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(OCTOBER 20, 2011) AGRICULTURE UNDER SECRETARY FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT ANNOUNCES FUNDING TO IMPROVE WATER QUALITY, PUBLIC HEALTH AND ELECTRIC SERVICES IN RURAL ALASKA

Norton Sound Communities to Receive Funds To Reduce Energy Cost

Washington, D.C., Oct 20, 2011 --

@@Agriculture Under Secretary for Rural Development Dallas Tonsager today announced that 22 rural communities in Alaska will receive Rural Alaska Village Grant (RAVG) program funding to implement planning, design and construction of water and waste water infrastructure delivery systems. In addition, today's announcement also includes a grant award to the Denali Commission for projects in Norton Sound communities in rural Alaska with exceptionally high energy costs.

"Today's announcements represent a long-standing commitment by USDA to improve public health conditions in predominantly Native villages in rural Alaska. These investments improve water and sanitary conditions bringing basic services to these communities that most Americans take for granted," Tonsager said.

In addition to RAVG, the announcement today also includes \$1.7 million in Technical Assistance and Solid Waste Management grants to eight entities: Zender Environmental Health and Research Group; Rural Alaska Community Action Program; Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium; Southeast Alaska Regional Health Consortium; Seldovia Village Tribe, Yukon River Inter-Tribal Watershed Council; Tanana Chiefs Conference and Aleutian Pribilof Island Association.

Southeast Alaska Regional Health Consortium was one of the entities awarded Technical Assistance funding. It will utilize funds to provide technical assistance and training in nine Southeast Alaska communities; assist in the preparation of grant applications and improvement of operations and maintenance of existing water and wastewater facilities. The nine rural Alaskan communities include Klawock, Craig, Hydaburg, Kasaan, Yakutat, Haines, Hoonah, Angoon and Kake.

The RAVG projects were authorized under a streamlined process that was approved between USDA Rural Development and program partners in a Memorandum of Understanding signed in June, 2011. Under the new MOU, the State of Alaska and Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium (ANTHC) can apply for funding on behalf of rural Alaskan communities. "Delivering these essential rural sanitation projects is made possible because of our strong partnership with the state Department of Environmental Conservation and ANTHC," stated Rural Development State Director Jim Nordlund.

As part of today's funding announcement, the State of Alaska was selected to receive almost \$8.7 million for water and wastewater improvement projects. Included are grant funds for the Remote Maintenance Worker Technical Assistance program which provides on-site training for water and wastewater operators. Additional communities funded under the State of Alaska for construction and planning include: Quinhagak, Unalakleet, Saint Paul, Seldovia and Nunapitchuk.

More than 4,000 feet of water and sewer line will be installed, and in-house plumbing will be provided

to residents in the Tomaganuk and Airport Heights subdivision. Residents there currently haul water and utilize portable buckets (honey buckets) for waste disposal.

ANTHC was selected to receive almost \$12.3 million in grants. The funds will be used to help develop and construct water and wastewater systems, which will improve the health and sanitation conditions in the following communities: Larsen Bay, Nondalton, Crooked Creek, Golovin, Eek, Kiana, Nanwalek, Toksook Bay, Kwethluk, Venetie, Levelock, Tetlin, Chevak, Chalkyitsik and Chenega.

In Diomedes, located in the Bering Strait a mile from the International Dateline, funding will be provided to construct a 340,000 gallon water storage tank and 500 linear feet of surface water distribution mains. The additional storage capacity of the new tank will help ensure that the community has a year-round safe water source. The current tank is filled for winter use, but the water supply typically runs out around March. The washeteria is then closed and residents are required to melt snow and ice for drinking water. All households on Diomedes use privies and honey buckets.

The \$5.7 million award to the Denali Commission in Alaska will fund projects to upgrade the Stebbins/St. Michael Rural Power System and replace a generator for the Alaska Village Electric Cooperative, Inc. These projects will help reduce energy use and costs for residents of these rural Alaskan communities.

“The USDA’s High Energy Cost Grant will be used in the Norton Sound community to replace obsolete equipment and reduce operating and energy costs that are especially burdensome for economically challenged communities, said Tonsager.

Stebbins and St. Michael are predominantly Yup’ik Alaska Native settlements located in a region of rural Alaska with historically high energy costs. The Administrator of the Rural Utilities Service, Jonathan Adelstein, finalized the grant during a visit to Alaska in August. Since 1999, the Denali Commission has worked with the Alaska Energy Authority (AEA), Alaska Village Electric Cooperative (AVEC), Alaska Power and Telephone and Federal and State partners to meet rural communities’ fuel storage and power generation needs.

Additional High Energy Cost Grants are expected to be announced later this year.

In June, President Obama signed an Executive Order establishing the first White House Rural Council, chaired by Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack. The White House Rural Council will work throughout government to create policies to promote economic prosperity and a high quality of life in our rural communities. Ten separate White House Rural Council Meetings were held in Alaska this summer.

Since taking office, President Obama's Administration has taken significant steps to improve the lives of rural Americans and has provided broad support for rural communities. The Obama Administration has set goals of modernizing infrastructure by providing broadband access to 10 million Americans, expanding educational opportunities for students in rural areas, and providing affordable health care. In the long term, these unparalleled rural investments will help ensure that America's rural communities are repopulating, self-sustaining, and thriving economically.

USDA, through its Rural Development mission area, administers and manages housing, business and community infrastructure and facility programs through a national network of state and local offices. Rural Development has an existing portfolio of more than \$155 billion in loans and loan guarantees. These programs are designed to improve the economic stability of rural communities, businesses, residents, farmers and ranchers and improve the quality of life in rural America.

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(NOVEMBER 4, 2011) USDA ANNOUNCES FUNDING TO HELP RURAL RESIDENTS IN REMOTE AREAS REDUCE ENERGY COSTS

Washington, D.C., Nov 04, 2011 --

@@ USDA Under Secretary for Rural Development Dallas Tonsager today announced funding to help reduce energy costs for residents of remote rural areas where the current cost of producing electricity is extremely high. The funds are being provided through USDA's High Energy Cost Grant program. The announcement was made during the Four Corners Sustainable Futures Tribal Summit in Flagstaff, Ariz.

"In many rural areas, energy costs can be a significant part of household and business expenses," Tonsager said. "These grants will help home and business owners offset rising energy costs by financing energy efficiency and power generation improvements that will deliver energy more cost-effectively and help the environment."

The program is administered by USDA Rural Development's Rural Utilities Service. Recipients use funds to improve energy generation, transmission or distribution facilities that serve communities where the average residential cost for home energy exceeds 275 percent of the national average. Grants are available to businesses, non-profit entities, states, local governments and federally recognized Indian tribes.

Sacred Power Corporation, a private Native American-owned firm which serves communities in Arizona, Utah and New Mexico will receive funds to provide improved batteries for solar, wind and propane fueled generation systems that serve the homes of tribal members in remote areas. Diné Cooperatives, Inc. in Arizona will receive funds for the Black Mesa Solar Project, which focuses on the use of solar energy as a viable solution to meet the energy needs of a remote portion of the Black Mesa and Pinon Chapters within Navajo Country, on the Navajo Reservation. This grant will focus on supplying energy to people in a community consisting mostly of elders who have minimal electricity needs, and their children and grandchildren who tend to require twice the power load. It will center on providing electricity to residents in homes that currently have no electrical service, and supplementing power to existing solar systems for other homes. These proposed systems will generate electricity utilizing photovoltaic solar systems and back-up generators.

The funding announced today totals more than \$21 million. Funding for individual recipients is contingent upon their meeting the conditions of the grant agreement. These funds may not be used to pay utility bills, purchase fuel, or be used for the sole benefit of the applicant.

Alaska

- Alaska Village Initiatives — \$443,779
- Gwitchyaa Zhee Utility Company— \$3,500,000
- Tlingit Haida Regional Housing Authority--\$1,000,000

Arizona/Utah/New Mexico

- Dineh Cooperatives Incorporated — \$1,352,000
- Sacred Power Corporation — \$2,500,000 (Serving customers in Arizona, New Mexico and Utah)

California

- Yurok Tribe —\$4,959,456

Hawaii

- Hawaii County Economic Opportunity Council — \$1,218,791

Maine

- University of Maine — \$2,617,569

Marshall Islands

- Marshalls Energy Company —\$2,317,388
- Island Economic and Environmental Company — \$1,395,525

South Dakota

- Sacred Power Corporation — \$395,000 (Serving the Lakota Reservations)

Since taking office, President Obama's Administration has taken historic steps to improve the lives of rural Americans, put people back to work and build thriving economies in rural communities. From proposing the American Jobs Act to establishing the first-ever White House Rural Council – chaired by Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack – the President wants the federal government to be the best possible partner for rural businesses and entrepreneurs creating job opportunities and for people who want to live, work, and raise their families in rural communities.

USDA, through its Rural Development mission area, administers and manages housing, business and community infrastructure and facility programs through a national network of state and local offices. Rural Development has an existing portfolio of more than \$155 billion in loans and loan guarantees. These programs are designed to improve the economic stability of rural communities, businesses, residents, farmers and ranchers and improve the quality of life in rural America. More information about USDA Rural Development can be found at www.rurdev.usda.gov.

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