

## News Briefs



### Washington SFH Team Recognized

Rural Housing Service Administrator Tony Hernandez recognized Washington State's Single Family Housing (SFH) Direct Loan Division team for helping USDA Rural Development achieve the "All Hands Effort" to utilize 100 percent of their Direct Housing allocation for Fiscal Year 2015. In fact, our Section 502 Direct activity increased over last year by about \$8 million.

### SFH Funding Update

Federal lawmakers passed a continuing resolution (CR) funding the government through Dec. 11, 2015 at fiscal year (FY) 2015 level; however, there is no funding at this time for either Direct or Guaranteed home loans. In the mean time, our Guaranteed Rural Housing Office is issuing Conditional Commitments "subject to funding" and expect restoration of funding in one to two weeks (based on previous years). There are currently no backlogs for GRH applications or closings.

### Washington State

Rural Developments is published monthly by USDA Rural Development, Washington State Office, located at 1835 Black Lake Blvd., SW, Suite B, Olympia, WA 98512

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Washington State



# Rural Developments

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October is National Cooperative Month

## Washington Cooperatives Make Top 100 List

Cooperatives have been around since the beginning of human civilization. According to the Small Business Administration (SBA) a cooperative is a business or organization owned by and operated for the benefit of those using its services. Typically associated with health food stores, cooperatives can be focused on just about anything. In addition to providing supplies and marketing services to farmers and ranchers, the nation's co-ops provide telecommunications, energy, financial and other important services. What makes them unique is that they are member owned and earnings generated by the cooperative are distributed among the members.



State Director  
Mario Villanueva

As part of USDA's observance of Cooperative Month, Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack previewed a USDA report to be released later this month that shows cooperatives posting record income and revenue in 2014. In fact, according to the report, cooperatives earned \$6.5 billion in net income and generated \$246.7 billion in total revenue last year.

"The nation's co-ops are essential to the U.S. economy and to rural America," Vilsack said. "The income they generate is reinvested or returned to members who spend it in their local communities. USDA is proud to continue its support of the cooperative movement."

Secretary Vilsack recently signed a Cooperative Month proclamation that salutes the nation's cooperative business sector which includes about 30,000 co-ops nationally. Also earlier this week, Secretary Vilsack previewed findings from USDA's annual rankings of the nation's Top 100 Ag Co-ops. Among other things, the rankings show that while most ag cooperatives are located in Iowa, Minnesota, and Illinois, two of the top 100 agricultural co-ops are here in Washington State.

Coming in at number 8 this year was the Seattle-Based Northwest Dairy Association (NDA), up from number 10 in 2013. You may know them by their Darigold label. NDA has been a farmer owned cooperative since 1918 and has over 550 dairy farm families working together across five states, selling over \$2.5 billion in dairy products each year.

Also on the list at 89 is Tree Top, Inc. (up 11 spots from 100 in 2013). Established in 1960, Tree Top is a co-op of apple growers based out of Selah, Wash. The cooperative earned over \$425 million in 2014, up from \$400 million in 2013.

They say strength comes in numbers, and cooperatives make sense because they allow worker-owned, worker-managed small businesses play a key community and economic development role in the improving opportunity in the local rural economy.

Mario Villanueva  
Washington State Director

## Workshop for Beginning, Minority, and U.S. Veteran Farmers

Beginning, Minority, and U.S. Veteran farmers and food-related business are invited to an all-day workshop on Wednesday, Oct. 28, from 8:45 a.m. to 4:15 p.m., at the Skagit County Fairgrounds in Mount Vernon to meet face-to-face with representatives of lending programs and financial institutions that provide loans from less than \$5,000 to more than \$300,000.

Sponsored by participating programs and lenders include USDA Rural Development; Community Capital Development; Community Food Co-op's Farm Fund; Community Sourced Capital; Craft3; Farm Services Agency; Industrial Credit Union; and North Coast Credit Union.

Enter at the Skagit County Fairgrounds Virginia Street Entrance. The workshop is located in Building A. Registration is \$20 (includes lunch, refreshments, and beverages). Register at: Access to Capital for Beginning, Minority and U.S. Veteran Farmers.

If you are interested in a Scholarship to pay for registration fees please contact Kate Selting, Latino Farmer Outreach Educator WSU Skagit Extension (360) 428-4270, ext 223  
[Kate.Selting@wsu.edu](mailto:Kate.Selting@wsu.edu).

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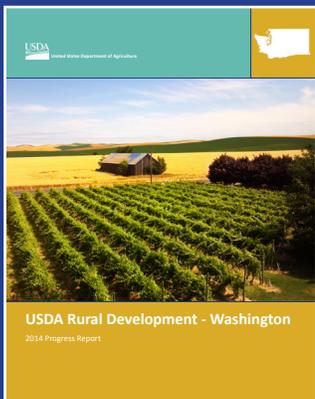
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**Funding Available for REAP Loans & Grants**

USDA Rural Development is accepting Rural Energy for America Program (REAP) applications for: 1) loans and grants for renewable energy systems and energy efficiency improvements, and 2) grants for energy audits and renewable energy development assistance.

Eligible agricultural producers and rural small businesses may use REAP funds to purchase and install renewable energy systems and make energy efficiency improvements.

Eligible renewable energy systems include energy from wind, solar, renewable biomass (including anaerobic digesters), small hydro-electric, ocean, geothermal, or hydrogen derived from these renewable resources.

Energy audits and renewable energy development assistance grants are available to state, tribal, or local governments; institutions of higher education; rural electric cooperatives and public power entities.

The REAP program was created in the 2002 Farm Bill. Because



of the success of the program, Congress reauthorized it in the 2014 Farm Bill with guaranteed funding of no less than \$50 million annually for the duration of the five-year bill. The 2014 Farm Bill builds on historic economic gains in rural America over the past seven years while achieving meaningful reform and billions of dollars in savings for taxpayers.

For example, in August, USDA Rural Development awarded Walla Walla based Pepper Bridge Winery with a \$65,212 grant that will cover 25 percent of the cost to install a solar photovoltaic (PV) system, which is expected to generate 137,805 kilowatts of electricity every year, enough to power 12 homes.

Through the REAP program, USDA has supported nearly 11,000 renewable energy and energy efficiency projects nationwide since the start of the Obama Administration. The Department has provided more than \$367 million in grants and \$354 million in loan guarantees to agricultural producers and rural small business owners during this period.

For more information about application deadlines and details on how to apply, please contact Randy Baird, Washington State Energy Coordinator, [randy.baird@wa.usda.gov](mailto:randy.baird@wa.usda.gov), or see [Page 60349 of the October 6 Federal Register](#).

**IACC Annual Conference October 20-22**

Registration is open for the 2015 [Infrastructure Assistance Coordinating Council \(IACC\)](#) conference, which will be held at the Wenatchee Conference Center, October 20 - 22.

IACC is a nonprofit organization dedicated to helping Washington communities and tribes identify and obtain resources they need to develop, improve, and maintain infrastructure. It consists of staff from state and federal agencies, local government associations, and nonprofit technical assistance organizations.

IACC is a unique organization that has enhanced the relationships between government agencies, tribes, and communities in Washington for over 20 years. Together with IACC, communities and tribes are better able to provide the infrastructure necessary to enhance, preserve, and protect Washington's environ-



ment and quality of life. IACC is operated by four Board Officers and six Board Members.

IACC's purpose is to improve the delivery of infrastructure assistance, both financial and technical, to local governments and tribes in Washington State. It does this by keeping its members informed of changes in infrastructure programs or services and in providing opportunities to network and gain information:

IACC sponsors the annual state-wide conference where state and federal programs assisting local

governments and tribes with infrastructure needs convene to share information about their programs with local government representatives.

Additionally, IACC provides technical assistance to communities and tribes by bringing together the appropriate funding and technical assistance representatives with community members to collaborate on specific projects.

Register [here](#) or view a list of the 2015 sessions and to learn more about the conference, read the 2015 Conference Brochure.

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