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News Release

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USDA Invests \$6,666,000 in Florida Rural Communities to Improve Water and Wastewater Infrastructure

GAINESVILLE, Sept. 17, 2018 – Florida Rural Development State Director Sydney Gruters today announced that USDA is investing \$6.67 million to help rebuild and improve rural water infrastructure in Florida.

“Put simply, modern and reliable water infrastructure is vital to quality of life and economic development in our rural communities,” Gruters said. “USDA’s partnerships with rural communities directly supports Agriculture Secretary Sonny Perdue’s commitment to rural people and the places they call home.”

USDA is supporting investments in these projects through the [Water and Waste Disposal Loan and Grant](#) program. It can be used to finance drinking water, stormwater drainage and waste disposal systems for rural communities with 10,000 or fewer residents. In many cases, states, other federal partners and nonprofits are working with USDA to also provide funding for these projects.

Assistant to the Secretary for Rural Development Anne Hazlett announced the awards today during the Water Pro Conference hosted by the National Rural Water Association. Below are examples of the types of investments USDA is making to improve infrastructure in rural Florida:

- The Town of Malone will use a \$1.226 million loan and \$3.534 million grant to install gravity connections to intercept flows presently directed to on-site, private systems that will be connected to an existing collection system. This will include expansions and additions as needed. The Town will construct approximately 21,500 linear feet of gravity sewer lines and appurtenances to support modest future growth. The Town will also construct a modern, central, mechanized extended aeration wastewater treatment facility.
- Zellwood Water Users, Inc. will use a \$1.041 million loan and a \$865,000 grant to make improvements to its water treatment system. Funds will be used to construct an administration building and replace aged and undersized water mains. The water mains will provide sufficient pressure system-wide. New fire hydrants will also be installed within a 500 ft. radius of all users, so all users will receive adequate fire protection. In addition, two water treatment plants, a diesel generator, and various electrical and control components will be replaced.

In FY 2018, Congress provided a historic level of funding for water and wastewater infrastructure. The 2018 Omnibus spending bill includes \$5.2 billion for USDA loans and grants, up from \$1.8 billion in FY 2017. The bill also directs Agriculture Secretary Sonny Perdue to make investments in rural communities with the greatest infrastructure needs.

Eligible rural communities and water districts can apply online for funding to maintain, modernize or build water and wastewater systems. They can visit the interactive [RD Apply](#) tool, or they can apply through one of USDA Rural Development's [state or field offices](#).

In April 2017, President Donald J. Trump established the Interagency Task Force on Agriculture and Rural Prosperity to identify legislative, regulatory and policy changes that could promote agriculture and prosperity in rural communities. In January 2018, Secretary Perdue presented the Task Force's findings to President Trump. These findings included 31 recommendations to align the federal government with state, local and tribal governments to take advantage of opportunities that exist in rural America. Increasing investments in rural infrastructure is a key recommendation of the task force.

To view the report in its entirety, please view the [Report to the President of the United States from the Task Force on Agriculture and Rural Prosperity](#) (PDF, 5.4 MB). In addition, to view the categories of the recommendations, please view the [Rural Prosperity infographic](#) (PDF, 190 KB).

USDA Rural Development provides loans and grants to help expand economic opportunities and create jobs in rural areas. This assistance supports infrastructure improvements; business development; housing; community services such as schools, public safety and health care; and high-speed internet access in rural areas. For more information, visit www.rd.usda.gov.

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