



News Release

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USDA Announces \$19.5M for Water Infrastructure in Montpelier; \$3.3M in Twin State Energy Projects to Combat Climate Change

Energy Specialist Ken Yearman Named Director of RD Business Programs; Agency Increases REAP Funding in FY23 through IRA

MONTPELIER, Vt., December 15, 2022 – Sarah Waring, State Director for U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Rural Development (RD) in [Vermont](#) and [New Hampshire](#), today announced a \$19,519,000 investment for the city of Montpelier to upgrade and expand sewer and stormwater infrastructure through USDA’s [Water & Waste Disposal Loan & Grant program](#). She also introduced Rural Energy Specialist Ken Yearman as Director of [RD Business Programs](#) (BP) – VT/NH, who assumes the position vacated by former BP Director Cheryl Ducharme in May, 2022.

Nationally, USDA Secretary Tom Vilsack announced [\\$285,026,766 in critical infrastructure funding for 844 projects across 46 states to combat climate change and expand access to clean energy](#) through the [Rural Energy for America Program](#) (REAP). Included among the investments is \$3,369,662 million awarded to 17 small businesses throughout the Twin States.

The city of Montpelier has set a goal of net-zero emissions by 2030. In January 2020, a [\\$14.4 million USDA investment](#) into the city’s Water Resource Recovery Facility (WRRF) enabled a cost-saving ‘organics to energy’ model, using solid waste from area farms and businesses to power the facility through high-capacity biodigesters. Today’s investment consists of a \$3,521,000 grant and \$15,998,000 loan, focused on funding further improvements to the WRRF and the stormwater system for East State Street. Upgrades include a waste-drying system powered by onsite biogas, predicted to reduce yearly sludge output by roughly 65 percent. The resulting product will be a Class A biosolid, or biochar, which can be recycled instead of sent to the landfill. The Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation is supplying additional funding for the project with a \$3,244,812 investment.

“The people of Montpelier have spoken once again, and their voices will be heard with more than \$19.5 million in transformational funding to improve the city’s water and waste infrastructure,” said Waring. “We must address climate change in creative ways, and Montpelier is a pioneer in energy sustainability and environmental solution making. We are so proud to be a partner in this innovative and essential undertaking.”

Further, the Department announced \$300 million will be available for REAP funding in fiscal year 2023, \$250 million of which was made possible by President Biden’s historic [Inflation Reduction Act](#).

“People in rural America are on the front lines of climate change, and our communities deserve investments that will strengthen our Country’s resilience,” Vilsack said.

“President Biden has created a roadmap for how we can tackle the climate crisis and expand access to renewable energy infrastructure, all while creating good-paying jobs and saving people money on their energy costs. These investments underscore the Biden-Harris administration’s commitment to providing funding and resources to rural people and communities across the country to help drive economic security and prosperity.”

Ken Yearman has worked for USDA Rural Development since 2008. Before joining the agency, he was a commercial loan officer at the Vermont Economic Development Authority. In that capacity, he helped small Vermont businesses gain access to capital using a variety of financial vehicles. Yearman also worked for the Vermont State Employees Credit Union as a loan officer for twelve years. A lifelong Vermont resident, he earned an MBA and B.S. in Finance and Economics from Southern New Hampshire University. He has served on Barre’s Town Planning Commission and Housing Advisory Committee, as well as the Central Vermont Community Land Trust’s Board of Trustees.

“We’re excited to close out fiscal year 2022 with funding for 17 smart-energy projects in Vermont and New Hampshire through REAP,” said Waring. “As he has done for 15 years, Ken Yearman guided these applicants to the finish line with a mission-driven approach of supportive customer service and fluid program expertise. I’m happy to announce that he’s bringing his versatile skill set and knowledge to the position of RD Business Programs Director.”

The deadline to apply for Water & Waste Disposal Direct Loans and [Predevelopment Planning Grants](#) is April 14th, 2023. These programs provide funding for clean and reliable drinking water systems, sanitary sewage disposal, sanitary solid waste disposal, and storm water drainage to households and businesses in eligible rural areas.

The deadline to apply for REAP grants is March 31, 2023. Applications for technical assistance grants are due Jan. 31, 2023. REAP helps farmers, ag producers and entrepreneurs purchase and install renewable energy systems and make energy-efficiency improvements.

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