

Winter 2002

Special Focus this Issue:

- **Success Stories** - Maximizing economic development staff time and money
- **Designated Communities** - Benchmarking to continue funding opportunities
- **California Map** - EZ/EC, Champion Communities and other Target Areas
- **Websites** - Links to Useful Information Resources

“Our call is to focus on increasing economic opportunity and improving the quality of life in rural America. Do this and we can truly say we have served the entire nation.”

Luis Luna
Deputy Administrator, USDA
Office of Community
Development
Washington, D.C.

California Rural Community Development News

“We Are The Champions!” - *successful EZ/EC and Champion Projects*

City of Watsonville Enterprise Community

The Enterprise Community (EC) recently received one of two national "Best Practices Awards" from the Office of Community Development for its YouthBuild Watsonville project. The project empowers young people

“We aim toward hands-on training like this in our community. Projects such as this have proven to be very successful. We couldn't have done it without you.”

Watsonville Mayor Betty Bobeda to State Director Paul Venosdel upon receiving the award.

ages 16 to 24 by providing them with construction technology training, academic achievement, leadership development and community service opportunities over a 10-month period while building affordable townhouses for residents. The City is beginning its second year of the project with a \$194,723 Rural Business Enterprise Grant to cover the costs associated with wages for the participants and trainers, uniforms, training materials and workshops.

“We aim toward hands-on training like this in our

community. Projects such as this have proven to be very successful. We couldn't have done it without you,” said Watsonville Mayor Betty Bobeda to State Director Paul Venosdel upon receiving the award.

Tulare County Champion Community

Pixley Community Center serves as a recreation spot for children in the community. A busy schedule of games, sports activities, events, movies, guitar and karate classes, trips to museums and colleges and camping trips is offered. The Center provides computers and desk space for children and youth to do their homework. Community Services and Employment

Training (CSET) is the Lead Entity for the Champion Community. CSET staff keep office hours at the Center to help both youth and adults track down job leads, prepare for interviews and work requirements and communicate with prospective employers.

The Junior Leadership Program is the core of the effort to "grow" leaders in Pixley. Children and youth are selected to participate in a competency-based, nine-month leadership program developing such skills as facilitating meetings, advocacy, consensus building, conflict resolution, and event planning. Skills are learned and practiced through a variety of hands-on community service projects that the youth select, plan and implement.

Desert Communities Empowerment Zone

The Empowerment Zone (EZ) needed a home and the community needed a central location where groups could meet. The EZ solved both problems when they opened the Community Resource Center. In addition to the EZ's business office, tenants include the Coachella Valley Enterprise Zone, the Inland Empire Lenders Credit Development Corporation, the nonprofit housing organization RANCHO, and the EZ Immigration Service among others.

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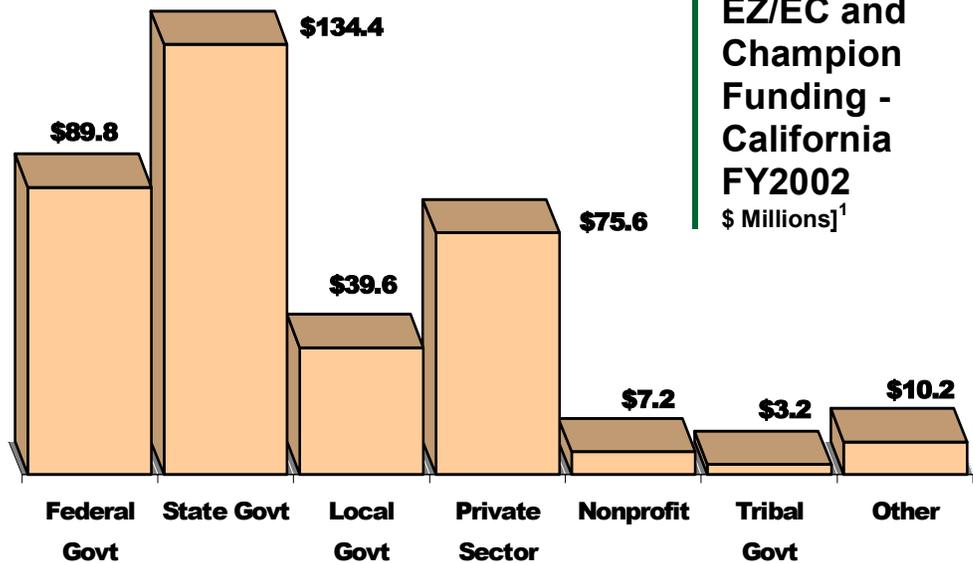
Nathan Garza, CSET Youth Development Specialist in the Tulare County Champion Community with Paul Venosdel, USDA-RD State Director



Desert Communities Empowerment Zone

(Continued from page 1)

The Center also has a large community room that local organizations, schools, and the City of Coachella can use. There's seldom an evening that the community room is not used. For instance, the Mariachi Estrella Learning Center, a music school for youngsters between the ages of eight and eighteen, conducts twice weekly classes at the Resource Center.



¹ California's designated communities have received \$25,158,833 from USDA Rural Development either through EZ / EC grants or other programs. Total Federal funding reaches \$89.8

million. By building relationships with other Federal and State agencies, as well as their local communities and nonprofit organizations, these communities have been able to *multiply their*

funding 13 times. That means for every \$1.00 received from USDA Rural Development, they received \$13.00 from other sources! GREAT JOB BY EZs, ECs and CHAMPIONS!



During his visit to the Coachella Valley this year, Deputy Under Secretary for Rural Development, Gilbert Gonzalez presented a Rural Business Enterprise Grant check to the City of Coa-

chella for a Business Incubator Program. Pictured are (left to right) Jesse Villareal, Coachella City Council member; Jeff Hays, EZ Executive Director; Gilbert Ramirez, Coachella City Council

Member; Gilbert Gonzalez; William Claire, City of Coachella and Steve Crabtree, USDA Rural Development.

“Use It or Lose It” - using your Designated Community status

Make sure your community is getting the most from its designation by taking advantage of the incentives offered by USDA Rural Development and other Federal agencies. Benchmarks are your community's key to success!

By keeping your benchmarks updated your community has access to Federal funds set aside for EZs and ECs. The benefits for EZs, ECs, and CCs are State Director discretionary points for USDA Rural Development applications, letters of

support for applications to any other funder, and technical assistance in locating resources. Without benchmarks, none of this is possible.

Chris Sundstrom, USDA Rural Development Community Development Program Director stands ready to help with your Benchmarking needs. Call Chris today at 559-734-8732 or e-mail christina.sundstrom@ca.usda.gov



Chris Sundstrom, USDA RD California Community Development Program Director provides orientation to members of the Huron - Tule Enterprise Community Partners.

Checklist for Success for Community Leaders

- Update strategic plan annually
- Keep benchmarks current
- On time submission of the Annual Report.
- Use benchmarks for public information.

“Remember, if you don’t measure it, you can’t improve it, and you can’t brag about it!”



WEBSITES OF INTEREST

www.rurdev.usda.gov/ca USDA Rural Development California

www.rurdev.usda.gov/ocd USDA Office of Community Development

www.ezec.gov USDA EZ / EC Programs

www.cset.org Community Services and Employment and Training, Inc. (Tulare County CC lead entity)

<http://www.i5bdc.com> Interstate 5 Business Development Corridor CC

www.californiacv.com/taskforce.htm Central San Joaquin Valley Economic Development Task Force

www.dcez.org Desert Communities EZ

www.caled.org California Association for Local Economic Development

www.climbthejobtree.org sponsored by the Employment Connection, funded by the Tulare County Workforce Investment Board

www.californiacv.com California Central Valley Economic Development Corporation

www.nado.org National Association of Development Organizations

www.crfusa.com Community Reinvestment Fund

www.cceda.com California Community Economic Development Association

www.csac.counties California State Association of Counties

www.cacities.org League of California Cities

www.knowledgeplex.org Online information exchange powered by Fannie Mae Foundation

THE DESIGNATED TEAMS

USDA Rural Development assistance programs for California rural community development:

EZ - Empowerment Zone

EC - Enterprise Community

CC - Champion Community

NCE - National Center of Excellence

RCAP - Rural Community Advancement Program

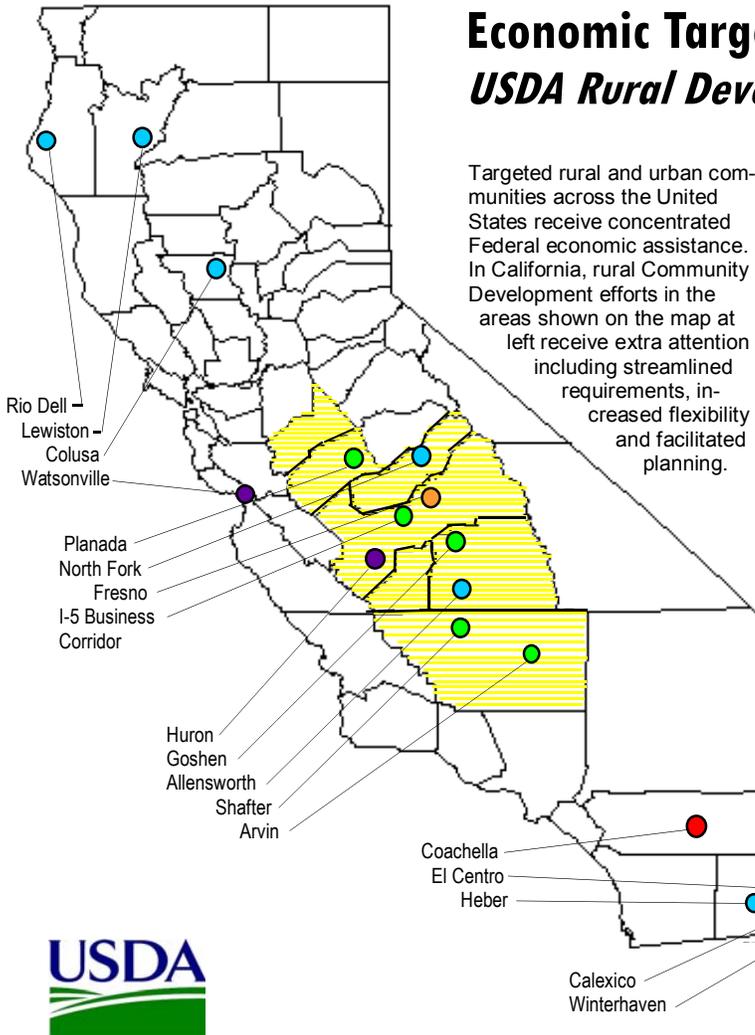
Central San Joaquin Valley Inter-agency Task Force

Colonias Program - Communities within 150 miles of Mexican border



Watsonville's *Net Café* is a new hot spot for youth to learn, work and socialize. Office of Community Development, City of Watsonville and the local Economic Development Council partnered on this innovative and very successful investment in youth.

Economic Target Areas in California - USDA Rural Development



Targeted rural and urban communities across the United States receive concentrated Federal economic assistance. In California, rural Community Development efforts in the areas shown on the map at left receive extra attention including streamlined requirements, increased flexibility and facilitated planning.

Empowerment Zones: Coachella - Desert Communities Empowerment Zone Eastern Riverside County.

Enterprise Communities: El Centro - Imperial County Enterprise Community areas around Calipatria, Brawley, Calexico; Watsonville - City of Watsonville Enterprise Community; Huron-Tule Enterprise Community West Fresno County, Tule River Tribe's Porterville Industrial Park.

Champion Communities: El Centro - Imperial County Champion Community areas around Calipatria, Brawley, Calexico, Winterhaven; South Valley Economic Partners Champion Community Kern County communities of Arvin, Lamont, Weedpatch; City of Shafter Champion Community; Tulare County Champion Community Cutler-Orosi, Goshen, Tipton, Woodville, Pixley; Interstate Five Business

Development Corridor Champion Community Firebaugh, Kerman, Biola, Mendota, Tranquillity, San Joaquin; **Planada-Le Grand Champion Community** Merced County communities of Planada and Le Grand.

National Centers of Excellence: Calexico - San Diego State University - Imperial Valley Campus; Fresno - California State University, Fresno.

Rural Community Advancement Program Areas: Heber-Imperial County; Allensworth - Tulare County; North Fork - Madera County; Rio Dell - Humboldt County; Colusa - Colusa County; Lewiston - Trinity County.

Central San Joaquin Valley Interagency Task Force: counties of Fresno, Kern, Kings, Madera, Merced, Stanislaus, Tulare (yellow highlight area on map).



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White House Initiates Focus on California's Rural Economy

California's hardest hit rural areas are getting extra attention from the Federal Government. By Executive Order, President George W. Bush created the Central San Joaquin Valley Interagency Task Force to focus the resources of federal agencies in seven counties in California.

Since inception in February 2002, agency partners have held two regional workshops to inform and advise local officials and private industry leaders on the effective use of available agency resources. During this first year, USDA Rural Development has stepped up attention in the target areas, work-

ing with lenders, public officials and community services agencies to improve service delivery.

"The President has directed agencies to coordinate efforts and establish new public-private sector partnerships that will improve effectiveness of Federal Program services in the area," said Paul Venosdel, State Director of USDA Rural Development in California.

Venosdel has been the Chair of the Task Force in its beginning year and has directed the multi-agency workshops held this year in Fresno in

May and Visalia in September.

The Interagency Task Force includes the Secretaries of Agriculture, Commerce, Defense, Interior, Education, Health and Human Services, Housing and Urban Development, Energy, Labor, Transportation, Treasury, the Attorney General, the Directors of National Drug Enforcement Control Policy and the Office of Management and Budget and the Administrators of the General Services Administration, Small Business Administration and the Environmental Protection Agency.

