



NEWS RELEASE

United States Department of Agriculture – Rural Development

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USDA RURAL DEVELOPMENT CELEBRATES EARTH DAY IN SAN JOAQUIN, ANNOUNCES \$6 MILLION FOR URGENT WASTEWATER UPGRADES

Earth Day activities include free recycling and student honors

SAN JOAQUIN, Calif., April 22, 2008 – Earth Day celebrations kicked off today at Peter Rusconi Park when USDA Rural Development State Director Ben Higgins announced a commitment of \$2 million in grant and \$4 million in long-term low-interest loan to the City of San Joaquin for critical wastewater infrastructure upgrades.

“With these funds, we’re providing San Joaquin the opportunity to deal with serious environmental challenges, including the need for safe, adequate wastewater disposal and infrastructure,” said Higgins. “This is a significant investment by USDA Rural Development in the future viability of this community.”

San Joaquin’s existing wastewater system exceeds its capacity, risking ground and surface water contamination. USDA Rural Development funds will be used to purchase additional land and construct a new 12 acre evaporation/percolation pond, replace sewer main lines, and upgrade the existing lift station.

“Like San Joaquin, many of California’s small towns and rural communities have difficulty affording critical water and wastewater infrastructure,” said Higgins. “Throughout the state, our agency is investing over \$50 million annually to provide clean drinking water, safe sanitation, and improved water service. We’re working everyday to give rural residents the same amenities and safeguards their urban counterparts have long taken for granted, and we’re proud to take time today, Earth Day, to mark the progress made.”

Today’s Earth Day event included free recycling of electronic waste to all San Joaquin residents courtesy of Mid Valley Disposal and free shredding and recycling of paper documents for area businesses courtesy of LPI. Six students from San Joaquin Elementary School were also honored for their posters and essay entries in a contest sponsored by USDA Rural Development. Students created either a poster or essay explaining why recycling was important and how they could help the environment. Poster winners were: First grade – Sol Ramirez; Second grade – Bereniz Dominguez; and Third grade – Alejandra Valdez. Essay winners were: First place – Victor Garcia, fourth grade; Second place – Arin Dhesi, fourth grade; Third place – Jackie Rodriguez, sixth grade. Winners will receive prizes including a \$50 gift certificate courtesy of San Joaquin City Engineer Yamabe and Horn, and City Attorney Hilda Montoy Cantu will sponsor an 18-month calendar featuring all of the winner’s creations.

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USDA Rural Development's mission is to deliver programs in a way that will support increasing economic opportunity and improve the quality of life of rural residents. As a venture capital entity, Rural Development has invested over \$91 billion since the beginning of the Bush Administration to provide equity and technical assistance to finance and foster growth in homeownership, business development, and critical community and technology infrastructure. As a result, over 1.7 million jobs have been created or saved through these investments. Further information on rural programs is available at one of California's 18 local USDA Rural Development offices or by visiting <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/ca>.

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