

USDA RURAL DEVELOPMENT NEBRASKA

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or

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Coordinators for Regional Economic Development Plan Announced --18 counties/62 rural communities to Benefit from USDA Funds

Lincoln, Nebraska, December 28-Announced today by the West Central Nebraska Development District (WCNDD) were the appointments of Jennifer Wolf as Community/Economic Development Specialist and Paul Rausch as Economic Development Finance Specialist who will head up a \$50,000 project funded by USDA. The project will establish an economic development plan for 18 southwest and west central rural Nebraska counties.

Jennifer Wolf recently joined the West Central Nebraska Development District Staff as Community Economic Development Specialist. She has a degree in Business Administration with an emphasis in Marketing from the University of Nebraska at Kearney. Jennifer is a resident of Gothenburg and has an extensive background working with communities in the areas of housing and community development.

Paul Rausch, Economic Development Finance Specialist, has a degree in Economics and Education from Purdue University. He has 23 years of experience in lending, management and economic development in rural areas.

The two coordinators explained that the proposed project would help the WCNDD address economic development issues, which their 18 county service area is presently facing. There is concern for rural communities that have experienced economic development growth

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from the value-added agricultural industry which, in turn, has attracted people with different cultural experiences and backgrounds, making adequate educational opportunities and the best utilization of the work forces challenging. Another concern is for those communities that are facing shrinking populations due to out-migration and the diminishing economic opportunities for potential population growth.

The proposed two year economic development project will provide for the establishment of a regional community economic development resource inventory, a marketing plan, and a direct marketing package for business recruitment. The economic development plan will place emphasis on business recruitment--bringing new jobs and better jobs to the area, and effective utilization of the existing labor pools in the 62 rural communities of the service area.

Glen Bowers, chairman for WCNDD stated, "We are appreciative of the USDA grant funds that are providing for an economic development plan to be created. This plan will assist in the prosperity of rural southwest and west central Nebraska."

WCNDD received the funding through USDA Rural Development's Rural Business Opportunity Grant program. This program is available to public bodies, non-profits, federally recognized tribal groups and cooperatives. The grant funds must be used to provide technical assistance for business development and to conduct economic planning in rural areas and to train rural entrepreneurs or economic development officials. Rural is defined as those communities with a population of 10,000 or less.

West Central Nebraska Development District (WCNDD) located in Ogallala, Nebraska was organized in 1974 and designated as an Economic Development District in 1980. WCNDD has assisted its 18 county area for 27 years with rural economic development issues. WCNDD partners with various economic development organizations to promote and attract industry to the area. Counties served are Arthur, Chase, Dawson, Dundy, Frontier, Furnas, Gosper, Grant, Hayes, Hitchcock, Hooker, Keith, Lincoln, Logan, McPherson, Perkins, Red Willow and Thomas.

For additional information regarding USDA Rural Development Loan and Grant Programs contact Deborah Drbal in the USDA Rural Development Office, Rm. 152 Federal Building 100 Centennial Mall North Lincoln, Nebraska 68508 or phone (402) 437-5558. Website: www.rurdev.usda.gov/ne/.

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