

USDA/Rural Development

WASHINGTON, D. C. 20250 - 0705

NEWS RELEASE

Tim McNeilly (202)-720-1019

USDA EXTENDS DEADLINE FOR \$23 MILLION IN RENEWABLE ENERGY GRANTS

WASHINGTON, May 19, 2003—USDA Under Secretary for Rural Development Thomas Dorr today announced that the deadline for applying for grants under the Renewable Energy Systems and Energy Efficiency Improvements program has been extended from the original date of June 6, 2003 to June 27, 2003.

The deadline was extended to allow additional time for applications to be developed and submitted for the \$23 million in grant funds. The notice extending the deadline for applications will appear in the *Federal Register* on Monday, May 19, 2003. Also included in the *Federal Register* notice will be information clarifying financial and other requirements for the grants along with information on how to access useful resources to assist in the applicant's preparation of the application. Such resources include the Department of Energy and the Agriculture Market Resource Center, funded by USDA Rural Development in July of 2001. Resource information will be also be available on USDA Rural Development website at www.rurdev.usda.gov

The grant program is available to eligible rural small businesses, farmers, and ranchers to develop renewable energy systems and make energy efficiency improvements to their operations. Applicants must be U.S. citizens or legal residents and have demonstrated financial need.

Grant funds may be used to pay up to 25 percent of the project costs. Eligible projects include those that derive energy from wind, solar, biomass, or geothermal sources. Projects using energy from those sources to produce hydrogen derived from biomass or water are also eligible. The program was authorized by the 2002 Farm Bill, and is conducted in collaboration with the Department of Energy.

The original Notice of Funding Availability for the grant program, including detailed information about program requirements and how to apply, was posted in the *Federal Register* on April 8, 2003.

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 provides equity, liquidity, and technical assistance to finance and foster growth in homeownership, business development, and critical community and technology infrastructure. Further information on rural programs is available at a local USDA Rural Development office or by visiting USDA's web site at <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov>.

