



NEWS RELEASE

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USDA RURAL DEVELOPMENT ANNOUNCES OVER \$2.3 MILLION IN FUNDING TO IMPROVE SANITATION SERVICES IN RURAL ALASKA *EARTH DAY ANNOUNCEMENT BENEFITS FOUR COMMUNITIES*

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PALMER, Alaska, April 22, 2009 –USDA Rural Development marked Earth Day 2009 by announcing that funding will be provided to four rural Alaska communities to improve sanitary conditions. One project will be funded immediately, and three others will enter the planning stage. Communities receiving funds include Eek, Fort Yukon, Hooper Bay and Nightmute.

“USDA Rural Development has done a great deal to improve rural health by providing funds necessary to provide safe and reliable water and sanitary services to Alaska’s communities. This funding helps further President Obama and Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack’s commitment to upgrade rural infrastructure and it is especially noteworthy that the announcement of these projects comes on Earth Day,” said Acting State Director Merlaine Kruse.

Kruse noted that Rural Development works in cooperation with agencies including the Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium, Indian Health Services, the State Department of Environmental Conservation, the Environmental Protection Agency and the Denali Commission. “We also owe a great deal of the progress we’ve made to contributions by our partners in Tribal government and local communities. We couldn’t begin to provide support for projects like these without community support.”

The funds are being provided under USDA Rural Development’s Water and Environmental Programs. In 2008, through those programs, USDA provided over \$ 12.6million for projects in Alaska’s rural communities.

The funds announced today will enable 28 homes in Fort Yukon to be connected to the sewer system and result in the closure of three sewage lagoons. A lift station will be constructed and over 9,000 feet of sewer pipe including mains and service lines, will be installed. Kruse said the current system, which will be replaced, is hazardous to public health. Because much of the area is built on permafrost, septic and holding tanks are failing, causing raw sewage to flow onto the ground.

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Planning funds will be provided to produce engineering and environmental reports, preparing for the replacement of landfills in Eek, Hooper Bay and Nightmute. All three existing landfills are not in compliance with State regulations. The Nightmute landfill is eroding into a nearby river, Hooper Bay's landfill is not lined, is a repository for human waste, and is located near the community's drinking water source. Eek's landfill is leaching into a community water source.

Federal funds allocated to the projects include:

City of Fort Yukon	\$2,248,500	Sewer Project
Native Village of Eek	\$45,000	Landfill Replacement Planning
City of Hooper Bay	\$52,500	Landfill Replacement Planning
City of Nightmute	\$22,500	Landfill Replacement Planning

USDA Rural Development's mission is to increase economic opportunity and improve the quality of life for rural residents. Rural Development fosters growth in homeownership, finances business development, and supports the creation of critical community and technology infrastructure. Further information on rural programs is available at any local Alaska USDA Rural Development office or by visiting USDA Rural Development's web site at <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov>.

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