

**AGRICULTURE SECRETARY VILSACK ANNOUNCES \$49 MILLION IN FUNDING  
FOR ALASKA WATER QUALITY IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS**

*Funds Will Improve Sanitation, Provide Jobs in Rural Alaska*

**WASHINGTON**, January 14, 2010 – Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack today announced that communities across rural Alaska will receive \$49 million through the Rural Alaska Village Grant Program. The funds will be used to address chronic water quality problems and provide jobs to rural residents. Today’s announcement, coupled with a previous announcement in October of the award of \$16 million, brings the total amount of money obligated for Alaska rural water projects through the Village Grant Program to \$65 million.

“The projects we’re announcing today will put rural Alaskans to work, but just as importantly they will provide the mechanism to quickly rectify public health problems that plague Alaska’s rural communities,” said Vilsack.

For example, Saxman, a predominantly Native community located near Ketchikan, uses a water system that does not meet standards set by the Environmental Protection Agency. About \$2.3 million in Federal funds will be provided to construct a new water treatment plant, bury water mains, build sewer collection mains and decommission the old water treatment plant. A new water treatment plant and backwash lagoon will also be built in Ouzinke, on Kodiak Island.

Fort Yukon, in interior Alaska, will receive almost \$5.7 million to replace crib boxes and septic tanks that have failed because of permafrost conditions. The tanks, which leak into the ground, will be replaced with sewer mains, service lines and a lift station. Meanwhile, Kotzebue will receive almost \$6 million to replace lift stations, water mains and to stop erosion at the reservoir, and Kasigluk will receive \$6.3 million to construct a water and sewer system. Residents of the latter community haul water to their homes and dispose of waste in buckets. The community is also planning to construct a new washeteria.

Communities selected to receive funding include:

City of Saxman - \$2,298,563  
City of Fort Yukon - \$5,696,695  
City of Ouzinkie - \$2,698,125  
Chignik Lake Traditional Council - \$1,368,000 (two projects)  
City of Lower Kalskag - \$869,193  
City of Golovin - \$225,000  
City of Kake - \$105,300  
Kasigluk Traditional Elders Council - \$480,198  
Native Village of Chenega - \$4,126,013  
City of Nikolai - \$56,250  
Kasigluk Traditional Elders Council - \$6,333,250  
City of Ambler - \$60,000  
City of Saint Mary's - \$1,500,000  
City of Kotzebue - \$5,925,000  
City of Emmonak - \$12,341,775  
Gulkana Village Council - \$1,027,462  
City of Old Harbor - \$3,547,058

“Providing quality sanitary services to rural Alaska as quickly as possible is the right thing to do, and we trust the State and local communities will move forward quickly to address these sanitation issues and provide needed jobs to residents of rural communities across Alaska,” said Vilsack. The Secretary visited Alaska in August, and other USDA officials from Washington have toured rural Alaska in recent months.

The funds are being provided through the Rural Alaska Village Grant program. Vilsack noted that today’s announcement signifies a major step toward eliminating a funding backlog that stretches back a decade. He commended members of the Alaska congressional delegation for working with USDA and State officials to obligate the funds while guaranteeing that the funds to be spent are also properly accounted for. Program funds announced today are being provided subject to “letters of condition” that require the grantees to meet necessary requirements before the funding is allocated.

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 a local USDA Rural Development office or by visiting USDA Rural Development’s web site at <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov>.

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