



NEWS RELEASE

United States Department of Agriculture – Rural Development

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USDA RURAL DEVELOPMENT INVESTS \$87 MILLION IN IMPERIAL COUNTY

California State Director to visit, announce several projects

EL CENTRO, Calif., September 18, 2007 – USDA Rural Development State Director Ben Higgins joined the Imperial County Board of Supervisors today to commemorate the extraordinary investment made by USDA Rural Development in recent years in Imperial County communities.

Since the start of the Bush Administration, USDA Rural Development has invested in Imperial County over \$19 million in business development which has helped save and/or create almost 550 jobs, \$17.4 million for infrastructure and community facilities, and over \$50 million for affordable housing. Higgins presented the Board of Supervisors with a check in the amount of \$87 million to reflect this total investment. Additionally, he announced grants totaling over \$1.4 million for five Imperial County projects ranging from classroom computers to emergency response equipment to improvements on city water systems.

“Numbers don’t tell the whole story,” Higgins said. “Our success is measured by water lines laid, hospitals built, and broadband connections made. Success is businesses started and jobs created. It is families moving into new homes, and affordable rental housing in small towns. Whether it’s an ethanol plant or industrial park, a day care center or critical care medical facility, investments made by USDA Rural Development are building a better future for rural residents in Imperial County and throughout the nation.”

Higgins’ trip to Imperial County also included visits to the communities of Calexico, Holtville and Brawley. He joined Calexico Mayor John Renison and Chelsea Investment Corporation CEO Jim Schmid for the Grand Opening of Villa Dorada Apartments, an 80-unit farm labor housing complex in which USDA Rural Development invested \$5 million. Also in Calexico, Higgins participated in an Open House event for Villa del Este Apartments where he commended Highland Property Management on their commitment to preserving quality, affordable housing in the county. Next, Higgins attended the City of Holtville’s ground breaking ceremony where he announced to city officials USDA Rural Development’s investment of \$4.4 million for the construction of a new 2.5 million gallon water tank. Higgins’ final scheduled visit occurred in Brawley where the State Director congratulated 12 families who recently completed constructing their own homes through the Mutual Self-Help Housing program. USDA Rural Development invested over \$1.4 million in the form of low-interest loans to the participating families.

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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 \$76 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 1.5 million jobs have been created or saved through these investments. Further information on rural programs is available at one of California's 25 local USDA Rural Development offices or by visiting <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/ca>.

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"Committed to the future of rural communities"
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