



NEWS RELEASE

United States Department of Agriculture – Rural Development

World Wide Web: <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/ca>

Ben Higgins, State Director

Release No. 34.07

Contact: Sarah Pursley
Office: (530) 792-5801
Cell: (916) 798-9295

GRANT SUPPORTS LOCAL ECONOMY, HEALTHY FORESTS

USDA Rural Development grant will allow community to create jobs while reducing fire risks

WEST POINT, Calif., July 2, 2007 – Faced with above average unemployment rates and excess forest fuels, the Calaveras Healthy Impact Product Solutions (CHIPS) Project aims to resolve these issues by reinvigorating the formerly thriving timber based economy in Calaveras County. With the help of a \$96,500 Rural Business Enterprise Grant (RBEG) from USDA Rural Development, the CHIPS Project will turn brush and small-diameter timber into usable wood products, including wood chips and mulch, creating jobs and reducing forest fuel loads in the process. Today, USDA Rural Development State Director Ben Higgins and Congressman Dan Lungren presented leaders of the CHIPS Project with a check for the RBEG funds at the West Point Community Hall.

“This project is an excellent example of multiple public and private interests collaborating for the greater good of rural communities,” said Higgins. “Not only will the project create and sustain jobs in an underserved area, it will assist in the clearing of forest fuels to help avoid potentially catastrophic wildfires.”

USDA Rural Development’s RBEG funds are available to rural communities, non-profit corporations and tribes for projects that strengthen the economic conditions of rural areas through business and job development and training as well as project planning. The CHIPS Project will use this grant to fund job training and work experience projects, purchase equipment and assist in the creation of a business selling wood chips and mulch.

“Residents of West Point understand the importance of keeping our forests healthy, and the dangers of accumulated forest undergrowth,” Lungren said. “This funding will open new opportunities for forest products that will lead to greater economic security. Through this process, West Point has provided an excellent example to the rest of the country of how a community working together can adapt to changing circumstances.”

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>.

#

“Committed to the future of rural communities”
United States Department of Agriculture • Rural Development
430 G Street, Agency 4169, Davis, CA 95616-4169
Telephone (530) 792-5801 Fax (530) 792-5837
<http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/ca>