



# NEWS RELEASE

**United States Department of Agriculture – Rural Development**  
**World Wide Web: <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/ca>**  
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## **USDA CELEBRATES EARTH DAY BY AWARDING \$144.3 MILLION FOR RURAL INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS**

### ***56 Communities Across America Benefit From Improved Water Availability and Quality***

WASHINGTON, April 21, 2009 – Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack marked the 39<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Earth Day today by announcing 56 communities in 34 states have been selected to receive \$144.3 million in loans and grants for infrastructure improvements to improve water availability and quality.

“Earth Day is the perfect time to highlight President Obama’s efforts to reinvest in and rebuild America’s rural communities,” Vilsack said. “Strategic investments such as the ones announced today will help improve the economy and the quality life for rural residents.”

Earth Day is observed annually on April 22 to raise awareness about the role citizens, businesses and communities can play in protecting the environment. Since the first Earth Day celebration in 1970, the event has expanded to include participation by citizens and governments in more than in 175 countries.

To protect the environment and improve the health of rural families, USDA Rural Development is funding water and wastewater infrastructure projects in local communities across the country.

Locally, the Buttonwillow County Water District will receive a \$500,000 low-interest loan combined with a grant from the State of California’s Water Quality Control Board to replace its 50-year-old sewage treatment plant. The current system is at capacity, beginning to fail, and is putting the community at risk for potential contamination to the water and food supply. With today’s funds, the new sewage system will not only help the District keep area groundwater safe, but ensure rates remain affordable for users.

A complete list of loan and grant recipients is available at <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov>. Funding of individual recipients is contingent upon their meeting the conditions of the loan or grant agreement.

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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 creation of critical community and technology infrastructure. Further information on rural programs is available at one of California's 18 local USDA Rural Development offices or by visiting <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/ca>.

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