



NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

More than \$2.2 Billion in Loans and Grants Available through USDA Rural Development to Help Improve Water Quality in Rural America

Managers from Water Districts throughout Iowa Met with USDA Representatives Today to Learn How to Access Funding

DES MOINES, Iowa – August 6, 2009 – Managers from eight rural water districts in Iowa met with representatives from USDA Rural Development today to discuss ways to access more than \$2.2 billion in nationwide federal loans and grants that can help improve water quality in rural areas and communities.

Leading the meeting was Jim Maras, deputy assistant administrator with USDA Rural Development in Washington D.C.

During the meeting Maras announced that \$2.2 billion is still available through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA), along with regular 2009 budget funding and disaster funds that were approved by Congress.

Funds from the 2009 budget are available through September 30, 2009. ARRA funds are available through September 30, 2010. Disaster assistance will be available until funds are depleted.

Of the \$2.2 billion available through ARRA \$27 million, or slightly more than Iowa's typical yearly allocation, is available for Iowa projects. As a result of ARRA and disaster assistance more than \$50 million is immediately available to assist rural water districts in the state.

“This was my first opportunity to meet with these rural water managers,” said recently appointed USDA Rural Development State Director Bill Menner. “I was eager to hear about their operations and their success in providing clean and safe water to rural Iowans.”

Attending today's meeting were representatives from Rathbun Regional Water Association, Inc., Southern Iowa Rural Water Association, Mahaska Rural Water System, Inc., Regional Water, Poweshiek Water Association, Iowa Lakes Regional Water, Central Iowa Water Association, along with the Iowa Rural Water Association.

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Roughly 50 percent of Iowa's 947 incorporated communities have fewer than 500 residents. Living in a small town has many advantages, but leaders in these communities also face many challenges. One important priority is being able to provide residents with clean and quality water.

"Ensuring rural Iowans have quality drinking water and sanitary wastewater systems have been top priorities at USDA Rural Development for many years," Menner said. "We have been a key player in bringing safe and reliable drinking water to rural Iowans since 1965. In the past 43 years, more than 2,400 loans and grants have been awarded totaling \$1.1 billion for water and sewer projects in the state."

Iowa has a strong network of regional water systems that provide water to rural areas in need of quality water. There are currently 19 rural water systems throughout the state serving more than 270 communities and nearly 320,000 residents, according to the Iowa Rural Water Association. Rural water systems in Iowa also serve communities in South Dakota, Minnesota and Missouri.

"A community with a good, reliable source of water has a quality life advantage," Maras said. "When a community makes water quality a priority and invests in their water system, the community's residents benefit in a number of ways including better health, more confidence in their water supply, and a better chance to maintain and grow their population."

Maras also added that having a good source of reliable water helps attract businesses to a community, in turn retaining or bringing new jobs.

Information on how to apply for USDA Rural Development programs is available by calling (515) 284-4663, at any USDA Rural Development office in Albia, Atlantic, Des Moines, Humboldt, Indianola, Iowa Falls, Le Mars, Mount Pleasant, Storm Lake, Tipton and Waverly, or by visiting www.rurdev.usda.gov/ia.

Projects considering ARRA funding must meet some specific criteria. The Recovery Act requires the Davis-Bacon Act be followed to ensure fair wages are being paid for labor. Projects also must meet the Buy American criteria which requires raw materials used in construction projects be produced in the United States.

USDA Rural Development is an equal opportunity lender with a variety of direct and guaranteed rural credit programs involving single and multi-family housing, community facilities, water and sewer development and business and cooperative programs.

During the past year funds from USDA Rural Development helped rural businesses in Iowa create or retain nearly 10,000 jobs, aided 1,600 families in buying their own home and assisted nearly 120 communities in improving community facilities and upgrading local infrastructure.

