



NEWS RELEASE

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Release No. 0386.04

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VENEMAN ANNOUNCES \$22.8 MILLION TO SUPPORT RENEWABLE ENERGY INITIATIVES IN 26 STATES

167 Recipients Named to Receive Grants: 89 Agricultural Producers /78 Small Businesses

SPENCER, Iowa, Sept. 15, 2004—Agriculture Secretary Ann M. Veneman today announced the selection of 167 recipients from 26 states to receive \$22.8 million in competitive grants to support President Bush's renewable energy efforts. The funds will be used by rural small businesses, farmers and ranchers to develop renewable energy systems and promote energy efficiency improvements.

“The Bush Administration is committed to advancing renewable energy ventures in rural America,” said Veneman. “We have the natural resources and the ingenuity to create new forms of energy and to use it more efficiently.”

Veneman said the Renewable Energy Systems and Energy Efficiency Improvements program was created as part of the 2002 Farm Bill to assist farmers, ranchers, and rural small businesses develop renewable energy systems and make energy efficiency improvements to their operations. In 2003, the Bush Administration invested under this program \$21.7 million to develop or improve wind power, anaerobic digester, solar, ethanol and other bioenergy related systems or energy efficiency improvements in 24 states.

In **North Dakota**, Microlap Technologies Inc., of Rolla, received an Energy Efficiency Improvement Grant for \$18,860. The funds will be used to provide energy efficiency improvements such as new energy efficient lighting and heating system for the facility.

“This is another example of the commitment that President George W. Bush and the Bush Administration have to the future of rural America,” said ND USDA Rural Development State Director, Clare Carlson.

A large percent of the 94 renewable energy applications selected this year will support anaerobic digesters and small and large wind power type ventures. A predominate number of the 73 energy efficiency grants will go to agricultural producers who will use the funds for buildings. A complete list of the selected grant recipients and projects can be found at <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/rd/newsroom/news.htm>.

Funding of selected applicants will be contingent upon meeting the conditions of the grant agreements.

The design and implementation of the grant program was accomplished through consultation with several federal departments and agencies, most notably the U.S. Department of Energy and the Environmental Protection Agency. “The sharing of technical and human resources has greatly enhanced the submission of qualified applications and selection of this year's recipients,” said Acting Under Secretary for Rural Development Gilbert Gonzalez. “By combining resources, we are improving the delivery of government services to the American taxpayer and implementing a more effective energy program.”

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 provides equity and technical assistance to finance and foster growth in homeownership, business development, and critical community and technology infrastructure. Further information on rural programs is available at a local USDA Rural Development office or by visiting USDA's web site at <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov>.

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