



# NEWS RELEASE

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## **USDA UNDER SECRETARY TONSAGER ANNOUNCES \$16 MILLION FOR WATER QUALITY IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS**

**ANCHORAGE**, Alaska, Oct. 23, 2009 – Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack today announced that nine communities, many with populations that are predominantly Native, will receive \$16 million through the Rural Alaska Village Grant Program. Agriculture Under Secretary for Rural Development Dallas Tonsager made the announcement on Vilsack’s behalf during a speech at the Alaska Federation of Natives Convention.

“It is important to invest in repairing America’s infrastructure to ensure the long-term health and prosperity of our rural communities,” Vilsack said. “These funds will help improve water service, provide 21<sup>st</sup> century waste disposal systems and continue our efforts to retire the use of ‘honey buckets’ in rural Alaska.”

For example, the community of Pitka’s Point will use grant funds to provide a safe water supply to the washeteria and water treatment plant, replacing a supply source that has been contaminated by fuel oil spills. Funds will also be used to provide water and sewer services to 35 homes, eliminating the need for residents to haul water to their houses.

Thirty-seven homes in the community of Kwigillingok will have tanks installed that will enable clean water to be provided and waste water to be removed by a delivery system. Currently, all of the affected homes lack indoor plumbing.

The funds are being provided through the Rural Alaska Village Grant program. Since taking office earlier this year, Under Secretary Tonsager has met with members of the Alaska congressional delegation to identify ways to move forward projects such as the ones announced today while guaranteeing that the funds allocated are properly accounted for.

“We share the delegation’s interest in providing quality sanitary services to rural Alaska as quickly as possible, while also ensuring that the funds appropriated by Congress are efficiently used to provide service to as many Alaskans as possible,” Tonsager said.

Funding of each recipient is contingent upon the recipient meeting the conditions of the grant agreement. These grants are part of USDA Rural Development’s budget and are not funded through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009.

Communities receiving grant funds under this announcement include:

Chignik Bay - \$2,684,325  
Hughes - \$1,242,835  
Koliganek - \$26,250  
Kwigillingok - \$1,332,750

North Pole - \$450,000  
Pitka's Point (two projects) - \$9,106,519  
Stebbins - \$512,798  
Togiak - \$375,000  
Toksook Bay (two projects) - \$836,116  
**Total: \$16,566,953**

Tonsager also announced that the City of Kotlik, a predominantly Native community in western Alaska, has been selected to receive a \$288,390 grant to design a new landfill and to design a water and sewer extension that will enable more of the community's residents to get indoor plumbing.

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 the creation of critical community and technology infrastructure. Further information on rural programs is available at a local USDA Rural Development office or by visiting USDA Rural Development's web site at [www.rurdev.usda.gov](http://www.rurdev.usda.gov).

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