

USDA: Partners to improve water and wastewater infrastructure

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STEVENS POINT, Wis, Sept. 17, 2018 – Wisconsin Rural Development State Director Frank Frassetto announced today that USDA is investing \$392 million to help rebuild and improve rural water and wastewater infrastructure in 42 states.

“Wisconsin rural communities face the challenge of aging or inadequate infrastructure to provide clean drinking water and meet the needs of their growing communities and changing economies,” Frassetto said. “By partnering with other Agencies, these investments assist communities by increasing rural prosperity and achieving economic stability.”

USDA is supporting investments in 120 infrastructure projects through the Water and Waste Disposal Loan and Grant program. It can be used to finance drinking water, storm water drainage and waste disposal systems for rural communities with 10,000 or fewer residents. In many cases, states, other federal partners and nonprofits are working with USDA to also provide funding for these projects.

Three Wisconsin communities received over \$12 million in infrastructure investments. For example, the Lac Du Flambeau Band of Lake Superior Chippewa Indians, along with an Indian Health Service grant of \$2.8 million, will invest a \$600,000 loan and \$2 million grant to upgrade the wastewater treatment system to prevent groundwater leaks. This project will improve service to more than 540 residential users and almost 70 businesses and other tribal operations.

In FY 2018, Congress provided a historic level of funding for water and wastewater infrastructure. The 2018 Omnibus spending bill includes \$5.2 billion for USDA loans

and grants, up from \$1.8 billion in FY 2017. The bill also directs Agriculture Secretary Sonny Perdue to make investments in rural communities with the greatest infrastructure needs.

Eligible rural communities and water districts can apply online for funding to maintain, modernize or build water and wastewater systems. They can visit the interactive RD Apply tool, or they can apply through one of USDA Rural Development's state or field offices.

In April 2017, President Donald J. Trump established the Interagency Task Force on Agriculture and Rural Prosperity to identify legislative, regulatory and policy changes that could promote agriculture and prosperity in rural communities. In January 2018, Secretary Perdue presented the Task Force's findings to President Trump. These findings included 31 recommendations to align the federal government with state, local and tribal governments to take advantage of opportunities that exist in rural America. Increasing investments in rural infrastructure is a key recommendation of the task force.

To view the report in its entirety, please view the Report to the President of the United States from the Task Force on Agriculture and Rural Prosperity (PDF, 5.4 MB). In addition, to view the categories of the recommendations, please view the Rural Prosperity infographic (PDF, 190 KB).

USDA Rural Development provides loans and grants to help expand economic opportunities and create jobs in rural areas. This assistance supports infrastructure improvements; business development; housing; community services such as schools, public safety and health care; and high-speed internet access in rural areas. For more information, visit <http://www.rd.usda.gov/wi>.