



News Release

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Ahead of Earth Day, USDA Announces Clean Water and Environmental Projects for 60 Rural Communities

WASHINGTON, April 19, 2016 – This week, representatives from USDA’s Rural Development team will be celebrating Earth Day by visiting newly funded projects that will improve rural water quality and safety in 33 states across the country. USDA is investing \$183 million in 60 water and wastewater infrastructure projects through Rural Development’s [Water and Environmental Program](#) (WEP), which provides technical assistance and financing to develop drinking water and waste disposal systems for communities with fewer than 10,000 residents.

“Safe drinking water and sanitary waste disposal systems are vital not only to public health, but also to the economic vitality of small communities,” Vilsack said. “Helping rural communities build and upgrade their water infrastructure is one more way USDA strengthens rural areas. Building and maintaining water infrastructure creates jobs, boosts the economy, and provides rural families with safe, reliable water and wastewater facilities that improve the environment.”

For example in North Carolina, Engelhard Sanitary District in Hyde County is receiving a \$691,000 WEP loan and a \$584,000 WEP grant to replace the wastewater treatment facultative lagoon with a new wastewater treatment facility and the rehab of the spray irrigation and dewatering system.

Seventeen of the Earth Day recipients announced today are receiving funding priority through a 2014 Farm Bill provision that encourages communities to adopt regional economic development plans. These projects are centered on collaboration and long-term growth strategies. They leverage outside resources and capitalize on a region’s unique strengths.

[Funding for each project announced today](#) is contingent upon the recipient meeting the terms of the loan, grant or loan/grant agreement.

This WEP funding builds on USDA’s historic investments in rural America over the past seven years. Since 2009, USDA has worked to strengthen and support rural communities and American agriculture, an industry that supports one in 11 American jobs, provides American consumers with more than 80 percent of the food we consume, ensures that Americans spend less of their paychecks at the grocery store than most people in other countries, and supports markets for homegrown renewable energy and materials.

USDA has provided \$5.6 billion to farmers and ranchers for disaster relief; expanded risk management tools with products such as Whole Farm Revenue Protection; helped farm businesses grow with \$36 billion in farm credit; provided \$4.3 billion in critical agricultural research; established innovative public-private conservation partnerships such as the Regional Conservation Partnership Program; developed new markets for rural-made products, including more than 2,500 biobased products through USDA's [BioPreferred](#) program; and invested \$64 billion in infrastructure, housing and community facilities to help improve the quality of life in rural America.

Since 2009, USDA Rural Development ([#USDARD](#) ) has invested \$11 billion to start or expand 103,000 rural businesses; helped 1.1 million rural residents buy homes; funded nearly 7,000 community facilities such as schools, public safety and health care facilities; financed 180,000 miles of electric transmission and distribution lines; and helped bring high-speed Internet access to nearly 6 million rural residents and businesses. For more information, visit www.usda.gov/results.

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