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**USDA ANNOUNCES FUNDING AVAILABLE FOR COMMUNITIES TO
ASSESS FUTURE WATER AND WASTEWATER INFRASTRUCTURE
PROJECTS**

Recovery Act Funding Will Help Rural Communities to Access Technical Expertise

WASHINGTON, July 9, 2009 — Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack today announced that USDA is providing \$14.2 million to help rural communities identify water and wastewater infrastructure needs that can be financed through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.

“Many people in smaller communities throughout the country are suffering because their local infrastructure is in desperate need of repair, and this funding will enable these communities to get the technical expertise they need to make these much-needed improvements,” said Vilsack. “One of the primary goals of the Recovery Act is to rebuild our communities, and this investment will help us to meet the basic need of providing clean, safe water infrastructure in struggling communities.”

The funding will be provided under USDA Rural Development’s Rural Water and Wastewater Circuit Rider Program to enable the National Rural Water Association to add 15 water and 71 wastewater technical assistance staff in 2009 and 2010 to help rural communities operate and maintain water and wastewater infrastructure, and provide training and other technical assistance to local staff throughout the country. Known as Circuit Riders, these technical assistance staff will help rural communities prepare proposals for water and wastewater systems, manage construction, offer on-site expertise and ensure that health and environmental protection requirements are met. The assistance provided by Circuit Riders keeps water and wastewater systems in compliance with EPA rules and reduces – often by thousands of dollars – repair and maintenance costs borne by small rural communities that lack sufficient financial resources.

For example, last year, a Circuit Rider in Sedona, Ariz., helped train local water operators on fire hydrant repair. The training enabled the water operators to fix four inoperable hydrants. By repairing and not buying new hydrants, the town was able to save an estimated \$10,000. Also in 2008, a Circuit Rider from the Alabama Rural Water Association helped conduct a survey to detect the source of a major water leak that prevented more than 20 customers from receiving water. The Macon County Water Authority in Tuskegee, Ala., will use the survey’s findings in its infrastructure rehabilitation plans. USDA’s Rural Development funding to state rural water associations will enable other small towns like these have access to technical staff and resources needed to operate and maintain water infrastructure.

The first \$4.1 million in funding will be for technical assistance services performed between June 1, 2009, and October 31, 2009. The remainder will be used

beginning November 1, 2009. In addition to the \$14.2 million, USDA Rural Development anticipates making Recovery Act funds available later in the year through a competitive grant process for further technical assistance services. All states and the Territory of Puerto Rico are eligible to apply.

President Obama signed The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 into law on February 17, 2009. It is designed to jumpstart the nation's economy, create or save millions of jobs and put a down payment on addressing long-neglected challenges so our country can thrive in the 21st century. The Act includes measures to modernize our nation's infrastructure, enhance energy independence, expand educational opportunities, preserve and improve affordable health care, provide tax relief, and protect those in greatest need.

More information about USDA's Recovery Act efforts is available at www.usda.gov/recovery. More information about the Federal government's efforts on the Recovery Act is available at www.recovery.gov.

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