

THE SPIGOT

from the NORTH DAKOTA RURAL WATER SYSTEMS ASSOCIATION

Rural Development Offers Many Programs for Rural Water Systems

USDA Rural Development has low-cost infrastructure loans and grants available now to help you provide quality water and waste services to your customers and it stands ready to assist its customers! USDA Rural Development has a long, rich history of working with rural America's smallest and most needy communities to provide loan and grant assistance for essential water and sewer infrastructure projects. Since 2009, it has helped more than 18 million rural residents receive new or improved water and waste disposal services, emergency water assistance, and technical help. Its assistance has been as varied as the need: for new or upgraded water and sewage treatment plants, equipment, wells, and even water itself for drought-inflicted communities.

Rural Development's program started as a partnership with rural communities. It was designed with an understanding of how good, clean, affordable, and reliable service interconnects with every other aspect of life in rural America and the knowledge of how important rural contributions are to the national economy. Now, 78 years later, the issues surrounding water are no less critical to the country, and the need for programs like Rural Development's water program remains high.

Rural Development is proud of its successes – but also knows it can do better, and realizes the funding process for USDA water and waste loans and grants can be time-consuming. It is working to change that.

Rural Development's goal is to ensure its loan and grant applicants receive funding decisions within 45 days of submitting a complete application. Its employees have already demonstrated this can be achieved. Grove City, Minn., sought funding from Rural Development last fiscal year to replace its more than 50-year-old sewer system. In just 30 days from the time it submitted a complete application, the project was reviewed and funds were obligated. In Georgia, the town of Resaca received loan

and grant funding for its sewer project in 48 days from the date a completed application was on hand at Rural Development. Mustang Special Utility District had a similar experience when funds were obligated in 57 days from when the application was completed.

Rural Development funded more than \$1.6 billion in loans, grants, and guarantees in all 50 states over the last year. It has funding available now under the Continuing Resolution, and its success depends on helping its rural partners receive the funding they need to provide essential water and waste services.

To reach its goal, Rural Development is taking measurable steps to improve and expedite its customers' experiences. Through new streamlined underwriting processes, use of improved technologies, collaboration and outreach, as well as increased employee training and engagement, it is decreasing loan processing times.

Many time-saving improvements have already been implemented. On Sept. 28, Rural Development launched, "RD Apply" at the National Rural Water Association's (NRWA) Water Pro Conference in Oklahoma City, Okla. RD Apply is an online system that allows potential customers to complete and submit their applications online. It is possible to register to use the system on any smart phone, tablet, or laptop. And the system is designed with Rural Development's applicants and their consultants in mind. In Oklahoma City, hundreds of community leaders, engineers, and circuit riders signed up and were able to test out the system, and the feedback was overwhelmingly positive. "Easy to use" was the most used way to describe RDApply. Even NRWA's president registered and started an online application at the conference! The system will result in faster processing times and an easier-to-understand filing process.

In 2014, Rural Development's streamlining efforts began in earnest with the introduction of new procedures for faster

processing of Emergency and Imminent Community Water Assistance Grant (ECWAG) applications. By utilizing this new streamlined process, towns such as tornado-ravaged Gifford, Ill., were able to receive much-needed grants to help replace a destroyed water plant and damaged water tower in record time. Rural Development's guaranteed loan program is currently being revamped and streamlined. It will have a new user-friendly guaranteed loan process in place in the coming year.

Rural Development is also intensifying its employee training and customer outreach efforts, ensuring all staff has the knowledge and skills to deliver the programs efficiently, effectively, and consistently.

Collaboration with other state and federal agencies remains a priority. Rural Development's partnership with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) on the new sustainability guide, also known as "Workshop in a Box," has proven to be very successful. Over the last 24 months, Rural Development and EPA have trained more than 1,600 trainers to facilitate the workshop. Workshops have been held in more than 140 locations across the country. Through this and many more collaborative efforts, Rural Development is building capacity and leveraging knowledge and financial resources.

To learn more about how Rural Development can help meet your water and waste needs, contact Eric Volk at the North Dakota Rural Water systems association at 701-258-9249 or USDA at 202-253-8060.

**Team Laboratory Chemical Corp
Hydro-Klean & Medora Corporation**
Present
**Wastewater Operations
& Maintenance**

COMING TO YOUR AREA SOON!

(Registration from 8:00 am to 9:00 am)

MINOT: March 15 • 9:00 am to 3:00 pm

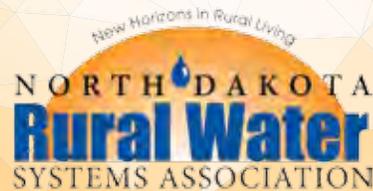
GRAND FORKS: March 17 • 9:00 am to 3:00 pm

Training topics to be covered:

- Manhole restoration, Monoform and Quadex
- Mixing options to improve wastewater systems
- Cure-in-place pipe lining and spot repair
- Grease control and sludge reduction
- Infiltration/inflow detecting and repair
- Root killing demonstration and aquatic weed and algae control
- Safety products and CCTV (closed-circuit television) inspections

Watch your mail for more information or visit www.ndrw.org.

Training is eligible for operator reimbursement and attendees can earn two CEUs. Training made possible by funding from USEPA.



**SAVE THE DATE
July 13-14**

Room Block Information

Bunkhouse - \$89/night

Badlands - \$139/night

AmericInn - \$190/night

Rough Riders - \$189/night

Call 1-800-MEDORA1 and ask for the North Dakota Rural Water room block prior to June 14

**North Dakota Rural Water
Summer Board Meeting
& Leadership Retreat**

Rough Riders Hotel Conference Center, Medora

July 13

8:30 am • Summer Board Meeting

Noon • Retreat Luncheon

1:00-4:00 pm • Leadership Retreat

6:00 pm • Pitchfork Fondue & Musical

July 14

7:30 am • Breakfast

8:30-11:30 am • Leadership Retreat

(all times in Mountain Time)

Open to all city and rural water system employees, managers, and board members.

Phone: 701-258-9249 or 1-800-349-6951 • www.ndrw.org • E-mail: info@nddrw.org