Bits & Pieces

$16.12 million funding for Kansas water projects approved by USDA Rural Development

A total of $16.12 million in funding for Kansas water projects has been approved by USDA Rural Development

Earlier this spring, USDA Rural Development State Director Chuck Banks announced today that the Agency approved $16,124,600 in first-half Fiscal Year 2008 funding for nine rural water service and sewer projects serving Kansas. The approved funding, split between $11,790,500 in loans and $4,334,100 in grants, will support the construction and/or completion of the important infrastructure projects that will provide long-term benefits to over 6,700 Kansans living in nine communities or service areas.

"USDA Rural Development's Water & Waste Disposal Program is one of the most important community and economic development efforts this Agency undertakes. These USDA funds, combined with the Agency's technical assistance which supports local leadership, helps make these critically needed services a reality. It is important that rural Kansans keep pace with their basic need to have access to safe and reliable water sources. Additionally, this valuable USDA program promotes economic growth and enhances the quality of life for the area residents served by these projects and all of Kansas," commented State Director Banks.

The nine new construction projects approved for funding by USDA Rural Development follows:

Circleville: $580,000 ($255,000 direct loan and $325,000 grant) This project will consist of installing new water lines, fire hydrants, and valves for the benefit of 185 city residents. The project will also include constructing a new water tower. USDA Rural Development funding will be leveraged with a $370,000 Community Development Block Grant.

Hartford: $1,365,000 ($688,000 direct loan and $677,000 grant) The project, benefiting 500 residents, will replace the city's corroded cast iron water lines with new lines, install new fire hydrants, and rehabilitate the existing elevated water storage tank. USDA Rural Development funding will be complemented with a $400,000 Community Development Block Grant.

Lecompton: $455,100 ($286,000 direct loan and $169,100 grant) The project, benefiting 608 rural residents, will construct a new elevated water storage tank and install pressure reducing valves on some of the meters. USDA Rural Development funding will be combined with a $304,900 Community Development Block Grant.

Neosho Rapids: $780,000 ($608,000 direct loan and $172,000 grant) The project will convert a three-cell lagoon system into a four-cell lagoon system for 274 city residents. The project will also consist of installing new force main, new collection lines, and improvements to a lift station. USDA Rural Development funding will be leveraged with a $400,000 Community Development Block Grant.

Onaga: $3,268,000 ($2,187,000 direct loan and $1,081,000 grant) Funding of this project, which will benefit a population of 704 residents, will be used for installation of new water lines, installation of fire hydrants, and construction of a water tower. USDA Rural Development funding will be complemented with a $400,000 Community Development Block Grant.

Oskaloosa: $4,150,000 ($3,199,000 direct loan and $951,000 grant) Funding of this project, which will benefit a population of 1165, will repair the city's sewer collection system by installing new replacement pipe in approximately 25% of the system and rehabilitating the balance of the lines in the system. The project will also consist of rehabilitating or replacing most of the manholes.

St. Paul: $285,500 (direct loan) This project, benefiting 646 residents, will replace the obsolete raw water intake structure and construct a pump house. Approximately 640 city residents will benefit from the project. USDA Rural Development funding will be leveraged with a $285,500 Community Development Block Grant.

Stockton: $4,867,700 ($4,046,000 direct loan and $821,700 grant) Funding of this project will benefit 1558 residents by replacing 37 blocks of water mains and broken or obsolete fire hydrants. USDA Rural Development funding will be combined with a $400,000 Community Development Block Grant.

Westmoreland: $373,300 ($236,000 direct loan and $137,300 grant) This project,

benefiting 631 rural residents, will construct a new ground storage tank and install about five miles of water lines within the city. USDA Rural Development funding will be combined with a $356,730 Community Development Block Grant.

During the announcement, State Director Banks thanked the Kansas Congressional Delegation for their continued support of the Agency's Water & Waste Disposal Program, along with the many other USDA Rural Development programs. "Over the past fifteen years alone, the Agency's Water & Waste Disposal Program has invested over $274 million towards the Sunflower State's economy, benefiting more than 234,000 rural Kansans. We should all thank our U.S. Senators and Representatives for supporting this benefit to the entire State," remarked Banks.

USDA Rural Development provides equity and technical assistance to finance and foster growth in homeownership, business development, and critical community and technology infrastructure in rural America. Since 2001, USDA Rural Development has delivered over $1.2 billion for Kansas covering all Agency programs, supporting well over $6 billion in future economic development for the Sunflower State.

For additional information regarding USDA Rural Development programs, interested parties may call the Agency's state headquarters at 785/271-2700 or log onto the state's USDA Rural Development Web site at: www.rurdev.usda.gov/ks

Giving small water systems a free check up

EPA is rolling out an important management tool for small drinking water and wastewater systems. At the National Rural Water Association Rally on April 21, Assistant Administrator for Water Ben Grumbles announced the availability of Check-Up Program for Small Systems (CUPSS). This user-friendly computer-based program assists owners and operators in developing and using plans for maintaining their systems and providing service to their customers. Administrator Johnson emphasized that CUPSS, with the support of our partners, will make a difference and help bridge the growing financial gap faced by small drinking water and wastewater systems as they repair, and replace infrastructure.

The program uses information provided on the system's assets, operation and maintenance activities and financial status to produce a prioritized asset inventory, financial reports and a customized asset management plan. Asset management programs support informed budget discussions, boost efficiency of the utility, and improve customer service by ensuring clean and safe water at competitive prices. CUPSS was developed by the Office of Water as part of the agency's Sustainable Infrastructure Initiative. The effort received input from a large stakeholder workgroup, including representatives from several states, the National Rural Water Association, the Rural Community Assistance Partnership, and Environmental Finance Centers.

The CUPSS program and all supporting materials are available for immediate download. Kits including the material will also be available in May. For more information on CUPSS, including program downloads and ordering information, visit www.epa.gov/cupss. EPA's newly updated Web site for small public water systems is available at www.epa.gov/safewater/smallsystems.

Farm Bill provides additional funds for USDA

The recently passed Farm Bill includes an extra $120,000,000 for USDA Grants/Loans; see www.ruralwater.org/backlog.pdf. This funding will go out as budget authority based upon each state's percent of backlog. The state USDA staff will determine the loan and grant split. USDA's planned obligation date is 9/4/08. Water will be a priority. USDA headquarters is currently collecting the list of potential projects. The new interest rate for USDA will apply; see www.ruralwater.org/iratesfarmbill.pdf.

Lyons increases water and sewer rates

With the completion of an all new $3.5 million city gas distribution system, city leaders in this county seat town of 1,800 households have turned their attention to the town's water and sewer infrastructure, according to a report recently in The Hutchinson News.

A study that showed 10 to 15 water line projects that need attention prompted the City Council to approve a water rate hike effective May 1.

"We have very little money set aside and we have to start replacing those line," Mayor Clancy Moses said. "Even with the increase we're looking at 2042 before we can complete them and we are still under-funded.

Sewer lines have aged, too. Like many cities, Lyons is facing the need to repair and maintain its infrastructure. The council has approved a water rate increase from 11 to 12 cents per 100 gallons for basic residential users. The cost of use in excess of 30,000 gallons per month will increase from the present 12 cents to 13 cents per 100 gallons. Users

will also pay a base rate for meters beginning at $12 a month for a one-inch meter and increasing to $34 per month for a four-inch meter.

Sewer rates will increase from $14.94 to $16 per month with a charge of 60 cents per month per thousand gallons of water.

Mayor Moses explained, "We looked at our water rates and they were very, very low compared to anyone else."

"Sewer improvements will be completed with trenchless technology. Water line projects are slated to begin within the next year," City Administrator John Sweet said

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Preserving municipal water supplies should be a priority with lawmakers

A recent meeting about the condition of the state's 24 federal reservoirs didn't produce any startling revelations, but the fact that state officials understand the need to start discussing this issue is an important step.

Forty or 50 years ago when new federal reservoirs were cropping up across Kansas, it seemed that many of our water supply issues were solved.

In addition to providing flood control and recreational opportunities, the new lakes provided nearby residents an inexpensive and reliable source of water.

Even though officials knew that the reservoirs were only expected to last 50 to 100 years, it was easy to see that as an issue we could worry about later.

Well, later has arrived.

As reservoirs like Perry Lake and Clinton Lake age, silt and sediment accumulate on the lake beds, limiting the amount of water that is stored there and providing a fertile environment for algae that can affect the taste and smell of the water.

Although we have had some dry spells, this area has been relatively fortunate in having sufficient rainfall to maintain the level of our lakes.

Serious droughts in other parts of the country, such as the Southeast, have caused severe drops in lake levels and spurred the need for water rationing.

On the flip side, runoff from that rainfall also has carried more sediment into our lakes, and officials say sail conservation efforts haven't been as successful as they had hoped in controlling the problem.

Although the timeline is uncertain, it is clear that action will be needed to preserve our federal lakes as a municipal water supply.

Raising the lake levels or dredging the lake beds are options, but either course would be expensive and take years to accomplish.

However, unless other options are found, it seems we have little choice. Even with increased emphasis on conservation, the demand for water is bound to grow. Ensuring a supply of clean, potable water is essential.

If it takes large sums of money to preserve that resource, we'll have to find it – which is why we should waste no time in setting a strategy and looking at ways to fund it.

Depending on Mother Nature, we may already be getting a late start; we can't afford to get further behind.

– Lawrence Journal-World

Tornadoes hit hard in Kansas communities

It's tornado season in Kansas and the spring of 2008 has been an active one. Tornadoes have struck hard in Jewell on Thursday, May 29 and in Chapman and Manhattan on June 11.

The city of Jewell's water storage tank was demolished. The photo shows the city's 50,000-gallon tank collapsed. The city of Jewell purchases its water supply from Mitchell RWD 3, which purchases from Mitchell RWD 2 at Glen Elder. Because of a Mitchell RWD 3 storage tank located just north of Jewell, the city has been able to maintain pressure and have an adequate supply for domestic use.

The storage tank above is an older 50,000-gallon model destroyed along with a booster pump station in Jewell, Kan. on Thursday evening, May 29. To the right of the tank wreckage is what remains of a dog kennel where 400 dogs were being housed. Volunteers were busy taking care of the kennel area where odors and fear of disease were causing a sense of urgency.

Mitchell RWD 3 operator Roy Arasmith lost his farmstead to the tornado. Roy reports that he has one shed and 'half a house' remaining. KRWA Techs Jim Jackson and Doug Guenther provided help at Jewell in restoring water service.

Damage at Chapman extensive

A devastating tornado hit Chapman, Kan. on Wednesday evening June 11. More than 70 homes were totally destroyed, as were schools, and three churches. Hundreds of other homes and business had extensive damage. Emergency Incident Commander Paul Froelich, who is City Superintendent at Enterprise, contacted KRWA early Thursday morning June 12 for help restoring water and wastewater operations.

Five KRWA staff members spent June 12 shutting off water meters to homes that were destroyed and also marking those and fire hydrants with steel stakes to try to help clean up crews avoid damaging more of the water system which often happens in the emergency, cleanup situations.

By late afternoon, city crews, KDHE's Marsha Carpenter and Traci Miles and KRWA staff had located most of the services and fire hydrants. With one well operating on a generator, the system was beginning to refill.

Seen in the images above is part of the damage to residential areas from the tornado that hit Chapman, Kan. on Wednesday night June 11. The tornado was reported to be six blocks wide and it tore up the town of 1,400 about 70 miles west of Topeka, damaging or destroying 60 percent of the town's buildings with a loss estimated of at least $20 million.