



**USDA-Rural Development**  
Alaska State Office  
800 West Evergreen Avenue, Suite 201  
Palmer, AK 99645-6539  
Phone: (907) 761-7705  
[www.rd.usda.gov/ak](http://www.rd.usda.gov/ak)

# News Release

Release No.: 08-30-16

**Contact:**

Larry Yerich, Public Information Coordinator  
(907) 271-2424, Ext. 125  
[lawrence.yerich@ak.usda.gov](mailto:lawrence.yerich@ak.usda.gov)

**EMBARGOED UNTIL 10 A.M. - 8-30-16**

## **USDA Awards \$27 Million in Water and Environmental Program Funding to Alaska**

**BETHEL**, Alaska – August 30, 2016 – U.S. Department of Agriculture-Rural Development Under Secretary Lisa Mensah today announced that several rural Alaska communities and organizations have been awarded a combined total of \$27 million in [Water and Environmental Programs](#) (WEP) loan and grant funding to address rural sanitation issues. The announcement was made from the conference room at the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta Regional Hospital, in Bethel, Alaska, and was accompanied by some of the recipients, including representatives from the Yukon Kuskokwim Health Corporation, the City of Bethel, the State of Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation, and others.

“USDA is improving the lives of people in rural Alaskan communities,” Mensah said. “Strengthening the ability to provide residents with safe and reliable water and sanitation services is at the core of our mission. It is our goal to assist residents of rural communities with necessary facilities and training, and encourage them to make similar investments to ensure efficient sanitation infrastructure is in place, and thereby work to build their economic base. Together, we can improve the quality of life for rural Alaskans and embrace conservation and environmental improvements to protect the land and water which makes this place so magnificent.”

“Many of these communities are located in rural areas of persistent poverty that USDA has targeted for special assistance through their [StrikeForce for Rural Growth and Opportunity Initiative](#),” stated USDA Rural Development Alaska State Director Jim Nordlund. “It is paramount for our agency to assist the needs of rural communities to upgrade and repair their water, wastewater and solid waste systems, but they often lack the resources to do so. In some cases the communities are committing to a loan that residents have the means to pay back. These investments help to bring basic services to these communities that most Americans take for granted.”

Highlighted USDA-RD WEP funding projects:

- **Yukon Kuskokwim Health Corporation**  
[Technical Assistance and Training grant](#) of \$125,000 to: (a) assist utilities with completion of a comprehensive self-assessment to identify strengths and challenges; (b) develop and finalize strategic plans to help systems improve outcomes in key management areas; (c) develop sound record keeping and reporting systems to support evidenced based decision-making by the local governing body and empower residents to

USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

participate in the decision-making process; (d) complete a capital improvement plan to improve sanitation conditions, meet regulatory compliance and protect public infrastructure. This is located in a [USDA StrikeForce area](#).

- **City of Bethel**

[Water and Waste Disposal loan](#) of \$913,000 and a grant of \$1,669,358 to design and construct improvements to the lagoon truck dumpsite/jetty and purchase three additional sewer collection trucks to increase collection capacity. This is located in a [USDA StrikeForce area](#).

- **City of Saint Mary's**

[Water and Waste Disposal loan](#) of \$204,000 and a grant of \$196,500 to provide the expansion of recovered heat to the city shop, which is an integral component or entry point of water utility system. This project is intended to substantially reduce the fuel usage and ultimately reduce the cost of water service to the consumers. Reducing the cost of providing clean water to community members will ensure continued sustainability and affordable access to clean water. This is located in a [USDA StrikeForce area](#).

The total of \$27,048,866 in obligated grants and loans across Alaska for water, sewer and solid waste projects, technical assistance and training, preliminary engineering and planning, and solid waste management are enumerated on the attached spreadsheet.

For more information on available USDA-RD program funding, please contact Tasha Deardorff, Director, West Area and Water and Environmental Programs at: (907) 271-2424, Ext. 118, or email [tasha.deardorff@ak.usda.gov](mailto:tasha.deardorff@ak.usda.gov).

Since 2009, USDA-Rural Development has invested more than \$2 billion in 226 rural Alaskan communities. These investments in housing, community facilities, business, energy, water and sewer, telecom and electric have helped to grow rural Alaska's economy and enhance the quality of life for its residents.

#