

September 2019



WestFAST News

682 East Vine Street / Suite 7 / Murray, UT 84107 / (801) 685-2555/ www.westernstateswater.org/westfast

Chair – Patrick Lambert; Federal Liaison – Deborah Lawler

USDA to Invest up to \$300 Million in Partner-Driven Conservation

NRCS 09/03/19. WASHINGTON – USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) announced today the launch of the updated Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP). Potential partners are encouraged to submit proposals that will improve the nation's water quality, combat drought, enhance soil health, support wildlife habitat and protect agricultural viability.

RCPP eligible partners include private industry, non-government organizations, Indian tribes, state and local governments, water districts and universities. Partners may request between \$250,000 and \$10 million in RCPP funding through this funding announcement. Leveraging of this NRCS funding is a key principle of RCPP; partners are expected to make value-added contributions to amplify the impact of RCPP funding.

“The new RCPP offers opportunities for partners and NRCS to develop and implement unique conservation solutions that engage farmers, ranchers and forest landowners,” NRCS Chief Matthew Lohr said. “A single RCPP project can include just about any Farm Bill conservation activity that NRCS is authorized to carry out. We’re really looking forward to what our partners across the Nation propose to do with these new flexibilities.”

The first iteration of RCPP, which was created originally by the 2014 Farm Bill, combined nearly \$1 billion in NRCS investments with close to \$2 billion in non-NRCS dollars to implement conservation practices across the Nation. There are currently 375 active RCPP projects that have engaged close to 2,000 partners. The 2018 Farm Bill made substantive changes to the program to make it more straightforward for partners and producers. Previously, in the 2014 Farm Bill, RCPP derived much of its funding from other NRCS conservation programs, such as the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). RCPP is now a stand-alone program with its own dedicated funding, simplifying rules for partners and producers. Additionally, the 2018 Farm Bill reduces the number of funding pools to make the submission and approval process easier.

Today’s announcement soliciting applications marks the first step in the implementation of the new RCPP. Later this fall, NRCS will publish a rule in the Federal Register that will establish the policies for the program and further outline the funding process. In addition, the RCPP Alternative Funding Arrangement provision will be implemented through a separate funding announcement following publication of the RCPP rule. Up to \$300 million is available for RCPP projects for fiscal 2019.

Successful RCPP projects provide innovative conservation solutions, leverage partner contributions, offer impactful and measurable

outcomes, and are implemented by capable partners. For example, in 2018, an RCPP project led by Audubon California and Western United Dairymen saved all of California's known tricolored blackbird colonies by using RCPP funding to compensate landowners for postponing harvests in fields taken over by blackbird colonies. In Wisconsin, the Milwaukee River Watershed Conservation Partnership is using RCPP to build the capacity of watershed stakeholders within the Milwaukee River watershed. This will help to conserve farmland, improve water and soil quality and deliver good food, all while giving local farmers a helping hand.

USDA is now accepting proposals for RCPP. Proposals are due December 3, 2019. For more information on applying, visit the RCPP webpage or view the Application for Program funding on [grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) offsite link image

[EPA Seeks Comment on New Policy Proposals to Facilitate Market-Based Opportunities to Improve Water Quality](#)

EPA 09/05/19. OXON HILL, Md. – Today, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Administrator Andrew Wheeler announced an important step to help promote the use of market-based approaches to efficiently and cost-effectively improve water quality across the nation. Speaking at the Chesapeake Bay Executive Council meeting, Administrator Wheeler announced several new policy proposals that could simplify and give more flexibility to states, tribes and stakeholders seeking to develop market-based programs or to generate or use nutrient reduction credits.

“EPA is proposing updates to our water quality trading policy that would help state and local partners take advantage of new technologies or develop market-based programs for improving water quality,” said EPA Administrator Andrew Wheeler. “Building on efforts already underway at

the state, local and tribal level, EPA is helping facilitate the use of innovative tools and technologies that will deliver critical water quality improvements at a lower cost.”

The action seeks comment on policy options related to one of the six market-based principles identified in EPA's February 6, 2019 Water Quality Trading Policy memo—encouraging simplicity and flexibility in implementing baseline concepts. The proposal seeks comment on approaches to clarify and provide flexibility for nonpoint sources to generate credits for use in water quality trading.

Under the Clean Water Act, water quality trading is an option for those seeking compliance with a discharge permit. Under trading programs, permitted facilities facing higher pollution control costs may be able to meet their regulatory obligations by purchasing environmentally equivalent (or superior) pollution reductions from other sources at lower cost. While EPA has long interpreted the Clean Water Act to allow for pollutant reductions from water quality trading, the practice has not been used to its fullest potential.

EPA invites the public to consider the policy options presented in today's notice and provide written comment on those options and others that may help promote market-based approaches to water quality improvements. EPA will host a public meeting to facilitate discussion on this important aspect of market-based programs, including water quality trading, that can be used to cost-effectively achieve water quality improvements.

For more information visit www.epa.gov/npdes/water-quality-trading.

Background

On Feb. 6, 2019, EPA released the Water Quality Trading Policy memo to modernize the agency's water quality trading policies to leverage emerging technologies and facilitate broader adoption of market-based programs. The memo identified five additional market-based principles that EPA

The WESTERN STATES FEDERAL AGENCY SUPPORT TEAM (WestFAST) is a collaboration between 12 Federal agencies with water management responsibilities in the West, including: BLM, DOD, EPA, FWS, NASA, NOAA, NPS, NRCS, Reclamation, USACE, USFS, and USGS. WestFAST was established to support the Western States Water Council and the Western Governors' Association in coordinating Federal efforts regarding water issues.

encourages policy makers and stakeholders to consider in developing market-based programs:

- States, tribes and stakeholders should consider implementing water quality trading and other market-based programs on a watershed scale.
- EPA encourages the use of adaptive strategies for implementing market-based programs.
- Water quality credits and offsets may be banked for future use.
- A single project may generate credits for multiple markets.
- Financing opportunities exist to assist with deployment of nonpoint land use practices.

The memo reiterates the agency’s support for water quality trading and other market-based programs to maximize pollutant reduction efforts and improve water quality. These actions are part of a larger collaboration with stakeholders across the country to better coordinate and focus federal resources on some of the nation’s most challenging water resource concerns, including addressing excess nutrients in waterways.

[EPA, U.S. Army Repealing 2015 Rule Defining “Waters of the United States” and Recodifying Familiar Definition](#)

EPA 09/12/19. WASHINGTON – At an event in Washington, D.C., U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Administrator Andrew Wheeler and Department of the Army Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works R.D. James announced that the agencies are repealing a 2015 rule that impermissibly expanded the definition of “waters of the United States” (WOTUS) under the Clean Water Act. The agencies are also recodifying the longstanding and familiar regulatory text that existed prior to the 2015 Rule—ending a regulatory patchwork that required implementing two competing Clean Water Act regulations, which has

created regulatory uncertainty across the United States.

“Today, EPA and the Department of the Army finalized a rule to repeal the previous administration’s overreach in the federal regulation of U.S. waters and recodify the longstanding and familiar regulatory text that previously existed,” said EPA Administrator Andrew Wheeler. “Today’s Step 1 action fulfills a key promise of President Trump and sets the stage for Step 2 – a new WOTUS definition that will provide greater regulatory certainty for farmers, landowners, home builders, and developers nationwide.”

“Today, Administrator Wheeler and I signed a final rule that repeals the 2015 Rule and restores the previous regulatory regime exactly how it existed prior to finalization of the 2015 Rule,” said R.D. James, Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works. “Before this final rule, a patchwork of regulations existed across the country as a result of various judicial decisions enjoining the 2015 Rule. This final rule reestablishes national consistency across the country by returning all jurisdictions to the longstanding regulatory framework that existed prior to the 2015 Rule, which is more familiar to the agencies, States, Tribes, local governments, regulated entities, and the public while the agencies engage in a second rulemaking to revise the definition of ‘waters of the United States.’”

Today’s rule is the first step—Step 1—in a two-step rulemaking process to define the scope of “waters of the United States” that are regulated under the Clean Water Act. Step 1 provides regulatory certainty as to the definition of “waters of the United States” following years of litigation surrounding the 2015 Rule. The two federal district courts that have reviewed the merits of the 2015 Rule found that the rule suffered from certain errors and issued orders remanding the 2015 Rule back to the agencies. Multiple other federal district courts have preliminarily enjoined the 2015 Rule pending a decision on the merits of the rule. In this action,

The WESTERN STATES FEDERAL AGENCY SUPPORT TEAM (WestFAST) is a collaboration between 12 Federal agencies with water management responsibilities in the West, including: BLM, DOD, EPA, FWS, NASA, NOAA, NPS, NRCS, Reclamation, USACE, USFS, and USGS. WestFAST was established to support the Western States Water Council and the Western Governors’ Association in coordinating Federal efforts regarding water issues.

EPA and the Army jointly conclude that multiple substantive and procedural errors warrant a repeal of the 2015 Rule. For example, the 2015 Rule:

- Did not implement the legal limits on the scope of the agencies' authority under the Clean Water Act as intended by Congress and reflected in Supreme Court cases.
- Failed to adequately recognize, preserve, and protect the primary responsibilities and rights of states to manage their own land and water resources.
- Approached the limits of the agencies' constitutional and statutory authority absent a clear statement from Congress.
- Suffered from certain procedural errors and a lack of adequate record support as it relates to the 2015 Rule's distance-based limitations.

With this final repeal, the agencies will implement the pre-2015 regulations, which are currently in place in more than half of the states, informed by applicable agency guidance documents and consistent with Supreme Court decisions and longstanding agency practice. The final rule takes effect 60 days after publication in the Federal Register.

In December 2018, EPA and the Army proposed a new definition—Step 2—that would clearly define where federal jurisdiction begins and ends in accordance with the Clean Water Act and Supreme Court precedent. In the proposal, the agencies provide a clear definition of the difference between federally regulated waterways and those waters that rightfully remain solely under state authority.

Additional information is available at:
<http://www.epa.gov/wotus-rule>.

Background

The final Step 1 rule follows President Trump's Executive Order 13778, "Restoring the Rule of Law, Federalism, and Economic Growth by

Reviewing the 'Waters of the United States' Rule." Section 1 of the Executive Order states that "[i]t is in the national interest to ensure that the Nation's navigable waters are kept free from pollution, while at the same time promoting economic growth, minimizing regulatory uncertainty, and showing due regard for the roles of Congress and the States under the Constitution." The Executive Order also directs the EPA and the Department of the Army to review the 2015 Rule for consistency with the policy outlined in Section 1 of the Order and to issue a proposed rule rescinding or revising the 2015 Rule as appropriate and consistent with law.

[Reclamation announces grant funding available to develop local water management solutions](#)

RECLAMATION 09/13/19. WASHINGTON – The Bureau of Reclamation released a grant funding opportunity for communities to establish a new watershed group, expand an existing group and complete restoration planning efforts. The Cooperative Watershed Management Program encourages diverse stakeholders to form local solutions to address their water management needs.

A watershed group is a self-sustaining, non-regulatory, consensus-based group that is composed of a diverse array of stakeholders. Membership in a watershed group may include, but is not limited to, private property owners, non-profit organizations, federal, state, or local agencies, and tribes.

"This program brings local stakeholders together to collaborate on improving water reliability and management in their community. The intention of this is to facilitate locally driven and consensus-based solutions to complex water issues," said Reclamation's Program Manager Robin Graber.

Eligible applicants for this grant opportunity must be located in the western United States or a U.S. Territory. Entities in Hawaii and Alaska are also eligible to apply. States, tribes, local and special

The WESTERN STATES FEDERAL AGENCY SUPPORT TEAM (WestFAST) is a collaboration between 12 Federal agencies with water management responsibilities in the West, including: BLM, DOD, EPA, FWS, NASA, NOAA, NPS, NRCS, Reclamation, USACE, USFS, and USGS. WestFAST was established to support the Western States Water Council and the Western Governors' Association in coordinating Federal efforts regarding water issues.

districts, local government entities, interstate organizations and non-profit organizations are eligible to apply to establish a new group. To expand a watershed management group, an existing watershed group or a participant in an existing watershed group is eligible to apply.

Up to \$100,000 in federal funding will be available, with no more \$50,000 available in each year of the two-year grant. A non-federal cost share is not required.

The funding opportunity is available at www.grants.gov by searching for opportunity number BOR-DO-19-F010. The application deadline for 2019 funding is Nov. 13, 2019.

The Cooperative Watershed Management Program is part of the WaterSMART Program. Through WaterSMART, Reclamation works cooperatively with states, tribes, and local entities as they plan and implement actions to increase water supply reliability through investments to modernize existing infrastructure and attention to local water conflicts. Visit www.usbr.gov/watersmart to learn more.

[USDA Invests in Water and Wastewater Infrastructure Improvements in 25 States](#)

USDA/RUS 09/23/19. WASHINGTON – U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Deputy Under Secretary of Rural Development Donald “DJ” LaVoy today announced that USDA is investing \$144 million to improve rural water infrastructure in 25 states (PDF, 163 KB).

“Modern and reliable water and wastewater infrastructure systems are foundational to economic growth and quality of life in rural communities,” LaVoy said. “Under the leadership of President Trump and Agriculture Secretary Perdue, USDA is committed to investing in this critical infrastructure, because when rural America thrives, all of America thrives.”

USDA is investing in 45 projects through the Water and Waste Disposal Loan and Grant program. Eligible applicants include rural cities and towns, and water districts. They can use the funds for drinking water, stormwater drainage and waste disposal systems in rural communities with 10,000 or fewer residents.

Below are examples of projects announced today:

- The town of Winfield, W. Va., is receiving an \$8.8 million loan to upgrade its wastewater treatment plant. The town will build a new headworks structure; improve mechanical systems; and improve grading, piping, storm drainage, sidewalks and fencing. This investment will benefit 1,055 residential users and 64 businesses.
- Tuscarawas County, Ohio, is receiving a \$2.2 million loan and a \$1.4 million grant to modernize the Wilkshire Hills water treatment facility, first constructed in the late 1970s. A third supply well will be added, and new pressure filtration equipment and master meters will be installed. These improvements will support current operations and accommodate future growth, including a planned expansion into the neighboring village of Bolivar.
- Maine’s Paris Utility District is receiving a \$189,000 loan to repair sewer lines along the Billings Bridge in South Paris. Replacing the 46-year-old, 12-inch lines will provide more reliable wastewater service to the system’s 1,216 users.

USDA is announcing investments today in Alabama, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Idaho, Iowa, Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Maine, Michigan, Missouri, Nebraska, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, North Dakota, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Virginia, Washington and West Virginia.

The WESTERN STATES FEDERAL AGENCY SUPPORT TEAM (WestFAST) is a collaboration between 12 Federal agencies with water management responsibilities in the West, including: BLM, DOD, EPA, FWS, NASA, NOAA, NPS, NRCS, Reclamation, USACE, USFS, and USGS. WestFAST was established to support the Western States Water Council and the Western Governors’ Association in coordinating Federal efforts regarding water issues.

USDA had \$2.9 billion available for Water and Environmental Program loans and grants at the beginning of fiscal year 2019. USDA will make additional funding announcements in coming weeks.

View the interactive RD Apply tool or contact one of USDA Rural Development's state or field offices for application or eligibility information.

In April 2017, President Donald J. Trump established the Interagency Task Force on Agriculture and Rural Prosperity to identify legislative, regulatory and policy changes that could promote agriculture and prosperity in rural communities. In January 2018, Secretary Perdue presented the Task Force's findings to President Trump. These findings included 31 recommendations to align the federal government with state, local and tribal governments to take advantage of opportunities that exist in rural America. Increasing investments in rural infrastructure is a key recommendation of the task force.

To view the report in its entirety, please view the Report to the President of the United States from the Task Force on Agriculture and Rural Prosperity (PDF, 5.4 MB). In addition, to view the categories of the recommendations, please view the Rural Prosperity infographic (PDF, 190 KB).

USDA Rural Development provides loans and grants to help expand economic opportunities and create jobs in rural areas. This assistance supports infrastructure improvements; business development; housing; community facilities such as schools, public safety and health care; and high-speed internet access in rural areas. For more information, visit www.rd.usda.gov.

[USDA Forest Service proposes changes to address land management challenges](#)

USFS 09/24/19. WASHINGTON – This week, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Forest Service will publish proposed changes to two regulations to implement new authorities the Forest Service received through the Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018—also known as the 2018 Farm Bill—and the 2018 Consolidated Appropriations Act. The legislation gives the USDA Forest Service direction and new tools to improve forest conditions, services, and safety on and around national forests and grasslands. The Forest Service is proposing several regulatory changes to use these new tools and authorities. The proposed regulations will be open for public comment for 60 days following their publication in the Federal Register.

“These new authorities help us face land management challenges by accelerating and broadening management efforts to work across boundaries” said Chief Vicki Christiansen. “These regulatory reforms represent a small part of the wealth of tools and authorities granted to us by the 2018 Farm Bill and the 2018 Consolidated Appropriations Act but will undoubtedly help us in our mission to improve the value and benefits of national forests.”

The proposed changes to the two rules are as follows:

-The proposed rule regarding Vegetation Management in Utility Corridors would establish options and incentives for more effective and collaborative vegetation management between the Forest Service and utilities. These utilities operate more than 3,000 transmission lines in and around national forests and grasslands. Management focus would be to remove dead and dying trees that threaten these transmission lines and power structures. Removing these hazards would reduce

The WESTERN STATES FEDERAL AGENCY SUPPORT TEAM (WestFAST) is a collaboration between 12 Federal agencies with water management responsibilities in the West, including: BLM, DOD, EPA, FWS, NASA, NOAA, NPS, NRCS, Reclamation, USACE, USFS, and USGS. WestFAST was established to support the Western States Water Council and the Western Governors' Association in coordinating Federal efforts regarding water issues.

fire risk as well as increase the reliability of energy delivered to more than 70 million American homes.

The proposed rule regarding Communication Sites Management aims to expedite application processes for individuals and companies that want to build communication sites on national forests and grasslands. These changes would help connect rural communities as well as improve customer service to those applying for and operating under special use permits for communication sites.

Communication sites on national forests and grasslands supports more than 10,000 wireless uses. These sites support critical communications, including emergency services, railroads, utility companies, and companies that provide personal communications services as well as television and radio broadcasts.

[EPA Announces Water Workforce Initiative to Help Recruit and Prepare the Next Generation of Clean Water Professionals](#)

EPA 09/24/19. WASHINGTON – Today, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) announced the Water Workforce Initiative to help cities and communities across the country that are facing critical staffing shortages for the operation and maintenance of essential drinking water and wastewater infrastructure. The goal of this new initiative is to provide federal leadership, collaborate with partners and increase public awareness to bolster interest in water sector careers—a field that is charged with ensuring that all Americans have access to clean and safe water.

“Ensuring all Americans have access to clean water is a top priority of the Trump Administration, and we can’t fulfill that goal without supporting the skilled workers who provide clean drinking water and safe wastewater treatment every day,” said EPA Administrator Andrew Wheeler. “We are launching the Water Workforce Initiative to help local

communities ensure they have enough highly trained workers to operate the water utilities of today and tomorrow.”

Approximately one-third of drinking water and wastewater operators in the U.S. will be eligible to retire in the next 10 years, a fact EPA Assistant Administrator for Water David Ross highlighted at an event last week in Salt Lake City. Due to several factors, including limited awareness of water careers, the sector often faces challenges with recruitment and retention of the skilled workers required in today’s high-tech water sector. Due to the scale of this challenge and the implications for environmental and public health protections, collaboration across federal, state, tribal and local governments as well as public utilities, the private sector, water sector associations, community groups and educational institutions is essential to developing an actionable Water Workforce Initiative.

“Building a dynamic and diverse water workforce for the 21st century is absolutely vital to continuing to deliver on our sector’s mission to protect public health and the environment,” said Water Environment Federation (WEF) President Tom Kunitz. “WEF is very grateful that EPA is collaborating with our organization and others to address critical workforce needs and believes the agency’s support will help advance current initiatives and better target federal efforts to the water sector.”

The Water Workforce Initiative builds on recent efforts to promote water careers. For example, EPA and the Department of Veterans Affairs signed a Memorandum of Understanding to help connect veterans with disabilities with career opportunities in the water sector. EPA also worked with the Department of Labor to support water operator apprenticeship programs.

“EPA looks forward to capturing innovative ideas and collaborative actions through our Water Workforce Initiative so that we can take meaningful

The WESTERN STATES FEDERAL AGENCY SUPPORT TEAM (WestFAST) is a collaboration between 12 Federal agencies with water management responsibilities in the West, including: BLM, DOD, EPA, FWS, NASA, NOAA, NPS, NRCS, Reclamation, USACE, USFS, and USGS. WestFAST was established to support the Western States Water Council and the Western Governors’ Association in coordinating Federal efforts regarding water issues.

steps to ensure we have a strong water sector workforce for generations to come,” said EPA Assistant Administrator for Water David Ross.

The Water Workforce Initiative was announced at the 92nd Annual Water Environment Federation Technical Exhibition and Conference in Chicago, Ill., where the regeneration and reinvigoration of the water sector workforce is a focus area for the conference. Following further engagement with its partners, the agency intends to release a draft Water Workforce Initiative for public comment this winter.

More information:

<https://www.epa.gov/sustainable-water-infrastructure/water-sector-workforce> and
<https://www.epa.gov/dwcapacity/learn-about-workforce-issues>.

[U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and NOAA Fisheries Update Effective Date of Section 7 Final Rule under the Endangered Species Act](#)

USF&WS 09/24/19. In its more than 45-year history, the Endangered Species Act (ESA) has led to countless conservation partnerships that have helped recover some of America’s most treasured animals and plants. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and NOAA Fisheries are publishing in the Federal Register a notice delaying the effective date of a final rule to revise portions of our regulations that implement section 7 of the ESA.

To ensure federal government actions are not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of listed species – or destroy or adversely modify their critical habitat – federal agencies must consult with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and NOAA Fisheries under Section 7 of the ESA. The revisions to the implementing regulations clarify the interagency consultation process and make it more efficient and consistent.

The revisions to the regulations clarify, interpret and implement portions of the ESA concerning interagency cooperation procedures.

Based on numerous informational webinars, meetings and briefings for internal staff and external audiences, including hundreds of state, federal, industry and other conservation partners, we have received many questions regarding implementation of the final rule.

Additional time is needed to adequately educate and train staff of the two agencies and all of the other affected federal agencies on these interagency implementing regulations.

The effective date of this final rule that published on August 27, 2019, at 84 FR 44976, is now delayed from September 26, 2019, to October 28, 2019.

For more information on the final rule, please visit: https://www.fws.gov/endangered/improving_ESA/regulation-revisions.html.

[USDA Invests in Community Facilities Improvements for 3.3 Million Rural Americans in 23 States](#)

USDA/RUS 09/30/19. WASHINGTON, Sept. 30, 2019 – U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Deputy Under Secretary for Rural Development Donald “DJ” LaVoy today announced that USDA is investing \$139 million in 56 projects (PDF, 189 KB) to improve community facilities and provide essential services for 3.3 million rural residents in 23 states.

“Modern, accessible and reliable community infrastructure, public safety facilities, schools and health facilities are essential components to strong and prosperous communities,” LaVoy said. “Under the leadership of President Trump and Agriculture Secretary Perdue, USDA is committed to being a strong partner in building and modernizing these

The WESTERN STATES FEDERAL AGENCY SUPPORT TEAM (WestFAST) is a collaboration between 12 Federal agencies with water management responsibilities in the West, including: BLM, DOD, EPA, FWS, NASA, NOAA, NPS, NRCS, Reclamation, USACE, USFS, and USGS. WestFAST was established to support the Western States Water Council and the Western Governors’ Association in coordinating Federal efforts regarding water issues.

facilities in rural America, because we believe that when rural America thrives, all of America thrives.”

USDA is making the investments through the Community Facilities Direct Loan Program. Interested parties should contact their USDA Rural Development state office for information about additional funding, application procedures and eligibility details. Also see the Community Facilities Direct Loan Program Guidance Book for Applicants (PDF, 669 KB), a detailed overview of the application process.

Here are a few examples of local investments:

- Ninnescah Valley Health Systems Inc. in Kingman, Kan., is receiving a \$4.9 million loan to renovate a 50-year-old critical access hospital and a medical arts building. A specialty clinic will be expanded, and the oncology department, admissions area and business office will be upgraded.

- The Foundation for Education Inc., in Denver, N.C., is receiving a \$39 million loan to expand and renovate the Lincoln Charter School. The school has been using mobile units to accommodate the increasing student population. USDA’s investment will provide an additional 29,450 square feet of permanent structures for middle and high school facilities and 53,335 square feet for elementary students. Additional upgrades include accessibility, safety and traffic flow improvements as well as renovations to the gymnasium.

- The Borough of Jim Thorpe, Pa., is receiving a \$2.2 million loan to convert Memorial Hall into a combined police station, administrative office and community center. The current facility has a single entrance through which all public, employee, police and criminal traffic flows. The new facility will have separate entrances that will greatly increase safety for visitors and employees.

More than 100 types of projects are eligible for Community Facilities program funding. Eligible applicants include municipalities, public bodies, nonprofit organizations and federally recognized

Native American tribes. Projects must be in rural areas with a population of 20,000 or less.

The investments announced today are in Alabama, Hawaii, Idaho, Illinois, Kansas, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, New Jersey, Nevada, New York, North Carolina, North Dakota, Ohio, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Utah and Virginia. USDA had \$2.8 billion available for Community Facilities direct loans and grants in fiscal year 2019. USDA will make additional funding announcements in coming weeks.

USDA Rural Development provides loans and grants to help expand economic opportunities and create jobs in rural areas. This assistance supports infrastructure improvements; business development; housing; community facilities such as schools, public safety and health care; and high-speed internet access in rural areas. For more information, visit www.rd.usda.gov.

In April 2017, President Donald J. Trump established the Interagency Task Force on Agriculture and Rural Prosperity to identify legislative, regulatory and policy changes that could promote agriculture and prosperity in rural communities. In January 2018, Secretary Perdue presented the Task Force’s findings to President Trump. These findings included 31 recommendations to align the federal government with state, local and tribal governments to take advantage of opportunities that exist in rural America. Increasing investments in rural infrastructure is a cornerstone recommendation of the task force.

To view the report in its entirety, please view the Report to the President of the United States from the Task Force on Agriculture and Rural Prosperity (PDF, 5.4 MB). In addition, to view the categories of the recommendations, please view the Rural Prosperity infographic (PDF, 190 KB).

The WESTERN STATES FEDERAL AGENCY SUPPORT TEAM (WestFAST) is a collaboration between 12 Federal agencies with water management responsibilities in the West, including: BLM, DOD, EPA, FWS, NASA, NOAA, NPS, NRCS, Reclamation, USACE, USFS, and USGS. WestFAST was established to support the Western States Water Council and the Western Governors’ Association in coordinating Federal efforts regarding water issues.

Upcoming Meetings

[WSWC Fall \(191st\) Meetings](#)

Breckenridge, CO
Beaver Run Resort & Conference Center
October 16-18, 2019

[Western Governors Association 2019 Winter Meeting](#)

Las Vegas, NV
December 13-14, 2019

[Western Governors Association 2020 Annual Meeting](#)

Medora, ND
June 29-July 2, 2020

Upcoming Events

Nothing to report.

Other Federal News

USGS 08/26/19. [New Tools for Flood Preparedness Available for Medina River Near Bandera, Texas](#)

NWS 09/01/19. [NWS Launches the Fall 2019 Safety Campaign](#)

NOAA 09/03/19. [U.S. Drought Monitor Update for September 3, 2019](#)

EPA 09/03/19. [U.S. EPA awards close to \\$8 million to protect and restore San Francisco Bay and its watersheds](#)

NPS 09/05/19. [Bear Glacier: Glacial Lake Outburst Flood](#)

RECLAMATION 09/05/19. [Reclamation selects 63 projects to receive \\$4.1 million to improve water efficiency and reliability](#)

NOAA 09/06/19. [Assessing the U.S. Climate in August 2019 – Second warmest summer for Alaska, 13th warmest August for U.S.](#)

NOAA 09/06/19. [January through August was wettest on record for U.S.](#)

BLM 09/09/19. [BLM Announces New District Manager in Spokane and Coeur d' Alene](#)

NPS 09/09/19. [Jeannine McElveen Selected as Superintendent of Petrified Forest National Park](#)

RECLAMATION 09/09/19. [Reclamation advances water delivery project for Navajo and Jicarilla Apache Nations](#)

USGS 09/09/19. [New Center Director at the Forest and Rangeland Ecosystem Science Center](#)

NOAA 09/10/19. [U.S. Drought Monitor Update for September 10, 2019](#)

RECLAMATION 09/10/19. [Reclamation and DWR to restore floodplain habitat for endangered salmon in the Yolo Bypass – Increased habitat for juveniles improves passage for salmon, sturgeon](#)

RECLAMATION 09/11/19. [Groundbreaking begins on Truckee River to improve cutthroat trout passage at Derby Dam](#)

NOAA 09/12/19. [U.S. Drought Monitor Update for September 12, 2017](#)

NPS 09/12/19. [Stuart West Selected as Superintendent of High Plains Group of Parks in Colorado and New Mexico](#)

USDOJ 09/12/19. [Secretary Bernhardt Announces \\$83.7 Million Construction Award to Continue Work on Navajo-Gallup Water Supply Project – Tribal and rural communities in northwestern New Mexico to receive clean and reliable water](#)

RECLAMATION 09/12/19. [Reclamation crews work to improve Rio Grande flows to Elephant Butte Reservoir](#)

NRCS 09/13/19. [USDA Awards \\$48 Million Public-Private Investment to Improve Critical Wetlands](#)

The WESTERN STATES FEDERAL AGENCY SUPPORT TEAM (WestFAST) is a collaboration between 12 Federal agencies with water management responsibilities in the West, including: BLM, DOD, EPA, FWS, NASA, NOAA, NPS, NRCS, Reclamation, USACE, USFS, and USGS. WestFAST was established to support the Western States Water Council and the Western Governors' Association in coordinating Federal efforts regarding water issues.

BLM 09/13/19. [BLM publishes Notice of Availability for the Final Environmental Impact Statement for the Marigold Mine – Mackay Optimization Project](#)

NPS 09/13/19. [Superintendent Mark Spier to Retire](#)

RECLAMATION 09/13/19. [Reclamation joins Aamodt Settlement parties to sign agreement and present Record of Decision](#)

RECLAMATION 09/13/19. [Reclamation announces grant funding available to develop local water management solutions](#)

EPA 09/13/19. [What They Are Saying | EPA, U.S. Army Repeal 2015 Rule Defining “Waters of the United States” | U.S. EPA News Releases | US EPA](#)

DOI 09/16/19. [Secretary Bernhardt Announces Over \\$100 Million in Public-Private Funding for Wetland Conservation Projects](#)

NOAA 09/17/19. [U.S. Drought Monitor Update for September 17, 2019](#)

RECLAMATION 09/17/19. [Pojoaque Basin regional water system moves toward construction](#)

RECLAMATION 09/17/19. [Groundbreaking begins on Truckee River to improve cutthroat trout passage at Derby Dam](#)

EPA 09/17/19. [EPA awards \\$500K to University of North Dakota to advance innovation and research on PFAS](#)

EPA 09/17/19. [EPA Awards over \\$1.3 million to Texas Universities to Research Potential Environmental Impacts in Waste Streams](#)

NOAA 09/18/19. [High Tide Bulletin: Fall 2019](#)

RECLAMATION 09/18/19. [Reclamation, TCID begin contract negotiations for Newlands Project operations and maintenance](#)

NIDIS 09/19/19. [Forecast-informed Reservoir Operations \(FIRO\): Overcoming Barriers and Realizing Benefits](#)

BLM 09/20/19. [BLM to begin tire removal project along Salmon River](#)

EPA 09/20/19. [EPA’s Campus RainWorks Challenge Invites Students to Design Innovative Infrastructure for Stormwater Management](#)

NASA 09/23/19. [2019 Arctic Sea Ice Minimum Tied for Second Lowest On Record](#)

RUS 09/23/19. [USDA Invests in Water and Wastewater Infrastructure Improvements in 25 States](#)

EPA 09/24/19. [In Case You Missed It: EPA Water Chief Says These People are Unsung Heroes Among Us](#)

USDOJ 09/24/19. [Secretary Bernhardt Inspects Key Water and Power Facility in Western Colorado](#)

USDOJ 09/24/19. [U.S. Senate Confirms Daniel Jorjani as Solicitor of the Department of the Interior](#)

WHITE HOUSE 09/24/19. [President Donald J. Trump Approves South Dakota Disaster Declaration](#)

RECLAMATION 09/25/19. [Reclamation invites public to open house discussing Leadville Mine Drainage Tunnel Plant redesign plans](#)

EPA 09/26/19. [EPA awards North Dakota Department of Environmental Quality \\$3.8 million to improve water quality and watershed health](#)

USDOJ 09/30/19. [Secretary Bernhardt Announces New Leadership – NPS & OSMRE](#)

RECLAMATION 09/30/19. [Lower American River partnership celebrates new habitat restoration project to protect salmon and steelhead](#)

EPA 09/30/19. [EPA awards Railroad Commission of Texas over \\$527,000 to protect groundwater](#)

EPA 09/30/19. [EPA Announces \\$15 Million in Grant Funding to Benefit Rural and Small Water Systems](#)

The WESTERN STATES FEDERAL AGENCY SUPPORT TEAM (WestFAST) is a collaboration between 12 Federal agencies with water management responsibilities in the West, including: BLM, DOD, EPA, FWS, NASA, NOAA, NPS, NRCS, Reclamation, USACE, USFS, and USGS. WestFAST was established to support the Western States Water Council and the Western Governors’ Association in coordinating Federal efforts regarding water issues.