



## Helping Rural Water Utilities

Low-interest loans, guaranteed loans and grants for eligible water and sewer utilities

**T**he Rural Development agency within the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA-RD) provides low-interest loans, guaranteed loans and grants to eligible water and sewer utilities to finance capital improvements. The agency also provides financing for community development, businesses, cooperatives, housing, telecommunications and electricity in rural areas.

Clare Pierson, associate editor for *Water & Wastes Digest*, recently spoke with the northwest Illinois division's Duane Smith, who has administered community development programs, including water and environmental programs, in the region since 1985.

**Clare Pierson:** What do you think the biggest challenge is in the everyday work that your agency performs?

**Duane Smith:** In general, our agency's challenge is to assist as many systems as possible, distribute our funds equitably throughout the state and provide grant funds where they are necessary to keep the rates affordable. As a specialist in the field, my challenges are to help applicants obtain the funding needed to have a successful project, explain why grant funding is limited and encourage them to proceed with an application even though the resulting water or sewer costs will be higher than many users might consider affordable.

Applicants would like to finance as much of their projects as possible with grants rather than loans, but we have only a dollar of grant funding available for every three dollars of loan funds. In addition, the proportion of grant funds is limited to 45% or 75%, depending on the median household income of the service area.

**Pierson:** Please discuss the various programs and offerings that the USDA-RD can provide to rural and small water systems.

**Smith:** Our direct loan and grant program provides the most funds for small water systems. In Illinois, we distributed more than \$39 million in low-cost loans and grants to them through this program last year. We fund public or nonprofit water and waste systems serving municipalities with fewer than 10,000 people and in unincorporated areas that are unable to finance a proposed project with their own resources or commercial credit. We also provide technical assistance to them throughout the process. That is particularly important for groups that have never before built, expanded or done a major repair to a water or sewer system.

**Pierson:** How do utilities apply for a loan or a grant? How does your department decide who gets one, and how long does it take to complete the entire loan application and distribution process?

**Smith:** We ask utilities to contact us if they are considering applying for our funding. They can call a local Rural Development office or find contact information online at [www.usda.gov/rus/water/states/usamap.htm](http://www.usda.gov/rus/water/states/usamap.htm). We ask potential customers to complete an initial application that includes financial history, an environmental report, user information and a preliminary engineering report. Complete applications from eligible applicants are given priority scores. More points are given for projects serving smaller communities, communities with low median household income and projects that address health and safety issues. Eligible applicants are then invited to develop a full application.

From initial application to completed project, it can take a year to several years, depending on the complexity of the project. Developing a new system understandably takes longer to complete than an expansion or renovation.

**Pierson:** Does the recent sluggish economy affect the work the USDA-RD performs on a daily basis—and if so, in what way?

**Smith:** Because safe water and environmental systems are a critical need, federal funding for [utilities] will be available and communities will need to correct faulty systems. The sluggish economy may affect utilities' attitudes about making improvements that could result in higher customer costs, but these projects are not short-term fixes. They are a fundamental part of a community's future. [www](#)

**Duane Smith is an area specialist for the USDA-RD in northwestern Illinois. Smith can be reached at 815.875.8732 or by e-mail at [duanesmith@il.usda.gov](mailto:duanesmith@il.usda.gov).**

**Clare Pierson is associate editor for *Water & Wastes Digest*. Pierson can be reached at 847.391.1012 or by e-mail at [cpierson@sgcmail.com](mailto:cpierson@sgcmail.com).**

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### California Adopts New Certification Requirements



Revised California Waterworks Standards now require certification for all drinking water treatment and distribution

products used by public water systems.

NSF/ANSI Standard 60 certification has been required in the California Waterworks Standards since 1994. California is the first state to require annual testing.

Certification of drinking water equipment to NSF/ANSI Standard 61 was not previously required in state regulations, although it has long been specified by many California water utilities. The new standards require equipment to be certified to Standard 61 by an ANSI-accredited organization.

### A.J. Antunes & Co. to Supply Olympic Water Systems



A.J. Antunes & Co. will install seven water filtration systems using multibore ultrafiltration membranes

in the Water Cube Building for the 2008 Beijing Olympics. The systems will produce bottled-quality drinking water.

A.J. Antunes & Co. also has filtration systems in the Beijing Capital Museum and the Industrial and Commercial Bank of China.

### Waters Corp. Offers Testing for Pharmaceuticals



Responding to recent findings of pharmaceuticals in U.S. drinking water, Waters Corp. will

offer qualified water authorities complimentary drinking water analysis for common pharmaceutical compounds.

Authorized officials from any U.S. water authority that serves more than 100,000 customers can submit a request for a complimentary test for common pharmaceutical compounds in their finished water by visiting [www.waters.com/h2o](http://www.waters.com/h2o).

Requests will only be honored from authorized water officials, and the results will be held in strict confidence.

### Submerged Anaerobic Membrane Bioreactors Project Wins Royal Society Award



A self-sustainable wastewater treatment process has been awarded the Brian Mercer Award for Innovation from the Royal Society.

"This advanced treatment system shows worldwide potential for long-term sustainability, allowing water reuse while offering energy self-sufficiency," said Frank Rogalla, engineering team leader at Black & Veatch.

The process achieves a high-quality effluent suitable for wastewater reuse with a positive net energy yield and very low sludge production.

### "Virtual Water" Innovator Awarded 2008 Stockholm Water Prize

Professor John Anthony Allan of King's College London and the School of Oriental and African Studies was named the 2008 Stockholm Water Prize Laureate.

In 1993, Allan introduced the concept of "virtual water," a measurement of the water embedded in the production of food and products. An average American consumes more than 1,585 gal of virtual water every day, more than triple the Chinese average.

The insights gained through Allan's work have redefined discourse in water policy and management. Allan is a leading expert on global water resources.

### P&G Awards Contract to World Water Works, Inc.



Procter & Gamble (P&G) recently awarded World Water Works, Inc., Oklahoma City, Okla., a contract

to supply two [www/Resource.com](http://www.Resource.com) RSP-13L dissolved air flotation (DAF) systems rated at 4,700 gal per minute each.

The units will be constructed of polypropylene using World Water Works, Inc. proprietary welding technology. They will feature the Nikuni dissolved air technology, used by P&G and others to upgrade existing DAFs to improve performance and reduce energy consumption.

### Halma Water Management Appoints New U.S. Business Development Director



Halma Water Management (HWM) has appointed Laurance Davies as business development director USA. Davies is

responsible for finding new opportunities to incorporate HWM's acoustic leak detection equipment, flow and pressure data loggers and flow measuring equipment into the water and wastewater industries.

### Godwin Pumps Announces Promotions



Godwin Pumps recently announced promotions within its North American operations.

Richmond, Va., Branch Manager Mark O'Sullivan has been promoted to district manager of the Richmond and Raleigh, N.C., locations.

Godwin's Upper Marlboro, Md., branch is now headed by Tom Vance.

Jennifer Saindon has been promoted to office manager of Godwin's Norwich, Conn., branch.

The Helena, Mont., branch announced the promotion of Pat Redmond to service manager. [www](#)

News compiled by Rebecca Wilhelm

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