

Investing in Rural Infrastructure



Lynne Hinrichsen has served as USDA Rural Development State Director in Kansas since November 2017.

Throughout Kansas this year, we have seen extreme drought, as well as flooding in several regions of the state. Water is our livelihood – from agriculture to manufacturing all economic sectors need water. A drought can impact a Public Wholesale Water Supply District’s ability to provide water to its customers, and a flood can damage a city’s aboveground and underground water and sewer infrastructure. Many rural Kansas communities are faced with aging water and wastewater infrastructure, and these events can put additional stress on the system.

According to the American Society of Civil Engineers Infrastructure Report Card, \$4.2 billion in drinking water infrastructure and \$3.76 billion in wastewater infrastructure is needed

in Kansas over the next 20 years. Unfortunately, many small and rural water systems lack access to affordable financing.

But there is hope for the future. In 2018, USDA Rural Development had more than \$4 billion in direct loans available to help rural communities build or upgrade water and wastewater infrastructure. This is a substantial increase from last year. So far this year in Kansas, we have announced 27 water and wastewater projects financed through the agency’s Water & Waste Disposal Loan & Grant Program totaling more than \$43 million. We have several more projects to announce that will be receiving funding.

I encourage rural community leaders and water district operators to apply for funding. USDA Rural Development employees are great resources to use during the application process, and we have technical assistance providers with water and waste expertise that can help complete rural communities’ applications. Water districts and rural communities can apply for USDA funds electronically using the interactive RDApply tool on the USDA Rural Development website (rd.usda.gov).

USDA Rural Development in Kansas has recently had a few changes in personnel. In September, Dan Fischer was hired as the Community Programs Director. Dan has been with the agency for 14 years. He began working for the agency in 2004 as an area specialist in the Manhattan office, and then moved to the Topeka office serving as a Community Programs state office

In 2018, USDA Rural Development had more than \$4 billion in direct loans available to help rural communities build or upgrade water and wastewater infrastructure. This is a substantial increase from last year.

USDA Rural Development Community Program Staff in Kansas

| Name | Area Served | Office | Phone | E-mail Address |
|------------------|--------------|--------|----------------------------|---------------------------|
| Dan Fischer | Statewide | Topeka | (785) 271-2737 | dan.fischer@usda.gov |
| David Barber | Northwest KS | Hays | (785) 628-3081, Ext 444 | david.barber@usda.gov |
| Austin Master | Northeast KS | Topeka | (785) 271-2731 | austin.masters@usda.gov |
| Sarah Hines | Northeast KS | Topeka | (785) 271-2760 | sarah.hines2@usda.gov |
| Michael Billings | Southeast KS | Iola | (620) 380-3109 | michael.billings@usda.gov |
| Chelsea Morris | Southwest KS | Newton | (316) 282-3474 | chelsea.morris@usda.gov |
| Tom Finger | Statewide | Newton | (316) 282-3476 | tom.finger@usda.gov |

specialist. Dan replaces Shàne Hastings, who is now the USDA Rural Development Regional Coordinator for the Community Facilities asset risk management team.

We have five Community Program specialists in Kansas dedicated to assisting customers with Water & Environmental and Community Facilities Program applications. In September, Sarah Hines joined the Community Programs staff, she had previously served as a USDA housing specialist in the Topeka office. Tom Finger in the Newton office will now be focusing on servicing the Community Programs portfolio.

As communities invest in infrastructure throughout the state, we look forward to partnering with them to help bring robust modern infrastructure to rural residents. In 2017, we helped more than 30,000 rural Kansans have access to improved water and wastewater infrastructure. With historic



Dan Fischer, Community Programs Director, USDA Rural Development.

funding from Congress in 2018, I know we have assisted more rural residents, and am looking forward to seeing the final numbers.

At USDA Rural Development we are focused on delivering efficient and effective customer service, while we improve the quality of life and create prosperity in rural communities. If you have ideas on how we can better serve you and your communities, don't hesitate to contact me at (785) 271-2777 or at lynne.hinrichsen@usda.gov.

Water districts and rural communities can apply for USDA funds electronically using the interactive RDApply tool on the USDA Rural Development website (rd.usda.gov).

WILSON & COMPANY

Providing clients with quality engineering services and innovative solutions that protect, enhance, re-use, store, and mitigate water.

Salina, Kansas
www.wilsonco.com
Kansas City, Missouri