

News Briefs

Grant Deadlines Approaching

USDA Rural Development is accepting applications for both the Value-Added Producer Grant (VAPG) Program and the Renewable Energy for America Program (REAP) Energy Audit and Renewable Energy Development Assistance Program (EA/REDA)

The deadline to submit paper applications for both programs is January 31, 2018. Electronic applications submitted through grants.gov are due January 24, 2018.

For additional information and assistance, please contact:

Eastern Washington

Roni Baer

veronica.baer@wa.usda.gov

Western Washington

Carlotta Donisi

carlotta.donisi@wa.usda.gov



WWW.RD.USDA.GOV/WA

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Contact Us:

www.rd.usda.gov/wa

Editor: Phil Eggman

philip.eggman@wa.usda.gov

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U.S. Department of Agriculture,
Director, Office of Adjudication,
1400 Independence Avenue, S.W.,
Washington D.C.
20250-9410

fax: (202) 690-7442

email: program.intake@usda.gov

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USDA Releases Agriculture and Rural Prosperity Task Force Report

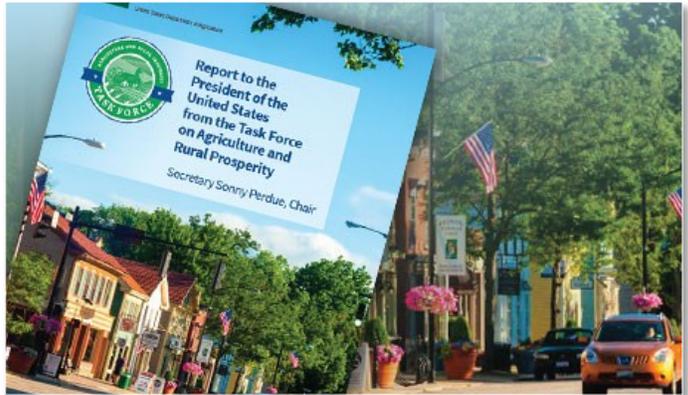
U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue presented the findings of the Interagency

Task Force on Agriculture and Rural Prosperity to President Donald Trump at the 2018 American Farm Bureau Annual Convention held in Nashville, TN, in early January.

President Trump signed an Executive Order on April 25, 2017, establishing the task force "to ensure the informed exercise of regulatory authority that impacts agriculture and rural communities."

As Secretary of Agriculture, Perdue served as the task force's chairman and identified over 100 recommendations to help improve life in rural America. The recommendations centered around -

- E-Connectivity,
- Quality of Life,



USDA Released the findings of the Interagency Task Force on Agriculture and Rural Prosperity to President Trump at the 2018 American Farm Bureau Convention.

- Rural Workforce,
- Technology,
- and Economic Development.

"Since his inauguration, President Trump has made agriculture and rural America a high priority," Secretary Perdue said. "On the day he swore me in to office, he tasked

me with chairing the Interagency Task Force on Agriculture and Rural Prosperity. With the voice of rural America leading the way, and in close collaboration with local, state, and tribal leaders, 22 federal agencies, offices, and executive depart-

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USDA Conducting Review of Single Family Housing Eligible Areas

USDA Rural Development is conducting a review of all areas under its jurisdiction to identify areas that no longer qualify as rural for housing programs.

The last rural area reviews were performed in 2012-2013 using the 2010 census data. This review, which is done every five years, will utilize the 2015 American Community Survey (ACS) data.

Based on the 2015 ACS data

and rural area guidance located in Handbook [HB-1-3550, Chapter 5](#), the rural eligibility designation is under review for the following communities in Washington State:

- Anacortes
- Arlington
- Bainbridge Island
- Battle Ground
- Benton
- Bonney Lake
- Camas
- Cheney
- Cottage Lake
- Elk Plain

- Enumclaw
- Ferndale
- Fort Lewis
- Frederickson
- Graham
- Grandview
- Kelso
- Lake Stevens
- Lake Tapps
- Lynden
- Maltby
- Maple Valley
- Monroe
- Moses Lake
- Mt Vernon
- Oak Harbor

See **Eligibility** Next Page

REAP Loan Guarantees

USDA Rural Development provides guaranteed loan financing and grant funding to agricultural producers and rural small businesses for renewable energy systems or to make energy efficiency improvements.

Agricultural producers with at least 50 percent of gross income coming from agricultural operations, and small businesses in eligible rural areas may apply. Agricultural producers may be in rural or non-rural areas.

For more information, please contact Randy Baird, Washington State Rural Development Energy Coordinator for Washington State by emailing him at randy.baird@wa.usda.gov.

MFH Update

USDA Rural Development's Multi-Family Housing Program reduced financial reporting requirements. This action was necessary to align USDA requirements with those of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) utilizing a risk-based threshold reporting which will reduce the burden on the borrower to produce multiple financial reports; focus on high-risk properties; and, reduce the financial cost of reporting on properties.

For more information, please refer to the [October 25, 2017 issue of the Federal Register](#).

or contact:

Mary Traxler, Program Director, Multi-Family Housing, Washington State Office
1835 Black Lake Blvd. SW, Suite B
Olympia, WA 98512

Email: mary.traxler@wa.usda.gov



Report

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ments accepted the challenge to make rural America great again. We traveled to 30 states, held two RV Tours covering over 2,200 miles, and most importantly, we listened to the people of rural America.

"While the task force worked tirelessly to identify solutions to the problems plaguing our rural communities, there is more work ahead," Purdue continued. "No doubt, rural America has struggled under burdensome regulations with no voice in Washington, but under President Trump's leader-



Rural Washington and Oregon are separated by the Columbia River.

ship, and with the work of this task force, we can turn that around and restore rural prosperity once and for all."

You can read the Rural Prosperity Task Force Report in its entirety on

the newly unveiled Rural Prosperity website, which includes a link for farmers, ranchers, foresters, and producers to submit comments and ideas on regulatory reform.

New Tool Available to Help Expand Access to Affordable Rural Housing

Lenders and homebuilders participating in the Single-Family Housing Guaranteed Loan Program now have a new tool to expand access to affordable rural housing and increase financing opportunities for low- to moderate-income applicants.

Combination construction-to-permanent loans, also called a "single close loan," allows approved lenders to close a new construction loan and receive a loan note guarantee before construction begins. Benefits include:



- Reduced risk for lenders.
- Reduced risk for builders.
- Increased economic activity.

USDA-approved lenders review homebuilders' qualifications and determine them eligible to construct new homes under the program. Funds may be used to construct and purchase single family

homes, including manufactured homes and eligible condominiums. This includes purchasing a lot, reasonable construction administrative costs, contingency reserves, inspection fees, builder's risk insurance, landscaping costs, and other authorized items.

For more information, please contact the Guaranteed Rural Housing Office by calling (360)704-7777 or email WA-GRH@wa.usda.gov.

Eligibility

Continued from previous page

- Port Orchard
- Prairie Ridge
- Pullman
- Sedro-Woolley
- Silverdale
- Snoqualmie
- Spanaway

- Sunnyside
- Tumwater
- Union Hill
- Vashon
- Walla Walla
- Washougal
- Wenatchee
- West Richland

The public shall have 90 days from the date of this public notice to submit comments

regarding the potential loss of eligibility for Rural Development housing programs. Comments should be sent to wa-sfh@wa.usda.gov.

For details, or questions about specific changes, please contact the Washington State Rural Development Housing Program staff at (360)704-7777.

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