



# THE GREAT LAKES RCAP Connection

The Voice of the Great Lakes Rural Community Assistance Program

## Agriculture Secretary Vilsack Celebrates USDA's 150th Year of Service, Highlights Ways the 'Every Day, Every Way' Department Works for American People

*Katherine Belcher, Kentucky USDA RD Office*

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack marked the 150th anniversary of the U.S. Department of Agriculture and highlighted the positive impact that USDA has on the life of Americans each day.

"For 150 years, USDA has supported our nation's economic prosperity and touched the lives of generations of Americans," said Vilsack. "I'm proud of the USDA employees who carry out President Lincoln's legacy throughout the country and around the world, making USDA a truly 'Every Day, Every Way' department. Whether improving domestic and international access to food, promoting nutrition and safety of our food supply, conserving our natural resources, advancing agricultural exports, or developing the rural economy, USDA helps Americans to lead better lives."

USDA Rural Development State Director Tom Fern of Kentucky, who also serves as Chairman of the state's Food and Agriculture Council, joined Governor Steve Beshear at the Capitol Rotunda on May 29 as the governor signed a proclamation recognizing the agency's historic anniversary. Fern was joined by other USDA representatives, including Farm Service Agency, Forest Service, Natural Resources Conservation Service, National Agricultural Statistics Service and Rural Utilities Service.

President Lincoln created USDA in 1862 and in his last address before Congress, called it the "People's Department." President Lincoln established USDA because he understood the importance of agriculture to America's success – and under the Obama Administration USDA has focused on advancing Lincoln's legacy. The Department has delivered record amounts of loan assistance; enrolled a record number of acres in conservation programs; provided food assistance to 1 in 4 Americans and helped to upgrade infrastructure, such as electric and broadband Internet service, for millions of people.



*Governor Steve Beshear Signing Proclamation.*

Throughout 2012, USDA will continue to recognize important events such as President Lincoln's signing of the Act to establish the Department of Agriculture on May, 15, 1862 and the July 2, 1862 signing of the Morrill Act to establish public land grant universities. Learn more about President Lincoln's agricultural legacy here (<http://www.nal.usda.gov/history-art-and-biography/biography/abraham-lincoln-and-agriculture>).

USDA works to support the tremendous growth and continued successes of American agriculture at home and abroad, drive economic growth, conduct groundbreaking research, conserve natural resources, promote healthy families and build stronger communities and a stronger nation. The Department will remain focused on rebuilding and revitalizing the nation's future while bolstering innovation and supporting economic growth for millions of American families.

In the years to come, USDA will continue to address the changing needs of agriculture and rural America, and will continue to help provide a safe, ample food supply for our nation and the world.

For more information on the 150th anniversary celebration, please visit [www.usda.gov/usda150](http://www.usda.gov/usda150). Additional information on USDA's work to strengthen the American economy can be found at [www.usda.gov/results](http://www.usda.gov/results).

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*Great Lakes RCAP assists rural communities in developing and maintaining community infrastructure and meeting other community development goals to improve quality of life.*

*Great Lakes RCAP is a member of the Rural Community Assistance Partnership. RCAP is a national network of regional non-profit organization that provide comprehensive, on-site technical assistance and training to help small, rural communities address their drinking water, wastewater, and other community development needs.*

## RCAP’s “Small Towns, BIG Futures” Conference in Ohio Held in Mid-August

On August 14th and 15th Ohio RCAP held its state-wide conference in Columbus. Titled “Small Towns, BIG Futures” the two day conference offered tracks focusing upon infrastructure, economic development, and management and leadership topics for community leaders. A wide array of topics were discussed from Fracking and Combined Sewer Overflows to Economic Gardening and Leadership Development.

Featured speakers included the Ohio Department of Development’s Director, Christiane Schmenk who spoke about the changes at the Department including Jobs Ohio, structure, and new programs available. The Auditor of State, Dave Yost, spoke about the savings communities can realize by conducting Performance Audits and how his office has been trying to push costs down through smarter and streamlined government – more information is available online at [skinnyohio.org](http://skinnyohio.org). In addition, Brian Cole (Author of Building Communities) spoke about his strategic planning process for economic development in communities.

Another highlight of the conference involved recognizing individuals for their contributions to rural Ohio. U.S. Senator Sherrod Brown received RCAP’s

Rural Community Champion award in recognition of his exceptional support of programs and policies designed to meet the needs of small communities, which recently included introducing language in the farm bill that would have a positive effect on small communities. John Ryan of Senator Brown’s staff accepted the award on behalf of the Senator, who provided a video to address the attendees on the importance of Ohio’s rural communities.

Karen Fabiano, Assistant Office Chief at the Ohio Department of Development and Mike Baker,



*John Ryan, Senator Brown’s office, receiving Rural Community Champion award from Deb Martin, RCAP Director*



*Christiane Schmenk, ODOD Director speaking at opening session*



*David Yost, State Auditor speaking at opening session*

# Small Towns, Big FUTURES

## Continued. . . RCAP “Small Towns, Big Futures”



*Karen Fabiano, ODOD receiving RCAP Hall of Fame award from Randy Hunt, RCAP*

Chief of the Ohio EPA’s Division of Drinking and Ground Water received RCAP Hall of Fame Awards for their many years of leadership in serving rural communities throughout Ohio.

Attendees of the conference included many county, city, village, and other local officials, engineering firms, non-profits, various entities and individuals involved in economic development and infrastructure, and even international participants. Two international delegations of eight Russians and ten Ukrainians also attended many of the sessions focusing on economic development as part of their exchange program in the U.S.



*Mike Baker, OEPA (left) receiving RCAP Hall of Fame award from John Rauch, RCAP*

Session handouts can be accessed on Ohio’s website at

[www.ohiorcap.org](http://www.ohiorcap.org)

## NOW IS A GOOD TIME TO CONSIDER A COMMUNITY FACILITIES IMPROVEMENT PROJECT

USDA Rural Development’s Community Facilities Program has been increased by over 1 billion for FY2012 making the total available \$1.3 billion. Last fiscal year (2011) the total amount available nationwide was only \$290,526 million.

Loans and grants are available to public entities, non-profits, and tribal governments to develop essential community facilities in rural towns and areas serving up to 20,000 in population. Examples of “essential” community facilities include libraries, child care centers, schools, municipal buildings, and firefighting equipment to Indian groups, nonprofit organizations, communities and local governments. Funds may be used to construct, enlarge, or improve community facilities for health care, public safety, and public services. This can include costs to acquire land needed for a facility, pay necessary professional fees, and purchase equipment required for operations.

Applicants located in small communities with low populations and incomes are eligible to receive a higher percentage of grants. The loan program can be set up two different ways - guaranteed or direct. Community Programs can guarantee loans made and services by various lenders including banks, savings and loans, and other financial institutions. The interest rate for Guaranteed loans is the lender’s

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## YOU STILL HAVE TIME FOR FREE MONEY

*Scott Shrahley, Ohio RCAP*

Have you thought about your business lighting? Typically, that answer is, “No.” You show up for work, turn on the lights, work hard all day, then turn off the lights and go home. You never give it a second thought. And, once a month, you get a bill from the power company, and just pay the amount due without thinking about your company’s hard earned dollars allocated for your utilities. Wouldn’t it be nice to reduce that electric bill? And, at the same time, wouldn’t it be nice to have the power company give you a little incentive money for being energy efficient? Better hurry up, though. The incentive money is set to disappear soon.

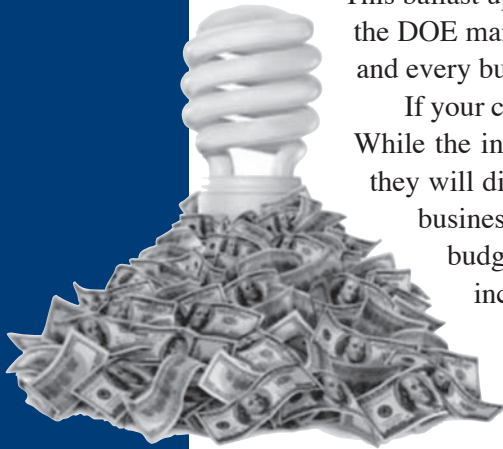
American Electric Power (AEP) of Ohio currently offers incentives based on energy efficiency for business owners. One of the most popular incentive programs is related to changing older fluorescent lighting fixtures (lamps and ballasts) with more efficient ones. It is common for a business to have lighting with inefficient fixtures that use magnetic ballasts and T12 lamps. With a simple upgrade, installing new electronic ballasts along with T8 lamps, a company will not only see a reduction in energy use, but also qualify for the AEP Ohio incentive money. But, why should you do this?

The United States Department of Energy (DOE) has realized the inefficiencies in the lighting industry, and has worked to improve the energy consumption related to lighting by establishing product efficiency guidelines. In July, 2010, lighting companies were prohibited from manufacturing new magnetic ballasts, leading the lighting industry to switching to the more efficient electronic ballasts.

This ballast upgrade typically results in 20-30% in energy reduction per fixture. Moreover, the DOE mandated the cessation of the manufacture of the T12 lamps. This impacts each and every business operating today.

If your company has not yet upgraded your lighting fixtures, it is only a matter of time. While the inventory of older, inefficient lighting materials may be available for a while, they will disappear. However, there is good news in this. By making the upgrade, your business will use less energy, and your electric bill will be decreased. Your utility budget will be softened, and your bottom line will get a boost. Do you need more incentive to do this today?

Well, since you asked, there are incentives for upgrading your lighting through AEP Ohio. From now until November 16, 2012, you can apply to receive an incentive of \$5 per lamp for the upgrade. For a four-lamp fixture, this can be up to \$20 per fixture. The incentives are scheduled to decrease, and then disappear, with the schedule as follows:



<i>Date</i>	<i>Incentive (T12 – T8 Upgrade)</i>
September 1 thru November 16, 2012	\$5 per lamp (per bulb)
November 17 thru June 30, 2013	\$3 per lamp
After July 1, 2013	No Incentive

Can you afford not to take advantage of this opportunity? Contact Ohio RCAP or AEP Ohio for assistance with this incentive program or with an energy audit for your business. There are additional opportunities to save through the use of pumps, motors, heating, cooling, office equipment, and more.

## Continued. . . Now is a Good Time to Consider

customary interest rate for similar projects. Direct loans can also be made through three different levels of interest rates, which are poverty, intermediate, and market. Eligibility for the different rates is determined by the median household income (MHI) of the area being served by the project. The poverty rate is currently 4.5% and the intermediate rate is set halfway between the market and poverty rates. The market rate is indexed to the eleventh bond buyers rate as determined by the U.S. Treasury and is updated quarterly.

For more information regarding Community Facilities funding visit [www.rurdev.usda.gov](http://www.rurdev.usda.gov) or contact your nearest Rural Development office.

## CISCO, ILLINOIS UNVEILS NEW WATER TOWER IN SUMMER, 2012

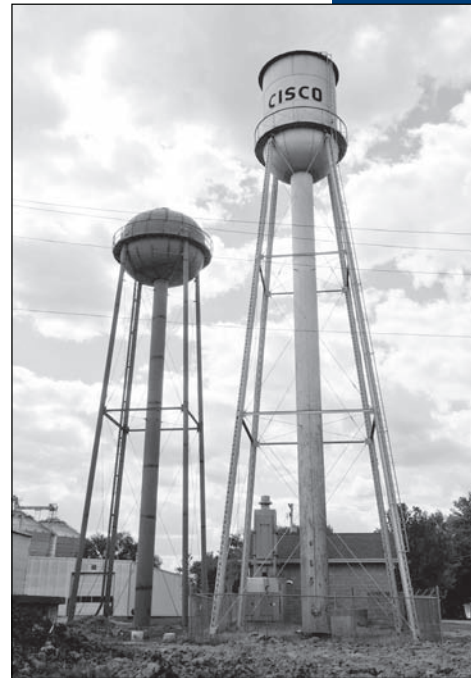
*Pat Gleason, Illinois RCAP*

In the last few years, popular culture has presented a number of movies and television shows depicting the now debunked ancient Mayan legend that the world was going to end in 2012. Luckily for the world, pop culture promoted a fantastic story proved wrong. Even luckier, the Village of Cisco, Illinois did not subscribe to that legend and undertook a long and arduous process with the aid of Illinois RCAP that will result in a brand new operating elevated storage tank. The residents of Cisco, Illinois are enjoying a new landmark that is viewable on their skyline. That landmark is a new 50,000 gallon elevated storage tank that replaces their aged and dilapidated former, nearly historic, tin man style water tower.

The former tower was under capacity and had shown signs of wear that were hazardous to the community drinking supply. Illinois RCAP, a program of the Illinois Association of Community Action Agencies, worked with the community starting in the spring of 2008, with the start of an income survey to determine the eligibility of the community for an Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity Community Development Assistance Grant (CDAP). These funds originate as Housing and Urban Development CDBG funds and are competitively applied for by many small communities in Illinois. The income survey determined that the community was, in fact eligible. In the spring of 2010, RCAP wrote a CDAP grant application for the community and in the fall of 2010 Cisco was awarded a grant to pay for the construction of the new elevated storage tank.

The community worked with various RCAP staff members throughout the process and prior to learning of their grant, received the results of a rate study performed by Illinois RCAP. This rate study determined that the community needed to raise their rates. RCAP also helped the community determine that all accounts on the system required new meters (the cash registers of any water system). With the increased revenues earned through the rate increase, Cisco is generating the revenue to sustain their water system well into the future.

Illinois RCAP will continue to work with the community as new boards are elected to ensure that the community board is diligent in their care of the water system. Illinois RCAP is also set to aid the community in locating funding in order to loop a handful of dead end lines within the distribution system. Regarding the assistance the village received from RCAP, Village President Paula Chumley states, "RCAP has been with us since the beginning of this project and while it was a lot of hard work put in by a number of village officials, none of this would have been possible without the help and hard work of Bud (Mason) and Pat (Gleason) from RCAP."



*Cisco Water Tower 3*





## GREAT LAKES RURAL COMMUNITY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

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Administering Agency: WSOS CAC Inc.  
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### Capacity Development Assistance Program for Small Systems in Kentucky

*Kim Padgett, Kentucky RCAP*

Seven small drinking water systems in Kentucky have been selected to receive financial assistance through the Capacity Development Assistance Program for Small Systems (CDAP). The CDAP program, which is in its pilot year, is a collaborative venture of the Kentucky Division of Water (DOW) and Kentucky RCAP.

“The CDAP program provides financial assistance to qualifying small drinking water systems to achieve and maintain sufficient Technical, Managerial and Financial (TMF) capacity in order to provide the public with safe drinking water,” said Jennifer Spradlin, Capacity Development Manager. “The Division of Water is pleased to provide assistance to many small drinking water systems that may otherwise struggle with State and Federal Regulations.”

The Kentucky Department for Environmental Protection’s DOW elected to utilize a small portion of their DWSRF set-aside funds for water systems to address deficiencies or recommendations mentioned in their triennial sanitary surveys. This funding is highly competitive and can only assist systems serving populations less than 10,000. Thirty-seven applicants requested \$805,319 of CDAP funds. The applications were ranked based upon several factors including, but not limited to, population, MHI, and willingness to enter into an Agreed Order with the cabinet.

The first round of funding was awarded to Bronston Water Association, Calhoun Water Works, Horse Cave Water Company, Monroe County Water District, Morgan County Water District, Wallins Water System (managed by Black Mountain Utility District), and Williamsburg Water Department for tank inspections, mapping of distribution assets, leak detection equipment, and leak detection plans.

Both DOW Capacity Development and Kentucky RCAP staff are devoted and passionate about helping the small water systems throughout the Commonwealth. Our field experiences confirm that limited operating budgets and staff make otherwise routine operation and maintenance items extremely difficult for small systems.

