

USDA announces assistance for coastal communities; priority for national scenic areas hit by wildfire

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U.S. Department of Agriculture Deputy Under Secretary for Rural Development Justin Maxson announced recently that USDA is making priority funding available for coastal National Scenic Areas that have been devastated by wildfires. National Scenic Areas are environmentally protected, federally designated locations that have outstanding natural and scenic value.

“Under the leadership of President Biden, Vice President Harris and Agriculture Secretary Vilsack, USDA is committed to getting help to rural communities that have been impacted by wildfires in many parts of the country,” Maxson said. “As severe weather and natural disasters continue to threaten the livelihoods of residents and businesses in rural America, we want the communities we serve to know that USDA stands ready to help.”

USDA is reserving \$2 million under the Rural Business Development Grants program for eligible projects in rural communities located on a river or ocean coastline. Priority is being given to National Scenic Areas impacted by wildfires.

Projects must be consistent with any USDA Rural Development state strategic plan, local and area-wide community and economic development strategic plans and support other economic development activities. Funds may be used to create business support centers, finance job training and support leadership development.

Eligible entities include rural coastal towns, communities, state agencies, authorities, nonprofits, federally recognized tribes, institutes of higher education and cooperatives.

Applications will be scored, reviewed and selected on a competitive basis. They must be submitted to the applicant's nearest USDA office by July 6, 2021, at 4:30 p.m. local time. Additional information is available on page 27365 of the May 20, 2021, Federal Register (PDF, 245 KB).

Under the Biden-Harris Administration, Rural Development provides loans and grants to help expand economic opportunities, create jobs and improve the quality of life for millions of Americans 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, Tribal and high-poverty areas. For more information, visit www.rd.usda.gov. If you'd like to subscribe to USDA Rural Development updates, visit our GovDelivery subscriber page

USDA touches the lives of all Americans each day in so many positive ways. In the Biden-Harris Administration, USDA is transforming America's food system with a greater focus on more resilient local and regional food production, fairer markets for all producers, ensuring access to safe, healthy and nutritious food in all communities, building new markets and streams of income for farmers and producers using climate smart food and forestry practices, making historic investments in infrastructure and clean energy capabilities in rural America, and committing to equity across the Department by removing systemic barriers and building a workforce more representative of America. To learn more, visit www.usda.gov.