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## CONNECTING THE ASSETS: NEW DIRECTION FOR RURAL AMERICA

Dynamic changes are underway at Rural Development (USDA). At a recent national policy meeting, Under Secretary Thomas C. Dorr (Rural Development) spoke of Rural Development as being one organization. Mr. Dorr stated that “As we reconnect our assets: our people, our program and our commitment, we build a stronger organization, one better prepared to meet the challenges of a changing Rural America.”

### VISION

To provide reasonable and cost-effective venture capital and technical assistance for rural America.

### MISSION

- Increase Economic Opportunity in Rural America
- Improve the Quality of Life in Rural America
- Be responsive to customer’s needs.

This means that USDA Rural Development will replace its “stove-pipe” mentality. The Agency will connect people and programs, ie, “connecting the assets.”

Rural Development policy will recognize the difference between agricultural policy and rural policy. A comprehensive approach to Rural Development will be achieved that is relevant to today’s market.

We, in New York State, have been practicing this philosophy. With the able assistance of your NY Rural Water Association, the NE Rural Community Assistance Program (NERCAP), the NYRWA/NERCAP Solid Waste Management Grant, and the Public Management and Finance Program (The Maxwell School of Syracuse University), which USDA Rural Development supports with grant funds, as well as the Tug Hill Commission, the NYS Revolving Loan Fund (DWSRF/CWSRF) and other proactive comprehensive Rural Development programs.

I am confident that we can do even better at developing the capacity in the most rural/neediest areas of our state by continuing to network, sharing information, by real collaboration and by using sound reasoning. The Governor’s Quality Community Program inspired the NYS Co-Funding Committee hosted by the NYS Environmental Facilities Corporation. This still developing collaboration provides better efficiency on project development and funding. You have seen the results.

The notion of a “Global Economy” was discussed at the Policy Meeting. What does this mean to you?

- Rural America must focus on competitive Advantages (natural resources, tourism, quality of life, etc.)
- Projects must be sustainable for long term survival

The outcome of the process must lead to stabilizing the rural middle class; to reducing poverty in the Rural Communities and to protecting the environment.

We will focus on the “impact” of our work, not merely the process. Our measures of success will be quantifiable, verifiable and auditable.

As I referenced earlier, our New York State Rural Development office has been practicing this philosophy and you have benefited from the results. Our water/wastewater program leads the nation in project volume. This Agency, along with the communities you represent, have created models in project financing that other states have replicated.

Can we do better? Of course! We must continue to communicate and share information. Mr. Dorr used the acronym TEAM: Together Everyone Achieves More. How true this is. Remember, in today's world, we are all "stakeholders" in Rural Development. Together we can transform the rural economy.

Keep up the good work!

I continue to look forward to your comments regarding USDA Rural Development's program. You may contact David A. Miller, P.E. at 315-477-6427 or email me at [david.miller@ny.usda.gov](mailto:david.miller@ny.usda.gov)