

Congressman Boucher joins Rural Retreat officials in breaking ground on the Town's federally funded water system rehabilitation project, which will bring more reliable water service to 1,000 businesses and residents. (August 16, 2010)

Groundbreaking on Rural Retreat Water System Improvements

Rural Retreat, Virginia

August 16, 2010

I am pleased to return to Rural Retreat today to join with you in breaking ground on a major rehabilitation of the Town's water system, which when completed will significantly improve water service for the more than 1,000 homes and businesses that rely on the Town's water system and will provide new opportunities for economic and residential development in the Town and the surrounding area in Wythe County.

Safe and reliable public water systems are essential to maintaining Southwest Virginia's excellent quality of life and are critical to achieving our economic development goals for the region. For these reasons, I work actively with local governments throughout the Ninth District to secure the federal funds necessary to construct new and improve existing public water systems.

Currently, the Town of Rural Retreat is struggling with an aging water system which has become costly to maintain. The water lines, some of which are more than 50 years old, have developed numerous leaks and are inadequate in size to accommodate future residential and commercial growth in many areas of the Town and in the surrounding areas outside the Town which are served by the Town's water system.

I have been working with Rural Retreat officials to secure the federal funds to address these problems, and our efforts have borne fruit. At my request, the U.S. Department of Agriculture through its Rural Development Agency has provided a total of $2.34 million to construct a major rehabilitation of the Town's water system, replacing major portions of the Town's aging water infrastructure. Of that total amount, the Rural Development Agency has provided a federal grant of $920,000 and a low-interest federal loan of $686,000 to replace the water lines that lie outside of the Town's limits. The Agency has provided a low-interest federal loan of $734,000 for the portion of the project within the town.

With the benefit of the federal funds, today the Town begins construction on a multi-phase project to upgrade its water system and better serve the more than 1000 households relying on the Town's water services.

As part of the project, the water lines outside the Town's limits that are part of the Town's system will be replaced and extended. Currently, 279 Wythe County households outside the Rural Retreat Town limits rely on the Town's water system, and when the project is completed, service can be extended to more Wythe County residents in the Rural Retreat area. In this part of the project, 22,000 feet of water lines will replace the existing aging infrastructure and extend water services. The new water lines will provide system loops to increase the reliability of the Town's water service.

Additionally, the water lines within the Town will be replaced with modern water lines. In this part of the project, more than 6,000 feet of water lines will be replaced with new lines and several existing valves will be replaced.

When completed, new water lines will provide water services to the homes and businesses on Cedar Spring Road, Lake Road, Myrtle Lane, Gienow Road, East Railroad Avenue, Cherry Street, West Lee Highway and Milk Plant Road. In addition, the Town's entire water system will provide more reliable water service.

Today's groundbreaking represents another significant step in our ongoing efforts to improve and expand access to public water service throughout Southwest Virginia.

I would like to take the opportunity of these remarks to recognize a number of individuals who have been instrumental in the success we celebrate today.

I want to thank Ellen Davis, State Director for the Rural Development Agency, and Travis Jackson, Area Director for the Rural Development Agency, as well as their excellent staff for their successful efforts to secure this funding.

Mayor Timothy Litz and the Rural Retreat Town Council also deserve our thanks today for their leadership in this project. I would also like to express my appreciation to Raymond Matney, Town Manager, for his efforts in securing this federal funding.

I would like to recognize Matthew Gross and the staff of Anderson & Associates for the outstanding assistance that they have provided to the Town of Rural Retreat in the planning of this project.

I want to thank David Barrett, Executive Director of the Mount Rogers Planning District Commission, and his excellent staff for the outstanding work they perform on behalf of the residents of this region.

Finally, I want to thank my Director for Community Development Derek Lyall for his excellent work in support of this project.

Today’s groundbreaking marks a major success for the Town of Rural Retreat. The Town’s residents will benefit from the provision of more reliable water service and the enhanced opportunity for residential and economic development. For the cooperation and successful work to bring this project to construction, I want to thank all here. And I want to offer special congratulations to the residents who will benefit from more reliable public water services.