

Reps. Harper & Matheson Stand Up for Rural and Small Communities

(Washington, DC) The country's largest community-based water organization - the National Rural Water Association (NRWA) is grateful to Representatives Gregg Harper (MS) and Jim Matheson (UT) for introducing legislation in Congress to authorize the most important element of the federal Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA) program for America. On April 7, 2011, Congressmen Harper and Matheson, introduced H.R. 1427, legislation to reauthorize the SDWA's small and rural community technical assistance provision.

Rural water associations' technical assistance and compliance training (authorized in the Safe Drinking Water Act) ensures that federal regulations don't overwhelm small and rural communities' resources. It also allows small communities lacking technical resources access to assistance necessary to improve and protect their water resources. Under this authorization rural water initiatives have been operating nationwide for the past three decades and have been the main source of compliance and assistance for small and rural communities to meet federal standards. Without these initiatives, effective implementation of the Safe Drinking Water Act and Clean Water Act in rural areas would be nearly impossible. Small communities want to ensure quality water and stay in compliance. Rural Water provides them the shared technical resources to do so.

Mike Keegan, Rural Water Analyst said, *"We are grateful for Congressmen Harper and Matheson's help and assistance to the county's over 50,000 small and rural communities that are trying to provide safe and clean water to their citizens every day. Drinking water and wastewater quality are two critical elements in a rural community's environment and its viability. Drinking water quality is one of the most pressing public health concerns in rural America and essential for long-term economic stability. The Congressmen's bill ensures that the most helpful and the most environmental beneficial initiatives are available to rural communities. This approach is truly unique in the federal effort to protect the environment because it accomplishes progressive environmental protection with the support of the local community. Small communities comprise more than 90 percent of the water supplies in the states. However, due to a lack of economies of scale, it is often more difficult for small towns to comply with federal rules, afford the latest technology, and have access to technical experts."*

The list of communities that were assisted last year is available in Rural Water's "2010 Report to Congress" on the internet at: www.ruralwater.org/report.

A copy of the legislation is available at: www.ruralwater.org/HR1427.pdf. Initial cosponsors on the legislation included Representatives: Jones (NC), McKinley (WV), Nunnelee (MS), Peterson (MN), Filner (CA), Blumenauer (OR), and Palazzo (MS).

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