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 to reauthorize the most important element of the federal Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA). Today, the Congressmen introduced H.R. 654, a bill to reauthorize the SDWA’s small and rural community technical assistance provision.

Rural water associations' technical assistance and compliance training (reauthorized in the bill) ensure that federal regulations don't overwhelm small and rural communities' resources. Rural water initiatives 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 and small communities would be impossible. Small communities want to ensure quality water and stay in compliance – and technical assistance initiatives provide the shared technical resources to do so.

Mike Keegan, NRWA 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. 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."

Mississippi Rural Water Association Executive Director Kirby Mayfield, "We are grateful for the Congressman’s support and that he spends the time with the small communities in his Congressional District to see what is working in providing the public with safe drinking water and keeping the environment clean. We thank Representative Harper for his help and assistance to the states over 1,200 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. We sincerely thank Congressman Harper for sponsoring H.R. 654, which will be helpful for all small communities in all the states.”

The list of communities that were assisted last year is available in Rural Water’s Report to Congress (www.ruralwater.org/report).