OES-Director

From: rhhoward@southernco.com%inter2 [rhhoward@southernco.com]
Sent: Thursday, September 08, 2005 5:52 PM
To: AGSEC
Subject: Question from USDA.gov-- null - 1126216338685

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Alabama Power Co. appreciates this opportunity to include comments in conjunction with the forum at Tuskegee on August 25. We also want to thank you, State Director Steve Pelham and other officials who convened these forums to receive input on the upcoming farm bill. The Department of Agriculture has asked how Federal rural and farm programs can provide effective assistance in rural areas? (Question 5). Alabama Power respectfully suggests that the USDA should continue and possibly increase its efforts to encourage/facilitate strategic planning and leadership development in rural areas. Working with Director Pelham and others in this State, Alabama Power has actively supported rural communities with strategic planning and leadership development efforts. Feedback from rural leaders indicate that these are important activities for rural areas to undertake at this time. One such program that Alabama Power and USDA have supported is the Alabama Communities of Excellence (www.alabamacommunitiesofexcellence.org) which seeks to focus the efforts of various interested groups in a select number of communities over a period of time. In these communities, volunteers from the various groups spend two to three years working on leadership development, strategic planning and implementation of the strategic plan developed by the rural community leaders. Although the program is new, it has shown great promise as a means for enabling rural communities to successfully address their own issues. Accordingly, we encourage USDA to continue to support rural community leadership development and strategic planning programs such as those embodied in the ACE program as a way to provide "effective assistance" in rural America.

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide input in to this very important issue and for you interest in our state.

Sincerely,
Bob Howard
Alabama Power Company
(205) 257-3880

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2005 SEP 13 P 2:12

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