



Letter No. 3656  
Friday, March 9, 2012  
Creative Media & Broadcast Center  
202-720-7079

## **BROADCASTERS LETTER**

#3656

Friday, March 9 2012

**(March 8)**

### **USDA AND INTERIOR ANNOUNCE WILDLIFE CONSERVATION EFFORTS TO SUPPORT LOCAL ECONOMIES AND PRESERVE FARM AND RANCH TRADITIONS**

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack and Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar announced a new \$33 million partnership with farmers, ranchers and forest landowners to use innovative approaches to restore and protect the habitats for wildlife, including seven at-risk species and other vulnerable game species. The [Working Lands for Wildlife](#) partnership follows last week's White House Conference on Conservation that spotlighted community-driven conservation efforts as part of President Obama's [America's Great Outdoors](#) Initiative.

"America's natural resources play a significant role in building a strong and vibrant economy," said Vilsack. "Agricultural lands with healthy and abundant wildlife habitat support strong incomes for our farmers and ranchers and provide great opportunities for enhancing hunting and fishing, outdoor recreation and wildlife viewing."

"This innovative partnership aligns our goals of empowering America's farmers and ranchers to continue working their lands, while furthering conservation of imperiled species, such as the greater sage grouse, through voluntary measures," Secretary Salazar said. "The Working Lands for Wildlife initiative will allow us to focus our resources where we can do the most good and will serve as a model for a more efficient, more effective, and more cooperative way to improve the health and diversity of working landscapes and strengthen local economies."

Under the strategy, Federal, state and local wildlife experts jointly identify at-risk species that would benefit from targeted habitat restoration investments on private lands. Using the best available science, the partners will prioritize restoration actions on a large regional scale to most cost effectively focus assistance. In return for voluntarily making habitat improvements on their lands, the Federal government will provide landowners with regulatory certainty that they will not be asked to take additional conservation actions.

USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and Interior's U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) will jointly prepare species recovery tools such as informal agreements, safe harbor agreements

and habitat conservation plans to provide regulatory certainty to landowners. The goal is to have these tools in place for all priority species by the end of the year. The seven species initially selected for this expanded campaign are: [greater sage-grouse](#), [New England cottontail](#), [bog turtle](#), [golden-winged warbler](#), [gopher tortoise](#), [lesser prairie-chicken](#) and the [Southwestern willow flycatcher](#).

Interested producers and landowners in targeted areas can enroll in the [Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program](#) (WHIP) on a continuous basis at their local [NRCS field office](#).

Contact: USDA Office of Communications (202) 720-4623

For More Story Info: [USDA Newsroom](#)

For Radio Story: [A New Wildlife Conservation Initiative](#)

[ACTUALITY: The Three Goals of New Wildlife Conservation Effort](#)

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## **USDA ANNOUNCES STEPS TO STREAMLINE ADMINISTRATION AND ENHANCE PROGRAM INTEGRITY IN THE NATIONAL SCHOOL LUNCH PROGRAM**

USDA's Food and Nutrition Service is collaborating with six states on new demonstration projects to connect eligible low-income children with free school meals automatically based on information received from Medicaid. The new process will allow for administrative efficiencies, reduce improper payments and streamline efforts to provide access to critical nutrition for kids across the nation.

"These demonstration projects are just the latest example of USDA's ongoing efforts to modernize our services and improve the lives of kids and their families," said Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack. "By relying upon existing data, we streamline operations, reduce payment errors and improve the efficiency of operations at the federal and local level. At the same time we are ensuring that we deliver healthy meals to more eligible kids so that they have access to the nutrition they need to learn and excel."

Alaska, Florida, Illinois, Kentucky, New York and Pennsylvania will begin their respective projects on July 1<sup>st</sup> for the school year 2012-2013. Kentucky and Pennsylvania plan to conduct statewide projects while the others will do so in select locations.

USDA recognizes its fundamental responsibility to promote effective program management and reduce and prevent improper payments. The department, in coordination with states and program operators in over 100,000 schools, is pursuing alternative business processes – such as direct certification for school meals based on participation in other means-tested programs – that can prevent these kinds of errors without compromising access for those truly in need.

Undersecretary Kevin Concannon underscored the importance of the projects. "Direct certification is a trifecta for schools, parents and children. Schools and parents benefit from reduced paperwork, and children in need get better access to healthy school meals," he said.

The passage of the Healthy Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 marks the first time that states have been allowed to test this new process, called direct certification, with Medicaid information. USDA selected the demonstration states through a competitive application process. Under the legislation, the areas selected to participate will be expanded in future years, which will allow additional states to participate.

USDA's Food and Nutrition Service will conduct a formal study to evaluate the effectiveness of the projects. The study – with the results published in reports to Congress in 2014 and 2015.

Contact: USDA Office of Communications (202) 720-4623

For More Story Info: [USDA Newsroom](#)

For Radio Story: [Findings of USDA Investigation into Snap Fraud](#)

[Latest Tools to Combat Snap Fraud](#)

[USDA IG Says SNAP Fraud Investigations Bring Measurable Results](#)

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## **OBAMA ADMINISTRATION ANNOUNCES \$15 MILLION MULTI-AGENCY CHALLENGE TO FOSTER JOB CREATION AND BUSINESS INNOVATION IN RURAL COMMUNITIES NATIONWIDE**

13 Federal agencies leverage resources to strengthen regional industry clusters and advance rural economies by awarding a \$15 million multi-agency Rural Jobs and Innovation Accelerator challenge to spur job creation and economic growth in distressed rural communities. This competition, which is being funded by the U.S. Department of Commerce's Economic Development Administration (EDA), the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), the Delta Regional Authority (DRA), and the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC), was designed by the Taskforce for the Advancement of Regional Innovation Clusters and the White House Rural Council.

The challenge is part of the President's "We Can't Wait" effort to strengthen the economy, create jobs and support business growth, particularly expanding opportunity for rural Americans and supporting new and innovative businesses nationwide.

The national effort will support rural partnerships by identifying and leveraging local assets and strengthening linkages to industry clusters. Strong industry clusters promote robust economic ecosystems and the development of a skilled workforce, both of which are critical to long-term regional success in rural areas. Last year's 20 challenge winners—both rural and urban public-private partnerships—generated millions in matching funds and their projects are expected to help create hundreds of new businesses and thousands of new jobs.

"We know that when rural America is growing, America as a whole is getting strong, and bringing everyone to the table creates more innovation and more jobs," said **U.S. Commerce Department Secretary John Bryson**. "This Rural Jobs Accelerator challenge aligns federal efforts and resources to build on the historic investments that have been made in rural America over the past three years. The contest will help determine where there is the greatest potential to maximize regional industrial strengths, helping businesses in rural areas create more jobs and support an economy that is built to last."

"The 'Rural Jobs Accelerator' will speed up job creation, new business start-ups and expansions by building regional economic systems in rural areas," said **U.S. Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack**. "USDA and our partners will work together to increase the power of local businesses, Tribes and officials to implement economic development strategies specially targeted to their regions."

The Rural Jobs Accelerator Challenge is expected to give out approximately 20 awards, depending on the number of eligible applications. To be eligible for an award, projects must benefit rural communities, but the applicant is not required to be located in a rural area. Nonprofits, higher education institutions, tribes and state and local governments can collaborate to apply for funding. Although businesses are not eligible to apply directly, applicants can also partner with the private sector on implementation.

Contact: Cleve Mesidor, DOC/EDA, (202) 277-7381, [cmesidor@doc.gov](mailto:cmesidor@doc.gov)  
Jay Fletcher, USDA, (202) 690-0498, [Jay.Fletcher@wdc.usda.gov](mailto:Jay.Fletcher@wdc.usda.gov)  
Amanda Richardson, DRA, (501) 912-5722, [arichardson@dra.gov](mailto:arichardson@dra.gov)  
Louis Segesvary, ARC, (202) 884-7771, [lsegsvary@arc.gov](mailto:lsegsvary@arc.gov)  
For More Storey Info: [USDA Newsroom](#)

**(March 7)**

**USDA FUNDING TO IMPROVE RURAL ELECTRIC INFRASTRUCTURE  
AND MAKE THE 'GRID' MORE RELIABLE AND EFFICIENT**

Nearly \$25 Million in Smart Grid Technology projects to be included in USDA's rural electric cooperative utilities program effort. Eight states will receive funding to install smart grid technologies and make improvements to generation and transmission facilities. "President Obama is taking an all-of-the-above approach to meet our energy challenges by developing new domestic energy sources, expanding oil and gas production, and reducing our overall reliance on oil through fuel efficiencies and renewable energy development," said Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack. "By supporting electrical system improvements, the Obama Administration is not only improving the reliability of America's electric grid, it's creating jobs and promoting business expansion. These investments in smart grid technologies give rural electric utilities and their consumers one more tool to better manage their use of electricity, improve efficiency, increase reliability of the electric grid and lower overall costs."

In less than a year, USDA Rural Development is more than halfway toward reaching Secretary Vilsack's goal to fund more than \$250 million for Smart Grid technologies. Today's announcement includes support for about \$25 million in Smart Grid technologies. For a list of rural utilities that will receive USDA funding go [here](#).

Contact: USDA Office of Communications (202) 720-4623  
For More Story Info: [USDA Newsroom](#)

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**A SENATE PANEL TAKES A LOOK  
AT LOCAL FOOD SYSTEMS**

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack tells the Senate Agriculture Committee what he sees as the three responsibilities that USDA has in terms of helping local food systems.

For Radio Story: [Senate Panel Takes a Look at Local Food Systems](#)  
[ACTUALITY: Three USDA Responsibilities to Help Local Food Systems](#)

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**GIVING THANKS TO THE COUNTRY'S  
AG PRODUCERS ON NATIONAL AG DAY**

The Agriculture Secretary says National Ag Day Thursday is a time to reflect on the importance of agriculture in all facets of our daily lives.

For Radio Story: [Thanking the Country's Ag Producers on National Ag Day](#)

**(March 6)**

**USDA PROVIDES DISASTER RECOVERY  
ASSISTANCE IN 20 STATES**

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack announced \$19.7 million of financial and technical assistance to help communities rebuild and repair damages caused by flooding, drought and other natural disasters. Funds are made available through the Natural Resources Conservation Service's (NRCS) Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) program. "A strong safety net is important to the long-term success of American communities," Vilsack said. "To keep America's lands safe for the public, and ensure continued

strong growth in the rural economy, USDA responds to disasters across the country, ranging from record floods and droughts to tornadoes, with direct support through disaster assistance programs."

Earlier this year, NRCS distributed \$215 million to 26 states to assist in disaster recovery projects around the nation. The \$19.7 million announced today will meet additional needs expressed by states. Congress set up EWP to respond to emergencies created by natural disasters. In this year's appropriations, Congress provided funds to put towards wait-listed projects from presidentially or locally declared disasters that occurred during 2011.

Disaster recovery projects are administered by NRCS in partnership with local sponsors, often municipal or county governments. NRCS pays up to 75 percent of the construction costs while the remaining 25 percent is obtained by local sponsors. When funding is dedicated to a project, contracts for construction work are awarded to local companies, spurring job creation.

Typical projects funded under EWP can include removing debris clogging waterways, protecting eroded stream banks, reseeding burned or eroded areas, and in some cases, purchasing floodplain easements on eligible land. To learn more about EWP or see a list of the states and their funding allocations, visit our [webpage](#).

Contact: USDA Office of Communications (202) 720-4623  
For More Story Info: [USDA Newsroom](#)

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## **THE NATIONAL CONVERSATION ON LOCAL AND REGIONAL FOOD SYSTEMS TAKES TO TWITTER AT #KYF2**

Agriculture Deputy Secretary Kathleen Merrigan used Twitter to continue the national conversation about USDA's support for local and regional food projects and how they offer economic opportunities for local farmers, ranchers and food entrepreneurs while growing the number of farmers, expanding healthy food access and building strong infrastructure systems. Earlier in the week USDA [launched](#) the Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food [Compass](#), a digital narrative with stories, pictures and video about USDA's support for local and regional food systems, and [interactive map](#) with datasets displaying the various ways and places where the initiative has made an impact.

Contact: USDA Office of Communications (202) 720-4623  
For More Story Info: [USDA Newsroom](#)  
For Radio Story: [Tweeting Up the Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food Compass](#)  
[A USDA Grant Helps a Young Farmer with His Tomato Crop](#)

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## **THREE PRIORITY AREAS IN FOREST SERVICE FY13 PROPOSED BUDGET**

The Chief of the US Forest Service explained priorities for funding requests for the upcoming fiscal year to a Senate Committee

For Radio Story: [Three Priority Areas in Forest Service FY13 Proposed Budget](#)

**(March 5)**

**THE WHITE HOUSE SETS THE STAGE FOR  
A NEW ERA OF CONSERVATION**

Community-driven conservation and outdoor recreation initiatives are powering the economy and helping to protect healthy lands, water and wildlife across the country. Members of President Obama's Cabinet convened for the White House Conference on Conservation to engage directly with conservation leaders from all 50 states to strengthen partnerships and identify next steps in advancing community-driven conservation and outdoor recreation initiatives that are building strong local economies and healthy lands, waters and wildlife across America.

Entitled *Growing America's Outdoor Heritage and Economy*, the conference was a part of the President's America's Great Outdoors initiative to establish a community-based, 21st century agenda for conservation, recreation, and reconnecting Americans to the outdoors. The event brought together hundreds of boaters, hunters, anglers, farmers, ranchers, land conservationists, historic preservationists, outdoor recreationists, small business owners, local governments, tribal leaders and other key stakeholders from around the nation to meet with Obama administration officials to discuss issues surrounding conservation in urban cities and rural communities.

Contact: (DOI) 202-208-6416 (CEQ) 202-456-6998 (EPA) 202-564-6794 (USDA) 202-720-4623 (DOA) 703-614-3992

For More Story Info: [USDA Newsroom](#)

For Radio Story: [Preserving the Country's Grasslands and Wetlands](#)

[ACTUALITY: The Value of the Conservation Reserve Program](#)

[ACTUALITY: Ensuring All Conservation Players Have an Equal Voice](#)

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**THERE'S GROWING IMPORTANCE OF  
B.R.I.C. NATIONS ON U.S. AG TRADE**

Four developing economies are posed to have a major impact on US and global ag trade in the coming years.

For Radio Story: [The Growing Importance of B.R.I.C. Nations on U.S. Ag Trade Latest Round of TPP Negotiations Taking Place](#)

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**POULTRY INSPECTION PROPOSAL AND  
WORKER SAFETY CONCERNS**

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack says his department is addressing the safety concerns being voiced by poultry plant inspectors concerning the USDA proposal that would allow plants to speed up production lines.

For Radio Story: [Poultry Inspection Proposal and Worker Safety Concerns U.S. Requests WTO Consultations with India](#)

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US Forest Service's Fort Valley Experimental Forest first in the nation to discover the affects of a changing climate on pines (**FS**)  
Earth Team Volunteers, Conservationists Bring Tree Lessons to Mississippi Classrooms (**NRCS**)  
Nebraska (**RD**)  
FAS Support Key to Nebraska Export Management Company's Success (**FAS**)  
Salsa, Sabor y Salud: MiPlato Celebrates the Strengths of Latino Traditions (**Faith Based**)  
Entries Promoting Ag Day and Census "Share Your Story" feature.  
Importance of the Rural Energy for America Program  
USDA-Land O'Lakes Partnership Helps Rebuild Dairy Herds, Raise Farmers' Incomes in Mozambique  
USDA Holds Cross-Departmental Discussion to Encourage Mentoring and STEM Literacy  
Science Tuesday: New Farmers Benefit from Ag Census (**REE**)  
USDA, Other Agencies, Join Forces to Improve Affordable Rental Housing Programs in Wisconsin (**RD**)  
Welcome to National Nutrition Month! And start marking your calendar! (**CFBNP**)  
Tuskegee Airman candidly shares his trials and tribulations (**FS**)  
US Forest Service hosts, trains, and engages Bhutanese foresters (**FS**)

## FROM OUR RADIO SERVICE

*(Feature Line-Up Subject To Change Prior to Update On March 13)*

**AGRICULTURE USA CD # 11.12** – Agri-Business Development Teams from National Guard Units from across the US are helping Afghan citizens rebuild their agricultural sector. Rod Bain looks at the efforts of one such unit in this edition of "Agriculture USA".

**CONSUMER TIME CD # 11.12** – Bringing More Locally Grown Foods To Our Dinner Table, The Battle Against SNAP Fraud, Lessons From A Broken Weather Forecast, Don't' Buy Yard And Garden Plants On A Whim, Some No Help Cost For Doing Your Taxes.

**AG UPDATE CD # 11.12** – Latest From USDA March Crop Reports, Helping Farmers To Diversify And Grow For Local Markets, The Growing Importance Of The BRIC Nations, Infrastructure Key To Improving Afghan Agriculture, Using A Hybrid Mulching Technique.

**UPCOMING ON THE USDA RADIO NEWSLINE** – March 3 – Crop Weather Report (WAOB), Wheat and Feed Grain Outlooks (ERS – WAOB) March 15 – Livestock, Dairy, And Poultry Outlooks (ERS – WAOB).

**These are USDA reports we know about in advance. The USDA Radio Newsline carries many stories every day that are not listed in this lineup.**

**USDA Radio Newsline, 202-720-6776, 5:00pm ET**

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For questions about USDA Radio's Features, fax name, station, and address to 202-690-2165.

[USDA Radio and TV Programming](#)

## **FROM OUR TELEVISION SERVICE**

### **White House Conservation Conference**

**FTP Download instructions:**

The host: <ftp://ocbmtcmedia.download.akamai.com>

User name: USDANews

Password: Newscontent1

Filename for **TV Feature**: WH Conservation

The new file is in QuickTime Movie (H.264), MPEG 4, MPEG2 and HDV

**YouTube:** [White House Conservation Conference](#)

If you have problems or suggestions, the email contact is [Bob.Ellison@USDA.gov](mailto:Bob.Ellison@USDA.gov)

Also, use this free ftp client if you have problems

<http://filezilla-project.org/download.php?type+client>

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### **Gary Black 2012 Census of Agriculture**

Public Service Announcement, Gary Black, Commissioner,  
Georgia Department of Agriculture

**YouTube:** [Gary Black 2012 Census of Agriculture](#)

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### **Karen Ross 2012 Census of Agriculture**

Public Service Announcement, Karen Ross, Secretary,  
California Department of Food and Agriculture

**YouTube:** [Karen Ross 2012 Census of Agriculture](#)

## OFF MIKE



**NEW MEMBER SERVICES DIRECTOR FOR NAFB** – He's **Aaron Corbet** [aaron@nafb.com](mailto:aaron@nafb.com) (NAFB - Platte City, Missouri <http://www.nafb.com>). **Corbet** is a graduate of Missouri Western State University with a degree in Business Administration. He's also a member of the Missouri Army National Guard and is a Human Resources Specialist. **Corbet's** NAFB duties include working with the association's annual convention, Trade Talk and Washington Watch. This is in addition to assisting the Foundation with ongoing projects and plans for making member visits throughout the year. **Corbet** and his wife, Alisha, have a two-month-old baby girl, Adalynn Joan.



**COVERING THE OKLAHOMA AG LEADERSHIP PROGRAM** – **Ron Hays** (Oklahoma Farm Report - Oklahoma City, Oklahoma [OklahomaFarmReport](http://www.oklahomafarmreport.com)) is recently arrived back from a tour of Scotland and Ireland with Class XV of the Oklahoma Ag Leadership Program. "I am Chairman of the Advisory Council to OSU on the program and my wife and I traveled with them to help publicize the program- did radio daily from the road and did web stories and took lots of pictures we shared on Flickr."

**Hays** explains, "OALP is a two year leadership development program for young adults in agriculture from the ages of 25 to around 45." The capstone experience is travel overseas. This adventure included Scotland and Ireland. "We were on beef and dairy cattle farms, sheep farms, a vegetable farm, and an apple farm- plus research facilities and even a chance to kiss the Blarney Stone- which we did!"



(Ron and Jan Hays along the lane to see the dairy farm of Tim O'Leary)  
**OALP visits "Killoran," the farm of Tim and Katherine O'Leary located in the County of Cork, Ireland. O'Leary runs a dairy farm with Holstein Friesian and Cross Bred Cows.**

In addition Hays did Twitter updates and did a TV report via video Skype on KWTN News9 in Oklahoma City.



**RED RIVER FARM NETWORK'S COMMODITY CLASSIC HIGHLIGHTS** – **Mike Hergert and Don Wick** (Red River Farm Network - Grand Forks, North Dakota [www.rrfn.com](http://www.rrfn.com)) were among the record 148 members of the media covering Commodity Classic last week in Nashville, Tennessee where overall attendance is said to have topped 6,000. **Hergert** says one highlight was "the election of Erik Younggren, from Hallock, Minnesota, as President of the National Association of Wheat Growers. Younggren is the first Minnesota farmer to serve as president of NAWG since Don Loeslie, in 1983." Other NAWG officers elected include Bing Von Bergen, from Montana, first vice president; Paul Penner, from Kansas, second vice president; Brett Blankenship, from Washington, secretary-treasurer; and Wayne Hurst, from Idaho,

immediate past president. North Dakota Grain Growers Association past president Terry Weckerly was elected to NAWG's budget committee.

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**Broadcasters if you have any humanitarian or community service events you'd like to share please forward to [susan.carter@oc.usda.gov](mailto:susan.carter@oc.usda.gov). We love to hear about what you're doing and share it with others in the farm broadcaster family.**

From all of us to all of you ... thank you for what you do



United States Department of Agriculture  
Office of Communications  
Room 402-A  
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