

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## **NRWA Grateful for Congressional Appropriations Providing Robust Funding to Support Rural Water Infrastructure**

The National Rural Water Association (NRWA) is grateful for the beneficial support of Congress with its recent approval of robust funding levels targeted to rural America. These appropriations will provide much needed assistance to rural water infrastructure through the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) rural water and economic development initiatives.

"Rural and small-town USA are very grateful to Congress in recognizing the unique success of this initiative. Over the last 70 years, through the funding provided by Congress, USDA's rural water initiatives have made great advancements in the standard of living in Rural America," NRWA CEO Sam Wade said. "These rural water infrastructure initiatives have been the engine of economic development and agricultural-related advances in rural communities, and they have provided for dramatic improvements to the environment and public health."

In March 2018, Congress provided the largest annual appropriation in history to the USDA rural drinking water and sewer infrastructure programs of \$1,060,000,000. This level is almost double the total amount provided in the previous year. The Appropriations Committee also provided Rural Development the maximum flexibility to use the \$1.060 billion to support billions of dollars in direct loans and over \$950 million for grants targeted to eligible rural utilities. The current backlog for the USDA Water and Sewer Loan and Grant program is approximately \$3 billion in applications. This funding and flexibility provided is more than adequate to address the entire current backlog.

Congress has just begun the fiscal year 2019 appropriation process and the initial efforts by both the House and Senate provide continued support to address rural community's water and waste water needs as follows:

- On May 16, 2018, the House of Representatives Appropriations Committee approved the USDA fiscal year 2019 budget bill including \$637,690,000 for USDA rural water infrastructure.
- On May 24, 2018, the Senate Appropriations Committee approved their version of the USDA budget bill including \$958,183,000 for USDA rural water infrastructure.

"We worked hard to craft a strong agriculture funding bill that provides our small rural communities, farmers and ranchers with the resources they need to overcome the challenges they face in farm country," said North Dakota Senator John Hoeven, Chairman of the Agriculture Appropriations

Subcommittee. “This bill makes responsible investments in critical farm service programs, agricultural research and rural development programs to reaffirm our commitment to growing rural America.”

“USDA’s rural water loans and grants are essential to helping rural communities overcome the limited economies of scale and low median household incomes to provide safe and affordable drinking water and sanitation. The initiative funds construction and expansion of drinking water and wastewater infrastructure through grants and loans provided at reasonable rates and terms. Without this assistance, many communities would not have the means to construct new water systems, expand existing systems, or comply with federal mandates,” stated Steve Fletcher, NRWA President and Manager of the Washington County Rural Water Company in Nashville, Illinois.

Most U.S. water utilities are small. More than 91 percent of the country’s 50,259 drinking water systems serve communities with fewer than 10,000 people, and approximately 80 percent of the country’s more than 14,500 wastewater systems serve fewer than 10,000 people.

“We want to acknowledge both the House and Senate and especially the Appropriations Committee members for recognizing the need to increase in investments in Rural America to maintain and upgrade the Nation’s aging infrastructure,” Wade expressed, “Because of this continued support millions of rural Americans have access to affordable and safe public water that their parents did not have and thousands of rural communities have public sewer or wastewater systems that have allowed for elimination of millions of questionable septic tanks, cesspools, straight pipes, or worse. “

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The National Rural Water Association is a national non-profit organization dedicated to training, supporting, and promoting the water and wastewater professionals that serve small and rural communities across the United States. The mission of NRWA is to strengthen State Associations to better serve their rural communities and residents.

NRWA provides training and technical assistance through 49 affiliated State Rural Water Associations, that currently have over 31,000 utility system members. Last year, State Rural Water Association staff delivered over 75,000 on-site technical assistance visits and 150,000 hours of training to more than 37,000 utilities in all 50 states and territories. Rural Water training and technical assistance covers every aspect of operating, managing, disaster assistance and financing water and wastewater utilities