

CANAAN GETS \$4.8 MILLION FOR WATER UPGRADES FROM USDA

BY ROBIN SMITH

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CANAAN — The federal government has awarded \$2.6 million grant to Canaan to address chronic drinking water problems that especially plagued this northeastern-most Vermont community this winter.

The grant is part of a major package, including a \$1.9 million loan, given by U.S. Department of Agriculture Rural Development Wednesday to the Canaan Fire District Number One for a major water quality upgrade.

Funds will be used to purchase and install a 150,000-gallon water storage tank and construct a new water filtration and treatment facility, as well as upgrade the existing water distribution system serving the people of Canaan and West Stewartstown, N.H.

The upgrades will eliminate the use of springs located in Canada as a source and replace them with an existing groundwater well located within the district.

A new storage tank will be constructed along with a new treatment/filter facility for the removal of manganese and arsenic. Portions of the distribution system will also be replaced as part of the funded project.

This winter, residents of Canaan experienced multiple incidents of water discoloration and low water pressure because of current water distribution system and treatment inefficiencies.

“This assistance from USDA Rural Development will help some of the most rural and remote communities of Northern Vermont and Northern New Hampshire ensure their residents have clean, healthy and safe water for decades to come,” said Ted Brady, director of USDA Rural Development for Vermont and New Hampshire.

“USDA Rural Development has not only invested in essential water

infrastructure with this project, but also in the health of Canaan’s people and our region’s economy. This project will put people to work in the Kingdom.”

Engineering for the improvements will be provided by Tata & Howard Engineering of St. Johnsbury. It is estimated the project will commence construction in May 2015 with completion of summer 2016.

Canaan was able to access a portion of the \$2.6 million in grant funds due to the Rural Economic Area Partnership (REAP) Zone designation accorded to three counties of the Northeast Kingdom of Vermont – Caledonia, Essex and Orleans counties.

The designation provides five regions of the country additional grant resources through USDA Rural Development. Sen. Patrick Leahy spearheaded the effort to designate the Northeast Kingdom as a REAP Zone in 2000, and led in renewing the NEK REAP Zone in the newly enacted 2014 Farm Bill.

“By improving water quality, these investments will tangibly improve the quality of life in these Vermont communities,” said Leahy, Sen. Bernie Sanders and Rep. Peter Welch in a joint statement.

“With the passage of the Farm Bill earlier this year, the REAP Zone program will continue to bring millions of investment dollars to the Northeast Kingdom. Partnering federal agencies and their resources with rural communities in ways like this is a catalyst for economic growth and quality of life improvements in the NEK and other rural areas.”

WEP loans and grants may be made to develop, extend or improve water and wastewater systems, including solid waste disposal and storm drainage systems, in rural communities with a population of 10,000 or less.