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STATEMENT OF CONGRESSMAN RICK BOUCHER

Funding Announcement
Town of Appalachia Water System Improvements

February 23, 2009

Appalachia, Virginia

I am pleased to return to Appalachia today to announce a significant provision of federal funding for major improvements to the Town's water system which will ensure that the residents of Appalachia and Big Stone Gap have access to an adequate supply of water during future instances of drought.

At my request the U.S. Department of Agriculture through its Rural Development Agency is providing a total of \$749,500 to the Town of Appalachia to complete two projects which will greatly improve the Town's water system. First, the Town will construct an interconnecting waterline between the Town of Appalachia and the Town of Big Stone Gap. Second, the Town will provide a permanent pump and a waterline which will be which will allow water to be drawn from the Powell River and be transferred to Ben's Branch Reservoir. For the past three years, the Town has been using a temporary pump and waterline to provide water to the Reservoir during drought conditions.

One of my primary goals in representing Southwest Virginia is to work with our local governments to obtain federal funding for our region's water and wastewater facilities. The provision of a safe and adequate supply of drinking water is an essential step in our efforts to attract new employers and to improve the quality of life for Southwest Virginians.

I am pleased to note that Congress approved and President Obama signed last week the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. The measure includes a total of \$10.2 billion to assist local communities construct new water and wastewater systems. These funds will assist our ongoing efforts to expand water and wastewater infrastructure in Southwest Virginia, and I will be working closely with local leaders and the grant making agencies to attract these funds for deserving localities. By meeting the infrastructure needs of our communities, the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act will create jobs in the short term in our region as well as provide a solid foundation for long term economic growth.

The funding I am announcing today will assist the Town of Appalachia to foster growth in the number businesses and residents in the Town. The improvements to the Town's water system will enable the provision of more reliable water service to the more than 1,200 businesses and homes which rely on the Town's water system.

The total cost of the improvements to the Town's water system is \$789,500. The Rural Development Agency is providing \$749,500 in federal funds. Of this total amount, \$487,500 will be provided in the form of a federal grant and of \$262,000 will be provided through a low-interest federal loan. In addition, the LENOWISCO Planning District

Commission is providing a grant in the amount of \$40,000 to aid in the completion of this project.

With the benefit of the federal funds, the Town will undertake two projects which will ensure that local residents have access to publicly provided water during future instances of drought. During times of extreme drought, the water level at Ben's Branch Reservoir, which serves the Town of Appalachia, can become very low. With the benefit of the federal funds which I am announcing today, a new raw water intake will be installed. The new intake system will replace a temporary system put into place three years ago as a result of a water supply emergency cause by the drought. Additionally, three pump stations and a water line which will be 7,000 feet in length will be put into place. Once this project is completed, Town officials will be able to pump water directly from the Powell River to the reservoir at the flip of a switch.

Additionally, the Town will construct an interconnecting water line between the Towns of Appalachia and Big Stone Gap. With the benefit of this federal funding, a water line which is more than 11,000 feet in length will be installed. Additionally, six 6-inch gate valves, a air release valve, a master meter vault and a pump station will be constructed. With this interconnecting water line, both towns will have a backup source of water in the event of a water emergency.

I would like to take this opportunity to recognize a number of individuals who have been instrumental in making today's announcement possible.

I would like to thank Travis Jackson, Area Director for the Rural Development Agency, and his excellent staff for their successful efforts to secure funding for these projects.

Mayor John Tull and the Appalachia Town Council deserve our appreciation for the outstanding work that they perform on behalf of the citizens of the Town of Appalachia. I would also like to recognize Fred Luntsford, who serves as Town Manager and as a member of the Wise County Board of Supervisors, for his excellent work in support of both of these projects.

I would like to express my appreciation to Bobby Lane and his staff at Lane Engineering for their outstanding engineering services.

Skip Skinner, the Executive Director of the Lenowisco Planning District Commission and his excellent staff perform outstanding work for our region, and I would like to thank them for their tireless efforts.

Finally, I want to thank my Project Manager Derek Lyall for his excellent work in support of this project.

Ensuring that the residents of Appalachia and Big Stone Gap have access to water service during times of drought is an excellent use of federal funds. Residents and businesses in the Town of Appalachia will benefit from the provision of more reliable water service and the enhanced opportunity for residential and economic development which will be provided by these improvements to the Town's water infrastructure.