

From: Jones, Michael - Columbus, OH
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Subject: News Release - USDA Announces Economic Development Assistance for two Ohio Regions

This message has been sent on behalf of
J. Anthony Logan, State Director
USDA, Rural Development – Ohio



NEWS RELEASE

United States Department of Agriculture • Rural Development

Federal Building, Room 507, 200 North High Street, Columbus, OH 43215

Phone: (614) 255-2394 • Fax: (614) 255-2559 • TDD: 800-877-8339 • Web: <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov>

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Contact: Michael Jones 614-255-2394

michael.jones@oh.usda.gov

USDA Announces Economic Development Technical Assistance for two Ohio Regions

COLUMBUS, OHIO, July 1, 2010 – USDA Rural Development Agency State Director Tony Logan today announced that two Ohio regions have been selected to participate in a major initiative aimed at promoting economic development across county borders as part of the USDA’s “Strengthening Economies Together (SET) program.

The regions selected include “Buckeye-Foresite”, a region encompassing 23 contiguous counties in Southeastern Ohio, and “West Central Ohio Network”, encompassing eight counties in West Central Ohio. The award will entitle these regions to receive training and technical assistance at no cost from OSU Extension, focusing on developing a region- wide economic development strategy that identifies the region’s key economic assets. Those strategies will then be promoted nationally and internationally, in conjunction with local businesses, non-governmental organizations, academia, and state and federal agencies.

“Ohio was one of only eight states nationally to participate in this pilot project for a major USDA regional initiative,” said Rural Development State Director Logan. “We are particularly gratified to have these two regions selected because they have already shown a willingness to collaborate across county and political boundaries for the greater good of the region. The days of counties pitted against one another chasing smokestacks are hopefully coming to an end.”

Buckeye Foresite includes the counties of Brown, Highland, Ross, Hocking, Perry, Adams, Scioto, Pike, Jackson, Lawrence, Gallia, Vinton, Meigs, Hocking, Athens, Morgan, Washington, Noble, Belmont, Guernsey, Muskingum, Athens and Monroe.

Led by the Voinovich School of Leadership and Public Affairs at Ohio University, Buckeye Foresite stakeholders include the Ohio Valley Regional Development Commission, Buckeye Hills- Hocking Valley Regional Development District, the Southeast Ohio Economic Development Partnership, the Governor's Office of Appalachia, American Electric Power Ohio, the Ohio Department of Natural Resources and numerous others in the region.

The West Central Ohio Network encompasses the counties of Allen, Auglaize, Hancock, Hardin, Mercer, Paulding, Putnam and Van Wert. Led by the Allen Economic Development Group, stakeholders include Wright State University, Rhodes State College, AEP Ohio, American Municipal Power Ohio, CSX Transportation, Buckeye Power and the Ohio Department of Development. Training for the recipient Regions is slated to begin near the end of July 2010.

USDA Rural Development's mission is to deliver programs in a way that will support increasing economic opportunity and improve the quality of life of rural residents. Rural Development provides equity and technical assistance to finance and foster growth in home ownership, business development, and critical community and technology infrastructure.

For further information on the SET initiative, contact Debbie Rausch at 614-255-2425. Information on additional rural programs is available by calling 614-255-2400, visiting a local USDA Rural Development office or by viewing USDA Rural Development's web site at <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov>.