

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 25, 2004

Contact: Scott Bell
State & Private Forestry,
Economic Action Program Manager
Northern & Intermountain Regions
(801) 625-5259

Congressional Delegation announces
USDA Forest Service Grants to Montana Communities
Economic Action & Rural Community Assistance programs
aid rural economies

MISSOULA, MT (MARCH 25, 2004)—Senators Baucus and Burns, Congressman Rehberg and Regional Forester Abigail Kimbell announced today that Montana’s rural communities will receive nearly \$190,000 in Federal Economic Action and Rural Community Assistance grants through the USDA Forest Service’s Region 1 State and Private Forestry office in Missoula.

“Our Rural Community Assistance program is one of the greatest tools available to local Ranger Districts and rural community leaders.” said Regional Forester Abigail Kimbell. “It gives us an opportunity to work together, to tackle important projects that enhance the health of our neighboring rural communities.” The program provides a strong return on its investment, with every federal dollar leveraging an average of \$10 from non-federal sources.

"I'm pleased to be able to join the Montana delegation and Regional Forester Gail Kimbell in announcing these funds to help improve Montana's rural economies," announced Senator Baucus. “The Economic Action and Rural Community Assistance programs are important economic development tools for rural communities and help to

create new jobs. We need to do all we can to help develop and strengthen the living conditions and economies in our rural areas. I will continue to work together with Conrad and Denny to support and strengthen these and other economic development programs that benefit Montana communities."

\$154,950 in Rural Community Assistance Program funding will help 9 Montana communities implement a variety of economic development projects. "These funds will have impacts all across Western Montana and will contribute to the economic growth of these often hard-hit towns," said Senator Conrad Burns. "I'll continue to work with Max and Denny to ensure Montana gets every opportunity to benefit from federal grant programs like this." Funded projects include: a roundwood kiosk for Darby's town park, a stewardship system project in the Yaak Valley, site planning for a business & recreation park in Lincoln County, a log debarker in Mineral County, the Deer Lodge roundhouse, Beaverhead County fairground improvements, the Canyon Ferry recreation & economic feasibility study, Florence's community playground equipment, and support for Teton County's development permit regulations.

Three more grants totaling \$33,500 are being awarded in partnership with the Montana Governor's Lewis and Clark Bicentennial Commission to fund projects related to the Bicentennial Celebration. Funded projects include a "Fishing with Lewis and Clark" exhibit at the Fly Fishing Discovery Center in Livingston, interpretive signage at the Dearborn Rest Area between Craig and Cascade, and a traveling exhibit entitled "Native Perspectives on the Trail: A Contemporary American Indian Art Portfolio" sponsored by the Art Museum of Missoula. This exhibit will be available for display in communities across the State.

"The projects Congress funds through this program often reflect the individual uniqueness of each community, and tend to draw the residents closer together. I'm proud we're able to assist in that," says Montana's Congressman Denny Rehberg.

Grant applications for these programs are submitted annually through the Forest Supervisors of Montana's nine National Forests. The Forest Service expects to issue the next request for proposals in the fall of 2004. Prospective applicants may contact their local National Forest office or Scott Bell, Economic Action Program Coordinator in Region 1 State & Private Forestry at (801) 625-5259 for more information.