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Check Presentation Creates Happy Day for Town

By Cathy Patton

IAEGER - "You've got a lot going on, a lot left to do, working together, we will continue on the journey," Region One Planning and Development Executive Director Dave Cole noted Tuesday morning during a USDA Rural Development Check Ceremony for the Coalwood Connector Water Project.

The ceremony was held at the Methodist Church.

Representatives from Stafford Consultants, Iaeger Mayor Jim Stafford, PSD Board President Jerry Stepp, Board members and County Commission President Gordon Lambert joined West Virginia USDA Rural Development State Director Rick Rice in presenting a \$1,811,800 check to the McDowell PSD. The check represents a \$1,311,800 grant and \$500,000 loan from the USDA Rural Development Utilities Programs.

The funds will be used to extend water lines to the Coalwood water treatment facility and will enable the town of Iaeger to have safe potable, barium-free water for the first time in many months.

The total cost of the Coalwood Connector Project is over \$4,193,000, Cole said, adding that a future phase of the Coalwood Connector Project will bring water from Coalwood through Wilmore Hollow to connect to Roderfield and Big Sandy.

Cole commended the PSD for diligently pursuing water projects throughout McDowell County. Since forming several years ago, the PSD, he said, has worked hard to improve water for residents in Coalwood, Raysal, Bartley, English and is now working in the second phase of the four-phase Jolo Project, which will extend water to the top of Bradshaw Mountain. Cole said the PSD recently took over the Elkhorn/Kimball system and will likely work with the Town of War through a Service Agreement.

Because of so many regulations and restrictions, Cole said that it generally takes three years to get from the point of conception to the point of construction on a water project. Funding for such projects come from a variety of sources and it takes everyone from the towns to the County Commission to the design engineers and the PSD working together to bring a project to fruition.

Stressing, “Water is the lifeblood of all development,” Rice commended the PSD. “I’m here today to congratulate you for the hard work,” he said. “This is giving you back some of the tax dollars you send to Washington, D.C.”

Rice said that the need in McDowell County is great, but that USDA Rural Development stands ready to assist. “We can do things for you that you can’t do alone,” he said.

Mayor Jim Stafford thanked Rice, Cole, the PSD, the County Commission, Stafford Consultants, the Iaeger City Council and others who have worked so diligently for so long on the Iaeger water system.

“This is a happy day for the citizens of Iaeger,” Stafford smiled “I thank everyone. It’s a new time. We’re going to Coalwood and get some real good water.”

Echoing Stafford’s gratitude, Stepp promised that the PSD would continue in its mission to provide decent water.

“Everyone in McDowell County deserves to have decent, clean, healthy drinking water,” Stepp said.

The new paving projects currently underway and other recent projects should be a reminder that good things remain on the horizon for us, Lambert related. “This is another great day. McDowell County is beginning to shine again,” he said.

Other program participants included Edward Shutt, Stafford Consultants; Saxophonist Cindy Meade, who played the “Star Spangled Banner” and “God Bless America” and Jessie McPeak,



who led the Pledge of Allegiance.

PSD RECEIVES FUNDS FOR COALWOOD CONNECTOR - USDA Rural Development Director Rick Rice (third from right) joined other local officials for a special check presentation ceremony at the Iaeger Methodist Church Tuesday morning. Pictured with Rice (front row) are PSD Board Member Jessie McPeak, Manager Mavis Brewster, Iaeger Mayor Jim Stafford; (back row) PSD Board Member Elden Green, County Commission President Gordon Lambert, PSD Board President Jerry Stepp and Rice’s Executive Assistant. (Photo by Cathy Patton)