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News Release

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USDA Announces Pilot Program to Increase Homeownership Opportunities on Native Lands

Department is Partnering with Native Community Development Financial Institutions

WASHINGTON, May 31, 2018 – Assistant to the Secretary for Rural Development Anne Hazlett today announced that the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is launching a pilot program to increase homeownership opportunities on Tribal lands.

“To thrive, rural America needs a creative and forward-thinking partner in USDA,” Hazlett said. “Under Secretary Perdue’s leadership, USDA is harnessing innovation so we can be a better, more effective partner to Tribal communities in building their futures.”

USDA is partnering with two Native Community Development Financial Institutions (NCDFIs) that have extensive experience working in Native American communities. The Department will loan Mazaska Owecaso Otipit Financial and Four Bands Community Funds \$1.6 million that they will relend to eligible homebuyers for mortgages on South Dakota and some North Dakota tribal trust lands. Mazaska and Four Bands also will service the mortgage loans after they are made. USDA is providing the funding through the [Single Family Housing Direct Loan program](#).

Each NCDFI will contribute \$200,000 for mortgages in the pilot program.

USDA has helped provide rural homeownership opportunities for nearly seven decades. More than 4 million rural residents have purchased USDA-financed homes since passage of the Housing Act of 1949. However, homeownership rates on Tribal lands historically have been significantly lower than those for other communities.

Both NCDFIs have deep ties to the local communities and will be able to reach potential homebuyers more effectively than USDA and other lenders. Mazaska Owecaso Otipit Financial is located on the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota and creates homeownership opportunities for the members of the Oglala Sioux Tribe. Four Bands Community Funds, headquartered in Eagle Butte, S.D., provides financial products to businesses as well as home mortgages in South Dakota and North Dakota. Part of its service area includes the Standing Rock Reservation in North Dakota.

The pilot program will begin this summer. USDA Rural Development's [state office in Huron, S.D.](#), will oversee the initiative.

In April 2017, President Donald J. Trump established the Interagency Task Force on Agriculture and Rural Prosperity to identify legislative, regulatory and policy changes that could promote agriculture and prosperity in rural communities. In January 2018, Secretary Perdue presented the Task Force's findings to President Trump. These findings included 31 recommendations to align the federal government with state, local and tribal governments to take advantage of opportunities that exist in rural America. Increasing investments in rural infrastructure is a key recommendation of the task force.

To view the report in its entirety, please view the [Report to the President of the United States from the Task Force on Agriculture and Rural Prosperity](#) (PDF, 5.4 MB). In addition, to view the categories of the recommendations, please view the [Rural Prosperity infographic](#) (PDF, 190 KB).

USDA Rural Development provides loans and grants to help expand economic opportunities and create jobs in rural areas. This assistance supports infrastructure improvements; business development; housing; community services such as schools, public safety and health care; and high-speed internet access in rural areas. For more information, visit www.rd.usda.gov.

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