

# PRESS RELEASE

USDA RURAL DEVELOPMENT ANNOUNCES FUNDING FOR CITY OF WELLS  
Project Will Help Eliminate Bottleneck in Major Texas Hurricane Evacuation Route



**From Left to Right: Bossier City Mayor Lo Walker, Klotz Associates Herbert Bickley, Klotz Associates Christopher Key, Ark-La-Tex Corridor Council Chairman Richard Anderson, USDA RD State Director Paco Valentin, Cherokee County Judge Chris Davis, City of Wells Mayor C.W. Williams, State Representative Travis Clardy, ETCOG Executive Director David Cleveland, TxDOT Commissioner Jeff Austin III, East Texas Regional Director For Senator John Cornyn Louellen Lowe, Cherokee County Commissioner Kelly Traylor, Coordinating and Development Council President Max Locompte, and USDA RD Area Director Don Williams**

**WELLS, TX, November 18, 2014:** USDA Rural Development Texas State Director Paco Valentin announced funding yesterday for the City of Wells to relocate existing water and wastewater system infrastructure.

"Rural Development is pleased to offer funding to the City of Wells," said Paco Valentin, USDA Rural Development Texas State Director. "Not only will it provide a crucial component in the completion of a Hurricane Evacuation Route that serves Wells and up to one third of the population of Texas; it also assists the City in providing uninterrupted service to their water and sewer customers."

USDA Rural Development has approved a Water and Waste Disposal grant of \$1,381,000 and loan of \$1,699,000 to the City of Wells to primarily relocate existing water and wastewater system infrastructure in advance of a major Texas Department of Transportation highway improvement and widening project. This improvement is

necessary to provide adequate traffic flow for the Hurricane Evacuation Route along US Highway 69.

"TxDOT requested our assistance with this project about two years ago because their funds cannot be used to relocate utility lines. The East Texas Rural Planning Organization (RPO), led by our region's 14 County Judges and the mayors of Longview and Tyler, adopted this project as a top priority and approved a multi-faceted funding strategy for ETCOG to pursue, said ETCOG Executive Director, David Cleveland. "This has truly become a collaborative effort between our staff, USDA, TxDOT, the City of Wells, and Klotz Associates engineering firm. Today was not only a victory for Wells and Cherokee County, but for regionalism everywhere. One-third of our state's citizens will be safer once this road widening project is completed, especially when we have to cope with the next hurricane."

"This project has been on the drawing board since 1985, said Cherokee County Judge Chris Davis. "As a resident of the county I am pleased such a significant need is being addressed that will improve the lives of many of our residents within and outside our County."

TxDOT plans to begin construction in August of 2015. In the meantime, ETCOG and the RPO continues to pursue various funding alternatives to address the last remaining piece of this project involving the relocation of a natural gas line that serves City of Alto and City of Wells residents.

For more information, contact ETCOG's Executive Director, David Cleveland, at (903) 218-6423 or Gayle Aubrey with USDA at (254) 913-3103 or [gayle.aubrey@tx.usda.gov](mailto:gayle.aubrey@tx.usda.gov).

#### **About ETCOG**

The East Texas Council of Governments (ETCOG) is a voluntary association of counties, cities, school districts and special districts within the fourteen-county East Texas region. ETCOG assists local governments in planning for common needs, cooperating for mutual benefit and coordinating for sound regional development. Established in 1970, ETCOG, either directly, or through its contractors, provides programs and services for East Texas seniors, employers, and job seekers. ETCOG and its contractors also build the 9-1-1 emergency call delivery system, provide peace officer training and homeland security planning services; and deliver rural transportation services, business finance programs, and environmental grant funding for the region.