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# Cool, clear water ...

## \$2.1 million approved bringing those words and water hookups to the southern part of county

By Rudy Taylor - Publisher

Rural residents living in the southern part of Chautauqua County are seeing the final stages of a process that will bring rural water hookups to their homes, following an announcement in Sedan last Friday.

U.S. Rep. Todd Tiahrt and Chuck Banks, state director of Rural Development, came to present a check for \$2,185,000 to Rural Water Dist. No. 4. This represents final funding for the southern part of the county and 117 residents who have signed up for rural water. A second phase will include residents in the northwestern part of the county and Tiahrt is pushing for funding that will expedite that project, as well.

"This a landmark day for Chautauqua County," said Larry Cameron, local chairman of Rural Water Dist. No. 4. "We started this process way back in 1995 and we have gone through a lot of applications, rejections and redoing our initial plans to get to this point."

Connie Rogers, secretary of the district, said construction should begin in the near future and she anticipates that residents could be turning on their taps for fresh drinking water within the next 24 months, or perhaps sooner.

Overall, the project will have cost about \$6.5 million, according to Cameron who has often

stated that economic development in Chautauqua County will never get off the ground unless

every resident has access to a good water supply.

Cameron should know --- he and his wife, Vonnice, reside east of Sedan near Peru and they haul most of their drinking water.

Special recognition was given to Karen Thompson and Billie Jennings who are widows of the late Rex Thompson and Wayne Jennings, both of whom worked hard as water board members for many years.

"As you can see, this project has taken many years to accomplish and some of our original members never got to see it finished. But we want to say thank you to them for their efforts without which this day would not have been possible," Cameron said.

Tiahrt said he now serves as ranking minority member of the House Interior Committee which helped in gaining approval of the funds.

He currently is working on obtaining a State and Tribal (STAG) grant to boost the northern Chautauqua County project toward final approval. He is

pushing for approval of \$1 million from the STAG funds which would not require local repayment.

Cameron explained that the northern project would cost

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about \$1.5 million more than the southern project is costing because of the terrain and elevation. "Since that area lays higher, it will require an elevated water tower and pumping station," he said. "The southern lines will operate mostly by gravity flow."

Cameron said the first group

was formed in 1995 to discuss the prospects of rural water and it resulted in splitting into two projects: A wholesale water district, which is currently completing its entire project, and the residential hookups which finally are funded, at least for the southern part of the county.

In addition to those pictured, Nita Jones from the Sedan Area Economic Development Committee and Neal Troyer, area director for Rural Development were on hand, in addition to others who have supported the project from its inception.

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Residents of rural Chautauqua County are calling it a landmark day as a check for \$2,185,000 is presented to Rural Water Dist. No. 4. The funds will be used to build water service to residents living in the southern portion of the county. From Left: U.S. Rep. Todd Tiahrt, water specialist Dale Yeager, State Director of Rural Development Chuck Barnes, RWD No. 4 chairman Larry Cameron, Karen Thompson, Roland Cain, Billie Jennings, County Commissioner Danny Williams, Connie Rogers, Edwin Bowman and Vonnice Cameron.

