

USDA officials hand out grants of more than \$400K in Clare County

Summerfield and Greenwood townships, road commissions among those to receive funds

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Clare County, the Middle Michigan Development Corp. and two townships received federal grants Thursday totaling more than \$400,000.

Officials from USDA Rural Development met local officials at the Clare County Building in Harrison to dole out grants to the road commission, Summerfield and Greenwood townships, the county and MMDC.

Hosted by USDA Rural Development State Director James J. Turner, the presentation in Harrison was one of three in Clare and Gladwin counties on Thursday.

At the presentation in Harrison, the road commission received two separate \$50,000 grants to purchase new road graders.

Clare County Road Commission Manager and Engineer Steve Stocking said the grants will

allow the county to continue rotating trucks to grade and plow about 700 miles of road surface throughout the county.

Currently, the county has four road graders, and the grants will allow the two older trucks to be taken out of the rotation, Stocking said.

"It's great," he said. "We need to replace equipment."

"Our revenue is declining each year."

In the struggling economy, the grants will allow the road commission to continue to provide key services, Stocking said.

"These machines are vital not only for grading roads but for plowing snow in the winter," Stocking said. "They are the backbone of our operation."

Other USDA Rural Development grants in Clare County included \$99,500 to the county for a revolving loan fund for small businesses, according to Cristina Stanley, assistant to the state director and state civil rights coordinator.

The county also received a \$30,500 grant for training contractors in the identification and removal of lead-based paint; and \$86,113 to assist low income homeowners in installing or repairing water and sewer systems, Stanley said.

A \$55,520 grant went to MMDC for asset-based community training, Stanley said.

Summerfield Township was awarded a \$14,000 grant, and Greenwood Township a \$5,000 grant, for storm sirens, Stanley said.

Other grants were presented in Gladwin and Beaverton on Thursday.

The goal of USDA Rural Development is to deliver programs that will support increasing economic opportunity and improve the quality of life of rural residents.

Rural Development provides equity, liquidity and technical assistance to finance and foster growth in home ownership, business development, and critical community and technology infrastructure.