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E. De la Garza

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news release

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DE LA GARZA ANNOUNCES NEW FEDERAL AID FOR COLONIAS

For immediate release, August 7, 1989

(PR89-092)

WASHINGTON -- House Agriculture Committee Chairman E (Kika) de la Garza, D-Tex., Monday announced that an additional \$5.5 million in federal loan and grant funds will be targeted for water and sewer projects in colonias in four U.S. states along the Mexican border, including Texas. This is in addition to \$24 million in federal funds Texas is expected to receive for water and waste projects during fiscal year 1990, he said.

Rep. de la Garza had asked Agriculture Secretary Clayton Yeutter and officials at Farmers Home Administration (FmHA) to give higher priority to the housing, water, and waste project needs of impoverished colonias. He said that Monday's announcement by the U.S. Department of Agriculture and FmHA is an indication of the agencies' commitment to improving the quality of life for colonia residents.

"When I met with Secretary Yeutter recently to discuss colonia problems and some possible measures we could take, he was immediately receptive to helping us. I thank Secretary Yeutter for following up on our discussions with this action today. These monies for water and sewer projects in colonias will help colonia communities improve the life of their residents," Rep. de la Garza said.

"Unfortunately, this only addresses one of the problems. There are still the twin problems of inadequate income opportunities and unscrupulous developers. Local, state and Federal governments must make a coordinated effort to once and for all eliminate these problems and provide hope and pride for colonia residents," Rep. de la Garza said.

FmHA funds will be available beginning Oct. 1, 1989, and will come out of the agency's national office reserve account. This account is held to alleviate serious health hazards and for other emergencies. Ten percent of the reserve funds will be set aside for colonia projects. Any unused funds will be returned to the national reserve near the end of the fiscal year (usually in August), Rep. de la Garza said.

These funds will be in addition to each state's normal allocation of FmHA loan and grant funds. Secretary Yeutter also announced that colonias will be given priority in the use of each state's regularly-allocated funds under FmHA's water and waste program.

"I expect Texas will receive about \$24 million under the regular FmHA water and water program once Congress finalizes action on the agricultural appropriations bill. With the Secretary's new directive, colonia projects will move up to the top of the list for funding under this program," Rep. de la Garza said.

FmHA has spent more than \$84 million for housing and water and waste projects in Texas counties where colonias are located. More than 110,000 people, mostly Mexican-Americans, live in the Texas colonias.

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