

USDA FUNDED ALASKA CIRCUIT RIDER MARSHALLS FORCES AND CLEANS UP THE TOWN



WASTE: Circuit rider Scott Lindsey points to trash and waste in Lower Kalskag prior to the start of remediation efforts.

OUTLINE OF NEED: The interior Alaska community of Lower Kalskag had a human waste disposal problem. A river of human effluent was running untreated, on the open ground. Scott Lindsey, A wastewater Circuit Rider, who works for the Alaska Rural Water Association in a position funded by USDA Rural Development decided to fix it.

HOW RURAL DEVELOPMENT HELPED: USDA Rural Development provides utility program funding for “circuit riders” across the nation. These professionals travel to small communities that often cannot afford full time sewage system maintenance staff, and fix problems they encounter. The problem encountered in Lower Kalskag was severe. Lower Kalskag is a community of about 270. Almost all of the residents are Alaska Natives. When Circuit Rider Scott Lindsey arrived in the town he was alarmed to see what he said was a “river of human waste” near the homes, sewage from dwellings running directly onto the open ground. “We had to do something. Children were playing in it. There were literally bags of waste lying around, but there was no money to fix things,” said Lindsey.

He went to the city council and asked for \$2,000. Using that funding, he hired a back hoe and operator and spent a week digging holes, burying the waste and establishing a temporary sanitation solution for the town. “The most important thing was to get the wastewater away from the community. About 40 houses were at risk. That’s done now,” said Lindsey. He says the next step will be to make the solution permanent by making sure the effluent winds up away from the homes. “We’ll get everyone hooked up,” said Lindsey. He also hired two village residents to apply lime to the waste, and he credited the local tribal organization for assisting in the effort. Tools and supplies were purchased with training fund dollars.

THE RESULTS:

Residents of a rural Alaska community are less likely to be exposed to disease through the efforts of circuit rider Scott Lindsey. A temporary solution was found using a small amount of money and planning is underway to make the solution a permanent one. “Thanks to the efforts of the Alaska Rural Water Association, tribal officials and funding from USDA Rural Development, an Alaska community is safer and cleaner. Working together we are accomplishing great things in rural Alaska and it is due to the tireless work of individuals like Scott that we achieve successes like this one,” said Acting Rural Development State Director Chad Padgett.

Lindsey said he especially wanted to thank John Spriggs and John Nichols of the Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium for supporting his request to the city council, and for agreeing to work with the community next year to ensure that residences are connected to the sewer system. He also acknowledged the work of Anna Morgan with the Tribe and Joe Sarcone with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). “I also want to acknowledge Merlaine Kruse, Director of Community Programs with USDA Rural Development. Her compassion and support makes efforts like this one possible,” said Scott Lindsey.