

Alaska Native Village of Mekoryuk's Reservoir, Repaired with Rural Alaska Village Initiative Funding supplied in part by USDA Rural Development



New Liner: The new reservoir liner in the community of Mekoryuk. (Photo taken by Joe White, Panoramic program through Autostitch™)

THE NEED: Mekoryuk, a community of about 200, is a predominantly Native settlement on Nunivak Island, off the Alaska coast in the Bering Sea. Its water supply comes from a 30 year old nine million gallon reservoir which is lined, to prevent leakage. In 2007 the liner failed and the reservoir drained, forcing community members to haul canisters of fresh water to the village through the winter using snowmobiles and sleds.

HOW RURAL DEVELOPMENT HELPED: USDA Rural Development is authorized to provide up to \$30 million a year to the State of Alaska's Village Safe Water Program. USDA had originally provided \$1,125,000 to fund the design of water source improvements in Mekoryuk. Because of the liner failure, the scope of that project changed. In June of 2008 another \$1,175,000 was authorized to replace the failed liner. Those funds came from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the State of Alaska.

Also, USDA provided \$313,000 to Mekoryuk in Rural Alaska Village Grant funds to help fund the installation of eight "flush haul" systems in individual homes. Each home is provided with two external tanks in an insulated outside shed. Clean water is contained in one tank and wastewater in the second tank. The water tank is filled periodically and the wastewater tank is drained. These systems are often used where the water table is close to the surface or where the homes' distance from the water and sewer system would make it difficult and expensive to extend conventional water and sewer services to the home.

THE RESULT: Because of the Village Safe Water Program, and USDA's financial support (along with financial support from funding partners), the Mekoryuk reservoir liner was replaced and community residents no longer have to haul water to their homes. Replacement of the liner and installation of flush-haul systems in an additional 8 homes boosted the quality of community life and improved sanitary conditions in the village.

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