

New Clinch-Powell Enterprise Community Receives Approval

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The federal government has approved the application for the designation of portions of five East Tennessee counties, including a part of Grainger County, as the Clinch-Powell Enterprise Community.

The news that the local area is now one of only 50 such zones in the country was announced by Vice President Al Gore last week.

It means the area initially will receive \$250,000 for economic development and be eligible to compete for its share of \$150 million over the next 10 years in grant funds set aside for enterprise communities.

In addition the designation makes the area eligible for tax-exempt bonds for business facilities and federal tax incentives for employment programs. These, in conjunction with the area's priority on grant proposals, can be used to create new jobs and retain existing ones, expand the supply of affordable housing, reduce crime and cleanup pollution.

The area of Grainger County included in the enterprise community is the north side of Clinch Mountain plus Grainger County Industrial Park.

Also included in the area are parts of Claiborne, Hancock, Hawkins, and Union Counties.

The application for the creation of a new enterprise community was submitted by the Clinch-Powell Resource Conservation and Development Council, which is planning a meeting on January 21 to inform county officials and members of the RC&D board of directors about the meaning of the application's success.

How to spend \$250,000 and future policy decisions will be made by the committee of citizens from each county which worked on formulating the enterprise community application.

Public meetings and surveys completed in preparation for the application indicated the establishment of a centrally-located vocational-technical school in the area has a high priority among residents, according to Lindy Turner, Clinch-Powell RC&D director.

The Enterprise Community program, administered by the USDA, reported that the Clinch-Powell area covered by the application has a per capita average income that is 42 percent less than the national average and 35 percent below the stated average, indicating a need for economic development to provide better employment opportunities for its residents.