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**Fredericksburg Region Lands Largest Residential Energy-Efficiency
and Conservation Program Grant Award in Virginia**

Fredericksburg, VA – February 19, 2010 – The George Washington Regional Commission (GWRC) announced today that it received a \$1 million grant from the Virginia Department of Mines, Minerals and Energy (DMME) to develop a regional home energy-efficiency and conservation retrofit program. The grant, part of the Obama administration’s stimulus program (The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009) was the largest grant awarded of 26 grants announced yesterday by Virginia DMME Director Stephen Walz.

The receipt of the regional grant resulted from the work of GWRC staff and members of the regional Green Government Commission (GCC) subcommittee on Green Building.

Hap Connors, GGC Chairman, said, “We have been working hard to advance innovation and green technologies in this area that will stimulate new opportunities and jobs. This grant moves us farther along that path. This grant would not have happen without the tireless work of GWRC staff and Commission members.”

The home energy-saving program will work with local utility companies to target older homes of moderate- to middle- income residents to audit homes and then develop and implement cost-effective energy efficiency and conservation improvements, producing about a 20% savings in energy costs per home.

Additionally, the program will develop and offer energy conservation training to certify a pool of contractors eligible to perform the work authorized by and paid for through the program. The program will also offer rebate incentives to encourage upper-middle income owners of older homes to invest in home energy-efficiency and conservation measures that yield federal energy tax credits and life cycle savings to recover their investment. Finally, the program will establish a regional revolving loan program offering low-interest loans to help finance home energy saving improvements.

Dan Dukes, Chairman of the regional Green Building subcommittee and President of Green Source Raters, said, “Our goal with this program is to generate local “green” jobs by providing training to establish a team of qualified contractors who will help home owners realize long-term energy savings from these prudent investments in their homes.”

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Dukes said that likely improvements could include the sealing of inefficient heating and cooling ducts, additional caulking and/or insulation around leaky windows, doors and pull-down attic stairs and ceiling light canisters; heat pump tune-ups, water conserving shower and faucet heads and additional attic insulation. Larger investments in home energy improvements (e.g. heat pump upgrades, insulated replacement windows or doors, etc) could be handled through the new revolving loan program that project developers seek to establish later this year.

The program has been endorsed by the Fredericksburg Regional Chamber of Commerce, the Fredericksburg Area Association of Realtors, the Fredericksburg Area Builders Association, the Central Virginia Housing Coalition, Rappahannock United Way, Rappahannock Area Agency on Aging, Dominion Power and Rappahannock Electric Cooperative.

GWRC will also apply to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to certify the program, once developed, as a partner in EPA's [Home Performance with Energy Star](#) program that provides independent quality assurance testing to certify to homeowners that the energy-efficiency work done on their homes has truly improved its energy operating efficiency.

An additional grant program targeted by GWRC to complement and support this initiative may be the [AmeriCorps*State](#) program, which could supply community outreach volunteers to help work with residents, community associations and contractors interested in the program.

For further information regarding the regional home energy-efficiency and conservation retrofit program, contact Kevin Byrnes, Director of Regional Planning and Regional Demographer, George Washington Regional Commission, at 540-373-2890 and byrnes@gwregion.org