

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

Mr. David Matthews
Director of State Operations- Rural Development
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave SW
Washington, DC 20250

March 21, 2025

Dear Mr. Matthews:

I write to request that your agency reverse the decision to close the Yuma Rural Development (RD) Office. This office plays a vital role in fulfilling the USDA's mission in southwestern Arizona, a region known as the "Lettuce Capital of the World," and its closure would have widespread damaging effects.

Located in an agriculturally rich yet geographically isolated area, the Yuma RD office provides access to essential programs and services for rural constituents. With the nearest USDA service center over 230 miles away, the Yuma RD Office is uniquely positioned to address critical community needs. By housing the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) and the Farm Service Agency (FSA), this integrated service center delivers streamlined operations and maximizes value while minimizing redundancy. Its efforts have empowered rural communities in Yuma County to access nearly \$623 million in loans and grants over the last decade, highlighting its impact on fostering housing development, economic growth, and sustainable infrastructure in this agriculturally significant region.

The Yuma RD Office's contributions are significant and quantifiable. From FY21 to FY24, its surrounding communities benefited from \$469.5 million in USDA investments, with 1,933 projects funded to strengthen rural communities. Examples include a hospital expansion project in Bisbee, economic investments to the Pascua Yaqui Tribe, improvements to water services in Colonias, and crucial homeownership support in Yuma and Santa Cruz Counties. The office's active collaboration with local nonprofits, including the Rural Housing-523 Mutual Self-Help Program, are supporting the construction of 70 affordable homes, further enhancing community resilience.

Closing the Yuma RD Office would create substantial barriers for residents, forcing them to undertake long journeys to distant service centers, which would disproportionately impact low-income families and the elderly. Its continued operation is imperative—not only as a cornerstone of effective governance but as a vital lifeline for the rural communities it serves with unparalleled dedication and expertise. I urge you to reconsider your decision on its closure.

Sincerely,



Ruben Gallego
U.S. Senator