



The Monroe Journal

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\$2.5M gas line project announced

BY MIKE QUALLS

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Darlene Thompson, executive director of the Monroeville/Monroe County Economic Development Authority (MMCEDA), announced the MMCEDA will receive the Rural Utility Infrastructure Grant (RUIG) from the Alabama Department of Agriculture and Industries (ADAIA).

Thompson said the funds will expand the existing natural gas distribution system, which is owned by South Alabama Gas District (SAG) from Peterman to Beatrice and will provide access to natural gas to businesses, including Scotch Plywood, Monroe Sausage and others, as well as to J.F. Shields School and residents.

"One of the MMCEDA's primary goals is to assist existing industries," said Thompson. "Scotch Plywood is a company that is vital to our economy." Scotch produces veneer sheets from pine trees, which is used in the production of plywood. "Currently Scotch employs approximately 130 employees with an average salary of \$23.76 per hour at the Beatrice location. This extension will increase the potential for Scotch to remain competitive in today's market."

"Projects such as this are essential for the expansion and retention of existing industries in Monroe County," added Thompson. "This is a win-win economic development project that will directly benefit citizens and existing industries. The scope of this project will highlight Monroe County, attracting interest from industries seeking new locations. We want to express our sincere gratitude to State Sen. Greg Albritton and ADAIA Commissioner Rick Pate for their leadership and support."

Mark Burgess, chief executive officer at SAG, commented, "We are excited to be part of this effort to extend our services in Monroe County. This is the first project of this size for SAG in many years. It's projects like this that I worked when I began my career. Most of my current staff have not had an opportunity to collaborate on a project of this magnitude." Monroe County Commission Chair Sonya Stinson and the county commissioners said the announcement is "good news" for the county and the businesses and residents of Beatrice.