



## **Sec. Vilsack announces \$310 million in Recovery Act funds for rural broadband projects**

**By Agri-Pulse Staff**

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Washington, Jan. 26 – Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack has announced the selection of fourteen Recovery Act Broadband Infrastructure projects that will receive \$309,923,352 through funding made available by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. An additional \$3,551,887 in private investment brings the total to \$313,475,239. Altogether, Congress awarded USDA \$2.5 billion in Recovery Act funding to help bring broadband services to rural un-served and underserved communities.

“The Obama Administration will strengthen communities in rural areas through these broadband investments and provide employment opportunities, building a solid foundation for future economic growth,” Vilsack said. “The awards for these broadband projects will support anchor institutions – such as libraries, public buildings and community centers – that are necessary for the viability of rural communities.”

In rural Burleigh County, ND, for example, the BEK Communications Cooperative has been selected to receive a \$2 million grant and \$2 million loan with an additional \$2 million in leveraged funds. The company will expand the existing system to offer fiber-to-the-premises service to more than 540 homes and anchor institutions that are currently underserved. The existing system provides service to 53 percent of the population in the area, and among the current users, 22 percent derive household income from the Internet. This expansion is expected to stimulate economic growth by bringing on new users.

Funding of individual recipients is contingent upon their meeting the terms of the loan, grant or loan/grant agreement. The latest Recovery Act Broadband award recipients include:

### **Alaska**

Southwestern Alaska, United Utilities, \$43,982,240 grant and \$44,158,522 loan. The funding will provide middle mile connectivity to 65 communities.

### **Alabama**

Butler, Butler Telephone Co., Inc., \$3,892,920 grant. The funding will provide high speed DSL broadband service to remote, unserved households within its rural service

territory. The system is being built so that it can be easily upgraded to accommodate future services.

### **California**

San Joaquin, Tranquillity, and Fresno, Audeamus, \$2,741,505 grant and \$2,741,505 loan. The proposed project is a fiber-based broadband infrastructure for the unserved and underserved communities in this service area. A last-mile project, it will provide access to approximately 1,500 households, local businesses and anchor institutions in the communities.

### **Iowa**

Meriden and Archer, C-M-L Telephone Cooperative Association, \$1,519,225 grant and \$1,519,225 loan, \$1,525,315 in matching funds. Funding will provide services via a fiber optic network to rural communities with high speed internet exceeding 20 Mbps. Bennett, Delmar, and Lowden, F & B Communications, Inc., \$1,609,162 grant and \$1,628,588 loan. Funding will provide services via high speed fiber optic network with speeds exceeding 20Mbps. System will allow for expansion at a future date. Springbrook, LaMotte Telephone Company, \$187,815 grant, and \$187,815 loan. The funding will provide services from a 300-foot tower and Wi-Max installation for wireless broadband service in the surrounding area.

### **Kansas**

(1% of the network is to be built in **Nebraska**)

Western Kansas, Rural Telephone Service Co., Inc., \$49,588,807 grant and \$51,612,842 loan. Funding will provide service in an area 99.5 percent unserved/underserved and provide a rural infrastructure required for economic stability, education and healthcare. The company is a cooperative and RUS partner on 32 other projects. It leads a team of seven companies with this shovel-ready project.

### **Tennessee**

(1% of the network is to be built in **Kentucky**)

Northern Tennessee, North Central Telephone Cooperative, Inc., \$24,715,709 grant and \$24,964,000 loan. The funding will provide the necessary infrastructure to provide advanced voice, video, and data services that exceed 20 Mbps to remote and rural communities in the service area.

### **Louisiana**

Morehouse Parish, Northeast Louisiana Telephone Company, Inc., \$4,359,000 grant and \$8,124,600 loan. Funding will provide an active ethernet system with symmetrical speeds of 20 Mbps. The system will be using buried fiber to the premise.

### **Missouri**

Ralls County, Ralls County Electric Cooperative, \$9,548,908 grant and \$9,548,909 loan. Funding for this project will provide a fiber optic network to residential and commercial members and the underserved safety and anchor agencies in the service area. This is a State of Missouri demonstration project and non-proprietary data will be shared.

### **North Dakota**

Burleigh County; BEK Communications Cooperative, \$1,986,473 grant and \$2,016,571 loan; \$2,016,572 in leveraged funds. The funding will provide fiber-to-the-premises

broadband service to underserved homes and anchor institutions. This will aid business growth and support public safety in rural areas highly dependent on Internet business income.

Trail County; Halstad Telephone Company, \$2,027,600 grant and \$2,027,600 loan; \$10,000 in leveraged funds. The funding will provide fiber-to-the premises broadband service to unserved homes and businesses in Trail County.

### **Oregon**

Marion County, Gervais telephone Company, \$314,430 grant and \$314,430 loan. This project extends Gervais Telephone Company's existing fiber network by building out from the nearest fiber splice point through the funded service area. This project will provide broadband connectivity to residential and business end users, as well as to four anchor institutions.

### **Virginia**

Alleghany County, NTELOS Telephone Inc., \$8,062,088 grant and \$8,062,088 loan. The funds will provide broadband infrastructure to unserved and underserved homes, businesses and critical community institutions in this rural county. A fiber-based project, it will enable work-from-home jobs and foster economic development, and improve health, education and public safety services to the county citizens.

President Obama signed The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 into law on Feb. 17, 2009. It is designed to jumpstart the nation's economy, create or save millions of jobs and put a down payment on addressing long-neglected challenges so our country can thrive in the 21st century. The Act includes measures to modernize our nation's infrastructure, enhance energy independence, expand educational opportunities, preserve and improve affordable health care, provide tax relief, and protect those in greatest need.

For more information about USDA's Recovery Act efforts, including broadband, go to: [www.usda.gov/recovery](http://www.usda.gov/recovery). More information about the Federal government's efforts on the Recovery Act is available at [www.recovery.gov](http://www.recovery.gov).

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