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News Release

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USDA Invests in Rural Electric Infrastructure and Smart Grid Improvements in 13 States

*Nearly 77,000 customers will benefit from improved or new service
A solar farm in Eagle Nest, New Mexico is one of the projects receiving funds*

WASHINGTON, April 8, 2019 – Acting Assistant to the Secretary for Rural Development Joel Baxley today announced that [USDA is investing \\$485 million to upgrade rural electric systems](#) and reduce energy costs. The funding includes nearly \$7.1 million for smart grid technologies that improve system operations and monitor grid security.

“Under the leadership of Agriculture Secretary Perdue, USDA is a proud partner to utilities and cooperatives delivering reliable, affordable power to rural communities,” Baxley said. “These loans will enhance rural economic development and help improve the quality of life for people who live and work in rural America.”

USDA is providing financing through the [Electric Loan Program](#) to improve rural electric infrastructure in Georgia, Illinois, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, New Mexico, North Carolina, North Dakota, South Dakota, Texas and Wisconsin. These investments will help build or improve 2,635 miles of line.

In New Mexico a \$1,200,000 electric loan was made by Rural Development to finance the construction of a 1.3-megawatt solar farm located in the village of Eagle Nest in Colfax County. The solar farm consists of 4,032 solar panels covering 8 acres which was built by Parasol Solar late last year. The solar farm is currently up and running and provides enough electricity to power 250 homes. The electricity is being made available to customers of Kit Carson Electric Co-Operative based in Taos, New Mexico.

South Dakota’s Northern Electric Cooperative is receiving a \$24.8 million loan to build or improve 360 miles of line. The loan includes \$351,000 to incorporate smart grid technologies such as computer applications, two-way machine-to-machine communications, geospatial information systems and other tools to increase the reliability and efficiency of electric power systems. Northern Electric serves more than 6,300 consumers over 2,600 miles of line in 10 counties in northeastern South Dakota and one county in southern North Dakota.

Missouri's Central Electric Power Cooperative is receiving a \$72 million loan to finance electric distribution and transmission facilities. The upgrades will supply peak loads, conform to safety requirements and improve the reliability and resiliency of the transmission system. Central Electric also will construct backup control center facilities to ensure the continuity of operations in the event of catastrophe. It serves approximately 187,000 residential and business consumers across 22,000 square miles in 28 counties in central Missouri.

In April 2017, President Donald J. Trump established the Interagency Task Force on Agriculture and Rural Prosperity to identify legislative, regulatory and policy changes that could promote agriculture and prosperity in rural communities. In January 2018, Secretary Perdue presented the Task Force's findings to President Trump. These findings included 31 recommendations to align the federal government with state, local and tribal governments to take advantage of opportunities that exist in rural America. Increasing investments in rural infrastructure is a key recommendation of the task force.

To view the report in its entirety, please view the [Report to the President of the United States from the Task Force on Agriculture and Rural Prosperity](#) (PDF, 5.4 MB). In addition, to view the categories of the recommendations, please view the [Rural Prosperity infographic](#) (PDF, 190 KB).

USDA Rural Development provides loans and grants to help expand economic opportunities and create jobs in rural areas. This assistance supports infrastructure improvements; business development; housing; community facilities such as schools, public safety and health care; and high-speed internet access in rural areas. For more information, visit www.rd.usda.gov.

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