

Secretary Vilsack Announces Telecommunications Projects To Deliver Broadband and Job Opportunities

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MINNEAPOLIS, Minn., July 27, 2011 – Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack today announced that rural telecommunications companies have been selected to receive nearly \$192 million in loans for projects that will deliver broadband services to rural customers across eight states. These funds represent the latest investment from The Department of Agriculture's Telecommunications Infrastructure Loan Program and will add thousands of miles of cable to the telecommunications grid in rural America. The announcement was made by Rural Utilities Service Administrator Jonathan Adelstein on Vilsack's behalf at the summer meeting of the Organization for the Promotion and Advancement of Small Telecommunication Companies in Minneapolis.

"A significant portion of America still does not have adequate broadband for job and economic development activities," Vilsack said. "Working with our partners, including cooperatives and the telecommunications industry, USDA delivers broadband to rural areas, creating jobs and providing critical financial, educational and health care services. We've made a good start, but it is clear that the work of the Obama Administration and USDA is far from done."

Administered by USDA Rural Development's Rural Utilities Service (RUS), this financing is part of the \$690 million investment during fiscal year 2011 and is in addition to the \$3.5 billion in broadband funding RUS awarded for projects under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009. The telecommunications infrastructure program funds facilities and equipment to upgrade, expand, maintain and replace rural telecommunications networks.

Projects announced today include a \$70 million loan to 3 Rivers Telephone Cooperative, Inc. (3 Rivers) in Fairfield, Montana to install almost 1,700 miles of buried cable, construct buildings,

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and install electronic equipment to upgrade 10 exchanges. The deployment of this equipment will make upgraded broadband services available to approximately 4,700 households, 500 businesses, and 82 critical community organizations, such as public safety departments. 3 Rivers provides telecommunications services to subscribers over nearly 17,000 square miles of Montana.

In Oregon, Molalla Telephone Company has been selected to receive a \$22.5 million loan to expand a Fiber-to-the-Premises (FTTP) broadband system to approximately 85 percent of their subscribers.

Funding of each recipient is contingent upon their meeting the conditions of the loan agreement. A complete list of the rural utilities approved for funding is listed below:

Iowa

- Farmers Mutual Telephone Company: \$18,205,000

Iowa and Missouri

- IAMO Telephone Company: \$14,972,000

Kansas

- Wilson Telephone Company, Inc.: \$14,312,000

Montana

- 3 Rivers Telephone Cooperative, Inc.: \$70,000,000

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Oregon

- Molalla Telephone Company: \$22,500,000

Texas

- Coleman County Telephone Cooperative, Inc.: \$22,540,000

Washington

- Western Wahkiakum County Telephone Company: \$12,708,000

Wisconsin

- Baldwin Telecom, Inc.: \$16,716,000

USDA, through its Rural Development mission area, administers and manages housing, business and community infrastructure and facility programs through a national network of state and local offices. These programs are designed to improve the economic stability of rural communities, businesses, residents, farmers and ranchers and improve the quality of life in rural America. Rural Development has an existing portfolio of more than \$150 billion in loans and loan guarantees. Visit <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov> for additional information about the agency's programs or to locate the USDA Rural Development office nearest you.

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