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News Release

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USDA Announces Investments to Improve Rural Electric Infrastructure and Finance Smart Grid Technologies

More than 6,200 customers will benefit from improved or new service

WASHINGTON, Feb. 28, 2019 – Acting Assistant to the Secretary for Rural Development Joel Baxley today announced that USDA is [investing \\$122 million](#) to expand and upgrade rural electric systems in Arkansas, Florida, Indiana, Oklahoma and South Dakota. The funding includes more than \$7 million to finance smart grid technologies to improve system operations and monitor grid security.

“Modern and reliable electric infrastructure is foundational to building prosperity in rural America,” Baxley said. “Under the leadership of Agriculture Secretary Sonny Perdue, USDA is committed to being a strong partner in improving this essential infrastructure.”

USDA is investing in seven projects through funds from the [Electric Loan Program](#). The loans will help build or improve 964 miles of line to benefit more than 6,200 business and residential customers.

Central Florida Electric Cooperative is receiving \$17 million loan. This Rural Development investment will be used to build or improve 248 miles of distribution line and improve system operations benefitting 1,328 rural customers. This funding also includes more than \$1 million for smart grid technologies. Central Florida serves approximately 33,000 customers with 4,273 miles of line in Alachua, Dixie, Gilchrist and Levy counties. More than 2,320 of these are commercial and 500 are irrigation consumers. The co-op, which has been operational since 1940, is expected to add more than 2,100 customers during the next decade.

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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