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# News Release

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## **USDA Announces \$309 Million Investment in Rural Electric Utilities** *Loans Will Improve System Efficiency and Resiliency in 12 States* *Including one project in New Mexico*

CEDAR RAPIDS, Iowa, June 7, 2018 – Assistant to the Secretary for Rural Development Anne Hazlett today announced that USDA is investing [\\$309 million in 16 projects](#) to improve rural electric infrastructure in 12 states.

“Robust, modern infrastructure is a foundation for quality of life and economic opportunity no matter the zip code in which you live,” Hazlett said. “Under Secretary Perdue’s leadership, USDA is committed to being a strong partner in addressing rural infrastructure needs to support a more prosperous future in rural communities.”

Hazlett made the announcement here today during a visit to the Central Iowa Power Cooperative. One of its members, Farmers Electric Cooperative in Greenfield, Iowa, is receiving a \$1.4 million USDA loan to invest in smart grid projects. Farmers plans to install more than 5,800 single-phase meters and additional meter reading equipment in its west-central Iowa service area.

Hazlett also announced the Lea County Electric Cooperative, headquartered in Lovington, New Mexico is receiving a \$36.5 million loan to build 73 miles of electric line and improve 57 miles more miles and make other system improvements. The loan amount includes \$1 million for smart grid projects. Headquartered in Lovington Lea County Electric Cooperative’s service area includes Lea, Eddy and Chaves counties in Eastern New Mexico and Yoakum, Cochran and Gaines counties in West Texas. The cooperative serves nearly 16,000 consumers over 4,254 miles of line.

The loans announced today are being made through USDA’s [Electric Infrastructure Loan and Loan Guarantee program](#). It helps finance generation, transmission and distribution projects; system improvements; and energy conservation projects in communities with 10,000 or fewer residents.

Today’s investments will build or improve 1,660 miles of electric line serving rural homes, farms and businesses. USDA is funding infrastructure improvements for utilities in Alabama, Arizona, California, Colorado, Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, North Carolina, New Mexico, Ohio, South Dakota and Washington.

Funding for these loans was included in the FY 2018 Omnibus spending bill. It allocates significant resources for infrastructure investments, including \$6.25 billion to USDA for electric loans. The measure also directs Secretary Perdue to make investments in rural communities with the greatest infrastructure needs.

In addition to funding in the 2018 Omnibus bill, President Trump has proposed a \$200 billion infrastructure investment plan that allocates 25 percent (\$50 billion) to rural projects.

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 services such as schools, public safety and health care; and high-speed internet access in rural areas. For more information, visit [www.rd.usda.gov](http://www.rd.usda.gov).

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