



Rural Development • Rural Utilities Service • Telecommunications Program

Bringing Home the Broadband in Rural Minnesota

Need: Paul Bunyan Communications, based in Bemidji, Minnesota, has taken advantage of the RUS Telecommunications Broadband loan program to build-out a high speed broadband network covering their entire service area. Their goal of connecting every institution, every business, and every home to this gigabyte network is nearly complete.



Paul Bunyan Communications Staff

How Rural Development Helped: Starting out as the Paul Bunyan Telephone Cooperative in the early 1950's, the cooperative obtained their first "REA" loan in 1954. Paul Bunyan's most recent loan was in 2011 for \$19,700,000.

Results: Today, the cooperative provides all levels of voice services, network services, broadband Internet with speeds up to 150 Mbps available to all members throughout its 5,000 square miles of service territory in rural Central Northern Minnesota. They are in the process of upgrading the 30,000 access lines, 18,000 broadband and 15,000 digital television subscribers in their service territory to a gigabit network. Thanks in part to their RUS broadband loans, Paul Bunyan has been able to serve the needs of even their most information-intensive businesses (and households), and to attract others that have chosen or may be looking into Greater Bemidji as a location to start or expand operations. These and other businesses fit side by side with the anchor institutions, such as Bemidji State University (which recently received a RUS Distance Learning & Telemedicine Grant), Grand Itasca Hospital in Grand Rapids, MN, Essentia Health Clinics including the hospital in Deer River, Sanford Health Hospital and its clinics in the region, and the entire reservation of the Red Lake Chippewa Band of Indians, including the tribe's Indian Health Service facility in Bemidji. Paul Bunyan is setting a high standard for quality broadband service in Rural America.

Obligation Amounts: \$19,700,000 loan

Date of Obligations: 2011

Congressional Districts: Representatives Peterson & Nolan, 7th & 8th Districts; Sen. Klobuchar & Franken

Demographics: Residents, businesses and organization located in Beltrami, Hubbard, and Itasca Counties, Minnesota.

Impact: Funding used to install fiber optic cable to premise locations, upgrade switches, servers and other electronic equipment for high bandwidth deployment and its capabilities.