



News Release

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USDA Invests \$15.2 Million to Improve and Expand Rural Electric Infrastructure in Maine and New Hampshire

Funding Helps Aligned Solar Partners Create Clean Energy in Androscoggin, Merrimack, Carroll, Hillsborough Counties

Bangor, ME; Montpelier, VT, Jan. 30, 2023 – U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Directors for Rural Development in Maine, Rhiannon Hampson; and New Hampshire, Sarah Waring, today announced \$15,217,000 in funding through the [Electric Infrastructure Loan program](#). Aligned Solar Partners has built five solar arrays throughout the two states to generate a total of 10.291 MWdc, reducing the cost of energy for rural communities in Androscoggin County, Maine, and New Hampshire’s Carroll, Merrimack and Hillsborough Counties. The energy produced will be enough to power an average of 1800 homes annually.

In Maine, Aligned Solar Partners worked with ReVision Energy to construct a 14,040-panel array at Souther Farms, in Livermore Falls. The project is the first in Maine to provide 96 percent of its solar energy to five public schools in the state, offsetting energy costs for Camden Rockport School District, Camden Hills Regional High School, Mt. Blue Regional School District, Regional School Unit 73 and Hope Elementary School, with the remaining 4 percent benefiting the Farmington Water District. The project is anticipated to produce 6,478,200 kilowatt hours of clean energy annually.

“This project is fantastic in its breadth,” said Hampson. “Through this lease, Mr. Souther secured his generational family farm while helping several school districts offset carbon emissions and reduce utility costs. With this thoughtful demonstration of how working agricultural lands and renewable energy projects can coexist, Mr. Souther has left a legacy of innovation, proving once again that our heritage industries have the capacity to adapt. He made each student within collaborating districts a partner in building their brighter futures, and has offered us a stellar example to chart a course by.”

In New Hampshire, Aligned Solar will team up with energy provider Eversource to power the Stonyfield Farm processing facility in Londonderry. Through solar arrays in Conway, Loudon and two in Nashua, the dairy company will benefit from a significant reduction in energy costs. The project is anticipated to produce 7,098,352 kilowatt hours of clean energy annually.

“Today’s funding reflects the agency’s proactive commitment to fighting climate change head-on,” said Waring. “With this investment, Stonyfield Farm will be positioned to create more jobs, more business opportunities and more resilience in the face of future challenges—while doing its part to reduce carbon emissions. Lower costs ensure the long-term viability of New Hampshire’s farms and agricultural producers, who are increasingly on the forefront of the transition to clean energy. With projects like this, the USDA is making the promise to power tomorrow’s rural economies through innovation, imagination and collaboration for generations to come.”

“Aligned deeply appreciates our partnership with the USDA Rural Utilities Service,” said Peter Davidson, CEO of Aligned Climate Capital. “Together, we have brought low-cost, clean energy to rural electric customers throughout northern New England.”

USDA Secretary Tom Vilsack also announced the Department is investing \$2.7 billion across 26 states to help 64 electric cooperatives and utilities expand and modernize the nation’s rural electric grid and increase grid security for nearly 2 million people. The other states are Alabama, Arkansas, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Iowa, Indiana, Kentucky, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, Montana, Nebraska, New Mexico, North Carolina, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, Washington and Wisconsin.

“These critical investments will benefit rural people and businesses in many ways for decades to come,” Vilsack said. “This funding will help rural cooperatives and utilities invest in changes that make our energy more efficient, more reliable, and more affordable. Investing in infrastructure – roads, bridges, broadband and energy – supports good-paying jobs and keeps the United States poised to lead the global economy.”

The loans include \$613 million to help rural utilities and cooperatives install and upgrade smart grid technologies. Smart grid can be a catalyst for broadband and other telecommunications services in unserved and underserved rural areas in addition to improving grid security and reliability.

In the coming months, USDA will announce additional energy infrastructure financing. The Biden-Harris Administration’s [Inflation Reduction Act](#) provided more than \$12 billion to USDA for loans and grants to expand clean energy, transform rural power production, create jobs and spur economic growth. This funding will help make energy cleaner, more reliable and more affordable. USDA’s Electric Loan Program can help finance wind, solar and natural gas plants, as well as improvements to produce cleaner energy from coal-fired plants. Local utilities also use the loans to invest in infrastructure to deliver affordable power to millions of residential, commercial and agricultural consumers.

Under the Biden-Harris Administration, Rural Development provides loans and grants to help expand economic opportunities, create jobs and improve the quality of life for millions of Americans 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, Tribal and high-poverty areas. For more information, visit www.rd.usda.gov.

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