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# News Release

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## **USDA Invests \$1.4 Billion in Rural Electric Infrastructure Improvements in 21 States**

*Investments will Benefit Residents and Businesses of Middle Tennessee*

**NASHVILLE, Tenn.**, Nov. 1, 2019 – U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue today announced that the [U.S. Department of Agriculture \(USDA\) is investing \\$1.4 billion in projects in 21 states to build and improve rural electric infrastructure](#). Tennessee Rural Development State Director Jim Tracy is pleased to announce 12 rural Tennessee counties will benefit from improvements to electric infrastructure.

“We are pleased to be making investments in Meriwether Lewis Electric Cooperative,” Tracy said. “The improvements made will allow for elevated levels of service to their customers and the overall quality of life in rural Tennessee.”

### **Background:**

USDA is providing financing through the [Electric Loan Program](#). It will help build and improve 6,886 miles of line to strengthen reliability in rural areas. The loans include \$255.8 million for investments in smart grid infrastructure that uses digital communications technology to detect and react to local changes in electricity usage.

Among the loans announced today, Tennessee’s Meriwether Lewis Electric Cooperative will receive a \$60 million loan to install smart grid applications. Meriwether Lewis is a member-owned electric cooperative headquartered in Centerville, Tenn. It serves approximately 34,200 customers, over 3,857 miles of line.

USDA also announced investments today in Arkansas, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Indiana, Kansas, Kentucky, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, New Mexico, North Carolina, Ohio, Oregon, South Carolina, South Dakota, Texas, Vermont and Wisconsin. USDA will make additional funding announcements in coming weeks.

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/tn](http://www.rd.usda.gov/tn).

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