



**United States  
Department of  
Agriculture**

## **Southwest REAP Zone**

**Lead Entity:** Southwest REAP Zone, North Dakota

**Demographics:** Includes the counties of Dunn, Stark, Hettinger, Adams, Bowman, Slope, Golden Valley, Billings, and part of the Fort Berthold Indian Reservation

**Background:** USDA has undertaken a pilot program entitled, Rural Economic Area Partnership (REAP) to implement new and innovative approaches to community economic development that are based on cooperation, partnership and sustainability. Generally, over the last decade rural limited resource areas have had a steady decline in both public/private business and service. Also, these areas are low in population density, have limited economic diversification and have above average out-migration. One intent of the REAP pilot project is to utilize federal, state and local public and private resources in cooperation and partnership to efficiently and effectively address the problem of out-migration. The resources provided will target new wealth creation through economic diversification and the development of primary sector job opportunities.

**Purpose:** The REAP pilot program was established to assist in the mitigation of the negative effects of continued out-migration and population loss. If out-migration and population loss were to continue over the next few decades, as it has in the past, there may not be enough critical mass of population or public and private services to maintain the desired quality of life for which local citizens aspire.

The task of slowing this negative trend, much less stopping it or hopefully reversing its direction, is of such magnitude that only a targeted, committed, and good-willed effort by all parties will effectively meet the challenge. Through intense leadership training and community involvement, it is the goal of all parties concerned to establish a sustainable economic development structure and process within the REAP Zones which will help local citizens to more effectively take charge of their future.

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