

Contact:  
Jane Grant (701) 530-2037

## **RURAL DEVELOPMENT ANNOUNCES \$62 MILLION IN ELECTRIC LOANS TO BOLSTER RURAL INFRASTRUCTURE IN NORTH DAKOTA**

*Schneider says, "Investment Will Benefit More Than 3,168 Rural Customers in North Dakota."*

BISMARCK, March 4, 2010 – USDA Rural Development State Director Jasper Schneider today announced that three rural utilities and cooperatives in North Dakota have been selected to receive **\$62 million** in loans and loan guarantees to build and repair more than 614 miles of distribution and transmission lines and make system improvements that will benefit more than 3,168 rural customers.

The funding is being provided under USDA Rural Development's Electric Loan Program. It may be used to expand or improve electric service, support renewable energy efforts and establish energy conservation programs. The loans and loan guarantees are part of USDA Rural Development's annual budget and are not funded through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009.

"The electric cooperatives in North Dakota play an essential role in the rural economy," Schneider said. "They provide a vital service to rural residences and to industries/operations such as farming, ranching, dairy, oil production, ethanol, power production, and mining."

The three rural utilities and cooperatives are part of the 29 rural utilities and cooperatives projects in 16 states announced by USDA Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack to receive loans and loan guarantees to build and repair more than 5,600 miles of distribution and transmission lines and make system improvements that will benefit more than 55,000 rural customers.

"Reliable electric service is a key to economic growth and development and the funding that I am announcing today will help many rural utilities improve service to their customers and owner-members," Vilsack said. "These investments are a critical part of the Obama Administration's actions to develop the infrastructure and build the economy of rural communities."

**For example, the Mountrail-Williams Electric Cooperative in Williston, N.D., has been selected to receive a \$30 million loan** to provide service to 370 new consumers, make service improvements for 200 existing consumers, build 58 miles of new distribution line, make improvements to 202 miles of distribution line, build five new distribution substations, improve one existing distribution substation, build 37 miles of

new transmission line, improve 11 miles of existing transmission line, and make general system improvements.

This loan includes funds to improve the transmission system serving the Fort Berthold Indian Reservation. This infrastructure upgrade will support present and future reservation oil and economic development.

Counties include: Burke, Divide, McKenzie, McLean, Mountrail, Ward, and Williams in North Dakota and Roosevelt and Sheridan in Montana.

**In Cando, N.D., the Northern Plains Electric Cooperative has been selected for a \$17 million loan** to provide service to 566 new consumers, make service improvements for 570 existing consumers, build 19 miles of new distribution line, make improvements to 70 additional miles of distribution line, provide for improved automated meter reading capability, and make general system improvements.

**Northern Plains Electric Cooperative** serves portions of the Turtle Mountain Chippewa Reservation and the Spirit Lake Sioux Reservation. Native Americans represent 14 percent of the cooperative's membership, which accounts for substantial residential sales growth requiring the planned construction upgrades supported by this new loan.

Counties include: Barnes, Benson, Eddy, Foster, Griggs, Kidder, Pierce, Ramsey, Rolette, Stutsman, Towner, and Wells.

**The Capital Electric Cooperative, Inc., in Bismarck, N.D., has been selected to receive a \$15 million loan** to provide service to 1,352 new consumers, make service improvements for 110 existing consumers, build 16 miles of new distribution line, make improvements to 185 miles of distribution line, build one new distribution substation, make improvements at nine other distribution substations, build/improve 16 miles of transmission line, and make general system improvements.

Counties include: Burleigh, Emmons, Kidder, McLean, and Sheridan

USDA Rural Development administers and manages more than 40 housing, business, and community infrastructure and facility programs through a network of 6,100 employees located in the nation's capital and 500 state and local offices. These programs are designed to improve the economic stability of rural communities, businesses, residents, farmers and ranchers and improve the quality of life in rural America. Rural Development has an existing portfolio of more than \$125 billion in loans and loan guarantees.

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