



NEWS RELEASE

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Broadband Access Builds Main Streets and Mainstream Economics

It goes without saying that broadband-high speed internet is changing the way Americans live their lives. It's almost hard to remember how many of us got by without it. With access to broadband, we can easily sell a car, rent an apartment, look for a job, read the news, or manage a business. The advantage of the broadband network is that it can connect you to the rest of the world on your schedule, at your convenience and *almost* anywhere – that is unless you live in rural America.

Today too few rural Americans take advantage of the opportunities broadband provides. Only half of rural residents subscribe to broadband – compared to 65 percent nationwide – because too many communities in rural America don't have adequate access to broadband infrastructure.

Simply put, building a broadband infrastructure is critical to creating jobs and economic opportunity in rural America. With investments in broadband we are fostering innovation and bringing America's rural communities into the digital age. A young person doesn't have to move to the nearest city to make a living. He or she can create, develop, and run a business at home, in rural America, and be successful. A young parent can work and raise a family and still connect with business partners across the country or around the world. With new or enhanced broadband access, the door to economic growth is open.

When broadband access reaches into rural communities:

- farmers and ranchers will have up-to-the-minute commodity and weather information to make the best decisions for their operations;
- schools can expand limited course offerings through distance learning – both advancing education and better preparing students to compete in the 21st century economy;
- first responders will have information they need to keep their communities safer;
- and rural health care will improve, as medical specialists will be able to use telemedicine to provide advanced diagnosis for patients or to consult with colleagues at other hospitals.

At the Department of Agriculture, we are focused every day creating thriving rural communities where people want to live and raise families. We want every parent and grandparent in rural America to be able to look their child or grandchild in the eye and tell them that their home town has the economic opportunities necessary to offer them a bright future.

The Obama Administration recently announced investment in sixty-six new Recovery Act broadband projects nationwide, the second round of funding for broadband infrastructure from

Committed to the future of rural communities.

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President Obama's Recovery Act. Thirty-seven of these new projects will help expand broadband access in rural America. These projects will not only directly create over 5,000 jobs up front, but spur economic development in some of the nation's hardest-hit communities, creating jobs for years to come.

These funds will put people to work constructing new facilities, erecting towers to transmit signals and high speed broadband services installed in homes, businesses and community education, safety and public health centers. But the investments will also foster long term economic growth. The \$7.5 billion provided by the Recovery Act to help expand broadband will benefit tens of millions of Americans and over 685,000 businesses, 900 healthcare facilities and 2,400 schools in all fifty states.

We will see the impact of broadband locally when the Hardy Telecommunications, Inc.. project moves forward.

- The Hardy OneNet Fiber to the Home Project: \$9,494,483 loan and \$22,153,791 grant. This project is a fiber-to-the-home network providing affordable, reliable ultra-high speed Internet access, VoIP, and video services to underserved areas in Hardy County, West Virginia. It will be a turning point for underserved rural mountain communities, allowing instant access to share information and ideas with others across the world, and increase knowledge, productivity and prosperity.

Hardy Telecommunications is a nonprofit rural telephone cooperative committed to working together with its members, and other nonprofit organizations and public institutions, to serve the needs of the people of Hardy County.

President Obama signed the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 into law with a vision of knowing it will help America. In addition to the jobs it will create and save in West Virginia and across the country, it will stimulate the national economy. In the longer-term, it is the foundation for sustainable growth and keeping us competitive within the global economy.

Rural Development serves as the lead Federal entity for rural development needs and administers program assistance through its housing, business, community and infrastructure programs. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability and where applicable, sex, marital status, familial status, parental status, religion, sexual orientation, genetic information, political beliefs, reprisal, or because all or part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.)

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