

**USDA AWARDS \$677 MILLION IN ELECTRIC LOANS
40,000 Consumers Reached**

WASHINGTON, Aug. 22, 2008 —Agriculture Secretary Ed Schafer today announced the selection of 20 rural utilities and cooperatives to receive almost \$677 million in loans for new electric lines and system improvements in 19 states.

“America’s electric co-ops provide a vital service to rural areas, electrifying communities, serving farms, businesses and homeowners,” Schafer said. “Electric co-ops do it with a remarkable track record of reliability. The loans we’re announcing today will help make system improvements that will benefit consumers across the nation.”

The loan funds will finance the construction and repair of over 4,200 miles of distribution and transmission lines benefiting almost 40,000 rural electric cooperative consumers. For example, East Central Energy in Braham, Minn., has been selected to receive a loan of over \$49 million to serve 4,600 new consumers in Minnesota and Wisconsin. The utility will make system improvements to construct and upgrade over 700 miles of distribution lines. Suwannee Valley Electric Cooperative in Live Oak, Fla., has been selected to receive an \$18 million loan to build or improve almost 325 miles of distribution lines and provide service to almost 3,700 new consumers. Central Electric Cooperative in Parker, Pa., will receive a \$17 million loan to build and improve over 400 miles of distribution lines and provide service to almost 1,400 new consumers.

The funding is being awarded through USDA Rural Development’s Utilities Programs, which Congress authorized under the Rural Electrification Act of 1936. USDA Rural Development has awarded approximately \$28 billion in electric loans since 2001.

Funding of these individual recipients is contingent upon their meeting the conditions of the loan agreement:

Borrower	State	Loan Amount
Suwannee Valley Electric Cooperative	FL	\$18,000,000
The Central Georgia EMC	GA	\$48,648,000
Pioneer Electric Cooperative	KS	\$9,419,000
East Kentucky Power Cooperative	KY	\$108,147,000
Pennyrile RECC	KY	\$36,056,000
South Kentucky RECC	KY/TN	\$30,762,000
Mille Lacs Electric Cooperative	MN	\$8,000,000
Minnkota Power Cooperative	MN/ND	\$115,892,000
East Central Energy	MN/WI	\$49,289,000
Ralls County Electric Cooperative	MO	\$8,000,000
Grundy Electric Cooperative	MO/IA	\$5,000,000
Surry-Yadkin EMC	NC	\$20,000,000

Tri-County EMC	NC	\$16,000,000
Pee Dee EMC	NC	\$12,000,000
Delaware County Electric Cooperative	NY	\$5,000,000
Midwest Electric	OH	\$7,000,000
Central Electric Coop	PA	\$17,000,000
Southeastern Electric Cooperative	SD	\$15,332,000
East Texas Electric Cooperative	TX/LA	\$137,476,000
Beartooth Electric Cooperative	MT/WY	\$9,895,000

USDA Rural Development's mission is to increase economic opportunity and improve the quality of life for rural residents. Rural Development has invested more than \$91 billion since 2001 for equity and technical assistance to finance and foster growth in homeownership, business development, and critical community and technology infrastructure. More than 1.7 million jobs have been created or saved through these investments. Further information on rural programs is available at a local USDA Rural Development office or by visiting USDA Rural Development's web site at <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov>.

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