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**USDA RURAL DEVELOPMENT AWARDS \$4.95 MILLION FOR PUBLIC TV
DIGITAL TELEVISION GRANTS**

WASHINGTON, September 7, 2007 – Agriculture Under Secretary Thomas C. Dorr today announced the award of \$4.95 million in public television digital transition grants to fund seven projects in six states.

“This funding from Rural Development will enable rural public television stations to install the digital transmission equipment that must be in place by February 17, 2009,” Dorr said. “These grants will ensure that public television and emergency and educational programming continues to be provided in rural areas.”

Mississippi Public Broadcasting was awarded \$1.86 million for two projects to enable several counties in the Hurricane Katrina-damaged Mississippi Delta region to upgrade coverage and receive a digital public television station signal for the first time. The Oklahoma Educational Television Authority will receive \$1 million to fund the digital conversion of three rural translators. ***Prairie Broadcasting in North Dakota was awarded a grant of \$837,895 to convert its Dickinson transmitter from analog to digital, and to fund tower upgrades.***

Tennessee’s WCTE TV, an active producer of local programming, will receive \$826,000 to buy digital production equipment. Northern Minnesota Public Television will receive \$398,436 for digital production equipment to continue providing areas in rural Northern Minnesota with viewers’ only local news programming. South Dakota Public TV was awarded \$25,510 to replace a translator that serves the Pine Ridge Oglala Sioux Reservation.

Funding awarded through the Digital Public Television grant program also may be used for engineering and environmental studies associated with the transition to digital television.

USDA Rural Development’s mission is to increase economic opportunity and improve the quality of life for rural residents. USDA Rural Development has invested more than \$76.8 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 1.5 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’s web site at <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov>.

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