



NEWS RELEASE

United States Department of Agriculture • Rural Development
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USDA ANNOUNCES \$120 MILLION IN RURAL ELECTRIC LOANS

Electric Service Expanded in Six States to Serve 16,500 Future Consumers

ROME, Ga., April 15, 2004 — Agriculture Secretary Ann M. Veneman today approved \$120 million for six loan or loan guarantee applications to expand rural electric service in six states. These funds further bolster President Bush's goal to improve the quality of life in rural communities.

"These funds support rural economic development by expanding access to electric service and improving infrastructure to attract job-creating businesses," Veneman said. "The Bush Administration remains committed to improving local economic opportunities in rural communities throughout the nation."

Loans and loan guarantees are made available to finance the construction or replacement of electric transmission and generation facilities in rural areas through USDA Rural Development's utilities program. This program provides reliable, affordable electricity to the nation's rural communities.

In fiscal year 2003, the Bush Administration invested over \$6.3 billion in grants, loans and loan guarantees to support the development and/or improvements to rural electric, telephone and water/wastewater infrastructure that helped create or save an estimated 150,000 jobs. The funds announced today will serve 16,500 future customers, build 1,300 miles of new line and fund general system-wide modernization.

In North Dakota a loan application was approved for \$10,237,000 to Mor-Gran-Sou Electric Cooperative located in Flasher, ND, to construct 54 miles of new distribution line serving 570 new consumers in Grant, Mercer, Morton, Oliver and Sioux Counties in North Dakota and Corson County in South Dakota.

Funding of selected applicants will be contingent upon meeting the conditions of the loan agreement. USDA Rural Development's mission is to deliver programs that will support increasing economic opportunity and improve the quality of life of rural residents.

USDA Rural Development serves as the lead federal entity for rural economic and community development needs. It administers financial and technical assistance through a network of state Rural Development offices, various non-profit and educational institutional partners, and its national office.

In Fiscal Year 2003, USDA Rural Development provided over **\$73.5 million dollars** in loan and grant financing to North Dakota citizens.