

USDA / Rural Development

Bismarck, North Dakota

For Immediate Release

Local Contact: Jane Grant (800) 582-7584

USDA ANNOUNCES \$15 MILLION IN PUBLIC TELEVISION STATION DIGITAL TRANSITION GRANTS

WASHINGTON, February 20, 2004—Agriculture Secretary Ann M. Veneman today announced the selection of 16 recipients in 13 states to receive \$15 million in grant funds to finance the conversion of television services to digital broadcasting for small rural public television stations.

“Bringing digital age broadcasting to rural America ensures that more remote rural residents have access to state-of-the-art broadcasting technology for viewing educational programming as well as important local information,” said Veneman.

Many rural communities depend on public television stations for services ranging from educational course content in their schools to local news, weather and agricultural reports. The recipients selected for the competitive grant program are from rural areas, have the least resources, and provide the greatest public need to their communities.

To meet the requirements of transition to digital broadcasting, a station must install a new antenna, transmitter or translator, and new digital program management facilities consisting of processing and storage systems. If a station is to perform a program origination, which many do, digital cameras, editing and mastering systems are required.

“Rural Development is proud to provide financial assistance to western North Dakota communities to improve their broadcasting capabilities,” said Clare Carlson, North Dakota Rural Development State Director. “This is evidence of the Bush Administration’s commitment to improving the infrastructure of rural America.”

North Dakota Prairie Public Broadcasting will receive \$2 million. Presently, the main studio is located in Fargo where digital multicast and high definition programming originates for its eight digital transmitters. The Fargo studio already has a digital connection to the Bismarck studio, but the three stations west of Bismarck still lack a digital signal. The RUS grant funds a digital microwave system that would provide the final studio-to-transmitter (STL) communication links necessary to deliver digital programming to the western North Dakota stations KSRE-DT/Minot, KWSE-DT/Williston and KDSE-DT Dickinson.

Funds will be provided through the USDA Rural Development Telecommunications Program. Funding of selected applicants will be contingent upon meeting the conditions of the grant agreement. USDA Rural Development's mission is to deliver programs in a way that will support increasing economic opportunity and improve the quality of life of rural residents. As a venture capital entity, Rural Development provides equity and technical assistance to finance and foster growth in homeownership, business development, and critical community and technology infrastructure. 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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