

Bringing broadband to rural America is an economic gateway for people, business owners, and key institutions such as libraries, hospitals, public safety buildings and community centers.

I'm Dallas Tonsager, Under Secretary for Rural Development at USDA - our mission is to increase economic opportunity and improve the quality of life for all rural Americans.

Access to high-speed broadband levels the economic playing field for rural communities – strengthening competition and increasing access to markets. Equally important is broadband's ability to improve the quality of life for local residents through improved access to educational resources and state-of-the-art healthcare. I'm Dallas Tonsager, Under Secretary for USDA's Rural Development – our mission is to increase economic opportunity and improve the quality of life for all rural Americans.

Through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, Congress provided \$2.5 billion to USDA's Rural Utilities Service, known as RUS, to facilitate broadband in rural communities. RUS can leverage these resources and provide far more in loans, grants, and loan/grant combinations, which will increase the taxpayer's investment and provide more rural Americans with access to broadband. To date, USDA Rural Development has provided \$895 million to support 55 broadband projects in 29 states or territories.

These investments are more critical than ever in rural communities. They are helping create jobs and wealth, driving economic growth, advancing education, fostering innovation, and ensuring that first responders have the tools they need. That is why USDA Rural Development is so excited to use these once-in-a-lifetime Recovery Act funds to help reach remote rural areas.

Let me point out one of RUS's many Broadband success stories. A few years ago, USDA Rural Development awarded a \$436,000 grant to Sacred Wind Communications in New Mexico to establish broadband internet connections at a computer lab to be used by the tribe and community members. If it had not been for the USDA Broadband Grant, the Huerfano community would not have had the

scholastic and employment successes and gained a familiarity with computers that they have experienced.

Investments in technology like broadband have helped keep the United States at the center of innovation and kept U.S. companies competitive around the world.