

## USDA Funding Expands Broadband Access

Written by USDA

Friday, 20 November 2015 16:26 -

---



STEVENS POINT, WI - USDA Rural Utilities Service Administrator Brandon McBride announced Thursday that nearly six million Americans who live and work in rural areas now have access to new or improved high-speed Internet service, thanks to USDA funding provided in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.

“I am proud to announce today that all of the active projects USDA has financed through the Recovery Act are now providing broadband service in rural areas nationwide,” McBride said. “In 2009, the Obama Administration pushed for, and Congress provided USDA with, an unprecedented level of funding and five years to connect rural areas to high-speed networks. Bringing broadband to these areas is having a tremendous impact on rural communities. This access means more jobs, better education and a higher quality of life. The economic viability of rural America, like all of America, depends on access to broadband.”

In Wisconsin, USDA Rural Development provided more than \$85.4 million in Recovery Act loans and grants for 15 broadband projects serving rural communities. Across the nation, 254 Recovery Act broadband projects financed by USDA’s Rural Utilities Service totaling \$2.9 billion are providing broadband service in 44 states and American Samoa. More than half the infrastructure projects were completed under budget, resulting in the return of nearly \$113 million to the Treasury. The measure’s five year period for funding broadband projects expired at the end of the 2015 fiscal year.

These projects have brought high-speed Internet access to 260,000 rural households, 17,500 businesses and 1,900 community facilities. The service providers estimate that completed projects could provide access for more than 5.8 million rural consumers.

“We’ve accomplished a great deal as a result of the Recovery Act funding,” McBride noted. “But we still have more to do. Too many rural Americans are still living on the wrong side of the digital divide. USDA is committed to bridging that divide by getting more rural Americans online at work, at school and at home.”

According to the Federal Communications Commission, only 47 percent of people who live and

## USDA Funding Expands Broadband Access

Written by USDA

Friday, 20 November 2015 16:26 -

---

work in rural areas have access to high-speed internet, compared to 90 percent of those who live and work in urban and metropolitan areas.

While Congress instructed USDA to improve rural broadband access as part of a sweeping set of infrastructure investments funded through the Recovery Act, USDA is financing additional expansions to rural broadband service through other annual funding.

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 the lead federal agency for rural development needs, USDA Rural Development can help rural communities and regions grow and prosper by offering a variety of financial and technical assistance programs that encourage the development of strong community and economic development strategies.

During this past year, USDA Rural Development's \$571 million investment in Wisconsin helped create or retain nearly 1,380 jobs, aided 3,600 families in buying their own homes and assisted more than 50 communities as they made improvements to their facilities, services and infrastructure.

Further information on USDA Rural Development is available at a local USDA Rural Development office or by visiting the web site at [www.rd.usda.gov/wi](http://www.rd.usda.gov/wi).

###

*USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.*

<http://www.rd.usda.gov/newsroom/news-release/usda-funding-expands-broadband-access-nearly-six-million-rural-residents-0>

- [ARRA Broadband Completion news release CHART.pdf](#)
- [15.11.19 Broadband Natl WI.docx](#)

**USDA Funding Expands Broadband Access**

Written by USDA  
Friday, 20 November 2015 16:26 -

---