

USDA Invests \$274,000 in 21 Wisconsin Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Projects

Written by USDA, Kevin Tuttle
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<http://newiproggressive.com/images/stories/S5/solar-panels-s5.jpg>



Funding includes grants for solar energy to create jobs, promote energy independence and advance the use of renewable fuels.

STEVENS POINT, WI – USDA Rural Development funded 21 rural Wisconsin energy projects under the latest round of Rural Energy for America Program (REAP) funding. Eleven of the projects are solar projects, continuing the Obama Administration's "all-of-the-above" energy strategy. It is the most recent of a series of USDA actions to strengthen the country's energy sector.

USDA Rural Development State Director, Stan Gruszynski, said the projects reflect a spectrum of energy conservation and production initiatives in place across rural Wisconsin that utilize renewable energy and create jobs.

"Alternative energy production is no longer a matter of speculation or unproven technology. Wisconsin businesses, producers, manufacturers and homeowners are moving us in the direction of energy independence by better conservation and renewable resource production. The Renewable Energy for America Program has been a catalyst for us, I am proud that Wisconsin Rural Development continues to be a national leader in program participation," Gruszynski commented.

For example, USDA awarded a \$17,250 grant to Markesan Veterinary Clinic to help finance the purchase and installation of a solar electric system in Green Lake County; and a \$10,623 grant to Sippl's Sap Shack, LLC, in Shawano County, to assist in the purchase and installation of a new reverse osmosis system that saves \$14,000 a year in utility costs for this maple syrup producer.

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack recently announced that USDA is investing in 540 renewable energy and energy efficiency projects nationwide.

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“These loan guarantees and grants will have far-reaching impacts nationwide, particularly in the rural communities where these projects are located,” Vilsack said. “Investing in renewable energy and energy efficiency will continue the unprecedented increase in home-grown energy sources and American energy independence we’ve seen in recent years. This is creating jobs, providing new economic opportunities and leading the way to a more secure energy future.”

The Rural Energy for America Program provides financial assistance to agricultural producers and rural small businesses in rural America to purchase, install, and construct renewable energy systems; make energy efficiency improvements to non-residential buildings and facilities; use renewable technologies that reduce energy consumption; and participate in energy audits and renewable energy development assistance. REAP was created by the 2008 Farm Bill and was reauthorized by the recently passed 2014 Farm Bill.

Funding is contingent upon the recipients meeting the terms of the loan or grant agreement.

Since the start of the Obama Administration, REAP has supported more than 8,800 renewable energy and energy efficiency projects nationwide. During this period, USDA has provided more than \$276 million in grants and \$268 million in loan guarantees to agricultural producers and rural small business owners.

President Obama’s historic investments in rural America have made our rural communities stronger. Under his leadership, these investments in housing, community facilities, businesses and infrastructure have empowered rural America to continue leading the way – strengthening America’s economy, small towns and rural communities.

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