

In Episode 56ZLA USDA Empowering Rural America (New ERA) Program. Excerpts edited by RAWSEP for brevity and clarity and relationship to Residents Against Wood Smoke Emission Particulates, a 501c3 nonprofit organization. Transforming Rural Electric Cooperatives. Rural Electric Cooperatives are member-owned nonprofit utilities that serve around 12 percent of the nation's population across almost every state and own 42 percent of America's Distribution lines. They are much more carbon intensive than their utility counterparts. On Thursday September 5, 2024, President Biden announced 16 rural electric cooperatives selected to receive up to \$7.3 Billion in clean energy financing. September 5: First round of the selected New ERA Rural Electric Co-ops. The first round of selectees and the states they serve are as follows:

- Allegheny Electric Cooperative Inc., Pennsylvania and New Jersey
- Arizona Electric Power Cooperative, Inc., Arizona, California, Nevada, and New Mexico
- Basin Electric Power Cooperative, Montana, North Dakota, and South Dakota
- Buckeye Power, Inc., Ohio
- CORE Electric Cooperative, Colorado
- Dairyland Power Cooperative, Wisconsin, Iowa, Illinois, and Minnesota
- East Kentucky Power Cooperative, Kentucky
- Golden Valley Electric Association, Alaska
- Great River Energy, Minnesota, North Dakota, and Wisconsin
- Hoosier Energy, Indiana and Michigan
- Minnkota Power Cooperative, North Dakota and Minnesota
- San Miguel Electric Cooperative Inc., Texas
- Seminole Electric Cooperative, Inc., Florida
- Tri-State Generation and Transmission Association, Inc., Colorado, New Mexico, Nebraska, and Wyoming
- United Power, Colorado
- Wolverine Power Supply Cooperative, Michigan

October 25: Second Round of Selected New ERA Rural Electric Co-ops. Six Selectees. Connexus Energy, serving rural communities in Minnesota and South Dakota, Central Electric Power Cooperative Inc, serving rural communities in South Carolina, Poudre Valley Rural Electric Association Inc., serving rural communities in Colorado, Nebraska Electric Generation, serving rural communities in Nebraska, Rayburn Country Electric Cooperative serving rural communities in Texas, and Yampa Valley Electric Association, serving rural communities in Colorado

Impacts: 24 New ERA Co-ops  
The Empowering Rural America (New ERA) program helps rural Americans transition to clean, affordable, and reliable energy. By reducing air and water pollution, New ERA funding improves health outcomes and lowers energy costs for people in rural communities. New ERA program funding is available to member-owned rural electric cooperatives, which have been the backbone of America's rural power delivery for nearly a century. This \$9.7 billion program, which USDA will use to finance more than that in loans in grants, is part of the Inflation Reduction Act and represents the largest investment in rural electrification since President Franklin Delano Roosevelt signed the Rural Electrification Act into law in 1936. USDA is committed to supporting clean energy investments that reduce pollution, upgrade rural America's power grid, and deliver on the Biden-Harris administration promise to strengthen America's energy security. Together, these projects will keep electricity costs low for hardworking families, farmers and small business owners and prevent power outages in the face of extreme weather exacerbated by the climate crisis. The New ERA project investments will strengthen the nation's energy independence, create good-paying jobs, and enhance the resiliency of our nation's electric grid. Announcements. President's announcement on September 5, 2024 | [Press Release](#). Secretary's announcement on

## USDA Empowering Rural America (New ERA) Program: Transforming Rural Electric Cooperatives

- Rural electric cooperatives are member-owned, nonprofit utilities that serve ~12 percent of the nation's population across almost every state and own 42 percent of America's distribution lines.
- They are much more carbon intensive than their utility counterparts.
- On Thursday September 5, 2024, President Biden announced 16 rural electric cooperatives selected to receive up to \$7.3 billion in clean energy financing.



### September 5: First Round of Selected New ERA Rural Electric Co-ops

- Allegheny Electric Cooperative Inc., Pennsylvania and New Jersey
- Arizona Electric Power Cooperative, Inc., Arizona, California, Nevada, and New Mexico
- Basin Electric Power Cooperative, Montana, North Dakota, and South Dakota
- Buckeye Power, Inc., Ohio
- CORE Electric Cooperative, Colorado
- Dairyland Power Cooperative, Wisconsin, Iowa, Illinois, and Minnesota
- East Kentucky Power Cooperative, Kentucky
- Golden Valley Electric Association, Alaska
- Great River Energy, Minnesota, North Dakota, and Wisconsin
- Hoosier Energy, Indiana and Michigan
- Minnkota Power Cooperative, North Dakota and Minnesota
- San Miguel Electric Cooperative Inc., Texas
- Seminole Electric Cooperative, Inc., Florida
- Tri-State Generation and Transmission Association, Inc., Colorado, New Mexico, Nebraska, and Wyoming
- United Power, Colorado
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said Hoosier Energy President & CEO Donna Walker. "If awarded, the Empowering Rural America New ERA investment will assist Hoosier Energy with the continued diversification of our resource portfolio and ensure the most effective balance of reliable, affordable, sustainable energy for our 18 member cooperatives, their 730,000 member-consumers, and the communities they serve. The focus on community benefits has significant potential to positively impact the rural Illinois and Indiana areas served by Hoosier Energy as well, helping to advance workforce readiness and programs that educate member-consumers, farmers, and agribusiness on what they can do to reduce energy consumption and save money."

Tri-State Generation and Transmission Association, Inc. Tri-State Generation and Transmission Association, Inc. \$2.5 billion New ERA financing through grants and loans is expected to reduce electricity rates for cooperative members by 10 percent by 2034, amassing \$430 million in rural consumer benefits over ten years. New ERA funds will finance the purchase of 1,040 megawatts of renewable energy and more than 200 megawatts of energy storage. New ERA funds will also help Tri-State refinance the retirement of 1,100 megawatts of previously and newly announced coal-fired energy generation. The investments will provide affordable, reliable, and resilient energy to Tri-State's cooperative members across Arizona, Colorado, Nebraska, New Mexico, and Wyoming. This investment will reduce climate pollution by nearly 5.8 million tons annually. This transformative investment is expected to create over 2,000 jobs. "New ERA represents the largest investment in rural electric cooperatives and the communities they serve since the Rural Electrification Act of 1936," said Tri-State Chief Executive Officer Duane Highley. "We couldn't be more excited by this opportunity to leverage New ERA to serve our cooperative's members and support our communities through unparalleled investments that achieve significant greenhouse gas emissions reductions while maintaining the reliable, affordable electricity rural communities count on."

Wolverine Power Supply Cooperative. The New ERA investment will be used by Wolverine Power Cooperative to purchase 435 megawatts of clean, carbon-free wholesale energy from the Palisades Nuclear Power Plant to serve its member cooperatives throughout rural Michigan. This nearly \$650 million grant will reduce carbon emissions by nearly 2 million tons annually, putting the cooperative's members on track to reach 100 percent carbon-free energy before 2030. This proposal will reduce greenhouse gas pollution by the equivalent of removing 448,000 gasoline-powered cars each year. The restart of Palisades Nuclear Plant, a historic first for the United States, will restore and maintain a safe, highly skilled, and well-compensated workforce of 600 full-time employees, including nearly 250 union positions. In addition, Holtec signed a Project Labor Agreement with more than 15 skilled trades unions for the restart project. Wolverine's Community Benefits Plan includes meaningful support for key initiatives such as low-income community solar, skilled trades training, agricultural investments, and energy efficiency programs, which will benefit members and the communities Wolverine serves for decades to come.

"The New ERA grant opportunity inspired Wolverine to think big about decarbonization," said Wolverine's President and CEO Eric Baker. "The power purchase agreement, essential for the historic restart of the Palisades plant, enables us to achieve two critical goals: protecting Michigan's electric reliability and advancing decarbonization."

Selected Recipients. The following entities have made it past the competitive stage of the New ERA program and are now in the underwriting process to receive an award.

Arizona Electric Power Cooperative, Inc. The New ERA investment will be used for Arizona Electric Cooperative and its cooperative and public power members to transform their power portfolios with large-scale investments in renewable power, including 730 megawatts solar, 2,910-megawatt hours of battery energy storage, and 70 megawatts of wind throughout Arizona and the Southwest. These projects will reduce pollution by more than 1 million tons in carbon dioxide emissions – more than 70 percent total reduction –without sacrificing electricity reliability or affordability. This proposal will reduce greenhouse

## October 25: Second Round of Selected New ERA Rural Electric Co-ops

### Six Selectees:

- Central Electric Power Cooperative Inc., South Carolina
- Connexus Energy, Minnesota and South Dakota
- Nebraska Electric Generation & Transmission Cooperative, Nebraska
- Poudre Valley Rural Electric Association Inc, Colorado
- Rayburn Country Electric Cooperative, Texas
- Yampa Valley Electric Association, Colorado and Wyoming



## Impacts: 24 New ERA Co-ops



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|--|--|
|  | <b>11.1 Gigawatts</b><br>Clean Energy for Rural Communities                    |
|  | <b>\$33.7 Billion</b><br>Invested Investment in Clean Energy                   |
|  | <b>47.5 Million</b><br>Annual Tons of Carbon Pollution Reduced or Avoided      |
|  | <b>11.4 Million Cars</b><br>Equivalent Carbon Emission Reduction and Avoidance |



meet those needs in a way that produces less carbon emissions while holding energy costs as low as possible for our consumers.”

**Connexus Energy.** This New ERA investment will be used by Connexus Energy, Minnesota’s largest electric cooperative, to procure over 227 megawatts of renewable resources including hydro, solar, and wind energy and purchase 20 megawatts of battery energy storage in rural areas of Minnesota and South Dakota. These projects will power nearly 80,000 homes annually. Through these projects, Connexus Energy will create up to 370 short and long-term jobs, stabilize costs to rural cooperative members, and reduce carbon emissions by over 1.1 million tons each year. These projects will reduce greenhouse gas pollution equivalent to 250,000 gasoline-powered cars annually. The New ERA program is designed to meet Connexus Energy’s long-term power supply needs and reduce costs by investing in the local distribution grid, while complying with Minnesota’s 100% carbon-free mandate. These projects, which are included in Connexus Energy’s 10-year resource plan, are expected to lower members’ power supply costs by 25% over the next 20 years, creating significant savings. These programs will not only enhance affordability but also ensure a more sustainable energy future for its members. “As a New ERA selectee, Connexus Energy is excited about the potential impact to our membership,” said Connexus Energy Interim Co-CEO’s Yan Paul Martinez and Brian Burandt. “If awarded, the New ERA investments will substantially benefit our 146,000 members on the pathway to decarbonizing our power supply portfolio while maintaining affordability and alignment with our board-approved Resource Plan. We look forward to working with the USDA in making these investments happen to benefit our membership and the communities where these projects will be developed.”

**CORE Electric Cooperative.** This New ERA investment will be used for CORE Electric Cooperative to procure renewable energy sources in the form of wind, solar, and batteries through several power purchase agreements in rural portions of Colorado. The initiatives are expected to create new short- and long-term jobs, lower costs for members, and reduce pollution in support of Colorado’s net zero emissions goals. This proposal will reduce greenhouse gas pollution by an estimated 321,000 gasoline-powered cars annually. “This Empowering Rural America New ERA investment will be used for CORE Electric Cooperative to procure approximately 550 megawatts of new wind and solar renewable energy. It will also allow CORE to invest in energy reliability through roughly 100 megawatts of energy storage,” said CORE Electric Cooperative CEO Pam Feuerstein. “These efforts are estimated to provide more than 1.9 million MWh of GHG-free energy annually, create new short and long-term jobs, reduce costs for member-owners, and help meet Colorado’s clean energy goals.”

**East Kentucky Power Cooperative.** This New ERA investment will be used for East Kentucky Power Cooperative to construct or procure 757 megawatts of renewable energy for rural portions of Kentucky, as well as improve the regional transmission grid to support renewable projects and increase energy efficiency. These efforts also will reduce pollution – including carbon dioxide emissions - by over 2.3 million tons annually, the equivalent of avoiding the pollution from 554,000 gasoline-powered cars annually. “New ERA funding will help EKPC cost-effectively lower the carbon intensity of the electricity it generates for 1.1 million Kentucky residents and thousands of businesses, bolstering our mission of providing reliable, cost-competitive and sustainable energy for Kentucky,” said East Kentucky Power Cooperative President and CEO Tony Campbell.

**Golden Valley Electric Association.** This New ERA investment will be used for Golden Valley Electric to add up to 150 megawatts of renewable wind energy onto their system in Interior Alaska. It will also include constructing a battery energy storage system and significant transmission infrastructure to reliably interconnect large-scale variable generation onto Alaska’s unique grid. This investment will create up to 300 short- and long-term jobs, stabilize costs to rural cooperative members, and reduce carbon emissions by over 460,000 tons each year, which is the equivalent of removing 110,000 gasoline-powered cars annually. Additionally, funds will support the Collective Bargaining Agreement between Golden Valley Electric Association and the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local 1547. As part of Golden Valley Electric Association’s Community Benefit Plan, the projects will increase local

## Award: Allegheny Electric Cooperative, Inc.

- **Project Description:** 25 megawatts of clean energy
- **Location:** Pennsylvania, New Jersey
- **Service Territory:** Approximately 220,000 rural households in Pennsylvania and New Jersey will receive affordable clean energy through Allegheny’s 14-member electric distribution cooperatives.
- **Carbon Emissions Reduction:** 100,000 tons per year, is equivalent to the electricity used by approximately 18,000 houses each year.



25 MW  
Clean Energy

100,000  
Annual Tons of Carbon Dioxide Reduction



18,000 Homes  
Equivalent Carbon Emission Reduction

## Award: Dairyland Power Cooperative

- **Project Description:** 1,080 megawatts of solar, wind, and battery storage.
- **Location:** Wisconsin, Iowa, Illinois, and Minnesota
- **Service Territory:** 280,000 consumer members across Wisconsin, Minnesota, Iowa, and Illinois
- **Jobs Created:** Up to 3,200 short-term and long-term jobs.
- **Carbon Emissions Reduction:** 3 million tons per year, is equivalent to taking 729,000 gasoline-powered cars off the road every year.



1,080 MW  
Solar and Wind Energy and  
Battery Storage

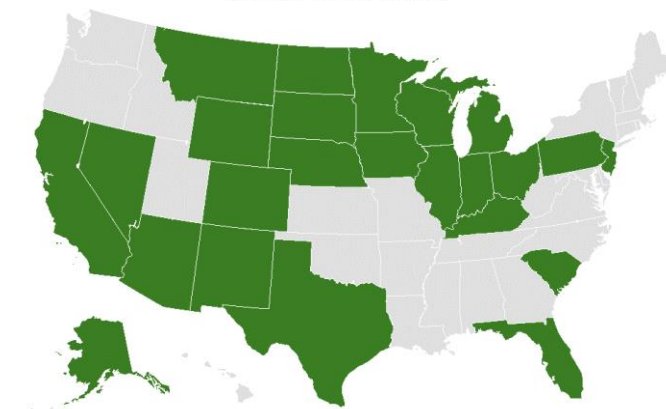
3,200  
Short and Long-Term Jobs



3 Million  
Annual Tons of Carbon Emission  
Reduction

729,000 gas-powered cars  
taken off the road  
Equivalent Carbon Emission  
Reduction





apprentices, implement a job retraining program, and expand educational opportunities and scholarships to diversify the workforce. "New ERA provides Golden Valley Electric the ability to enhance grid reliability, create new jobs, and invest in energy solutions that support long-term resilience. The funding represents a significant opportunity for us to advance sustainable projects that would otherwise not be possible for our small electric cooperative," said Golden Valley Electric Association CEO Travis Million. "As we move forward in this process, Golden Valley will remain committed to providing reliable and affordable power to our members, and we're excited about the possibility of contributing to the economic growth of the communities we serve."

**Great River Energy.** This New ERA investment will be used by Great River Energy and its member-owners to procure 1,275 megawatts of renewable energy across rural portions of Minnesota and North Dakota. These projects include large-scale wind energy projects, distributed renewable energy projects, and innovative demand side management investments that complement their existing portfolio. These investments are estimated to create over 1,600 short and long-term jobs, reduce costs against business as usual for members by \$30 million on average annually, and reduce carbon dioxide emissions by over 5.49 million tons each year. This proposal will reduce greenhouse gas pollution at levels equivalent to avoiding the pollution from 1.3 million gasoline each year. "Our consortium laid out an innovative portfolio of projects and power purchase agreements that will benefit cooperative members across Minnesota," said Great River Energy President and Chief Executive Officer David Saggau. "The projects in our New ERA proposal will allow us to procure more than 1,000 megawatts of renewable energy while creating over 1,500 new jobs, saving our members \$30 million on average annually, reducing carbon dioxide emissions by over 5 million tons and creating a host of benefits across the communities we serve."

**Minnkota Power Cooperative.** This New ERA investment will support Minnkota Power Cooperative's pursuit of a carbon capture and storage project (Project Tundra) as well as the procurement of 370 megawatts of wind energy in North Dakota. These projects will create hundreds of short- and long-term jobs, while providing environmental benefits to rural member-consumers in Minnesota and North Dakota. This proposal will reduce greenhouse gas pollution by 4.3 million tons, the equivalent pollution of 1 million cars each year. "As we enter one of the most transformational periods in our industry's history, the New ERA program represents a positive opportunity for our membership and many others across rural America," said Minnkota President and CEO Mac McLennan. "We are grateful to continue forward as we pursue development of Project Tundra – a bold carbon capture initiative in North Dakota – as well as the advancement of 370 megawatts of new wind energy resources in the state. New ERA helps not-for-profit cooperatives like Minnkota more cost-effectively decarbonize power supply portfolios, while retaining a reliable and resilient electric grid for the members we serve."

**Nebraska Electric G&T .** This New ERA investment will be used by Nebraska Electric G&T (NEGT) to procure 725 megawatts of wind and solar energy in Cutler, Burt, and Custer County, Nebraska, which can supply electricity to nearly 170,000 homes per year. This investment will create up to 425 short- and long-term jobs, stabilize costs for rural cooperative members, and reduce carbon emissions by over 2.2 million tons per year. This proposal will reduce greenhouse gas pollution by the equivalent of 482,000 gasoline-powered cars each year. The New ERA program will provide an opportunity for NEGT to provide its members with special patronage retirements. It is also projected to reduce wholesale power rates by 1.5% per year over the project's life. "NEGT is grateful for the invitation and eagerly looks forward to collaborating with the Rural Utilities Service staff," said Nebraska Electric's General Manager Darin Bloomquist. "Our goal is to provide, low cost, clean, renewable energy to the wonderful state of Nebraska for many years to come."

**Poudre Valley Rural Electric Association Inc.** This New ERA investment will be used for Poudre Valley Rural Electric Association Inc (PVREA) to procure 108 megawatts of wind energy and construct 5 megawatts of new battery energy storage across rural Colorado. These projects will help power more than 56,000 homes and businesses. Funds will be used to stabilize costs for

rural electric cooperative members and reduce carbon emissions by over 370,000 tons per year, the equivalent of removing 80,000 gasoline-powered cars, annually. The New ERA program provides the opportunity for PVREA to expand their renewable energy projects and meet their commitment to achieve 80% carbon-free energy by 2030. Additionally, this investment will create up to 330 short- and long-term jobs and will support Collective Bargaining Agreements with International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local 111. As part of PVREA's Community Benefits Plan, the projects will support the development of apprentice and internship programs. These projects will also create a cleaner electric grid providing health benefits to rural member-consumers, especially for low-income families and individuals who are disproportionately affected by climate change. "The New ERA Grant funding represents one of the most significant investments in rural America in the past century, marking a transformative moment for Poudre Valley REA and the communities we serve," said Poudre Valley Rural Electric Association's President and CEO Jeff Wadsworth. "This historic funding empowers us to initiate legacy projects that will benefit our members for generations. Most importantly, it strengthens our commitment to providing affordable, reliable power while navigating the energy transition."

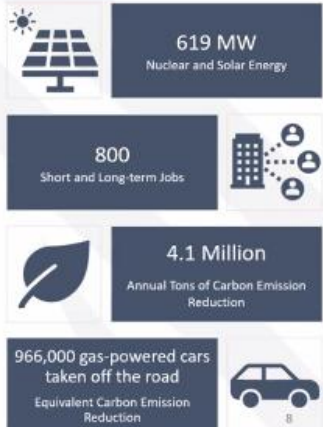
Rayburn Country Electric Cooperative. This New ERA investment will be used by Rayburn Electric Cooperative to construct 160 megawatts of new battery energy storage near Trinity Valley Electric Cooperative's service area in Texas, powering nearly 32,000 homes per year. Rayburn's battery energy storage system will enhance the resilience of the grid by storing excess low-cost solar energy and distributing it during peak demand hours. This approach ensures that renewable energy is available when it is needed the most, helping to stabilize the system and reduce reliance on more expensive, non-renewable energy sources. This investment will create up 370 short- and long-term jobs, stabilize costs for rural cooperative members, and reduce carbon emissions by over 150,000 tons per year, which is the equivalent of removing 32,000 gasoline-powered cars each year. "Rayburn is honored to receive this New Era investment to further the value of our members' investment in our community," said Rayburn Electric Cooperative's President/CEO David A. Naylor. "Over 575,000 Texans served by our four distribution cooperative members will benefit from this battery system, in addition to its role in strengthening the resiliency of the ERCOT grid."

San Miguel Electric Cooperative, Inc. This New ERA investment will be used for San Miguel Electric Cooperative to procure 600 megawatts of clean, renewable energy through solar voltaic panels and a battery energy storage system. This system will power 47 counties across rural South Texas, providing a low-cost, reliable power supply, and help alleviate system constraints and ease transmission congestion. These projects are estimated to provide 600 short- and long-term jobs and save coop members \$1.09 billion over the 30-year life of the project. All this will be accomplished while reducing climate pollution by over 1.8 million tons annually. The proposal will remove 446,000 gasoline-powered cars each year. The New ERA program will provide apprenticeship programs, employee training and education, and workforce benefits, including partnerships with area colleges and universities for transition education and needed certifications. To enhance the use of previously mined land, San Miguel plans to incorporate agricultural programs to benefit the area farms and ranches, residents, and underserved communities with opportunities for growth and education. "We are very excited to be named a selectee for the New ERA program, providing our community with unprecedented opportunities," said San Miguel Electric Cooperative General Manager Craig Courter. "This includes a wide range of educational, agricultural, and infrastructure improvements that will benefit our employees, cooperative members, and the region as we continue to deliver affordable, reliable energy to rural Texans at a time of record demand."

Seminole Electric Cooperative, Inc.. This New ERA investment will be used for Seminole Electric Cooperative to construct and procure a total of 700 megawatts of energy resources through a combination of utility-scale solar and battery energy storage projects across rural portions of Florida. The initiative is expected to create an estimated 3,400 short- and long-term jobs, provide resource diversity at stable cost, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions by more than 3.5 million tons annually. This proposal will reduce greenhouse gas pollution by the equivalent of 1 million gasoline-powered cars each year. As a

## Award: Hoosier Energy

- **Project Description:** 619 megawatts of nuclear and solar energy annually.
- **Location:** Indiana and Michigan
- **Service Territory:** more than 760,000 consumers in 59 counties across central and southern Indiana and southeastern Illinois.
- **Jobs Created:** Up to 800 short-term and long-term jobs.
- **Carbon Emissions Reduction:** 4.1 million tons per year, is equivalent to taking 966,000 gasoline-powered cars off the road every year.



## Award: Tri-State Generation and Transmission Association, Inc.,

- **Project Description:** 1,480 megawatts of solar, wind, and battery storage and 1,100 megawatts to retirement of three coal plants.
- **Location:** Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico, Nebraska, and Wyoming
- **Service Territory:** 1 million consumers across roughly 200,000 square miles of Eligible Service Area in Colorado, Nebraska, New Mexico, and Wyoming.
- **Jobs Created:** Up to 2,159 short-term and long-term jobs.
- **Carbon Emissions Reduction:** 6.9 million tons per year, is equivalent to the electricity used by approximately 1.4 million houses each year.



