

USDA: Following Earth Day, USDA invests over \$5 million in critical infrastructure to combat climate change across rural Wisconsin

Posted on Friday, Apr 29, 2022

>> **WisPolitics is now on the State Affairs network. Get custom keyword notifications, bill tracking and all WisPolitics content. [Get the app or access via desktop.](#)**

STEVENS POINT, Wisc., April 26, 2022 – Following Earth Day 2022, U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Rural Development State Director for Wisconsin Julie Lassa announced today more than [\\$5 million in climate-smart infrastructure](#) to strengthen the health and livelihoods of people living in rural Wisconsin.

“Investing in rural climate-smart infrastructure has a positive impact locally as well as globally,” Lassa said. “The investments we’re highlighting reflect the importance that USDA, under the leadership of President Biden and Ag Secretary Vilsack, is placing on locally-driven climate change solutions as well as helping rural communities prepare for severe weather events. We couldn’t be prouder to recognize the positive impacts that these investments will have following Earth Day 2022.” [[audio actuality](#) | 4.50 MB 00:00:24]

- OCEP-VC LLC will use a \$5 million [Rural Energy for America Program \(REAP\)](#) guaranteed loan to install a renewable natural gas upgrade for their anaerobic digester facility in Fond du Lac, Wisc. This renewable energy infrastructure will help to generate 20.3 million kilowatt hours (kWh) of electricity per year, which is enough to power 1,900 homes for a year.
- The Village of De Soto, Wisc. will use a \$55,000 [Community Facilities Disaster](#) Grant to purchase a new four-wheel drive public works vehicle with a dump bed and equipment capabilities for snow removal, landscaping projects, sewer maintenance, tree removal and general maintenance hauling.

Today's investments are in coordination with Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack's recent nationwide announcement that the department is investing nearly [\\$800 million in climate-smart infrastructure](#) in: Arkansas, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Idaho, Iowa, Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Mississippi, Montana, North Carolina, North Dakota, Nebraska, New Hampshire, New Mexico, New York, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, Virginia, Vermont, Washington, Wisconsin, West Virginia, Wyoming, Northern Mariana Islands and Puerto Rico.

[\[audio actuality of Secretary Vilsack & USDA Under Secretary for Rural Development Xochitl Torres Small - 00:00:59.951\]](#)

USDA Rural Development is taking several actions to mitigate the impacts of climate change in rural communities nationwide.

Advancing Equity in Rural Communities

USDA Rural Development is [prioritizing projects](#) that advance the Biden-Harris Administration's key priorities of investing in rural communities to ensure people have equitable access to critical resources and to combat the climate crisis. Investments in these communities will make an impact for generations to come.

Clean Energy Infrastructure and Energy Efficiency Improvements

Through [REAP](#), the Department helps rural businesses and agricultural producers get access to clean energy, while reducing their carbon footprint to make their business operations more cost-effective.

The [Electric Program](#) includes funding for smart grid technologies that improve system operations and monitor grid security.

Infrastructure Improvements for Communities Hit by Severe Weather

Through the [Community Facilities Disaster Grants](#) program, funds help rural communities purchase emergency response equipment and be better prepared and more resilient in the face of disaster.

Background: Building a Better America Rural Infrastructure Tour

Today's announcement is also part of the Biden-Harris Administration's [Building a Better America Rural Infrastructure Tour](#), during which Biden Administration officials are traveling to dozens of rural communities to talk about the impact of Bipartisan Infrastructure Law investments, as well as President Biden's broader commitment to ensure federal resources reach all communities in rural America. This announcement also furthers the President's Justice40 Initiative, which commits to delivering at least 40 percent of the benefits from federal climate and clean energy investments to disadvantaged communities.

Under the leadership of the Biden-Harris Administration, USDA and its federal partners in the [Infrastructure Implementation Task Force](#) are working with rural communities to deliver on the promise of support for rural America.

The Building a Better America Rural Infrastructure Tour is a multi-faceted outreach effort involving cabinet and sub-cabinet officials across federal agencies as they travel to and learn from key rural communities. These visits will highlight new federal funding and investments already underway through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, a once-in-a-generation investment that will support rural communities and their infrastructure needs.

Rural Development provides loans and grants to help expand economic opportunities, create jobs and improve the quality of life for millions of Americans in rural areas. This assistance supports infrastructure improvements; business development; housing; community facilities such as schools, public safety and health care; and high-speed internet access in rural, tribal and high-poverty areas. For more information, visit www.rd.usda.gov/wi.

If you'd like to subscribe to USDA Rural Development updates, visit our [GovDelivery subscriber page](#).