Richland Electric Cooperative

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Office of Internet Connectivity and Growth
National Telecommunications and Information Administration
U.S. Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20230

Dear National Telecommunication and Information Administration,

This letter is being written to express support of Dairyland Power Cooperative's (DPC) Tri-State Fiber Deployment Project.

Richland Electric Cooperative serves the sparsely populated area in and around Richland County, Wisconsin with retail electric service and has been an integral partner in developing broadband expansion within our community. Since 1998 we have been partners with two local telephone cooperatives and have deployed high-speed fiber optic broadband to thousands of households.

Our success was driven in large part because we were fortunate enough to have a middle-mile provider in our area, something many rural communities do not have. The DPC project would provide similar opportunities to other communities which will be vital to retail provider success.

As a member of the Governors Rural Broadband Task Force in Wisconsin, a former board member of the National Rural Telecommunications Cooperative and the former CEO of a rural broadband provider I have witnessed first-hand how middle-mile projects can serve as a catalyst for last-mile construction. Frankly, without a robust middle-mile provider, last-mile projects simply aren't investigated.

We know that DPC is committed to having a positive impact in communities like Richland. Their project will spur rural broadband access in areas where few providers are interested in serving.

We encourage the Administration to award DPC the requested Middle Mile Grant so that rural America can continue to grow and prosper.

Sincerely,

RICHLAND ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

Shannon L Clark

Shannon L Clark
CEO & General Manager