

Yates Co. leads New York with broadband project



Yates County Acting Administrator Nonie Flynn, Legislature Chairman Douglas Paddock, and N.Y. USDA Rural Development Director Richard Mayfield at the Feb. 3 announcement.

GWEN CHAMBERLAIN/
CHRONICLE-EXPRESS

USDA grants \$10.3 million in broadband for rural New York communities

By Gwen Chamberlain

The Chronicle-Express

STARKEY — Yates County is the first county in New York state, and one of the first in the nation to receive funding to build a system to deliver high-speed broadband to nearly 3,000 rural Yates County households, farms, businesses and educational facilities.

In the first round of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's ReConnect Pilot Program, Yates County will receive \$10.3 million for the project, which will begin with a feasibility study as soon as all the legal documents have been finalized, says Acting County Administrator Nonie Flynn.

She says that feasibility study will provide information that could be the basis of an

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informational session for county residents. The county will have five years to complete the build-out from the time funds are first made available.

U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Rural Development State Director for New York Richard Mayfield formally announced the investment Feb. 3 at a gathering at Veraison's Restaurant at Glenora Wine Cellars in Starkey.

"The ReConnect program will increase access to opportunities across multiple sectors, such as public safety, economic development, education and health care," Mayfield said, adding, "USDA is proud to partner with Yates County

as we continue to build out this critical infrastructure in rural communities across America, because we know when rural America thrives, all of America thrives."

Flynn said the Yates County legislature should be lauded for its forward thinking as she thanked the members of the county's Broadband Committee.

Yates County Legislature Chairman Douglas Paddock credited Flynn as the champion of the project who "stepped up to the plate and hit a homerun," even though the project was well outside her area of expertise.

U.S. Rep. Tom Reed noted that the other New York project funded in

the first round is also in the 23rd Congressional District, in the Seneca Nation's Cattaraugus Territory, where \$4.3 million was awarded. He thanked his staff for their assistance to applicants.

Yates County will use a \$10.3 million ReConnect Program grant to deploy a fiber-to-the-home (FTTH) broadband network capable of delivering speeds up to 1 gigabit per second (Gbps). The project will deliver high-speed broadband, which will help improve the overall quality of life for residents and businesses in and around Yates County, according to the statement prepared by USDA.

In March 2018, Congress provided \$600 million to USDA to expand broadband infrastructure and services in



Members of the Yates County Legislature Broadband Committee, from left, Timothy Groth, Yates County Information Technology Director, representative from Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand's office, District 3 Legislator and Milo Supervisor Leslie Church, Chris Zeltmann from Sen. Chuck Schumer's office; Acting Yates County Administrator Nonie Flynn, U.S. Rep. Tom Reed, District 1 Legislator Tim Cutler, District 2 Legislator Rick Willson, Yates County Planner Dan Long, and Richard Mayfield, USDA Rural Development State Director.

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rural America.

USDA received 146 applications requesting \$1.4 billion in funding across all three ReConnect Program funding

products: 100 percent loan, 100 percent grant, and loan-grant combinations.

The second round of \$550 million in the

ReConnect Program opened Jan. 31. For details, visit www.usda.gov/reconnect.