

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Contact: Erik Hatlestad, CURE Director of Rural Cooperative Energy, [erik@curemn.org](mailto:erik@curemn.org) or Clovis Curl, Communications and Research Strategist, [clovis@curemn.org](mailto:clovis@curemn.org) | 320.269.2984



## **Biden Announces Historic Investments in Rural Electric Cooperatives - Local Co-ops to Benefit**

**Westby, WI, September 5, 2024** – Today, President Biden announced the first round of finalists for the [Empowering Rural America](#) (New ERA) Program, the largest investment in rural electrification in U.S. history. CURE, an organization with deep roots in rural Minnesota and a driving force behind this program, was present to witness this historic moment.

The \$9.7 billion New ERA Program, created through the Inflation Reduction Act and administered by the USDA's Rural Utility Service, aims to drive clean energy development and coal plant retirements by providing grants and low-cost loans to rural electric cooperatives. The New ERA program is based on CURE's groundbreaking 2019 [Rural Electrification 2.0 Report](#), which was championed by the Rural Power Coalition – a national coalition co-founded and co-led by CURE.

“The New ERA program is a historic achievement for rural America” said Erik Hatlestad, Director of Rural Cooperative Energy at CURE, “these investments are clearing the way for rural electric cooperatives to renew their commitment to rural communities, farmers, and workers.”

President Biden announced the first 16 finalists, representing \$7.3 billion in awards that will leverage \$29 billion in investments. These projects will cut or avoid nearly 44 million tons of greenhouse gas emissions annually. Four of the finalists – Great River Energy, Basin Electric, Dairyland, and Minnkota – serve Minnesota, meaning nearly every cooperative member in the state will benefit from these investments.

Great River Energy's project alone is projected to create over 1,600 short-term jobs, save cooperative members \$30 million annually, and cut carbon emissions by more than 5.49 million tons each year – equivalent to taking 1.3 million gasoline-powered cars off the road. “Great River Energy has been leading the way, showing how cooperatives can work with community groups, farm groups, and organized labor,” added Hatlestad.

The finalists will now enter the Community Benefits planning phase, where cooperatives will work with their communities to maximize the impact of these investments.

Hatlestad says that more work lies ahead. “To realize our vision for rural electrification and meet our climate goals, we need to expand New ERA,” Hatlestad said. “More funding is needed to ensure that rural communities can fully participate in the clean energy transition.”

About CURE: CURE is rurally based, with staff across Minnesota. CURE knows rural people, lands, and ecosystems are vital to helping solve some of the biggest problems Minnesota

and the country face. We help to tell the story of a vibrant rural future, lift-up people to lead, and work for policies and laws to make a better future possible for everyone.

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PHOTOS ATTACHED TO ACCOMPANYING EMAIL:



Photo 1 Caption: *President Biden announces the first finalists for the New ERA Program Thursday in Westby, WI, marking the largest investment in rural electrification since the New Deal.*

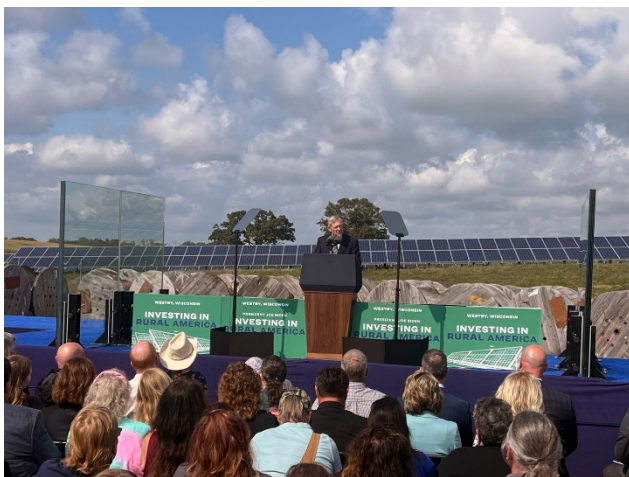


Photo 2 Caption: *US Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack speaks at the New ERA Program announcement Thursday in Westby, WI, marking a historic investment in rural electrification.*



**Photo 3 Caption: *CURE's Erik Hatlestad and RUS Administrator Andy Berke at the New ERA Program announcement in Westby, WI. Hatlestad, from rural Minnesota, was instrumental in shaping the initiative.***

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### **Official Organizational Name Change Notice–**

Please note that our organization's name has changed.

In 1992, we began our journey with a fitting name, Clean Up the River Environment. The heart of our work was localized, and we were laser-focused on water issues as an organization.

Since that time, we have matured and transformed. Our organization has outgrown a name that no longer holds the true breadth and depth of our work. We have always used our acronym, CURE, as shorthand to refer to ourselves. Early in 2023, we formalized this to refer to our organization through an official filing of an Assumed Name with the Secretary of State of Minnesota.

**Please use the simple name "CURE" to refer to our organization moving forward.**

CURE continues to blaze new paths. Our story is one of passion, resilience, and unwavering commitment to Minnesota's people, land, and ecosystems – and beyond.