

USDA to provide \$2.37 million grant for local broadband improvements

From Staff Reports

WASHINGTON — Agriculture Secretary Sonny Perdue has announced the U.S. Department of Agriculture is investing \$97 million in 12 projects to provide or improve rural broadband service in 11 states — including Garrett County.

“A person’s location should not determine whether he or she has access to modern communications infrastructure,” Perdue said. “That is why USDA is partnering with businesses and communities by investing in state-of-the-art

broadband e-connectivity to remote and rural areas. These investments will expand access to educational, social and business opportunities for 22,000 subscribers to help grow their rural communities and America’s economy.”

In Maryland, Declaration Networks Group Inc. will receive a \$2.37 million Community Connect Grant to construct a fixed wireless network in Garrett County. The network will operate in the 5 GHz and TV white space frequency bands, providing service offerings of up to 20 Mbps/10 Mbps

to 1,319 households and 96 businesses within its proposed service area.

Because of this investment, Garrett County residents will also have access to computer terminals and Wi-Fi internet access free of charge for at least two years at a community center collocated in at a Garrett County Community Action Committee facility within the area.

“This is an example of infrastructure, partnerships and innovation in action,” said USDA Rural Development Maryland/Delaware State Director Denise Lovelady. “Broadband infrastructure is a necessity in the 21st century. It takes innovative approaches like the partnership between Garrett County Community Action Committee and Declaration Networks Group Inc. to deliver rural broadband service. USDA is pleased to return these taxpayer dollars to the citizens of Garrett County.”

USDA is making the investments through the Telecommunications Infrastructure Loan Program and the Community Connect Grant Program.