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Sault Tribe awarded \$25 million in federal grant dollars to expand broadband access on tribal lands

CHIPPEWA AND MACKINAC COUNTIES, Mich. – The Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians announced today that it has been awarded a Rural Development Broadband ReConnect grant totaling \$24,944,355 from the USDA’s Rural Utility Service (USDA-RUS).

The grant will allow the tribe to expand high-speed Internet access to its members by installing a fiber-to-the-premises network located on Sault Tribe’s Reservation Lands in Chippewa and Mackinac counties. The network will provide 1 gigabit broadband services to any subscribing households.

“Bringing affordable and reliable broadband service to our region is central to connecting our membership to medical specialists, job opportunities, and remote learning courses,” **said Sault Tribe Vice Chairman Austin Lowes.** “This rural development investment will connect tribal reservation lands from Sault Ste. Marie, south to Kincheloe, and to St. Ignace. The Sault Tribe Board of Directors thanks all tribal employees involved in making this opportunity a reality. This has been a truly collaborative effort and has the support of the entire board of directors and executive staff. We also want to thank Cloverland Electric for their support of this grant opportunity.”

The grant was supported by several Michigan elected leaders, including **U.S. Senators Debbie Stabenow and Gary Peters, Congressman Jack Bergman** and **Gov. Gretchen Whitmer.** Each leader was a key supporter of the Sault Tribe’s application and helped secure the necessary funds from USDA-RUS.

“High-speed internet means so much for our nation’s tribal communities, both in Michigan and nationwide, and I’m thrilled to be able to help expand broadband through the bipartisan infrastructure package,” **said Sen. Stabenow.** “Better, more reliable Internet connects kids with more resources for school, links patients to the doctors they need, and helps small business owners access a world of new customers.”

“Whether you are a student, running a small business, or working from home – reliable high-speed internet access is critical to keeping our communities strong and connected,” **said Sen. Peters.** “I was pleased to support this investment in critical broadband infrastructure to help ensure Sault Tribe members across the UP can access

essential health care services, educational and business opportunities, and good-paying jobs.”

“With high-speed Internet as our tool, we can grow our economy, create jobs, and improve health and educational outcomes in every corner of our state,” **said Lt. Governor Garlin Gilchrist II.** “Governor Whitmer and I were proud to support the Sault Tribe in its grant application and we look forward to continuing our work to create opportunity by connecting Michigan communities.”

“High-speed Internet is critical to bridging U.P. communities with the rest of the digital world, and I’m thankful to the USDA’s Rural Utility Service for recognizing the need to ensure Sault Tribe members have access to this vital infrastructure,” **said Rep. Bergman.**

Background:

[USDA’s Broadband ReConnect Program](#) furnishes loans and grants to provide funds for the costs of construction, improvement, or acquisition of facilities and equipment needed to provide broadband service in eligible rural areas.

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