



Committed to the future of rural communities.

USDA Rural Development: Telecommunications Program Success Story;

Broadband Initiatives Program (BIP)—Oregon

Gervais Telephone Company

Need:

Gervais Telephone Company is a member-owned telecommunications cooperative serving the town of Gervais, Oregon and rural portions of Marion County. The company needed assistance providing underserved businesses and residents outlying the town along River and Butteville Roads with reliable broadband internet. Additionally, an elementary school and two fire stations in this service area were without much needed broadband.

How Rural Development Helped:

In 2010, Gervais Telephone received a Broadband Initiatives Program (BIP) award under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009. They obtained a loan/grant combination totaling \$628,860. The company planned to use this funding to extend broadband services in portions of its service area that previously could not receive access. This included 121 households and 24 businesses as well as buildings used by the school district and emergency services.

Results:

Gervais Telephone was able to connect these customers in under four months. This was one of the fastest completion times for any of the program's award recipients. Community members say the project also provided the local workforce with much needed business during the economic downturn.

Woodburn Fire District, the community's local fire company, has only four stations scattered throughout the region to serve the vast rural area. Prior to Gervais Telephone's service extension, two of the four did not have broadband connections. Now, first responders based at these stations can directly access the fire district's server. This means they can file and send reports immediately when they return from emergency



Above: Matt Jones of Jones Farm Produce stands by his sign showing the specials he can now publish online through social media

calls rather than driving to the main station. The BIP award in conjunction with other funding also allowed these stations to connect to a dispatch tower using fiber optic cables. This allows for a much more reliable connection when the fire company needs to respond to emergencies and helps keep the Gervais community safe.

The Gervais School District's five school buildings are spread out throughout the district, making communication between them difficult. One of these schools, Eldriedge Elementary, did not have a broadband internet connection prior to the service extension. Now, its 118 elementary students are able to effectively use online educational programs and the school district is spending less on its long distance costs. The broadband infrastructure affords these students the same technological opportunities as others throughout the nation and allows the school district to focus more funding on education.

Jones Produce of Marion County grows and sells fruits and vegetables throughout the region. When

broadband internet was finally offered at its location, it quickly connected. Retail employees now have better access to advertising and can connect to customers through social media; growers routinely research fertilizers and other chemicals to make educated decisions about their fields; and faster connection speeds allow them to view videos on new agricultural methods. Jones Produce is also utilizing online banking features to help with the business's finances.

One local lawn care company, Valley Green, Inc., has also benefited tremendously from the new service. Now that Gervais Telephone offers broadband to the business, Valley Green has been able to switch from its old T1 system resulting in dramatic reductions in

cost. This new, reliable connection allows the company to better communicate with its clientele about appointments through e-mail and provide better overall customer service.

The new fiber optic cables now stretching throughout the Gervais area are providing tremendous benefits for the community. The expanded broadband infrastructure is helping keep people safe, providing educational opportunities, and encouraging growth in the local small businesses.