EESI Brief: Unlocking Rural Economies: Farm Bill Investment in Rural America

RESP, Weatherization, and Broadband

Gary Stooksbury
Chief Executive Officer
Aiken Electric Cooperative, Inc.
Aiken, SC

Wednesday, May 24, 2023
Aiken Electric Cooperative

• 51,000 members
• 9 counties
• 5,600 miles of line
• 137 employees
THANK YOU, REP. CLYBURN!

Rural Energy Saving Program and Help My House
Began in 2011 as a pilot, and AEC followed with their own HMH program in 2012
## Average Energy Savings (HMH Pilot)

<table>
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<th>Annual Net Savings</th>
<th>Annual Loan Repayment</th>
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<td>$288</td>
<td>$869</td>
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- **$1,157**  
  - Maxine Stroman  
    - Homeowner, Aiken, SC  
    - Annual Energy Savings

- **$288**  
  - Diane Taylor  
    - Homeowner, Monetta, SC  
    - Annual Loan Repayment
HELP MY HOUSE BASICS

1. Convenient
   – On-bill repayment (2010 S.C. law)
   – Improves comfort and energy savings

2. Consistent Quality
   – Trained, qualified contractors
   – Co-op manages QA, QC

3. Affordable Financing
   – Low-interest loan tied to the meter;
     Transfers if home sells
   – No money down, no credit checks required
Homes Weatherized

Aiken Electric Co-op
• 419 homes
• $4.3M loaned

All HMH homes
• 1,031 homes
• $10.3M loaned
Broadband

• Partnering with Carolina Connect – a fiber optic communications cooperative
• Bringing affordable high-speed internet to the unserved and underserved
• Started in 2021, a 3-year work plan to install 350 miles of 288-strand fiber optic backbone to connect 4 offices, 27 substations and all down-line devices
Where we started — 2021

CarolinaConnect Partnership
- Affordable, reliable high-speed internet for unserved and underserved in AEC service area

CarolinaConnect Sister Co-Op’s
- Mid-Carolina Electric Cooperative
- Newberry Electric Cooperative
- Aiken Electric Cooperative
What makes our service different? *Everything!*

- VoIP (Voice over the Internet Protocol) telephone service
- Superior performance and affordable pricing
- Extraordinary customer service
- Access free technical support

Our service culture is born of the electric cooperative’s longstanding commitment to reliable, friendly customer care.
Workforce behind the scenes

- AEC
  - McCall-Thomas Project Managers (2)
  - Splicers (45)
  - Admin & Engineers (20)
  - Fiber Optic Technicians & Inspectors (359)

426 Fiber Employees
Funding Secured to date

- Cares Act: $554,575
  Wi-Fi to Aiken and Orangeburg counties schools

- Office of Regulatory Staff (ORS): $3,939,368
  Service Orangeburg and Barnwell counties and the town of Springfield and Monetta area

- Office of Regulatory Staff (ORS): $6,478
  Last Mile Grant Program to complete service in Edgefield
Funding Secured to date

- Aiken County: $3 million
- Saluda County: $1 million
- Edgefield County: $47,579 for engineering study
- Rural Digital Opportunity Fund (RDOF) Award: $45,666

Approved Grants to Date

$8,593,666
Get a bigger bang for your broadband buck!
Broadband Area