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Cotton Electric Cooperative Awarded \$8 million Federal Grant for Grid Upgrades to Mitigate Wildfire Risks

WALTERS, OK – Cotton Electric Cooperative has been awarded \$8,068,007 from the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) to enhance wildfire protection and resilience in the communities it serves by making critical upgrades to its electric system.

Cotton Electric is a member of a consortium of 38 electric co-ops and other rural utilities selected to receive federal funding through the Wildfire Assessment and Resilience for Networks project, or “WARN.”

“The WARN grant is a great opportunity for Cotton Electric to increase reliability and improve service quality for our membership, while also working to reduce wildfire risk in our communities,” said Jennifer Meason, Cotton Electric CEO. “We are excited to begin our program and learn from cooperatives across the country. It’s another shining example of three cooperative principles in action - cooperation among cooperatives; safety, education and training; and commitment to community.”

Cotton Electric will use its funding to make strategic improvements to the distribution grid to decrease the potential for wildfires, increases grid reliability during adverse weather conditions, and increases community engagement in the prevention of wildfires in the Cotton Electric Cooperative service territory. This will be done via utility pole inspection and replacement, vegetation and fuel-load management, adaptive protection technologies, and the replacement of aged overhead conductors and underground cables.

Led by Holy Cross Energy in coordination with NRECA Research, WARN will provide more than \$145 million in wildfire mitigation funding to co-ops across 16 states in the central and western United States to drive energy resilience in high-risk rural areas.

“Electric cooperatives are focused on leveraging innovative solutions to meet tomorrow’s energy needs,” said NRECA CEO Jim Matheson. “This infrastructure funding is an important step as electric co-ops work to harden systems against wildfires and enhance the reliability of the grid. These projects hold tremendous potential for local communities as their co-ops unlock new ways to use technology to help mitigate wildfires and keep the lights on.”

Working together, consortium members will share lessons learned and expertise and provide real world data to create an advanced analysis tool to identify the likely impacts of utility-ignited wildfires on regional electricity supplies and local communities.

WARN funding comes from DOE’s Grid Resilience and Innovation Partnerships program created by the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act.

Cotton Electric Cooperative, organized in 1938, is a not-for-profit electric cooperative that serves over 16,000 members across eight counties in Southwest Oklahoma: Comanche, Cotton, Stephens, Tillman, Jefferson, Caddo and Carter counties.

