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Surf Internet Awarded \$10.5 Million in Connect Illinois Grants

Funding to expand high-speed fiber-optic connectivity to over 2,500 homes and businesses in rural Illinois

NAPERVILLE, Ill. (July 12, 2024) – Surf Internet®, a leading provider of fiber-optic internet in the Great Lakes region, is proud to announce that it has been awarded three Connect Illinois grants totaling \$10.5 million. These grants will support the extension of last-mile broadband access in unserved and underserved rural areas of Whiteside, Grundy, LaSalle, Lee, and Putnam counties. The projects will extend fiber connectivity to approximately 2,638 homes, agribusinesses, and community anchor institutions, significantly enhancing digital access in these regions.

Surf is investing \$6.3 million of its own funds to reach the rural Illinois residents near Rock Falls, Sterling, Dixon, Ottawa, Morris, and Coal City, including Lake Wildwood, Grand Detour, Lost Nation, and Magnolia. Residents and business owners will enjoy up to 2 gigabit speeds immediately, with higher speeds possible in the future.

“The process of laying rural fiber is truly one household, one street at a time,” said Gene Crusie, CEO of Surf Internet. “Grant funds like Connect Illinois allow us to take real, measurable steps towards getting every home connected. We’re proud to partner with states and communities in doing the hard, incremental work of getting those connected who are most in need.”

Surf recently opened a new Illinois office in Naperville, underscoring the company's commitment to the state. The office serves as a hub for administrative and financial operations, as well as a meeting point for Illinois partners and investors.

The \$400 million Connect Illinois program launched in 2019, representing the then-largest state matching grant program for broadband expansion. Connect Illinois seeks to achieve ubiquitous statewide broadband access – for homes, businesses, and community anchor institutions throughout the state.

“In our experience, grant investment into communities has what we call a multiplier effect, attracting additional investments both privately and from other programs such as the upcoming federal BEAD Program,” said Steve Carender, Director of Special Funding at Surf Internet. “We are committed to continuing the momentum in and around these areas in order to do our part in getting all rural houses connected to high-speed fiber-optic broadband.”

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The Connect Illinois project allows Surf to leverage its increased presence and grant money to extend its fiber-optic network into adjacent communities through a mix of public and private investments. Currently, 5,700 additional passings are part of the build plan, made possible by extending their network beyond the addresses included in the Connect Illinois program. Surf further expects to be able to build into Kendall County as a result of its expanding infrastructure.

The work in rural Illinois is part of Surf's overall commitment to build an advanced fiber-optic network serving rural communities across the Great Lakes Region of Illinois, Indiana, and Michigan. Residents and business owners wanting project updates can visit Surf's construction page at <https://surfinternet.com/surf-fiber-map/>.

About Surf Internet

Surf Internet is an innovative fiber-optic internet company that serves as the essential gateway to connectivity across the Great Lakes region of Illinois, Indiana, and Michigan. The company is building a bridge to the wide-open future by delivering high-speed, reliable internet to homes and businesses in underserved, rural communities. Surf's 250-plus person team is local, giving them an edge when it comes to customer care and advocacy for the region. Headquartered in Elkhart, Ind., Surf also has offices in La Porte, Ind., Byron Center and Fowlerville, Mich., and Naperville, Coal City, and Rock Falls, Ill. Learn more at <https://surfinternet.com>.

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