FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

**Washington Electric Cooperative Receives $8.13 Million Loan From USDA Rural Development**

*E. Montpelier, Vt:* Washington Electric Cooperative (WEC) will receive a federal loan of $8.13 million to improve distribution, transmission, and generation for its members. The loan, announced Nov. 1 by the USDA, is part of a $1.3 billion investment to support rural electric infrastructure nationwide.

“We are thrilled to be able to invest in improving our grid system by upgrading wires and poles along with investing in grid modernization technology,” said WEC General Manager Patty Richards. “USDA is our major lender for operations upkeep and helped WEC get started back in 1939. The timing of this loan could not be better, as we just incurred more damage to our grid from yet another catastrophic storm. This loan will help us build resilience, manage peak costs, and better connect to each of our member-owners.”

14 miles of new line and 50 miles of improved line will be built to serve 330 new WEC members. Another portion of the loan will fund Smart Grid technologies to help WEC lower its peak electric use and associated costs.

Line improvements include shortening the distance between poles in forested areas to make lines more resilient to damage from tree and weather damage. Improvements also include clearing the electric co-op’s Rights of Way of potentially damaging trees.

Washington Electric Co-op is a member-owned, not-for-profit electric utility founded in 1939. WEC serves approximately 11,460 member-owners in 41 towns throughout Washington, Orange, Caledonia and Orleans counties with power generated from 100 percent renewable sources. WEC is an equal opportunity provider and employer. For more information please visit washingtonelectric.coop or call 802-223-5245.

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