Eastex Telephone Cooperative, Inc.
"A Phone For Every Farm"
"Broadband For Every Barn"

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Eastex Telephone Cooperative, Inc. Awarded $25 Million USDA ReConnect Round 4 Grant to Invest in Fiber Infrastructure

HENDERSON, TX – September 18, 2023 - Eastex Telephone Cooperative, Inc. ("Eastex") is pleased to announce it has been awarded $25 million in grant funding from the USDA's Rural Utility Service ReConnect Round 4 program. Combined with Eastex's investment of $8.4 million, these funds will be used to deliver high-speed fiber-to-the-premises Internet service to Eastex's existing customers in the socially vulnerable communities of Maydelle and Hudson Chapel within Cherokee and Anderson Counties.

"Eastex is thrilled and honored to receive a USDA ReConnect grant. The opportunity to accelerate Eastex's fiber network deployment to these extremely remote portions of our existing service area will significantly improve the quality of life, education, healthcare, and communications for the Maydelle and Hudson Chapel communities," said Eastex General Manager Rusty Dorman. In August, 2022, Eastex secured a $10 million contract with Polk County to upgrade and extend Eastex's network for fiber-based broadband internet access services, bringing the total awards for fiber expansion to approximately $30 million within the last twelve months.

Eastex will work with the communities of Maydelle and Hudson Chapel to construct 229 miles of buried fiber to deliver scalable 1 Gbps symmetrical internet service to approximately 1,241 locations. The fiber upgrades are expected to be completed over the next three calendar years.

"I applaud Eastex for securing grant funding to help bridge the digital divide in Texas. The crucial work of upgrading broadband and telecommunication infrastructure requires partnerships at all levels to ensure that currently underserved areas receive essential broadband services," said Texas Senator Robert Nichols, an East Texas native who has championed numerous broadband infrastructure programs in Texas.

"We are excited to partner with Eastex through this award," says Lillian Salerno, USDA Texas State Director for Rural Development. "Places like East Texas deserve reliable internet and we are working with broadband providers all over the nation to increase network reliability and close the digital divide." The ReConnect Program is an innovative program that offers unique federal financing and funding options in the form of grants, loans, and loan/grant combinations to facilitate broadband deployment in areas of rural America that don't currently have sufficient access to internet. Priority was awarded for projects that propose to deliver higher capacity connections to rural homes, businesses,

and farms in severely underserved areas of the nation. To learn more about ReConnect please visit https://www.usda.gov/reconnect.

Representatives from USDA will be joining Eastex for a press conference at Eastex's Livingston, Texas branch office on Wednesday, September 20, 2023, at 11:00 A.M. to discuss this important award.

About Eastex Telephone
Eastex Telephone Cooperative, Inc. has over 70 years of experience bringing essential communications technology to eleven counties across rural East Texas. Today, Eastex and its affiliates and subsidiaries Eastex.Net and ECS Security and Automation are proud to deliver top-quality broadband Internet, voice, high-capacity data transport, Wi-Fi, and security and automation services to thousands of subscribers from three regional business offices in Henderson, Livingston and Waskom, Texas.

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