

January 18, 2024

Andrew Berke  
andrew.berke@usda.gov  
Rural Utilities Service Administrator  
U.S. Department of Agriculture  
STOP 1510, Rm 4121-S  
1400 Independence Ave. SW  
Washington, DC 20250-1510

Dear Administrator Berke:

We are elected officials representing various levels of government – state and local – in New Mexico, spanning across our state. The communities we serve are a diverse mix of urban, rural, and suburban areas, both within and beyond the service territory of Tri-State Generation and Transmission. We write to you today concerning the U.S. Department of Agriculture's New ERA (Empowering Rural America) funding opportunities for rural cooperatives and electricity providers. The New Era program holds immense potential for benefiting co-op members and the state of New Mexico as a whole.

Several Tri-State member cooperatives in New Mexico have submitted Letters of Interest to tap into the \$9.7 billion allocated for renewable energy and energy efficiency projects under the New ERA funding. For those co-ops that have applied, we express our gratitude for their proactive dedication to meeting member needs. This initiative to seek funding aims to reduce costs, utilize local energy sources, enhance resilience, and bolster local economies. The funding available through New ERA and other Inflation Reduction Act programs promises to be transformative for rural America.

We also want to publicly acknowledge and thank Tri-State for its significant efforts and unwavering support last year, ensuring that this historic level of funding for rural cooperatives was included in the Inflation Reduction Act through the New Era program. With the potential to secure more than a billion dollars for New Mexico through the New ERA program, we encourage all of New Mexico's Tri-State member co-ops to fully embrace this unique opportunity to transition our rural communities to a clean, affordable energy future.

We support Tri-State's endeavors to acquire as much federal funding as possible in two key areas: First, the expansion of our clean energy infrastructure will bring numerous

benefits to our rural communities. Second, refinancing and retiring costly debts from increasingly uneconomical generating capacity can pave the way for new wind, solar, and storage projects. The New ERA funds will empower Tri-State to provide low-cost energy throughout its network, invest in grid resilience and modernization, and implement vital carbon reduction strategies for our future.

As elected officials, we look forward to collaborating with you to reduce costs for consumers, bolster rural economies, and address New Mexico's energy needs while pursuing our state's ambitious greenhouse gas reduction goals.

Sincerely,

Congresswoman Melanie Stansbury

Sen. Bill Tallman

Rep. Debra Sarinana

Sen. Peter Wirth

Rep. Andrea Romero

Taos City Councilor Darien Hernandez

Rep. Joy Garratt

Santa Fe City Councilor Signe Lindell

Rep. Christine Chandler

Santa Fe City Councilor Renee Villareal

Rep. Kathleen Cates

Albuquerque City Councilor Tammy Fiebelkorn

Sen. Antoinette Sedillo Lopez

Sandoval County Commissioner Joshua Jones