



Brightscape Networks Launches USDA-Funded Initiative to Prepare Rural Northern California for Broadband Investment

ARCATA, CA, UNITED STATES, June 16, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Brightscape Networks, in partnership with Cal Poly Humboldt, today announced the launch of the Redwood Rural Reach (R3) project, a \$1 million broadband technical assistance initiative funded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Broadband Technical Assistance (BTA) program.

Rather than funding construction directly, the R3 project is designed as a foundation-building opportunity: equipping rural communities that often do not get the infrastructure resources they deserve in Humboldt and Trinity Counties with the planning, data, and tools needed to successfully compete for major state broadband infrastructure funding expected in October 2026 and future federal deployment projects.

The project will focus on 23 rural communities that were eligible for federal technical assistance, where many residents remain unconnected or underserved. Through detailed needs assessments, engineering designs, and development of near shovel-ready project plans and grant application templates, R3 will position these communities to move quickly when new funding opportunities become available.

Participating communities include:

Humboldt County: Alderpoint, Benbow, Miranda, Myers Flat, Orick, Petrolia, Phillipsville, Redcrest, Shelter Cove, Weott, Willow Creek

Trinity County: Burnt Ranch, Coffee Creek, Douglas City, Hayfork, Hyampom, Junction City, Lewiston, Mad River, Post Mountain, Salyer, Trinity Center, Trinity Village

"We are excited to oversee this initiative with partners who deeply understand the needs and challenges of these communities," said Erik Hunsinger, President and COO of Brightscape Networks. "This effort is about building the foundation, so when the next wave of funding arrives, these communities are not starting from scratch, but are ready to move forward with clear, competitive projects."

The initiative builds on years of regional broadband planning and recent progress in middle-mile infrastructure. Connie Stewart, Executive Director of Initiatives at Cal Poly Humboldt, highlighted

how this work represents the next critical phase.

"I'm pleased to report that all of the middle-miles that we had envisioned in that plan so long ago are now either built or funded and on the way to being built," Stewart said. "That's taken a long time."

She emphasized that the focus must now shift to last-mile connectivity: bringing service directly to homes and businesses.

"The next step is last mile connections, which is the really fun part of trying to figure out how to get this actually to your home at a reasonable price," Stewart added.

While some communities have already secured significant funding, such as a recent \$40 million award supporting last-mile connections along the Highway 299 corridor, many others, particularly in Southern Trinity and Southern Humboldt, still lack viable projects. The R3 project is designed to change that.

Brian Court, Senior Operations Director at Brightscape Networks, described the initiative as a strategic effort to prepare communities for success in upcoming funding cycles. "This grant is about teeing up each of these communities for success in future funding rounds," Court said. "What we believe we can offer is the ability to work in conjunction with local experts, community leaders and residents who know these areas inside and out, to develop near shovel-ready plans so as funding opportunities become available, all the legwork will already be done. We'll have the information ready to plug into applications and unlock that funding."

Brightscape Networks will lead the technical planning and network engineering work, while Cal Poly Humboldt will spearhead community engagement, ensuring that solutions reflect local priorities and conditions. Together, the partners will produce actionable infrastructure plans and ready-to-submit grant application materials aligned with programs such as BEAD, ReConnect, and the California Advanced Services Fund.

County leaders have welcomed the initiative as a critical step toward closing long-standing connectivity gaps that impact education, healthcare, emergency response, and economic opportunity.

"This project allows us to focus on some of the most rural communities in the region and position them for future infrastructure investment," said Humboldt County Supervisor Michelle Bushnell.

The R3 project will run through Summer 2027, with a primary goal of supporting communities to be prepared to apply for the state's next major broadband funding cycle in October 2026 and future federal broadband opportunities.

For more information on meetings and project updates, visit: www.brightscapenetworks.org/R3

Contact: Kate Shea, Cal Poly Humboldt at kate.shea@humboldt.edu.

Media Contact:

Brightscape Networks Public Affairs

Email: press@brightscapenetworks.org

Phone: (916) 909-3940

Kate Shea

Cal Poly Humboldt

[email us here](#)

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