

Jerry and Steph Paumen

Plato, MN

Business: Young farm family who own and operate a retail seed business in addition to farming.

Internet Service: Switched from too-slow DSL offered by the local telephone company to costly patchwork of wireless accounts.

Our Story: Farming and running a small business are hard enough, but the internet access we depend on is a nightmare. We had something that the local telco called “high-speed broadband,” but it was too slow to deliver even basic email and file transfer. We’ve looked into fixed wireless but have line-of-sight issues. My parents live nearby and have satellite, but service depends on fair weather and it’s costly. We’re stuck with cell phones and cellular hot spots. We run the farm and business off of four dedicated accounts, have a fifth for our teenage son, and add a sixth during fieldwork in the spring and fall. These are top of the line plans and we pay about \$350 a month for basic communications only. Our data lasts about three weeks - we pay extra after that. We’re doing everything we can to build success for our family and community, but in this day and age, you cannot compete if you don’t have access to reliable, affordable high-speed broadband.



Our Message:

MRC and MAT are participating members of the Rural Broadband Coalition and support the coalition message for 2018:

“Fund the Border-to-Border Broadband program. No new policy this year.”

Goal: The Minnesota Rural Broadband Coalition and its supporters request the 2018 Legislature to fund the Border-to-Border Broadband Development Grant program with \$51.48 million in 2018 to achieve the state’s 2026 broadband speed goal of 100 megabits per second (Mbps) download and 20 Mbps upload. Consistent and stable funding of the grant program is important to allow economic development agencies, local governments and others to be creative and collaborative in their approach to providing broadband services to these areas.

Background: The Legislature has traditionally provided funding for the Border-to-Border Broadband Grant Program on an annual basis, rather than over the biennium. Last session, the Legislature included \$20 million for the program. The Office of Broadband Development received 70 applications in the 2017 grant cycle totaling over \$50 million in requests for broadband infrastructure projects throughout the state.

The Governor’s Task Force on Broadband Report recommends \$71.48 million per biennium in on-going funding over the next four years. This will provide broadband internet speeds of 25 Mbps/3 Mbps to the 252,000 households that currently lack such service—and will help Minnesota achieve its statutory broadband speed goal of connecting all Minnesotans with broadband internet speeds of 100 Mbps/20 Mbps by 2026.

For more information, please contact:

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2017 Broadband Availability in the State of Minnesota

Percentage of Households served by broadband service of at least 25Mbps/3Mbps
Statewide: 88.11%, Rural: 73.45%

