USDA Grant Will Bring Broadband to St. Paul

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Brianna Gibbs/KMXT

Broadband access is coming to the community of St. Paul in the Pribilof Islands. The Alaska Native Village Corporation Tanadgusix has received a grant to update the current network and provide broadband service. Larry Yerich is the spokesman for United States Department of Agriculture Rural Development in Alaska and said the community connect grant is awarded annually to rural communities across the nation.

“The Community Connect Program is administered through the Rural Utilities Service National Office and the Rural Utilities Service is part of the USDA Rural Development family its just that we don’t administer it here at the state level," he said. "The Community Connect Program serves rural communities, typically where the broadband service is least likely to be available but where if they had it would make a huge difference in quality of life for the people who live there, the residents.”

He said the Tanadgusix Corporation received $554,140 from the Community Connect Grant and had to meet specific requirements in order to qualify.

“There are eligibility criteria. The following entities would be eligible for the funding: Incorporated organizations, Indian tribes or tribal organizations as defined by U.S. code or state or local units of government or private corporations or limited liability companies organized on a for profit or not for profit basis," he said. "The eligibility area would be a single community with a population less than 20,000 people that does not have broadband transmission service. The funds are used to build broadband infrastructure and establish a community center which would offer free public access to broadband for two years. ”

Yerich said Tanadgusix Corporation will have to match at least 15 percent of the funds for the broadband project.