



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Sept. 22, 2023

Contact: Avery Wilks, 803-374-3115, [avery.wilks@ecsc.org](mailto:avery.wilks@ecsc.org)

## **Rural South Carolina community to benefit from Department of Energy grant**

COLUMBIA – Blair, an unincorporated community of about 1,500 people in Fairfield County, will benefit from improved power grid resilience and reliability through a grant Central Electric Power Cooperative has obtained from the U.S. Department of Energy.

The grant, funded by the 2021 Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, will help Central Electric and its partners purchase and install five vanadium flow batteries capable of discharging 700kW to 3.6MW of electricity for up to 20 hours.

These batteries will help fulfill the Blair community's power needs, especially during extended power outages. Central Electric and the local cooperative that serves Blair, Newberry Electric, will be able to rely on the batteries to keep the power on in Blair while line crews assess and address those outages.

This capability is especially important in rural communities that rely on electricity to power critical infrastructure, including water pumps, medical facilities and communication systems.

"We are excited to help bring cutting-edge, long-duration energy storage technology to rural South Carolina," Central Electric CEO Rob Hochstetler said. "Electricity is essential in today's day and age. This project will help reduce outage times and keep the power on for our members."

"Newberry Electric Cooperative is proud to have been chosen for the battery storage program partnering with our power supplier, Central Electric," Newberry Electric CEO Keith Avery said. "This project exemplifies Newberry Electric's commitment to resiliency and reliability for its members."

Central Electric worked with the National Renewables Cooperatives Organization to obtain the grant. Blair is one of five rural communities from the Midwest to the East Coast to receive grants through the NRCO.

The exact grant amount will be negotiated with the Department of Energy in the coming months. It will come from a [\\$350 million pot of money available](#) from the federal agency's Office of Clean Energy Demonstrations.

"These battery projects put rural America – which is often last to benefit from new technologies – at the forefront of new opportunities in the energy transition." said Mike Keyser, CEO of NRCO. "This is about

co-ops bringing innovation to rural America that provides new economic opportunities while also enhancing grid resilience and charting a path to a cleaner energy future.”

Central Electric and NRCO will work with the Blair community to ensure local residents have a voice in the project.

The Department of Energy will monitor the Blair project as it studies the effectiveness of similar battery programs. The batteries will be supplied by Invinity Energy Systems, a global leader in the production of vanadium flow batteries with high efficiencies and long lifespans.

###

#### **NRCO battery project sites:**

1. *Iowa*: Meswaki Settlement in Tama County  
Served by [Central Iowa Power Cooperative](#) (CIPCO)
2. *Iowa*: Waterville in Allamakee County  
Served by Wisconsin-based [Dairyland Power Cooperative](#)
3. *Maryland*: Smith Island and *Virginia*: Tangier Island  
Served by Virginia-based [Old Dominion Electric Cooperative](#) (ODEC)
4. *North Carolina*: Hamlet Plant Power Station in Hamlet  
Served by [North Carolina Electric Membership Corporation](#) (NCEMC)
5. *South Carolina*: Blair community in Fairfield County  
Served by [Central Electric Power Cooperative, Inc.](#) (CEPCI)

**About Central Electric:** Central Electric Power Cooperative, Inc., is a not-for-profit generation and transmission cooperative headquartered in Columbia, South Carolina. Together, Central and its 20 member cooperatives serve about 2 million South Carolinians and cover more than 70% of the state’s land mass. South Carolina’s independent, member-owned electric cooperatives formed Central in 1948 in order to pool their resources to purchase wholesale power more efficiently and effectively. As explained in its mission statement, Central “exists solely for the benefit of its members,” and one of Central’s most important jobs is to plan for the future power supply needs of its member cooperatives.

**About Newberry Electric:** Newberry Electric Cooperative, formed in 1939, is one of South Carolina’s 20 electric cooperatives. It serves more than 13,200 members over 1,590 miles of power line in four counties, including Newberry, Fairfield, Lexington and Laurens counties.

#### **About NRCO:**

Formed in 2008, the National Renewables Cooperative Organization has 21 members across the United States that have a combined peak load of nearly 40 GW and serve more than 7.6 million homes and businesses. NRCO’s mission is to create opportunities for its members to contract and develop a wide range of cost-effective renewable energy resources. NRCO’s innovative solutions assist members through the maze of new storage applications, new grid infrastructure projects, evolving federal and state policies, and emerging technologies toward a cleaner and more reliable grid. Visit [nrco.coop](http://nrco.coop) to learn more.

