

Minnkota

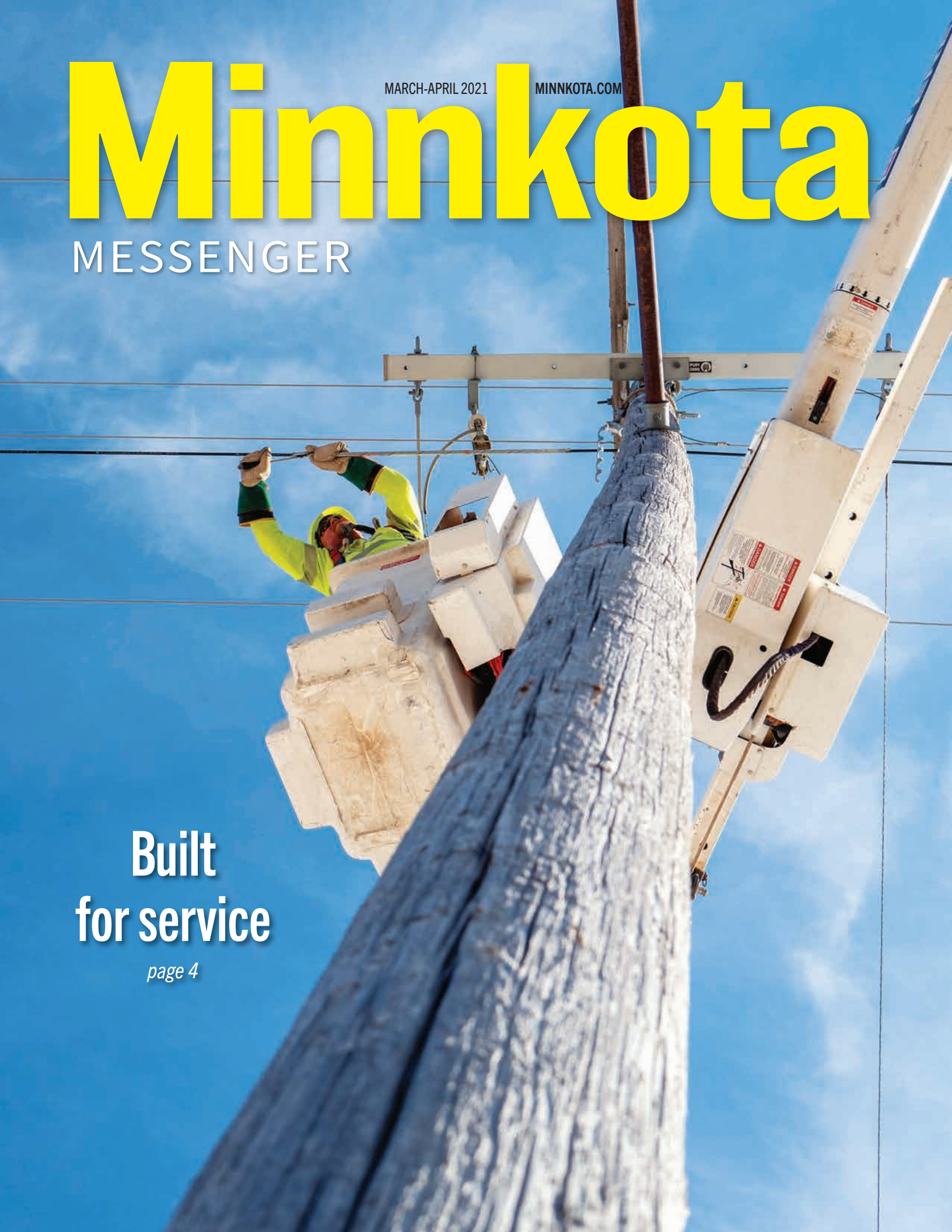
MARCH-APRIL 2021

MINNKOTA.COM

MESSENGER

**Built
for service**

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In the midst of a global pandemic, Roseau Electric Cooperative's NorthStream Fiber initiative has connected rural families to loved ones, employees to businesses, students to classrooms and others to a higher quality of living. And the connections are just getting started.

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The cold-weather reliability of our national power grid has been a hot topic in 2021, but Minnkota skillfully used its resources and demand response program to protect its regional members from outages and market volatility during a nationwide polar vortex event.

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As a 15-year Clearwater-Polk Electric Cooperative general manager decides to turn the page into retirement, an experienced co-op community force will step up to take the reins. Bruce Bjerke reflects on his years with the co-op, and Deanna Lefebvre discusses her plans for the future.

16 Annual meeting

There's no question that 2020 was a difficult year. But when faced with a global pandemic, Minnkota and its members found strength and resiliency. The cooperative's annual meeting highlighted successes, milestones and other positives from a year filled with adversity.



On the cover: Roseau Electric Cooperative lineworker Chad Johnson hangs overhead fiber-optic cable along power lines near the City of Roseau. The installation is just one small section among hundreds of miles of high-speed fiber currently being built out by Roseau's NorthStream Fiber project.

Minnkota Messenger is published six times a year by Minnkota Power Cooperative. Its mission is to communicate Minnkota's perspectives and concerns to its members, elected officials, employees and other business audiences. For editorial inquiries, call (701) 795-4282 or email bfladhammer@minnkota.com.

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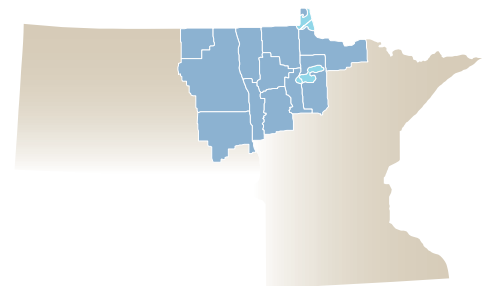
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Minnkota Power Cooperative is a generation and transmission cooperative headquartered in Grand Forks, N.D. It supplies wholesale electricity to 11 member-owner distribution cooperatives, three in eastern North Dakota and eight in northwestern Minnesota. Minnkota also serves as operating agent for the Northern Municipal Power Agency, an association of 12 municipal utilities in the same service region. Together, the Joint System serves more than 159,000 customers.

CAPTURING OUR ENERGY FUTURE



Minnkota produces Project Tundra video

Minnkota Power Cooperative has produced an engaging informational video to explain the science, technology and economics behind its carbon capture initiative, as well as the project's potential impacts on the region and societies around the world.

"Project Tundra: Capturing Our Energy Future" is a 12-minute journey through all areas of the endeavor, as told by the leaders and experts involved. Project Tundra aims to capture 90% of the carbon dioxide (CO₂) from either generator at the coal-based Milton R. Young Station. If the project moves forward, it will remove an amount of CO₂ equivalent to taking 800,000 gasoline-powered vehicles off the road.

"It is our hope that this video effectively tells the story of Project Tundra and how lives will be positively impacted by its success," said Ben Fladhammer, Minnkota communications manager. "We want people to know that this energy project goes beyond keeping electricity reliable, affordable and responsible in our own backyards. Reducing emissions is a global effort, and Minnkota has an opportunity to advance carbon capture technology for everyone."

Minnkota and its partners are currently in the advanced engineering and design phase of the project. It is anticipated that a decision on whether to move forward with Project Tundra will be made within the next year.

To view the video and see the latest updates on Project Tundra, visit ProjectTundraND.com or like Project Tundra on Facebook.



Built for service

ROSEAU ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE EXPANDS FIBER-TO-THE-HOME NETWORK TO MORE RURAL MEMBERS, CITY OF ROSEAU



An REC lineworker drills a hole to prepare the placement of a fiber cable trunnion. Inset: Stacy Rose displays a trunnion used to hold the fiber line along the power poles.

Roseau Electric Cooperative (REC) lineworker Ross Nelson will be spending this summer building out miles of overhead and underground fiber-optic cable for his co-op's expanding network.

It's hard work, but not harder than his task last summer – seeing his son, Jarrett, off to basic training for the U.S. Marines.

"The Marines can't have their phones for 13 weeks during boot camp," Nelson said, a photo of his uniformed son tucked in his wallet. "They can still rely on letters in the mail, so my wife got an app that's called Sandboxx."

Nelson explained that Sandboxx allows users like his wife, Mary, to type a thousand-character message and upload photos. That content is printed by the company and sent as a tangible letter to the training base. It's a handy service, but only if you have a solid internet link, which the Nelsons did not have.

"So she would be standing out in the yard, phone in the air like the Statue of Liberty, waiting for a connection," Ross explained, pantomiming his wife's distress. "That was for the first month he was gone. Then, the second day we had fiber, she tried it. And it just went, boop – done. It was sent."

The Nelsons were one of the first rural member families to be connected to reliable high-speed internet through NorthStream Fiber, REC's broadband deployment initiative started in 2019. Now, that sense of connection is spreading across more areas of

NORTHSTREAM FIBER

Roseau County, including the City of Roseau itself.

Early in 2021, REC was conditionally awarded \$1.2 million in funding from the Federal Communications Commission's (FCC) Rural Digital Opportunity Fund (RDOF) to expand fiber service to unserved or underserved regions of Roseau County. Some of the census-block groups that were included in that coverage zone lie adjacent to the census-block groups REC already began to serve in 2019, after the co-op was initially awarded \$2.1 million from the FCC's Connect America Fund Phase II (CAFII). In total, REC will receive around \$3.3 million over the next decade to build out a network to more than 550 member homes and businesses.

The hunger for high-speed has been obvious. As of mid-March 2021, NorthStream Fiber had already connected more than 130 customers. REC assistant manager Ryan Severson says they expected a take rate (or, rate of signing up for the service offered) of around 35%. On the first buildout, they've been exceeding 80%.

"We hope that continues throughout," Severson said. "Our main goal is that every one of our members has access to a high-speed internet connection, whether we accomplish that through NorthStream Fiber or through our partnership with Wikstrom Telephone Company. Call us, and we will connect you."



REC lineworker Ross Nelson holds a photo of his son, Jarrett, who is stationed across the country for Marine training.

The City of Roseau was one area that was not in NorthStream Fiber's initial buildout plan. Residents currently have access to coax connections for internet, but wanted more reliability and speed.

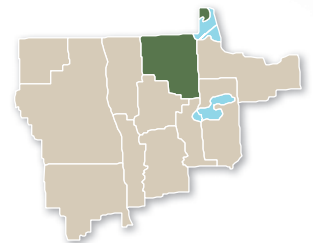
"We had people in town calling – 'Can we get your service?'" Severson said. "With some of the infrastructure that's in place in

the City of Roseau, it made total sense for us to start serving some customers there."

REC hopes to start hanging overhead fiber for the city this summer, coinciding with the four-year rollout plan of its two other rural buildouts. Depending on the infrastructure of the area, the co-op's line crews install either underground fiber lines or string the fiber from already-existing power lines. It's a service integration that fits a quickly evolving society.

"We believe here at Roseau Electric, and now NorthStream Fiber, that these two businesses will completely mesh. At some point, one will complement the other, and we're already starting to see that," Severson said. "When you go down the road of smart electricity – thermostats, EV chargers, all of these technologies – you're going to need a good internet connection to be able to do any of it."

Severson knows the co-op will also benefit from the marriage of fiber and electricity. As innovation continues, internet-connected meter reading could become the new

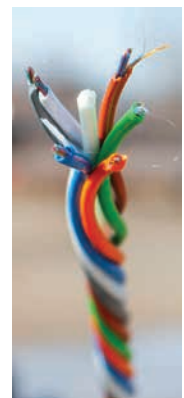


Served by

**Roseau Electric
Cooperative**

Roseau, Minn.

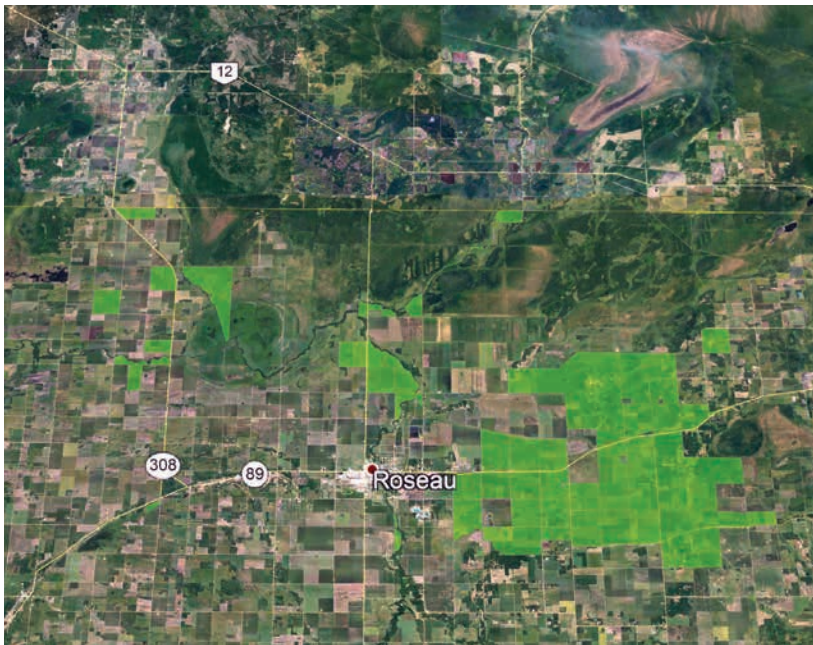
- Incorporated – July 25, 1940
- Year energized – 1944
- Board members – 9
- General manager – Tracey Stoll
- 2020 members – 6,590
- Miles of line – 2,175



An inside look at the overhead fiber cable being strung this year by REC's NorthStream team.

“COVID challenges reinforced why we’re doing this. We’ve had comments from people who have done doctor’s appointments or consults virtually instead of having to go into the hospital. It’s being used, and that is just going to increase with what’s going on today.”

– Ryan Severson, REC assistant manager



normal, and REC will now have a stronger foundation to connect its substations and enhance its use of SCADA (supervisory control and data acquisition) for better member service.

Perfect timing

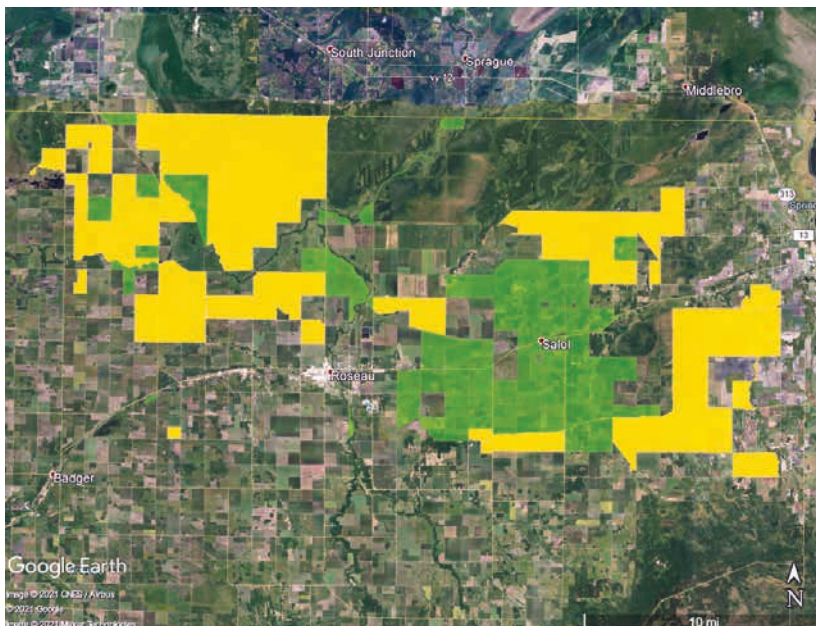
It’s not lost on fiber service director Stacy Rose that NorthStream’s deployment couldn’t have come at a better time. Just months after they started the project, COVID-19 hit. Solid internet was suddenly essential.

“Our customers have all been extremely happy,” Rose said. “A lot of them are working from home now, so they like having that feature. They don’t have to use their mobile hotspots, which get disconnected all the time. They have a consistent connection.”

For lineworker Nelson, it wasn’t just communication with his Marine-in-training that his family needed. His sophomore son was now distance learning online, and his wife was now working strictly from home.

“The company she works for gave her a cellphone, but whenever she did Zoom meetings, it would be in and out, in and out,” Nelson said. “With fiber, that went away. Now, she would never let me buy a house that doesn’t have fiber.”

Major Roseau County companies were also thankful for the new service from REC. Severson said he received a lot of positive feedback from employees of business members Marvin and Polaris, whose engineering teams had to abruptly take their highly technical work home. He’s also heard from those in the medical field.



Top: The Roseau County areas marked in green show the initial groupings of NorthStream Fiber coverage awarded in the Connect America Fund Phase II (CAFII). *Bottom:* The areas marked in yellow indicate the Rural Digital Opportunity Fund (RDOF) areas that NorthStream Fiber was conditionally awarded.

"COVID challenges reinforced why we're doing this," he said. "We've had comments from people who have done doctor's appointments or consults virtually instead of having to go into the hospital. It's being used, and that is just going to increase with what's going on today."

The pandemic may have pushed Roseau County further into a web-based world, but it was already heading that direction. As a younger generation of families looks to build their futures in rural Minnesota, high-speed internet will be key to recruiting and retaining thriving community members.

As Nelson puts it, fiber has become a quality-of-life necessity. When he was young, any purchase of a new homestead would need to include a good source of water to be valuable.

"I believe fiber is the new well," he said. "They expect the water, the electricity, all of that stuff. But now it's also the fiber connection."

Many of Nelson's fellow lineworkers have also connected to the NorthStream network over the past year, personally intertwined with a design plan that will have them hanging and trenching more than 250 miles of fiber cable.

"The things that our lineworkers accomplished last year – being new to it, and the amount of line they built out – it feels great," said Rose, who is often in the field with her crews, talking them through the more technical aspects. "It got to be overwhelming some days, but at the end of the day, you look back and think, wow, we did it."

Although Nelson is thrilled his family can now have substantial Wi-Fi video calls with Jarret as he continues Marine training in North Carolina, he's equally pleased to be giving that opportunity to other families in the north.

"It is a good feeling, and the hope is that we can get as many people on as soon as we



can," he said, squinting through the sun at his co-op brothers stringing fiber from the bucket truck. "Just like electricity – we want to get them 'lit up.'"

REC's line crew prepares a stretch of fiber at a future splicing point along the network path northwest of Roseau, Minn.

By Kaylee Cusack / Photography Michael Hoeft

Power over the market

ENERGY MARKETERS COMBINE RELIABLE RESOURCES
AND DEMAND RESPONSE TO AVOID A COLD-WEATHER CRISIS

In mid-February, millions of Texans were learning how to get through brutal winter temperatures with no electricity, while many more were researching how to pay for suddenly enormous power bills.

During that same subzero-weather event, a group of Minnkota energy marketers was getting a lesson on how to protect the cooperative's members from facing similar ice-cold consequences. And they skillfully passed the test.

(Left to right) Energy marketers Mark Fulbright, Dan Trebil, Amber Langemo and Isaac Hoffart examine the load data of the day.

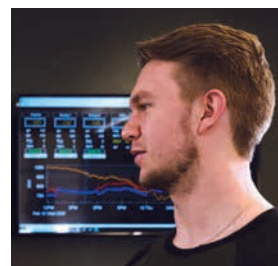
"We've seen some extreme temperatures locally, and we know how that plays into what we do day-to-day," said energy marketer Mark Fulbright, who has been with Minnkota less than two years. "But during this event we had the opportunity to see extreme temperatures spread across the country, and how that can add a new dimension to how we handle operations here."

The "we" that Fulbright refers to is a trio of fairly new additions to Minnkota's power



“We’ve seen some extreme temperatures locally, and we know how that plays into what we do day-to-day. But during this event we had the opportunity to see extreme temperatures spread across the country, and how that can add a new dimension to how we handle operations here.”

– Mark Fulbright, energy marketer



supply and resource planning department. Along with Fulbright, energy marketers Amber Langemo and Isaac Hoffart were all hired within the past two years, all three missing the last polar vortex event in January 2019. They join experienced energy marketer Dan Trebil, an eight-year veteran of powering through climate anomalies.

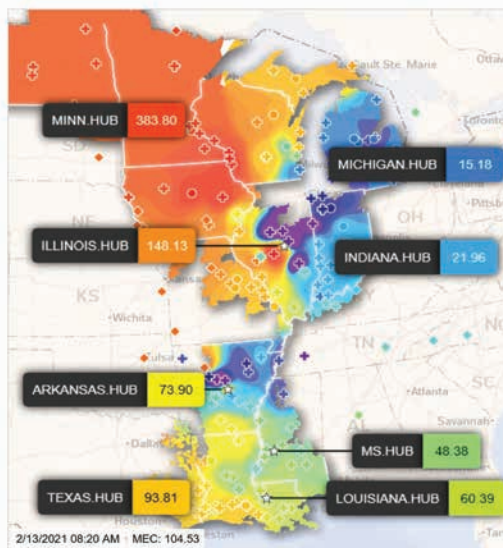
“They handled a very stressful situation very well,” said Todd Sailer, senior manager of power supply and resource plan-

ning. “Trying to incorporate our demand response, managing the wind forecasts and understanding how the markets work – this was one of those experiences that will end up being very valuable for them in the future.”

What happened?

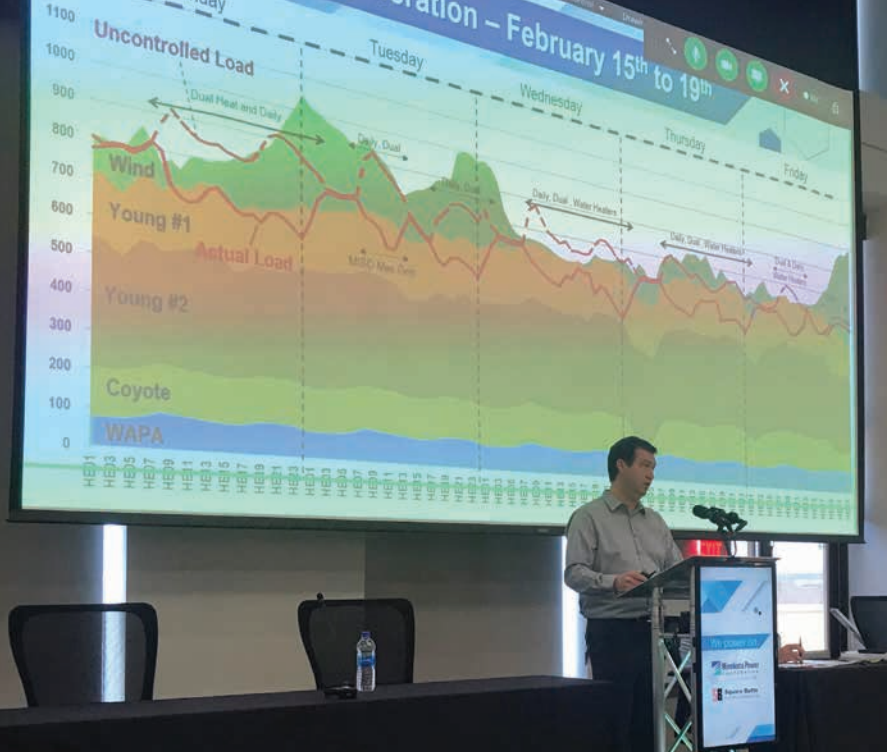
The nearly two-week February cold snap that essentially crippled the Texas power grid started up north. From approximately Feb. 8-14, Minnkota’s service area experienced some of its coldest temperatures of the stretch. As the polar vortex dropped south, both regional demand and weather-related generation issues began to rise.

Midcontinent Independent System Operator (MISO) – the organization that manages the transmission grid and energy markets of a 15-state region that includes Minnkota’s territory – asked its providers to



A screen capture from Feb. 13, 2021, shows how high energy market prices had risen in the north at the beginning of the polar vortex, hundreds of dollars higher than average. (Courtesy: MISO)





“Because we’re scheduling our generation resources into the market, we’re making sure we’re scheduling those resources in the right market. We’re making sure we’re doing something that is beneficial to our members and maximizing the value of those resources.”

– Todd Sailer, senior manager of power supply and resource planning

enter conservative operations Feb. 14-20 and declared a Maximum Generation Event on Feb. 16. Over those days, the combination of expanded regional need and less generation availability (from frozen plants, natural gas pipeline constraints and less production from wind farms across the midsection of the country) made the cost of buying energy from the grid skyrocket.

“We saw prices over \$100 all hours of the day starting on Feb. 15, and it lasted four to five days,” Sailer recalled. “We might see it that high for a few hours but, typically, in the last couple of years, it’s been averaging less than \$20 per megawatt-hour. So when you’re seeing prices of \$200, \$400, sometimes up to \$900, it completely changes what you’re trying to manage.”



Minnkota’s Milton R. Young Station continued to perform reliably throughout the cold snap, at times even delivering extra power into the regional grid.

Minnkota had to protect itself from relying on the volatile market. Although the coal-based Young Station continued to provide electricity reliably throughout the event, wind power generation dropped due to low winds and temperatures. Minnkota’s healthy demand response program – through which members volunteer to have certain electric loads like dual-fuel heating and water heaters controlled for a reduced rate – helped Sailer’s energy marketers decrease the demand on the grid.

“Because we’re scheduling our generation resources into the market, we’re making sure we’re scheduling those resources in the right market. If the power plant’s going to be available or the wind’s going to be available, we’re making sure to schedule that properly,” Sailer explained. “With that, you identify where your exposure is in the market, or maybe identify some opportunities in the market related to our demand response program. We’re making sure we’re doing something that is beneficial to our members and maximizing the value of those resources.”

Ultimately, Minnkota came out of the cold snap with few weather-related service interruptions to its members. There were no rolling blackouts as briefly seen in neighboring grid systems, and no days-long outages

as experienced in the south. Minnkota used 84 hours of dual-fuel heat control, which helped avoid high energy market costs. The electricity provided by the Young Station covered the remaining demand and added needed power into the national grid.

"Our value of reliability shined through in a moment where others were facing crisis," said plant engineering and environmental manager Tim Hagerott, adding that the Young Station is specifically designed to operate in North Dakota's cold-weather climate. "The majority of our equipment is housed indoors in heated buildings. We also have several systems that utilize heat trace that is covered by insulation to prevent piping and equipment from freezing."

A different situation

In Texas' unique energy landscape, the situation was starkly different. Many generation resource technologies, including natural gas pipelines, coal plants and wind turbines, could not perform in the once-in-a-century low temperatures. For most of the country, this would mean importing energy from a neighboring grid system operator (such as MISO). However, the Electricity Reliability Council of Texas (ERCOT) is independent of those grid interconnections.

"They're somewhat of an island when they start having problems on their system, because they're limited in bringing in other resources from other regions," Sailer said. "It was obviously a very extreme weather event for them, so some of their units just weren't prepared for that cold. It wasn't just one resource – they were nearly all impacted, which resulted in Texas being isolated."

Additionally, hundreds of Texas power consumers who were enrolled in programs that connect them directly to wholesale power rates were burned by that week's market volatility, receiving bills that were thousands of dollars higher than normal. Minnkota and its member cooperatives protect their member-consumers from this price fluctuation by using their own generation

resources to limit market exposure.

When the polar vortex finally waned in late February, Minnkota's energy marketers were able to return to some normalcy – regular work hours, stable market prices and infrequent demand response needs. The adrenaline may have faded, but the newcomer knowledge will stick around for the next time it's their job to help keep power reliable and affordable.

"This is a unique job in the sense that it seems like we learn something new every day," Fulbright said, surrounded by his fellow marketers. "And that week was ten-fold."

"It was exciting, because we hadn't seen anything like that before," Langemo added. "You can talk about these things in theory, but when you're actually doing them, it's a lot different. It was a great way to learn, when you have three other people to bounce ideas off of. That's one thing with our group – we do function well as a team."

MISO, in which Minnkota is a member, overlaps the Southwest Power Pool. Also shown is ERCOT, which was limited in its ability to import power from neighboring grids.

By Kaylee Cusack / Photography Michael Hoeft





Clear leadership

BRUCE BJERKE RETIRES AFTER 15 YEARS AS CLEARWATER-POLK ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE'S GENERAL MANAGER

Over his 22 years at Clearwater-Polk Electric Cooperative, Bruce Bjerke connected many things. He connected new members to new services as the head of member services, connected a network of electric meters through an AMR (automatic meter reading) system, and con-

nected the co-op to large loads that ensured Clearwater-Polk's vitality.

This general manager's mental scrapbook holds a lot of career milestones and victories. But as he retired from Clearwater-Polk in March, he wasn't focusing as much on the event snapshots glued to the pages –



his mind was on the faces in the photos.

"The co-op family," Bjerke responded without hesitation when asked what would be most difficult to leave in retirement. "It is just a great place to work. And I was able to work in the area where I grew up, where my parents were members of Clearwater-Polk, and where I've been a member since 1983."

Bjerke's early years were spent on a farm 22 miles northeast of Bagley, Minn., and later on a family resort on Clearwater Lake. After graduating from Clearbrook High School, he attended Minnesota State Community and Technical College in Moorhead, completing the construction electrician program. He worked for electrical contractors for four years, received his journeyman's license and joined Minnesota Pipe Line, where he received his master electrician license and worked for 16 years.

In 1999, it was time to bring all of that experience to Clearwater-Polk. Bjerke was hired to the member services team, and as his connections to the membership grew stronger, so did the co-op's belief that he was the person to be the department's director.

In August 2005, Bjerke transitioned from member services director to the "big chair" of general manager. Bjerke continued to leverage co-op connections to enhance his leadership over the next 16 years. He points to not only his fellow employees, but also a smart and driven board of directors and helpful nearby co-ops.

"The staff and everybody at Minnkota Power Cooperative have been such a good resource for us. Being a small co-op, we can't have everybody in house with that level of expertise," he said. "And as a new general manager, many of our neighboring co-ops had managers who were so willing to help out."

Bjerke's best moments at Clearwater-Polk were when he was able to execute projects that moved the co-op forward. Just a few years ago, his in-house team finished off a major conversion to the new AMR system, which will provide advanced automatic meter reading and two-way communication. In his last two years, he guided the co-op through a positive transition to the National Information Solutions Cooperative (NISC) system. The software gives more capability to the accounting, billing, member service, operations and engineering departments, but also allows members to more easily manage their energy usage and payments.

He's proud of those innovative endeavors, but Bjerke also speaks of the pride he felt in his lineworkers and office staff as they restored power during three consecutive summers (2016-18) of damaging wind storms. "They all worked long hours, getting members back on," he recalled, noting the valuable help his team received from neighboring co-op crews.

As he turns the scrapbook page into retirement, Bjerke is eager to start planning more trips with his wife, Debbie, and maintaining hunting land near their Clearwater Lake home. But time spent with their grown sons Brandon and Jason, their daughters-in-law Jessica and Jaime, and their four grandchildren (Regor, Emma, Rhett and Jepson) will be the true joy of retirement.

"We'll get to see them more, because we'll be able to babysit more and they can come spend more time at Papa and Grandma's house," Bjerke beamed. "I'm looking forward to it."

"It is just a great place to work. And I was able to work in the area where I grew up, where my parents were members of Clearwater-Polk, and where I've been a member since 1983."

— Bruce Bjerke
retired general manager
Clearwater-Polk Electric
Cooperative

Recipe for success

CLEARWATER-POLK ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE'S DEANNA LEFEBVRE
CHOSEN TO LEAD AS GENERAL MANAGER

Deanna Lefebvre baked up a reputation for herself over nearly six years at Clearwater-Polk Electric Cooperative. Besides her transparent, level-headed demeanor and her financial management prowess, she has a skill for crafting

made-from-scratch pies so delicious, they will make you weep.

But the woman known as the Queen of Pies now has a new title: General Manager of Clearwater-Polk.

"When I accepted the job, I had a board member ask me that question – will you still be making pies? I said yes, as long as I'm here, I'll be making pies for our members," Lefebvre said with a warm smile. "I am still me."

In March, Lefebvre took over the role of general

manager with the retirement of long-time GM Bruce Bjerke. The cooperative first got a taste of her leadership in 2015, when she was hired in the member services department. The Waubun, Minn., native brought experience in office management from the Minnesota Extension Service and 16 years in member services from Wild Rice Electric Cooperative, a neighbor co-op member of the

same Minnkota Power Cooperative system.

Lefebvre not only brought her little-bit-of-everything knowledge to Clearwater-Polk, but also her knack for member engagement. She started in August, and Member Appreciation Month was coming soon in October. When she asked what the co-op had planned, she was met with shrugs. So she decided to make pies.

That first year, Lefebvre's spread of multiple homemade desserts (from strawberry rhubarb to coconut cream) brought 125 members through the co-op doors over three days. That number has grown every year as word of her talent spreads.

"They love it. Last year we weren't able to do it because of COVID, so members were asking, 'Can't you just do drive-through pie?'" she said. "It's not just for members – it's for community members as well. Why not get them in and get them involved?"

From pies to pie charts, Lefebvre always had a soft spot for the business and accounting side of the industry, even helping to implement a new utility software system for finance and billing when Clearwater-Polk transitioned in 2018. Understanding that the co-op would soon have turnover in management due to retirements, Bjerke and others started molding Lefebvre to take over office manager responsibilities, which she did in 2019. She fell even more in love with her work, which made things difficult when more opportunity came knocking.

"I want to help my co-op maintain, because I think that Clearwater-Polk Electric is already an amazing company with wonderful staff and employees and an amazing board of directors, as well as the members we serve."

– Deanna Lefebvre
new general manager
Clearwater-Polk Electric Cooperative



With the announcement of Bjerke's impending retirement in March 2021, Lefebvre started hearing from fellow employees that they wanted her as their new leader. "That encouragement was what I needed to set me up for success," she said. "When you have a great team supporting you, that's huge."

The board of directors agreed Lefebvre was the right person to step into the GM role. She knows that there are challenging times ahead in the industry, but she looks forward to working with other co-ops to keep electricity reliability high and kWh rates low.

"I want to help my co-op maintain, because I think that Clearwater-Polk Electric is already an amazing company with wonder-

ful staff and employees and an amazing board of directors, as well as the members we serve," she said.

She's new to the GM role, but the Lefebvre family (including husband Scott, kids Kaylee, Kole and Kody, and five grandchildren) will tell you Deanna has always been the adaptable type. Her mantra is the same dreaming up new pies in the kitchen as it is developing new goals for the co-op: "If I haven't made it, it doesn't mean that I can't."

By Kaylee Cusack / Photography Michael Hoefft



Minnkota CEO Mac McLennan (center) addresses members and guests attending the cooperative's annual meeting in-person and online.

We power on.

MINNKOTA, SQUARE BUTTE NAVIGATE 2020 WITH RESILIENCY

Despite challenges and obstacles experienced in 2020, the annual meetings of Minnkota and Square Butte Electric Cooperative carried an upbeat and positive tone as cooperative members gathered in-person and online March 26.

The meeting's theme, "We Power On," was a fitting tribute to the strength and resiliency shown by Minnkota's employees when faced with the COVID-19 pandemic.

"The one common thread throughout the year is that our employees rose to the challenge," said Les Windjue, Minnkota board chair, during his address to the membership. "They continually found creative solutions to problems and proved to be innovative in collaborating and keeping projects moving forward."

The cooperative hit some remarkable milestones in 2020. In the field, power delivery crews didn't

let the pandemic stall progress on the many projects that are important to the membership. Efforts to address aging infrastructure and improve service continued in 2020, as substations and transmission lines were rebuilt, equipment was upgraded, and communication technologies were implemented.

At the Young Station, employees kept the units running reliably and efficiently. Commitment from past and present personnel helped the plant reach one of its better years of operation, with each generating unit being available more than 93% of the time.

With the Young Station reaching significant performance milestones in 2020, it reinforces why Minnkota and Square Butte continue to evaluate Project Tundra – an effort to install carbon capture technology at the plant. The project aims to capture 90% of the CO₂ from the Square Butte-owned Unit 2 generator, while

also capturing additional CO₂ from Unit 1. Minnkota and Square Butte hope to make a decision on whether to continue forward by the end of 2021.

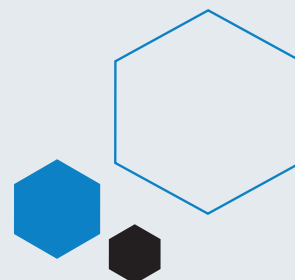
"After about five years of research and development, the project partners have gained a solid understanding of the engineering, geologic storage facility needs and overall economics," said Paul Aakre, Square Butte board president. "There is still more work to be done on all fronts, but the effort continues to advance in a positive direction."

Elections and recognition

The membership secured their leadership and representation on the Minnkota and Square Butte boards at the meetings. The Minnkota board reelected Windjue, Nodak Electric Cooperative, as chair. Mark Habedank, Wild Rice Electric Cooperative, was elected as vice chair. Colette Kujava, Red Lake

“The pace of change in our industry is accelerating faster than ever before. We must embrace that change and adapt. We must do this together.”

– Mac McLennan, president & CEO
Minnkota Power Cooperative



Electric Cooperative, was reelected as secretary-treasurer.

Square Butte Electric Cooperative welcomed two new directors: David Kent, Nodak Electric Cooperative, and Stacy Blawat, Red Lake Electric Cooperative. They replaced Paul Sigurdson (19 years of service) and Steve Linder (11 years of service). Both Sigurdson and Linder received resolutions of appreciation from the membership for their leadership and guidance. Square Butte reelected its board officers from the previous year, including Aakre (president), Larry Sollie (vice president), Roger Amundson (secretary-treasurer) and Anthony Ottem (assistant secretary-treasurer).

During the meeting, directors who have served on their distribution cooperative boards for 10 years received Minnkota's Red Lantern Award. This year's winners were Blawat, Red Lake Electric Cooperative; John Martinson, Cavalier Rural Electric Cooperative; Murl Nord, Beltrami Electric Cooperative; and Trevor Sorby, Red River Valley Co-op Power.

Recognition and thanks were also provided to three distribution cooperative general managers who retired during the past year: Ann Ellis, North Star Electric Cooperative; Steve Haaven, Wild Rice Electric

Cooperative; and Bruce Bjerke, Clearwater-Polk Electric Cooperative.

We power on

Mac McLennan, Minnkota president and CEO, closed the meeting by recognizing the rapid changes to the industry, culture and politics experienced in 2020. While the challenges look much different today than they did when Minnkota was formed in 1940, history has shown that great things happen when cooperatives band together.

“If you look at our history, we don't expect things to be easy,” McLennan said. “It wasn't easy for the people who started cooperatives and strung lines out to rural farmsteads. It's not easy when we have storms roll through or unex-

pected plant outages occur or global pandemics strike. The reason we're still here today – 80 years later – is because we have pulled together as cooperatives. If we're going to survive and thrive for another 80 years, we'll need to further strengthen those bonds.”

McLennan anticipates the coming year to be busy as the board and management evaluate future power supply decisions, new policies and regulations are introduced and energy technologies advance.

“The pace of change in our industry is accelerating faster than ever before,” McLennan said. “We must embrace that change and adapt. We must do this together.”

By Ben Fladhammer / Photography Michael Hoeft

Red Lantern Award recipients

Recognizing 10 years of service as a Minnkota member system director



Stacy Blawat
Red Lake Electric
Cooperative



John Martinson
Cavalier Rural Electric
Cooperative



Murl Nord
Beltrami Electric
Cooperative



Trevor Sorby
Red River Valley
Co-op Power

RUS loan repricing legislation reintroduced

Leadership from the Minnesota and North Dakota delegations has helped revive the Flexible Financing for Rural America Act – one of Minnkota's top federal legislative priorities.

Sens. Tina Smith (D-Minn.), Amy Klobuchar (D-Minn.), John Hoeven (R-N.D.) and Kevin Cramer (R-N.D.) hope to insert the legislation into an economic recovery and infrastructure investment package that Congress develops later this year. The bill would allow electric co-ops to reprice loans from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Rural Utilities Service at current low interest rates without being hit with prepayment penalties. Doing so could save the nation's electric cooperatives more than \$10 billion

in interest payments on their federal loans, according to the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA).

"Rural electric cooperatives are critical to economic success in small towns and rural areas across Minnesota," Smith said. "We ought to support them so they can continue to boost our infrastructure, all while supporting jobs and improving Minnesotans' quality of life."

The bill is key to helping co-ops recover from the economic battering brought on by COVID-19. The pandemic impacted demand for electricity by commercial and industrial co-op members struggling to survive downturns in the oil, agricultural and tourism industries. It also left many residential consumer-



members unable to pay their electric bills because of lost jobs and other financial hardships.

The new interest rate available to co-ops would be the U.S. Treasury rate that most closely matches the remaining term on the loan being refinanced. Co-ops would receive that rate starting on the date they notify the USDA of their repricing request. Lawmakers who are championing the bill say that co-ops' financial stability is crucial to rural America.

Lignite Energy Council to offer Teacher Education Seminar

Registration is now open for the Lignite Energy Council's Teacher Education Seminar: Energy, Economics and Environment. The free seminar gives teachers a firsthand look at lignite mining and related energy production. The seminar will be held June 14-17, 2021, at Bismarck State College's National Energy Center of Excellence, Bismarck, N.D. Teachers from all grade and subject levels should apply as soon as possible, as space is limited due to COVID-19.

Teachers who attend and complete a lesson plan can choose from one of three North Dakota institutions from which to receive their graduate credits: University of North Dakota, North Dakota State Univer-

sity and Minot State University. Free lodging, meals and mileage reimbursement are provided.

The seminar provides instruction on history, geology, land reclamation, environmental protection and economics of the lignite industry, the need for more workers, energy conservation and transmission. If COVID-19 restrictions allow, tours of a mine, power plant and the Great Plains Synfuels plant will be provided as part of the seminar. Teachers will take home handouts, videos, coal samples and activities that can be used in the classroom. For more information and an online application, go to www.lignite.com/teachers.

Lignite Education
TEACHERS SEMINAR

PEOPLE
WITH
ENERGY

June 14-17, 2021
Bismarck State College

Legislation introduced to advance carbon capture

Sens. John Hoeven (R-N.D.), Kevin Cramer (R-N.D.), Tina Smith (D-Minn.) and Amy Klobuchar (D-Minn.) helped introduce bipartisan legislation to support the development and implementation of carbon capture technologies. Specifically, the legislation:

- Provides a direct payment option for the 45Q and 48A tax incentives.
- Extends the 45Q commence construction deadline for five years, through Jan. 1, 2031.
- Includes the Hoeven-Smith Carbon Capture Modernization Act to update the 48A tax credit to ensure it works for carbon capture retrofits, like the Minnkota-led Project Tundra.
- Allows the 45Q credit to offset tax

obligations arising from the Base Erosion Avoidance Tax (BEAT).

- Increases support for direct air capture of CO₂ from the atmosphere.

“The advancement of carbon capture technology is essential for reliable, affordable electricity in our region, cleaner industries across the United States, and energy stability around the world,” said Mac McLennan, Minnkota president and CEO. “The energy landscape is changing quickly, and it is vitally important that we create a policy framework that allows these innovative emissions reduction technologies to thrive. The 45Q and 48A tax credits are some of the best tools we have available today.”



Rivian tests electric truck in Minnkota service area

When the world’s top automakers want to test their products against cold weather conditions, they bundle up and head north to Minnkota’s service area.

This winter, engineers with Rivian traveled to Baudette, Minn., to perform some winter research on their R1T all-electric pickup, set to be released to the public later this year. The highly anticipated electric vehicle boasts 250-400 miles of range, all-wheel drive and a zero-to-60-mph time of three seconds (in some models).

A unique testing facility, powered by member North Star Electric Cooperative, provides the ideal setting for Rivian to learn how its vehicle components and batteries stand up to temperatures of 40 below zero. Visit this link to learn about the Rivian team’s experience in northern Minnesota: stories.rivian.com/cold-weather-testing.

Five graduate from Minnkota apprenticeship program

Minnkota celebrated the training efforts of five Grand Forks employees in late February as they graduated from their respective apprenticeship programs.

Certificates of completion from the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) Apprenticeship Program were presented to the following crew members at a safety meeting at Minnkota’s headquarters: Andrew Klinger, Relay Technician; Perry Flaten, Relay Technician; John Lofgren, Substation

Electrician; Jason Sather, Substation Electrician; and Shawn Reimers, Lineworker.

Apprenticeship completions happen at different times through the year, but this was the first opportunity for an in-person presentation since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. These programs allow individuals to gain experience, training and nationally recognized credentials in a paid work environment.



(Left to right) Shawn Reimers, Andrew Klinger, John Lofgren, Perry Flaten and Jason Sather accept framed certificates for completing their apprenticeship programs.

We power on.

Minnkota crews face the coldest, most dangerous winters in the country.

Minnkota crews sweat through humidity-soaked Midwest summers.

Minnkota crews rise high into winds with gusts that just don't quit.

Minnkota crews trudge through water, mud and snow – in the same week.

Minnkota crews are reliable through all seasons.

It's no wonder your cooperative electricity is reliable, too.



**LINEWORKER
APPRECIATION DAY**
APRIL 12, 2021