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Minnkota

MESSENGER

Rural
Resurgence

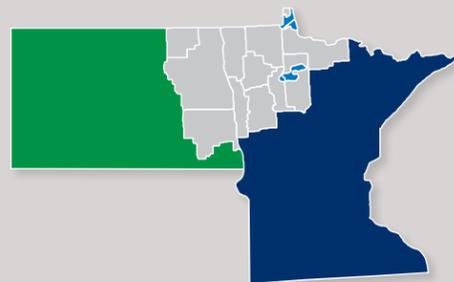
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On the cover: Hoople Grocery owner Jenna Gullickson and her son Hunter run the cash register at their Walsh County, N.D., store. Gullickson is a board member of the Rural Access Distribution Cooperative, a collaborative project to lower distribution costs and increase supply for the region's small-town businesses and schools.



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 162,500 consumers.

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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In this issue – Rural resurgence

For decades, the national dialogue on rural America's future has sounded like a horror story. Cue the withering tumbleweeds, boarded-up buildings and abandoned storefronts.

But that apocalyptic vision isn't happening in Minnkota's service area. There are different stories to be told. One where big-city transplants are arriving in droves to live and work remotely on the shores of Minnesota lakes. Another where small-town grocers are banding together to bolster their businesses and the communities they serve. And even how a military-base community has been strengthened by forming a closer bond with its local electric cooperative.

Minnkota, its members and the Northern Municipal Power Agency participants are on the front lines promoting this growth and evolution. Our group of utilities are built by, and belong to, the communities they serve. As we work together to meet tomorrow's electricity needs, the focus on people instead of profits helps lead to more resilient communities. In fact, our collective

economic development efforts are as strong as ever – even as we've faced a pandemic, record inflation and the risk of a recession.

A shift is taking place as people chose rural life because of lower costs, laid-back living and wide-open landscapes. At the same time, rural citizens are refocusing on placemaking efforts, which include modern amenities, services and other features that promote a lively and inviting community. It's not uncommon to see updated parks, modern coffee shops, breweries and other revitalized spaces in our small towns. These enhancement are helping foster an entrepreneurial spirit that is poised to grow in the coming years.

Technology is also a major factor in this transition. Minnkota is fortunate that much of its service area is connected to high-speed internet, while underserved areas are seeing spools of broadband fiber spin faster than ever before. Our farmers, ranchers and manufacturers are experiencing the benefits as their operations become increasingly digital, but it also creates an oppor-

tunity to recruit new tech talent to the region.

To be sure, challenges still exist. Our region isn't immune to broader workforce, childcare and housing issues being experienced nationally. But these obstacles are being met with creativity and innovation. And our organizations have resources available to help – including energy efficiency incentives, rural economic development loans, the Operation Round Up® charitable program and dedicated economic development staff. Perhaps most importantly, we know our communities. We've been in operation for decades and recognize what makes each area unique and vibrant.

In this issue of Minnkota Messenger, we meet the rural newcomers and the longtime community champions who are transforming the way we think about our region. Collectively, they have a chance to help rewrite the story on what it means to live in rural America. And it starts with this: If you can live and work anywhere, why wouldn't it be here?

By Ben Fladhammer



Living great in the 218

GREATER BEMIDJI'S RELOCATION PROGRAM ATTRACTS TELECOMMUTERS TO BELTRAMI ELECTRIC'S SERVICE AREA

Amy and Håkon Strande have 22 years of larger-than-life love stories to tell. Even their first week together sounds like screenplay fodder.

"I met her on a Greek island," said Håkon, a native of Norway whose heart was pickpocketed by an American.

"We were both vacationing on the same island for three days," Amy reminisced. "We met the first day and found each other again the third day."

With more than two decades of life in the Seattle suburbs, impressive careers with Microsoft and a daughter who just recently left the nest, the Strandes (and their pup, Scooter) were ready to return to the water-side – this time, on Little Bass Lake in Bemidji, Minnesota. They are two of more than 50 telecommuters who have taken advantage of 218 Relocate, an incentive program launched by the economic development minds at Greater Bemidji.

New Bemidji residents Amy and Håkon Strande (and Scooter) enjoy a waterside morning from the patio of their home on Little Bass Lake.



Assistant Director Erin Echternach stands in front of the Greater Bemidji building, home of many of 218 Relocate's amenities. The LaunchPad co-working space occupies the lower level.



LEARN MORE ABOUT 218 RELOCATE. SCAN THE CODE WITH YOUR PHONE.

Erin Echternach, Greater Bemidji assistant director, says the organization's board had been discussing workforce development for years, hoping to proactively find a solution to an anticipated workforce shortage. When COVID-19 hit the country in 2020, those discussions turned quickly into action.

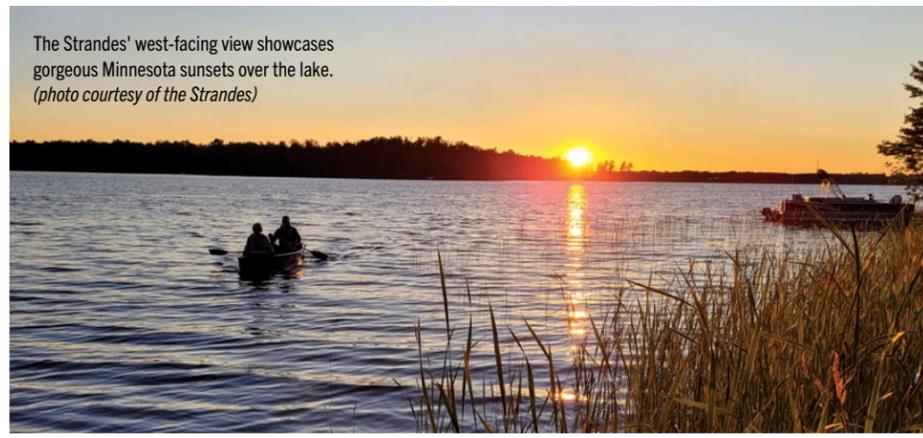
"Because of the pandemic and because of the fiber-optic gigabit internet infrastructure that we have – it's so widely available in our county and our region – we wanted to create a program that highlighted that specifically," Erin said of 218 Relocate. "We thought, everyone's working from home, so why don't we try to recruit these telecommuters who can literally work anywhere? They can choose where they want to be, instead of needing to be where the job is."

218 Relocate's Telecommuter Relocation Program incentivizes newcomers with perks (valued at nearly \$2,500) that emphasize the unique resources of Bemidji. Eligible applicants who work remotely for a company

headquartered outside of the region receive a package including six months of fiber-optic gigabit internet service through Paul Bunyan Communications, a one-year membership to Bemidji's LaunchPad co-working space, a membership to the Bemidji Area Chamber of Commerce, and free access to the Community Concierge Program, which matches participants with a Bemidji-native-and-loving-it volunteer.

Beltrami Electric Cooperative (BEC) CEO and Greater Bemidji board member Jared Echternach recognized immediately that this was an innovative approach to attracting people to BEC's service territory. "While many rural areas in our country are experiencing declining population, we are blessed to be a growing regional hub," he said. "This measured growth strengthens our cooperative and the communities we serve."

The Strandes' west-facing view showcases gorgeous Minnesota sunsets over the lake. (photo courtesy of the Strandes)



Smitten with Bemidji

The Strandes always imagined their eventual forever home would be on a river or lake, but life events pulled the couple toward the Land of 10,000 of them.

“My mom lives in southern Minnesota, in Austin,” Amy said. “I would come visit, ever since my dad passed away in 2014, once a month. I got very close to Mom. Håkon was a saint to let me fly here almost every month to see my mom.”

When the pandemic hit and remote work became the norm, the Strandes made the decision to permanently relocate to Minnesota to be closer to Amy’s mother. They had criteria for their new home: close to Mom, more than five acres of land, a water view, top-notch internet, airport access, excellent shopping/restaurants, outdoor fun and nice people.

Bemidji hit every item on the list.

As the pair searched for a potential home, their real estate agent urged them to explore the 218 Relocate website. It brought everything they were looking for to the next level.

“The amount of things you get from 218 Relocate is huge, and we’ve already taken advantage of at least over half of the opportunities of the program,” Amy said.

“As an electric cooperative we are committed to our communities and Greater Bemidji is committed to our region’s growth and prosperity. We are part and parcel to each other’s mission.”

– Jared Echternach
Beltrami Electric Cooperative CEO
Greater Bemidji board member

She spoke of a fellow empty-nester she met through Community Concierge, a meeting she held with a new Microsoft colleague at the LaunchPad co-working space, and a 218 Relocate social that connected them with other telecommuters and community champions. “And we’ve only lived here for not quite two months.”

The new personal connections were strong. But the strength of their broadband internet and electric service connections had them tickled.

“I mean, fiber right to the house? We had to wait years for that in Redmond [Washington] where we lived, and that was right next to Microsoft campus,” Håkon said.

“You can tell it’s been prioritized here,” Amy added. “It’s been terrific.”

In addition to the Paul Bunyan Communications gigabit internet, the new BEC members enrolled in the co-op’s off-peak heating program, which will provide savings when Minnesota’s famous winters blow through.

Erin Echternach has found it incredibly valuable to be able to tout Bemidji’s reliable, member-owned resources. She ran across one social media thread in particular in which a new resident asked about options for electricity, telecommunications,

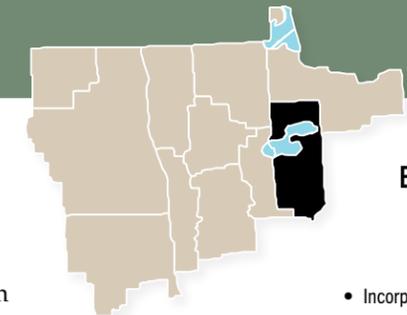
internet, etc. The comments were eye-opening.

“Most of them are talking about the cooperatives – how involved they are in the community, how supportive they are, how innovative they are, how they give back to their members,” she said. “It’s a super important model for us. We’re actually pretty lucky we have that in our area, to also advertise that co-ops are a piece of what makes Bemidji special.”

“As an electric cooperative we are committed to our communities and Greater Bemidji is committed to our region’s growth and prosperity. We are part and parcel to each other’s mission,” Jared Echternach echoed.

Be it by co-op, culture or connection, the locals of the 218 understand that some of the best life stories are created by folks coming together by the water’s edge.

“Bemidji is amazing, and the people are amazing – really, in northern Minnesota and all of the Midwest,” Håkon said with a smile at his wife. “People here are real. I’m from Norway, so I can stand a little bit on the outside and observe still, after 22 years.”



Served by
Beltrami Electric Cooperative
Bemidji, Minn.

- Incorporated – July 20, 1940
- Board members – 9
- President & CEO – Jared Echternach
- Members – 21,937
- Miles of line – 3,553

By Kaylee Cusack / Photography Michael Hoeft

Diana Hahn (left), owner of Jim's SuperValu in Park River, and Jenna Gullickson (right), owner of Hoople Grocery, are both board members of the Rural Access Distribution Cooperative.



Food for the community, food for the soul



Diana Hahn straightens canned goods on the shelves of her grocery store in Park River, N.D.



Jenna and Hunter Gullickson sell milk to one of their store patrons in Hoople, N.D.

RURAL ACCESS DISTRIBUTION COOPERATIVE COMBATS N.D. GROCERY STORE CLOSURES WITH SMALL-TOWN COLLABORATION

Jenna Gullickson is the town grocer for Hoople, N.D., a community of (almost) 300 people bobbing on the north edge of Walsh County. She doesn't have many mouths to feed, but every stomach matters to her. These are her neighbors.

She cares so much that when the grocery store's former owners retired in 2015, she and her husband stepped in and bought what is now Hoople Grocery. At that time, small-town grocery stores across the state were closing down as the price of rural supply and distribution rose. Gullickson wasn't going to let that happen to Hoople.

She'd only been at the helm for a couple of years when Diana Hahn and Lori Capouch showed up at the store. Hahn, the owner of Jim's SuperValu in Park River, N.D., and Capouch, Rural Development Director for the North Dakota Association of Rural Electric Cooperatives (NDAREC), pitched a proposal for a collaborative system of purchasing and delivering groceries to multiple small towns in Walsh County. It would eventually come to be known as the

Rural Access Distribution (RAD) Cooperative, and they wanted Gullickson on board.

"I was like, yep, any help I can get!" she recalled. "I was willing to work, save money, get more product in my store – anything I could do to help out our community, I was totally willing to work with them and do it."

Supporters of the cooperative idea came from all corners of Walsh County – Fordville, Adams, Edinburg, Park River and Hoople. All partners knew a collaborative model would help the stores (and communities lacking stores) not only survive, but thrive. The key elements were forming a purchasing cooperative to bring their collective volume up and distributing it on one truck, aggregating from many suppliers so grocers didn't have as many separate delivery fees.

"I've had people approach me and ask, 'Why did you do this? Why would you help your competitors out?' Well, I don't always think of everyone as competitors," Hahn said. "To me, it goes back to community."



Climate controlled food lockers, like this one in Park River, will allow users to order their groceries online and pick them up in assigned, PIN-accessible compartments.

Core of the problem

The notion of the RAD Cooperative was simple on the surface. But a lot of ground-work had already been laid in the few years before Gullickson was approached. In 2014, Capouch received a call from a rural grocery store inquiring about grants available to cover operating losses. There weren't any such grants.

"We'd never had a call from a grocery store before, and then we got about 10 calls that year. So we thought, OK, there's a problem here," Capouch said. She and her NDAREC team did some quick research and found other states were looking into why their grocery stores were declining.

"After losing food access, what else do you have left? We had already lost so much in our rural main streets, if we lost our grocery stores, too..." she said with sigh of disbelief. "It seemed like the last little thing that could pull out that could tip a community past that sustainability point."

Northern Municipal Power Agency (NMPA) general manager Jasper Schneider served as North Dakota state director for the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Rural Development division from 2009-2015. At that time, he saw the evolution beginning in the small towns for which he would eventually help deliver electricity. NMPA is the power provider for 12 municipal utilities in the region, including Park River.

"The predominant demographic in those rural areas is senior citizens, who may not have the wherewithal or means to travel



Gullickson (left) and Hahn display the RAD Cooperative delivery truck. Advertising sponsorships generate around \$6,000 annually for the co-op, which will help cover the fuel and maintenance costs of the vehicle.

50 miles to a larger town like Grand Forks," Schneider said. "The rural grocery stores are literally the lifeline in providing fresh food that is so critical to preserving that community."

In 2016, the average U.S. grocery store had a weekly sales volume of \$320,000. North Dakota's midpoint was \$20,000. Capouch learned that some store owners were driving to big box stores to buy their supplies to save on costs. A retail wholesale price, in some cases, was cheaper than a wholesale supply from their supplier.

Capouch surveyed stores around the state to see where the challenges were. She assembled a task force of owners and small-town community leaders and found an area of the state where there were already the beginnings of collaboration.

"Cooperatives have been the model to help people in rural places solve for issues that the private sector can't solve for, because there's no money to be made. We were looking to use cooperatives to make food access stronger in rural places. That's how we ended up in Walsh County," Capouch said. "They had a grocer who said she had backroom space for aggregating product and sorting it. And we had

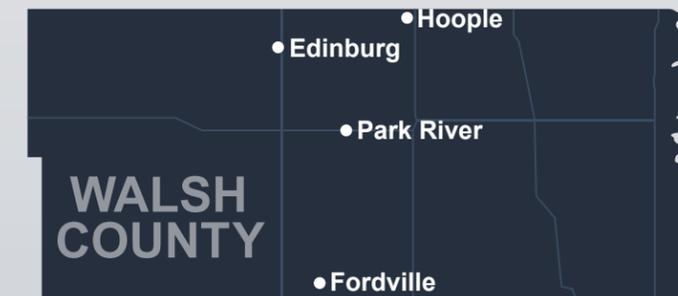
three grocers [Hahn, Gullickson, and Edinbug's Cindy Vargason] that were already independent and competitive, but they were already working together to make sure that everybody had the supplies that they needed."

Walsh County is also home to Fordville, a community of just over 200 people that had recently lost its store, as well as Adams, a town that was facing obstacles. "They already understood that if they didn't work together for food access, they were going to lose it," Capouch said.

As the partners came together, they uncovered all the ways they could get fresh, affordable food to remote communities. With pilot funding through several organizations including the Bush Foundation; the USDA; Blue Cross, Blue Shield; and a generous anonymous donor, RAD Cooperative was able to secure a large delivery truck and two climate-controlled grocery locker systems which can hold co-op deliveries (ordered online) to remote areas. One locker system is placed in Wells Drinking Well in Fordville, while the other stands near the entrance of Park River's SuperValu.

The cooperative is working through the technical logistics of the food lockers and online ordering system, but they hope to be running at full speed soon. When active, customers will enter their grocery order online, drive to the nearest locker when prompted, enter a special locker PIN, and access their healthy food – without driving an hour to get it.

"Our hope would be that we could expand out and we could help other areas. I think there's a limit to how far out we can drive to make it viable. It doesn't have to be profitable," Hahn said. "Our plan is not to operate to make money. It's to operate to cover costs."



Community cooperation

RAD Cooperative has fortified its effect on Walsh County by rolling in new members and opportunities. The co-op is now distributing food and milk to the Valley-Edinburg School District (which lost its suppliers during the pandemic). They also hope to soon add Park River's bakery as a member, which would supply bread for the schools. A local potato producer is moving his potatoes through the co-op, and additional entities like daycares and restaurants are exploring how they can get involved.

Other businesses who don't need deliveries but want to see the co-op succeed are also doing their part by sponsoring advertising on the RAD distribution truck. The local truck company itself is supporting the effort with a special contract for the co-op.

"It is amazing how many people have contributed. It's been a hard project, but it's been an easy project at the same time because so many people care about food access and they want to participate," Capouch said. "This project just makes your heart melt."

"Whether it's grocery stores or electricity or broadband, it's so easy to give up and say we're going to move to an area with a higher population density or we'll let the free market solve this," Schneider said. "But rural people really grab life by the horns and come up with these creative solutions. That's where co-ops shine."

Gullickson doesn't consider herself any kind of pioneer. She's just a mother raising two sons in a region she loves, and a business owner with a chance to deliver new energy to her community.

"Especially in Hoople, there are quite a few young people right now," she said. "I have young kids, too, so I get out and talk to the moms and ask them what they want and what they want to see in the store. It's good – we need to keep them there."

By Kaylee Cusack / Photography Michael Hoeft

Cooperatives help Northern Thunder Air Show take flight

LATEST EXAMPLE OF ONGOING RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CO-OPS AND GRAND FORKS AIR FORCE BASE COMMUNITY

More than 13,000 visitors flooded the tarmac of the Grand Forks Air Force Base (GFAFB) on June 18, many toting camping chairs and rocking aviator sunglasses. Flight enthusiasts had traveled from across the region to experience the 2022 Northern Thunder Air Show, including Michael Auker and his family and friends from Devils Lake, N.D.

"We wanted to come look at a bunch of cool airplanes," Auker said as he waited in line to see the inside of one of dozens of military planes staged on show grounds. "This really gets the kids involved and lets them see the stuff that they usually only see in the sky."

The event, supported in part by Nodak Electric Cooperative and Minnkota Power Cooperative, was to feature food truck vendors, informational sponsor booths, and a full afternoon of physics-defying flights

from airborne acts like the famous Thunderbirds. However, sustained high winds forced every set of wings to remain grounded.

"Even though the windstorm was a challenge," said Lea Greene, chief of public affairs for the 319th Reconnaissance Wing, "it was incredible to open the gates to our friends and neighbors to show off their Air Force base, tour aircraft and look at some of the technology we use every day."

"The GFAFB and the personnel living and working there have been such a big part of our community and the state of North Dakota over the years," said Nodak Electric CEO Mylo Einarson. "Anything we can do to support them so they can focus on their mission is the least we could do."

Nodak's support of the GFAFB doesn't stop with event sponsorship. The co-op has been a proud

partner of the base for decades and, in 2018, signed a utilities privatization (UP) agreement with GFAFB to make Nodak the owner and operator of all of the community's electric infrastructure. This partnership allows faster, safer, and more thorough electric service to the base's residents.

As a part of the new relationship, Nodak was able to construct a new 4,500-square-foot service center on the base. The government-funded facility includes a classroom to help train Nodak line and base personnel on the electrical systems of the GFAFB, both overhead and underground. There is also office space for crew members who need work stations during a job on the base. A large portion of the square footage is warehouse storage space for utility vehicles and materials used to maintain the electrical distribution system.



A young flight enthusiast tries on the pilot's seat for size at the Northern Thunder Air Show.

An air show performer welcomes attendees to explore the cargo area of the plane.

women and their families," Einarson said.

Greene says the mission of GFAFB has changed a great deal throughout the decades, from a strategic air command mission during the Cold War, to missile systems, to today's intelligence surveillance and reconnaissance mission. Change will continue as future missions encompass space through low-Earth orbit satellites.

"The one thing that has not changed in the 65 years of Grand

Forks Air Force Base is the support of the local community," she said.

The base is hoping for better weather for their next air show event, which is tentatively planned for 2025. Until then (and beyond), Nodak and Minnkota will continue to be there to light up the lives of the folks who serve our country. "I'm excited about the future of the GFAFB, and am looking forward to Nodak being a part of it," Einarson said.

By Kaylee Cusack / Photography Michael Hoeft



Keep the lights on during the energy transition

BY JIM MATHESON AND MAC MCLENNAN

Dozens of states in the most powerful nation in the world may struggle to keep the lights on this summer.

It doesn't have to be this way. But absent a shift in policy and coordination between federal and state governments, this is the energy reality our nation will face for years to come.

Reliable electricity has been a staple in America for more than half a century. But that's no longer a certainty. Organizations across the nation have sounded the alarm: reliable electricity may be in jeopardy this summer. That's inexcusable.

Minnkota Power Cooperative utilizes a diverse mix of coal, wind and hydro resources to meet the 24/7 needs of electricity consumers in eastern North Dakota and northwestern Minnesota. While this power portfolio is strong, Minnkota does not operate on the electric grid alone. Utilities across the Upper Midwest and down to Louisiana are interconnected through the larger Midcontinent Independent System Operator (MISO) grid. Challenges

in other areas of this system can and do have impacts on Minnkota and its members.

MISO expects to face a high risk of reliability challenges during both "normal and extreme conditions." If demand for electricity exceeds the available supply, MISO could implement controlled power outages to avoid catastrophic damage to the power grid.

Some are quick to blame these newfound reliability threats on changing or more extreme weather patterns. That's part of the story, but there's a deeper problem that must be acknowledged.

Spurred by policy and market factors, the ongoing energy transition has prioritized premature baseload coal and nuclear plant closures without considering the collective impact on the power grid and the availability of feasible technology to fully replace them. That's proving to be a dangerous misstep.

In MISO alone, 3,200 megawatts of electric generating capacity have shut down in the past year. That's enough to keep the lights on in 2.8

million homes. And electricity demand is forecast to rise by nearly 2% this summer.

To put it simply, new power-generating projects in some of the largest electricity markets haven't caught up with plant closures—jeopardizing reliability in the process.

Policymakers should recalibrate their focus on a common-sense energy transition that doesn't risk reliability or punish low-income families and our economy. Those choices don't need to be at odds.

Driven by a focus on keeping the lights on, America's electric cooperatives have demonstrated what a responsible energy transition can look like. Electric co-ops substantially lowered their carbon emissions by 23% between 2005 and 2020, the equivalent of taking nearly 9 million cars off the road. They've also invested in energy innovation technologies to help meet tomorrow's electricity needs with speed and flexibility.

In Minnkota's case, approximately 42% of its generation capac-

ity is already derived from carbon-free resources. The cooperative is also working to advance Project Tundra – an effort to build one of the world's largest carbon capture systems at a coal-based power plant in North Dakota. If the proposed project moves ahead, it would help retain a reliable and resilient power generator, while also significantly reducing Minnkota's carbon emissions.

The energy transition must consider threats to reliability and focus on the importance of allowing adequate time, technology development and the construction of desperately needed transmission lines to move electricity within regional markets. It is overambitious to believe this can happen by the current federal target of 2035.

Today's energy policy decisions will determine whether the threat of grid reliability challenges is our new energy reality. As state and federal policymakers re-evaluate their energy transition proposals in the wake of sobering summer reliability challenges, they should:

- Prioritize an adequate supply of always-available power resources to balance the increasing reliance on renewable energy.
- Promote the development of new transmission lines to carry electricity from where it's generated to where it's most needed.
- Facilitate coordinated, consistent, and timely agency permitting to speed the construction and maintenance of electric

transmission and other critical grid infrastructure.

- Provide electric cooperatives access to the same level of energy innovation incentives that for-profit utilities have enjoyed for years.

When you find yourself in a hole, the first thing to do is stop digging. Failure is not an acceptable option for the consumers and communities we serve.



Jim Matheson is CEO of the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the national trade association that represents the nation's more than 900 not-for-profit, consumer-owned electric cooperatives. He previously served seven terms as a U.S. representative from Utah.



Mac McLennan is CEO of Minnkota Power Cooperative, the wholesale electricity provider for 11 member cooperatives in eastern North Dakota and northwestern Minnesota.

5 questions with Matt Marshall, Minnkota's economic development administrator



Matt Marshall (right) shakes hands with Chris West, mayor of Grafton, N.D., near the site for a new housing project that will help meet a community need. Housing options and availability are among the keys to driving economic development in the region.

Creating connections and finding solutions is what Matt Marshall does best. Since starting in a brand new economic development administrator position at Minnkota in 2020, Marshall has been a conduit between Minnkota departments, member/municipal systems, communities and potential project developers. Working together in true cooperative fashion, these

groups not only promote natural growth in Minnkota's service territory, but also attract new investments that create resiliency and opportunity.

During his time at Minnkota, Marshall has navigated a pandemic and changing economic circumstances while helping bring a variety of projects from concept to reality – including a data center

that won North Dakota Gov. Doug Burgum's Economic Development Project of the Year in 2021.

Marshall sat down with us and answered five questions about the connections he's made with Minnkota's member and municipal systems, and why he is excited to continue assisting with their regional economic development efforts.

By Emily Windjue / Photography Michael Hoeft

1 What opportunities do our rural areas have to offer potential companies coming to North Dakota and Minnesota?

Rural areas throughout the Minnkota territory have a lot to offer companies looking to relocate or start a business. A few good examples of things rural areas can offer businesses are locations that have underutilized utilities, low-cost land and buildings relative to locations in more densely populated areas. In some cases, we have underserved markets that allow companies to establish a foothold within a region right away. Other rural areas have financial assistance or programs that can assist businesses in expansions or relocations that are not available in large metro areas. Rural areas offer a chance for companies and their employees to “work where they play,” which has increased in importance as younger generations enter the workforce. Most of that success has been driven by individuals moving home with the ability to maintain their current job and the rural areas that have the housing inventory available have been able to capitalize on the new remote work opportunities.

2 How does your position help rural communities overcome challenges in recruiting businesses to their area?

My hat changes depending on where I am working. Some locations have local economic development folks and in those places I act in a supportive role by supplying leads, providing assistance with tasks or utilizing my expertise in any particular areas. In other locations, there may not be a local economic developer on staff, so I tend to take on a more involved role as we work on projects. One of the major challenges our rural areas face is the lack of available real-estate inventory for a new or expanding business. In partnership with our members, we are constantly identifying new sites that can be marketed for development.

3 Why is it important to diversify the economy of our service territory?

Diversifying Minnkota's territory is all about creating resiliency during downward economic trends, thus making the region more stable for our member-owners. An added benefit to that diversification is the increased potential to recruit new workforce, which is a critical need for the vast majority of businesses within Minnkota's territory. Additionally, new workforce would provide new residents in areas that have seen their population decline over the last several decades.

4 What has been the most rewarding project you've worked on since joining Minnkota?

One of the greatest aspects of being part of the economic development team at Minnkota is the ability to fully embody the cooperative principle of concern for community. It is extremely rewarding to see the sustainable growth take place after assisting businesses and communities. I enjoy helping entrepreneurs get the funding they need and watching their businesses thrive. Working with a community to help them attract a housing developer solve a critical housing need is also extremely rewarding. I have been fortunate to be a part of a team that gets help bring projects like those to life.

5 What do you foresee for our region in terms of economic development over the next few years?

While we will continue to focus on expanding existing businesses and attracting new industry to the region, community development efforts will still need to be a major focus. Businesses and communities within the Minnkota family are seeing their growth hindered because of the lack of workforce and population declines. This elevates the need for new housing solutions, child care and quality of life elements that may be needed to help attract people. The new remote work dynamic that has taken hold of the country the last couple of years is great opportunity for the rural areas in the Minnkota family, and we are seeing some regions benefit from that transition already.

First donations awarded through rebranded Minnkota Cares program

Minnkota's employee giving program has made its first two donations as "Minnkota Cares," an effort formerly known as "Jeans Day." The first \$250 gift was presented to North Dakota Association for the Disabled (NDAD) Chief Program Officer Leslie Stastny through the nomination of Minnkota's Matt Bies, who used the NDAD's equipment services following an injury. The donation will help NDAD purchase more equipment for clients like crutches, support rails, etc.

Just a few weeks later, the Minnkota Cares committee moved to provide \$250 to the family of Minnkota electrician Tony Moulds, whose baby daughter is currently experiencing medical complications. The donation will be added to \$2,289 raised for the family through an employee-led benefit breakfast held on July 11. Minnkota wishes all the best for the Moulds family and a fast recovery for their new bundle of joy.

The Minnkota Cares fund gathers employee donations to be allocated to deserving charitable causes throughout the giving year (June-May), suggested by employees and chosen by committee. All participating employees' dollars have had a huge impact on Minnkota's communities – since 2011, the program has dispersed more than \$71,000 to area organizations and special drives.

By Kaylee Cusack



Minnkota technical maintenance technician Matt Bies presents a donation to NDAD Chief Program Officer Leslie Stastny.



Construction and maintenance foreman Rory Grenier (right) and Kevin Holwger prepare eggs and English muffins for the July 11 fundraiser breakfast.



Remembering Harvey Tallackson

Harvey Tallackson, a long-time electric cooperative leader and North Dakota state senator, died on July 27 in St. Paul, Minn. Tallackson, 97, will be remembered as a strong advocate for electric cooperatives and rural citizens in the region.

Tallackson served on the Nodak Electric Cooperative board from 1965 to 2010. He also served

as Nodak's representative on the Minnkota board from 1974 to 2010 – including 12 years as vice chairman and 15 years as chairman.

Tallackson was born May 15, 1925, in Grafton, N.D. He served as senator for District 16 in North Dakota's northeastern corner for 32 years. In addition to public service, Tallackson was active in

many organizations in the Grafton and Park River communities.

He is preceded in death by his wife, Glenna, to whom he was married for 73 years. The couple had four children, 13 grandchildren and 16 great grandchildren.

A funeral service will be held at Zion Lutheran Church, rural Hoople, N.D., on Sept. 7, 2022, at 1 p.m.

Supreme Court rules EPA cannot use generation shifting to regulate CO₂

In a landmark decision, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled June 30 that the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) cannot require "generation shifting" as a method to regulate carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions from coal-based power plants.

Under the 6-3 ruling, the court determined that Congress did not give EPA the explicit authority under Section 111(d) of the Clean Air Act to set emissions caps at a level that would force a nationwide transition away from the use of coal to generate electricity. This concept of generation shifting would have required a reduction of coal-based generation in

favor of resources that produce fewer emissions, such as wind and solar.

The case – West Virginia vs. EPA – was prompted by the Clean Power Plan, which set broad emissions reduction targets for the power sector in 2015 but was stayed by the Supreme Court before it took effect. The rule would have had significant operational and financial impacts on Minnkota and its membership.

EPA still retains the authority to regulate CO₂ emissions from coal-based power plants, and it is anticipated that a new proposed rule will be released in March 2023. Based on the Supreme

Court's decision, the proposal will most likely focus on the best system of emissions reduction at each individual source.

"Minnkota supports the Supreme Court's decision," said Mac McLennan, Minnkota president and CEO. "Coal remains a vital part of our energy mix and it has become increasingly important during times of grid instability. We recognize the potential of living in a carbon-managed world and remain committed to supporting technology development to help us reduce our carbon footprint."

By Ben Fladhammer



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