

Minnkota

SEPTEMBER-OCTOBER 2022

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MESSENGER



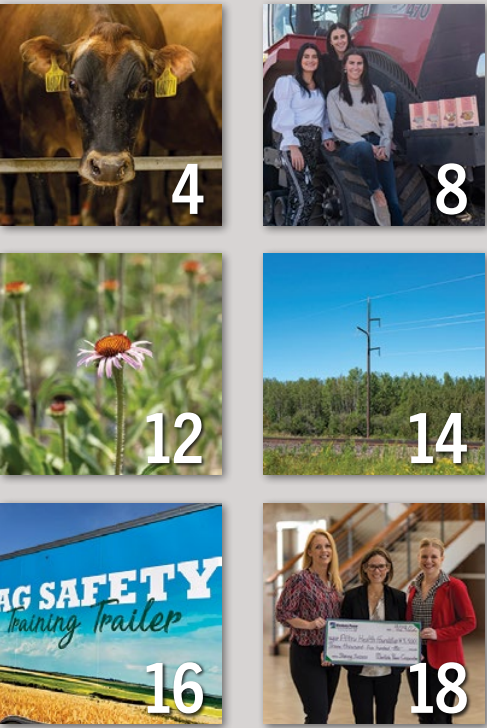
A circle of
benefits from
Minnesota milk

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On the cover: One of Waukon Dairy's 9,500 residents takes a break from lunch for a quick photo. The facility, just southeast of Gary, Minn., is one of the latest ag business loads welcomed by Minnkota and its member co-ops.

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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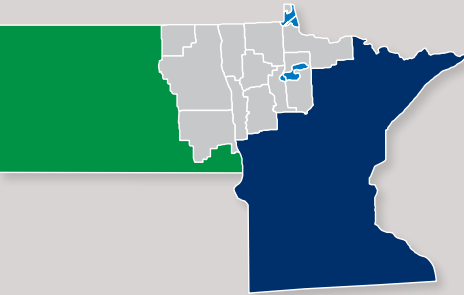
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Minnkota Power Cooperative is a generation and transmission cooperative headquartered in Grand Forks, N.D. It supplies wholesale electricity to 11 member-owner distribution cooperatives, three in eastern North Dakota and eight in northwestern Minnesota. 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 162,500 consumers.

Minnkota applauds electric co-op provisions in Inflation Reduction Act

RECENTLY SIGNED INFLATION REDUCTION ACT WILL HELP ACCELERATE ENERGY PROJECTS SUCH AS MINNKOTA'S PROJECT TUNDRA CARBON CAPTURE INITIATIVE

Minnkota Power Cooperative and its cooperative partners across the country will have access to important new tools to navigate the energy transition following passage of the Inflation Reduction Act. The bill, signed into law on Aug. 16, includes provisions to accelerate the development of technologies needed to meet ambitious environmental goals.

"The electric cooperative-focused provisions in this bill have the potential to drive energy innovation forward at a pace we've never seen before," said Mac McLennan, Minnkota president and CEO. "Now the real work begins to ensure that the industry is carefully planning for a responsible energy transition that includes the continued operation of baseload and dispatchable resources. As we enter one of the most transformational periods in our industry's history, we continue to support an all-of-the-above energy strategy that preserves reliable, affordable and resilient electricity for our membership, while also answering the call to significantly lower CO₂ emissions."

One of the most substantial provisions is the creation of a "direct payment" option for electric cooperatives to utilize energy tax credits. Historically, co-ops have not had direct access to those credits because of their not-for-profit status. With passage of this legislation, co-ops

will have a level playing field with for-profit utilities, which have long enjoyed tax credits to develop wind, solar and other renewable energy projects. The bill contains investment tax credits and production tax credits for solar, wind, carbon capture, nuclear, manufacturing of clean energy components and other energy technologies.

In addition to the direct-pay incentives, the 45Q tax credit for carbon capture and sequestration was increased from \$50 per ton to \$85 per ton. This increase provides a significant boost to the economics of the Minnkota-led Project Tundra carbon capture initiative. The project is currently in the advanced engineering phase and is being designed to capture and store 4 million metric tons of CO₂ annually. A decision on whether to move forward with the project is anticipated in 2023.

"The carbon capture provisions included in this bill will be a game changer for the development and deployment of this much-needed technology," McLennan said.

Electric cooperatives will also benefit from a \$9.7 billion grant and loan program through the USDA to develop clean energy systems. The program is specifically designed for co-ops to advance renewable energy, storage, carbon capture, nuclear and other projects that will lower greenhouse gas emissions and otherwise aid disadvantaged rural communities.

For McLennan, the passage of this bill represents decades of work by electric cooperatives across the country. In fact, he recalls advocating for similar direct-pay provisions during the early 2000s while working at the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA).

As this massive bill moved through Congress, McLennan said he is grateful that electric cooperative priorities made it to the finish line.

"On behalf of Minnkota, I would like to express our appreciation for Senators Tina Smith and Amy Klobuchar for their leadership and commitment to helping rural America participate in a responsible transition to a lower-carbon future," McLennan said.

By Ben Fladhammer

A circle of benefits from Minnesota milk

STATE-OF-THE-ART WAUKON DAIRY PRODUCES GALLONS OF OPPORTUNITY IN WILD RICE ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE TERRITORY

Right now, somewhere in the middle of Norman County, Minn., exactly 128 dairy cows are rotating on a large, circular milking platform, chilling to the tunes of polka as they enjoy their 8.5-minute carousel ride. This carnival spins day and night at Waukon Dairy (a subsidiary of Minnesota-based Riverview, LLP), with each of the facility's 9,500 cows receiving a ticket to ride twice a day.

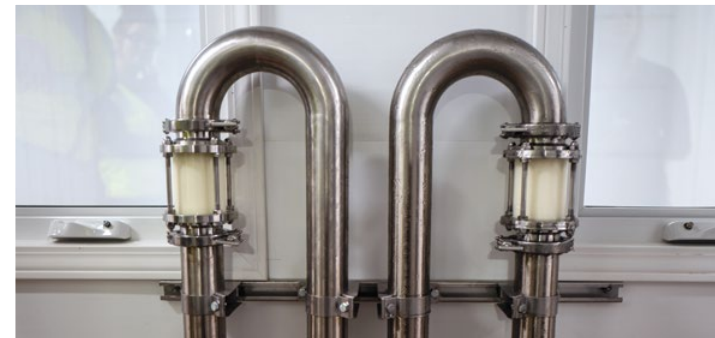
The daily price of admission? About seven or eight gallons of milk. And they're happy to oblige.

"They're usually excited to get on," said Riverview's Martha Koehl, peeking into the milking parlor from the observation deck. "If you watch long enough, it's actually very entertaining because cows have personalities. You'll notice who the shy ones are, because they won't push their way on."

Waukon Dairy, one of the newest business members of Wild Rice Electric Cooperative, began milking in June 2022. The operation sits on 160 acres of land purchased by Riverview, surrounded by local fields and farmers who have become fast partners.



Waukon Dairy's milking carousel turns around the clock, except when it goes through a deep-cleaning process twice a day.



This tube system shows visitors the milk going into the filtration process (at the cows' body temperature) and leaving the process fully chilled to 38 degrees.

Waukon employs 45 people and is the latest of more than a dozen Riverview dairies spread across the Upper Midwest.

The milk produced at Waukon Dairy is hauled by tanker to a creamery in Perham, Minn., several times a day. The facility breeds a cross of Holsteins and Jerseys (lovingly called HoJos), creating a beautiful mix of black-and-white, brown-and-black, and fully brown cows.

"The reason why we prefer the Jersey genetics is that there's a higher butterfat content in the milk. Our milk is made into cheese, so that, of course, makes good cheese," Koehl said.

'A good life'

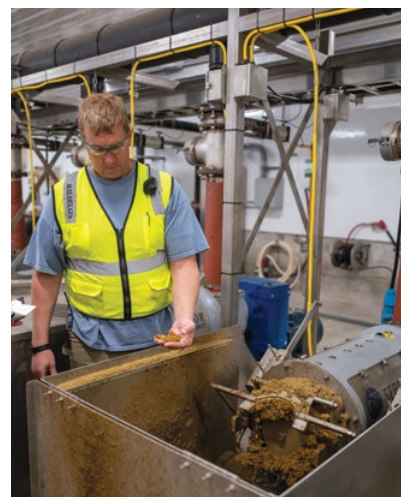
If a HoJo makes good cheese, then a stress-free HoJo makes the best cheese. As visitors walk through the Waukon barn, they notice a couple of typical barn staples are missing – there are no flies, and there are no moos. An endless row of industrial fans keeps a clean breeze moving through the facility, and the pens are cleaned every time the cows are taken through their milking cycle.

"It's a good life," said Ron Visser, Waukon Dairy's site manager. "You get milked once

every 12 hours, then you come back and you eat and you lay down on a fresh bed, drinking water and hanging out with your friends."

"Our cows make their own beds," Koehl said with a giggle, pointing across the barn to a large manure vacuum that winds through the pens twice a day. "That will go empty out, and that is where the manure will go through the separators. Then we can use it. And you can see it there, the bedding those cows are laying on," she added, referring to the dry, fluffy beds nearby.

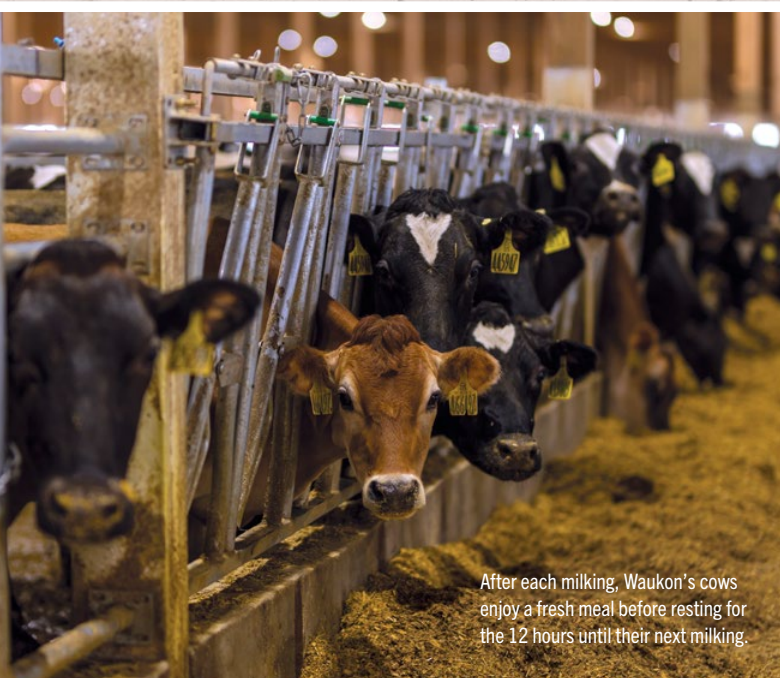
Manure is the quiet, unsung hero of Waukon Dairy. After the waste travels through one of a dozen high-powered separators, the liquid manure flows into a holding lagoon where it can then be used by neighboring farmers as high-powered natural fertilizer. It creates a mutually beneficial economic system in which Waukon Dairy buys feed silage and haylage from regional growers and then offers fruitful, non-commercial fertilizer.



Waukon Dairy's Ron Visser describes the process of separating dry manure from liquid manure.



“Just coming off of silage harvest, it really reiterated what kind of economic impact this has,” Visser said. “We work with several different growers on silage. Some of them don’t have a lot of land, and this was an opportunity for them to use their tractors to help us pack the pile. They got some more value out of their equipment.”



After each milking, Waukon’s cows enjoy a fresh meal before resting for the 12 hours until their next milking.

The initial plans for the dairy project garnered an incredible amount of community support in Waukon Township. What started as a conversation between a local farming family and Riverview bloomed into a venture based on trust and relationships.

Koehl says it’s important to the company to find areas where farmers see value in working with them.

“This area was awesome because a lot of counties – especially here in northern Minnesota – haven’t seen livestock for at least a few decades,” she explained. “But there are enough people here who remember the importance and the economic impact when you have livestock in your region, and what that does. That’s been neat to see.”

Energy of the farm

An operation like Waukon also needs a strong utility partner to power the hefty electric needs of a sprawling barn, milking parlor and commodity facility. Riverview worked alongside Wild Rice Electric Cooperative to ensure they had the electricity they would need and to find ways to conserve and save.

“This end of the farm takes a lot of power, between the fans and this manure room. It’s a big load,” Visser said. “We have to have consistent power.”

With the help of Wild Rice Electric and Minnkota Power Cooperative, Waukon Dairy participates in a load shedding program which allows Minnkota to switch the dairy to a backup generator when regional electric demand or market prices are high. The program helps the cooperative balance the grid while offering Waukon Dairy a reduced electric rate. “When it’s flipping from generator back to regular power, I get a text message about it, and I didn’t even realize it happened. That is so awesome,” Visser said.

Tommy Houdek, Director of Member Services and Communications for Wild Rice Electric, explained that many of the site’s separators and fans run on variable frequency drives (VFDs). These VFDs are beneficial to the co-op because they can ramp up slowly when they’re turned on, reducing the chance of tripping a breaker or causing a blink on the power lines. The dairy can also control the speed at which they run, reducing costs.

Riverview worked with Wild Rice Electric to plan several energy conservation measures throughout the site, from VFDs to

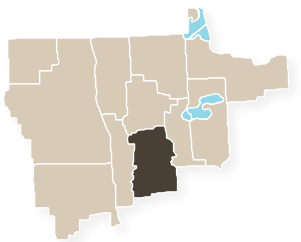
lighting with occupancy sensors. By incorporating these energy efficiency strategies, Riverview was rewarded with generous cooperative rebate incentives.

“We were very excited to see Waukon Dairy come to our region, and hope to see them continue to grow,” Houdek said. “They are one of our largest loads, and it’s great for the community and great for the economy here.”

When it comes down to it, cows and kilowatts are doing the same thing for the folks of Norman County – improving quality of life. Koehl can recite Riverview’s mission from memory: “Providing a culture of opportunity for passionate people and innovative ideas.”

“Yes, we’re passionate about agriculture and cows, but really it’s all about the people,” she said. “That is why we started.”

By Kaylee Cusack / Photography Michael Hoeft



Served by
Wild Rice Electric Cooperative
Mahnomen, Minn.

- Incorporated – October 6, 1939
- Board members – 9
- Members – 14,617
- Miles of line – 4,014

Generators provide backup power supply when electricity demand is high on the grid, saving Waukon Dairy on energy costs.



Dozens of fans keep the barn fly-free and fresh.

Family, farming, and feeding carb cravings



Sisters Annie Gorder (left), Mollie Ficocello (center) and Grace Lunski (right) are the faces behind Three Farm Daughters, a better-for-you pasta brand that's hitting shelves across the nation.

THREE FARM DAUGHTERS CREATES PASTA EMPIRE WITHIN NODAK ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE’S RURAL FOOTPRINT

Annie Gorder’s earliest memories of growing up on Sproule Farms north of Grand Forks, N.D., don’t involve as many tractor rides or chicken chases as you might imagine. She and her two younger sisters were raised to see agriculture through a different window.

“What I remember is every Sunday, after church, Mom and Dad would throw us all in the vehicle and we’d do crop tours for hours at a time. Back then, there were no iPads or DVD players in the Suburban, so we would just be sitting in the vehicle with coloring books,” Gorder said, her sisters nodding in

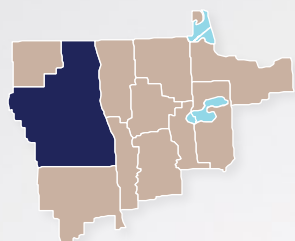
agreement beside her. “We got immersed in it because they immersed us in their business.”

Gorder and her siblings, Mollie Ficocello and Grace Lunski, didn’t know it at the time, but that early immersion would create a bond with the business (and each other) that would lead to the creation of Three Farm Daughters – a small pasta company that has now expanded to hundreds of stores across the country. In just two short years, the women turned the idea of better-for-you, additive-free pasta into a successful brand found on the shelves of Whole Foods, Hugo’s, Hornbacher’s, Kowalski’s and many other retailers.





The ag entrepreneurs showcase their latest short-cut varieties: penne, rotini, elbow and cavatappi.



Served by
Nodak Electric Cooperative
Grand Forks, N.D.

- Incorporated – January 17, 1940
- Board members – 9
- President & CEO – Mylo Einarson
- Members – 20,731
- Miles of line – 7,954

Family entrepreneurship wasn’t always on the roadmap for the sisters, who all went off to college and earned advanced degrees in business and law. But when they all started to build families, they knew their paths would ultimately lead back to Sproule Farms.

“We always say that growing up around the farm and around the family business, it kind of pulls at your heartstrings and brings you back to the business,” Ficocello said. “It’s kind of personal. It seemed to pull us all back.”

Im-pasta-bly good for you

The concept for Three Farm Daughters pasta was grown and harvested in the same Sproule Farms offices in which the girls spent much of their childhood, now with fewer Pack ‘N Plays and colored pencils. Annie, Mollie and Grace knew the wheat that was being produced in their backyards had unique attributes and health benefits over standard grains and flours found at the grocery store.

“We were thinking this was nutrition we would want to eat ourselves and feed our families,” Ficocello explained, gesturing to

the table before her. “We then, in this conference room, came up with the idea of making a product.”

The grains used to make Three Farm Daughters pasta contain resistant starches that help produce good bacteria in the large intestine, called butyrate, which is known to support a strong immune system. The sisters also learned their pasta has a low glycemic index (GI) response, meaning it doesn’t trigger the blood sugar spike, bloating and crash of a typical helping of noodles. Buyers with diabetes have messaged the women, thanking them for making pasta accessible again. The wheat variety’s high fiber also leads to a nutritional calculation that is lower in calories and net carbs – a miracle macaroni of sorts.

“When we say that we started this company because this was what we wanted to feed our kids, it was for those reasons,” Lunski said. “To get to feed a child their favorite food in the world, and they’re getting high fiber, and it’s good for their immune system – this is a win-win-win, check all of the boxes!” she added with a laugh.

As the trio learned more about “better pasta,” they also learned more about

“better business.” They started selling their small-batch product in shops and boutiques around the region, making a full-on boots on the ground effort to contact anyone who may have room for a local pasta on the shelf.

“Being from Grand Forks, we have such a great community. Even the state of North Dakota itself, it’s a very supportive state,” Ficocello said. “When we launched in Hugo’s, our local grocer, we had reached out to their team to see if we could sell with them. They were very willing and receptive to our product and what we were trying to do.”

“For me, the moment I felt we had made it was when Hugo’s was like, ‘Yeah, we’ll take you!’” Gorder said. “We got a grocery store!”

By December of 2020, just months after the business was conceived, Three Farm Daughters had expanded into 38 retail stores. The following year, the sisters decided to begin a professional rebranding process to make sure their product was ready for the big leagues they knew would be calling.

In July 2022, the new logo, packaging and products were ready, just in time to hit 68 Whole Foods locations in the Midwest. Three Farm Daughters not only redesigned its brand and boxes, but also worked to bring all production to North Dakota, returning the local support that had been given to them at the start.

Rural resilience

Annie, Mollie and Grace consider their father, Paul Sproule, one of the chief navigators of their new venture. He’s been by their side with business advice and words of wisdom.

“Our dad has really instilled in us that failure isn’t fatal in business. He reiterates that constantly,” Gorder said.

Sproule and his wife, Susie, know something about starting a journey from a spark of an idea. They started farming in Nodak Electric Cooperative’s service territory in 1993 when Annie was just three years old. They respect how rural ambition can lead to innovation and growth, even when it comes



to the electricity that powers their home, their daughters’ homes, and their Sproule Farms shop.

“The beauty of Nodak is how it was built. It was built by farmers. If they wouldn’t have got together and started a co-op, North Dakota wouldn’t have developed like it developed. To get those power lines going from place to place and to share those costs was very important,” Sproule said.

That farm work ethic – that need to grind until the world is made better for your family and your community – still flows through the Sproules and is visible in each of their daughters.

“Grace always comments that we’re living off coffee, adrenaline and a dream,” Annie said, smiling at her youngest sister. “You have to want it. If you don’t want it, then it’s hard. But when you want it, it’s exciting and it’s easy.”

Branding, branding, branding! One of the family combines (now referred to as Peachy) is professionally wrapped with Three Farm Daughters artwork. (Photo courtesy of Grace Lunski)



Scan here
to check out
Three Farm
Daughters

By Kaylee Cusack / Photography Michael Hoeft

Harnessing the grit of the grass

Blaine Keller, MNL Glyndon site lead, describes how nibbling goats can be used to naturally control invasive buckthorn in wooded areas.

RED RIVER VALLEY CO-OP POWER MEMBER USES NATIVE LANDSCAPING TO IMPROVE THE ECOLOGY OF THE PRAIRIE

Blaine Keller joined the Marines after graduating high school in Grand Forks, N.D. A child of the Air Force, he knew the military was an opportunity to serve and see more of the world. When it was time to come back to the Midwest for college, he planted himself in an entirely new field – natural resources.

The outdoor kid was getting back to his roots, trading foreign lands for native prairies.

“My favorite native grass is the little bluestem, because of the fall color. It turns red,” he said in the warm calm of a greenhouse just south of Minnesota’s Buffalo State Park.

Keller is the site lead for the Glyndon outpost of MNL, an ecological restoration and native landscaping company. The mission of the organization is simple: positively impact the environment through innovative, natural means. But MNL’s methods are multifold, including producing native grasses and wildflowers for

land restoration, creating pollinator habitats, performing multifaceted restoration construction work, responsibly managing unwanted vegetation growth (sometimes with goats and sheep), implementing prescribed fires, and mitigating damage to wetlands and streambanks.

In the rural service territory of Red River Valley Co-op Power (RRVCP), work like MNL’s is vital.

“We’re one of the most cultivated areas in the world,” noted RRVCP CEO Rich Whitcomb. “MNL’s Glyndon site is actually farming, but it’s doing native farming of plants that have been here thousands of years. They’re harvesting it, and they’re using it to restore native prairies here in Minnesota and North Dakota.”

“Less than 4% of the native tallgrass prairie still exists in the U.S. today,” Keller said. He further described MNL’s goal of 10 20 30, through which they aim to positively impact 10 million acres by the year

2030. “That doesn’t mean we’re going to touch 10 million acres, but between us and our partners, those are the impacts that could be made upstream and downstream. If we touch one piece of land, it affects the land around it.”

The production of native grasses and wildflowers is a key specialty of the Glyndon site, one of four locations in Minnesota. Keller and his team oversee 500 acres, popping with a rainbow of colors from blanket flower, yarrow, verbena stricta, Echinacea and common ox-eye. The native plantings are harvested by machine or by hand, cleaned, deter-

mined to be wheat-free, sold to other vendors and customers, and used in MNL’s own restoration projects.

Native plants have deep roots that help stabilize soil in erodible, droughty or flood-prone areas. They withstand the harsh northern climate well, having evolved through four-season years dating back to pre-settlement times. Native grasses and flowers also act as nature’s clean-up crew.

“That deep-rooted vegetation captures a lot of carbon dioxide (CO₂). It does a lot of transpiration and pulls a lot of CO₂ out of the air. Deeper roots do more work,” Keller said. “It’s a big deal for carbon sequestration, as well as sedimentation and chemical runoff. The water goes in and gets filtered through the root system, it will clean that surface water, and recharge groundwater as a clean product.”

Partners in planting

MNL’s work doesn’t only impact private landowners on lakeshores and large companies with a lot of acreage to maintain. MNL partners with entities across the map, whether they’re seeking the ecological benefits or simply trying to follow permit codes.

“There are so many good people who support what we do for different reasons,” Keller said. He referenced a project collaboration in which one partner sought natural native land-

scaping while the other hoped for cleared, green recreation space. “We found a compatible use design, so it helps everybody involved. There is less land to mow for recreation, and we could add native features along the bike paths. That’s the great part about it.”

MNL also works with electricity providers like RRVCP and Minnkota Power Cooperative, who have a history of respect for the lands they use and serve. From eco-friendly vegetation management around power lines to the reclamation of coal mine regions, MNL is called in to help support the values shared between the organizations.

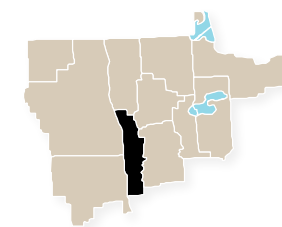
“Utilities provide something that’s greatly needed, and to mitigate that work, we can go back and bring the land back to something that may be better than when we started,” Keller said. “We’re doing

our part to perpetuate environmental stewardship.”

One could say Blaine Keller likes to find balance in his world. People may know him as a courageous

and tough-skinned Marine, but he recognizes that preserving the Minnesota he loves sometimes takes a light touch.

“I like to show people that just because you’re a conservative person doesn’t mean you can’t be concerned about the environment. There’s too much pressure put on that,” he said. “The main thing is just talking to people and making connections.”



Served by

Red River Valley Co-op Power
Halstad, Minn.

- Incorporated – February 21, 1938
- Board members – 6
- CEO – Rich Whitcomb
- Members – 4,754
- Miles of line – 1,792

By Kaylee Cusack / Photography Michael Hoeft



A greenhouse holding seedlings ready for the field.



The MNL team plants certain grasses and flowers by hand to ensure ideal growth.



A swath of common ox-eye blooms in one of MNL’s native fields.

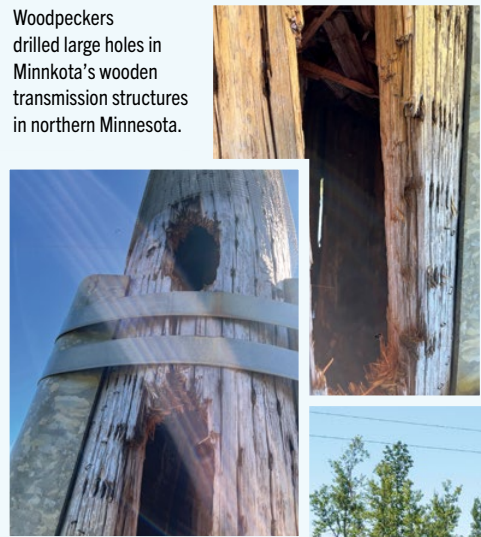
Pecking disorder

REBUILT TRANSMISSION LINE PROTECTED FROM WOODPECKER DAMAGE

There's a sharp rat-a-tat that rings through the trees in Lake of the Woods County and it's been giving Minnkota's power delivery personnel headaches for decades. Generations of the area's woodpeckers have hollowed out their homes in the cooperative's wooden transmission poles, requiring ongoing maintenance along a 40-mile stretch of line from Warroad to Baudette, Minn.

But a new structure design and stronger material could serve as a sort of aspirin for the long-suffering engineers and lineworkers who have toiled to repair and replace structures the birds have carved up with precision. For the first time on Minnkota's system, ductile iron is being used in place of wood to rebuild a 69-kilovolt (kV) transmission line.

Woodpeckers drilled large holes in Minnkota's wooden transmission structures in northern Minnesota.



Minnkota's new 69-kV transmission line from Warroad to Baudette, Minn., was built using ductile iron to protect against woodpeckers and other impacts.



"Sometimes, it feels like the woodpeckers are building condominiums in our poles," joked Mark Thorson, area lineworker stationed along the Canadian border. "We've put wire mesh up to try and protect everything, but if they're determined, they can peck right through it."

The tiny birds can do a huge amount of damage. In many instances, their mini-jackhammering can turn an otherwise sturdy pole into Swiss cheese – creating risks of the line falling down, power outages, fires and the safety of both the lineworkers and area wildlife. In addition to preventing pecking problems, the region's power delivery infrastructure is susceptible to an assortment of critters, ants and water issues.

"Bears can be another huge problem up here," Thorson said. "A lot of the time, we find them scratching on the poles and causing all kinds of damage."

Several poles have been repaired or replaced since the 69-kV line was put into service in the late 1940s. But

with the line scheduled for complete rebuild this summer, Minnkota's engineering team went outside their normal design specifications. The iron material carries a higher cost, but it is anticipated that there will be long-term savings through less maintenance required.

"This is the same basic material that's used to make water piping, so it will last a long, long time," said John Thompson, lead engineer on the first half of the project, which was completed this fall. "This line has been in service for almost 80 years, and we want to get another 80 years out of this new line."

Thompson credited Minnkota member North Star Electric Cooperative with helping ensure the construction process on his part of the project went smoothly. The second half of the line construction is under way and scheduled for completion in mid-2023.

"North Star has been great to work with on this project," Thompson said. "They helped us store material, coordinated the under-build (distribution line under the

transmission line) projects and helped set up outages so we could safely complete our work."

Although the woodpeckers have been a nuisance, Minnkota went to great lengths to ensure their nesting habitat wasn't negatively impacted during construction. As part of the cooperative's Avian Protection Program, detailed inspections were conducted to ensure the protection of the region's bird population.

Last of the copper

While the northern Minnesota wilderness dictated some of the project design elements, the major driver for the rebuild work was the age, condition and antiquated hardware components on the transmission line. The line's original copper conductor (wire) was replaced with aluminum wire, which allows for much greater operational flexibility.

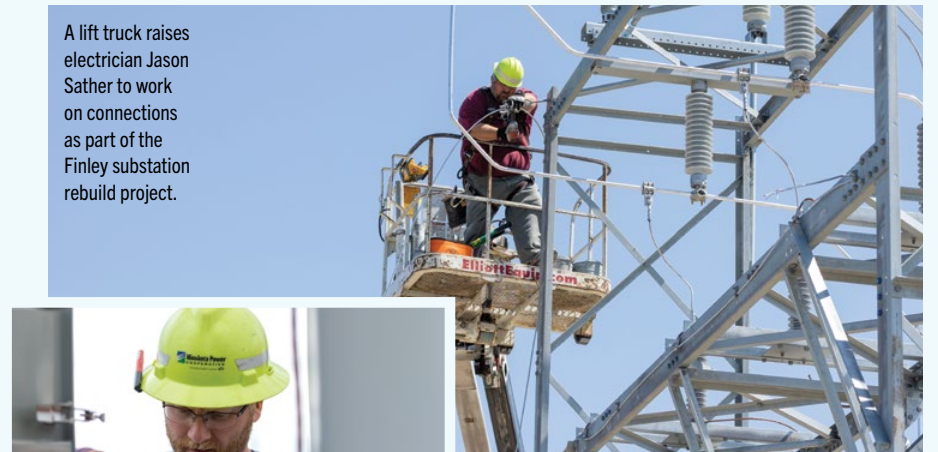
"This was the last remaining copper conductor on the Minnkota system," said Skylar Ertman, lead engineer on the second half of the project. "With the new conductor and improved structure design, members in the region should see improved reliability."

At an average height of 60 feet, the new standard 69-kV transmission structure in the Minnkota system is about 20 feet taller than the original structures. It includes a static wire to protect from lightning strikes, which are a major cause of blink power outages, and a fiber-optic ground cable, which will enhance Minnkota's communication capabilities in the region.

Rebuild program improving reliability

Over the last five years, Minnkota has rebuilt about 100 miles of 69-kV transmission line across its service area. In addition, more than 1,300 miles of line have been equipped with technologies to reduce blink outages.

A lift truck raises electrician Jason Sather to work on connections as part of the Finley substation rebuild project.



Kyle Swatlowski, apprentice electrician, completes wiring work at the newly rebuilt Finley substation in eastern North Dakota.

And transmission lines aren't the sole focus. Substations are getting the rebuild treatment, too. This year, two aging distribution substations – Finley (N.D.) and Tabor (Minn.) – have been rebuilt and the Rogers (N.D.) rebuild project began this fall. Minnkota budgets to complete two to three substation rebuild projects annually.

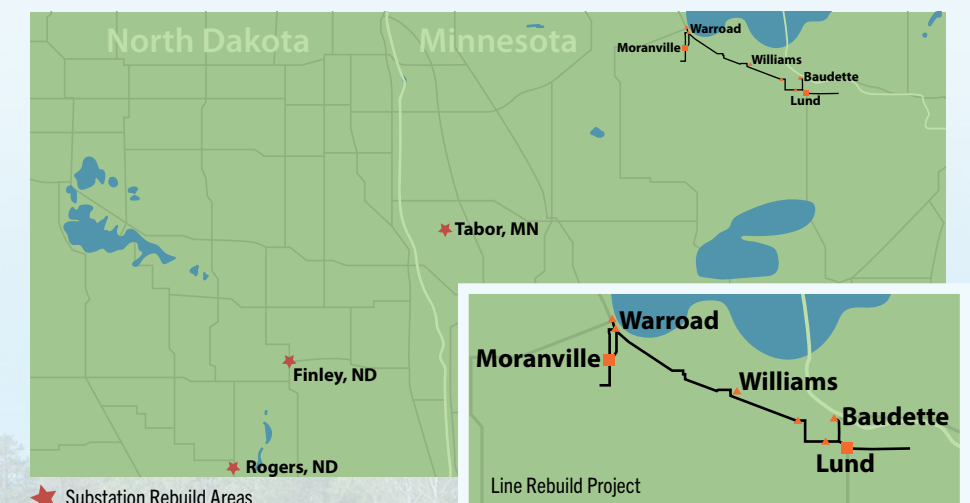
The newly constructed substations provide an updated design and significant benefits in terms of communication and reliability. An upgraded computer system, known

in the industry as SCADA, will help gather and analyze data, while also monitoring and controlling equipment processes remotely. With access to real-time data, operators can more quickly identify system issues and potentially reduce outage time.

The investment and effort have produced results. Minnkota is experiencing significantly fewer sustained outages and blink outages per delivery point. Those numbers should continue to improve as Minnkota's programmatic approach to addressing aging infrastructure helps make the power delivery system smarter, stronger and more efficient.

"We still have a lot of aging infrastructure on our system," Ertman said. "But we're making progress and starting to see real results."

By Ben Fladhammer / Photography Michael Hoeft



Minnkota helps take ag safety on the road



Minnkota Safety Manager Jason Uhlir (left) is joined by NDSC Executive Director Chuck Clairmont (right) and NDSC Director of Business Development and Marketing Kristin Wilson (middle).

Photo courtesy of the North Dakota Safety Council.

MINNKOTA DONATES A TRUCK TO SUPPORT NORTH DAKOTA SAFETY COUNCIL INITIATIVE

areas including grain handling, chemical safety, power take-off, personal protection equipment, all-terrain vehicles, and farm site and powerline safety.

With the addition of the mobile safety lab, the NDSC faced one major obstacle – how to pull this massive trailer. At a board meeting for the NDSC, Jason Uhlir, Minnkota’s safety manager, pitched a promising solution. Minnkota had a 2013 Chevrolet Silverado 3500 4X4 truck in good condition that was on its way to being retired from the cooperative’s fleet, but would work perfectly to pull the trailer.

The agriculture industry is the heart and soul of rural North Dakota and Minnesota. While the region and its economy rely on the dedication of farmers and ranchers, the job comes with serious risks. In 2020, 13 North Dakotans were killed in preventable agricultural-related accidents. The North Dakota Safety Council (NDSC) knew it needed to find a way to develop and implement a stronger safety foundation for rural farmers and ranchers

in the region – and Minnkota was ready to help.

The NDSC purchased a 24-foot enclosed trailer and transformed it into a mobile safety lab, thanks to a sponsorship from North Dakota Farmers Union. The trailer is equipped with seven custom-made module units that are dedicated to providing kids and adults with interactive lessons on agriculture safety. The modules feature hands-on demonstrations from ag-related

“I ran a request up the chain about donating a truck to an ag-related program, and everyone agreed that this was a good idea,” said Uhlir, who also serves on the NDSC board.

NDSC Executive Director Chuck Clairmont has been working closely on the project since NDSC received an Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) Susan Harwood Curriculum Development Grant in 2020. The grant helped in the development of a seven-course training class dedicated to agriculture safety. Rather than trying to bring farmers to a classroom, Clairmont and the NDSC knew it would be more effective to bring the classroom to the farm.

“Ag safety is an area in the safety world that is just really missing,” Clairmont said. Thanks to Minnkota’s donation, the NDSC can now take its safety lab all across the state.

“We have this massive trailer and thank goodness that you guys donated the pickup because we needed it to be able to move,” said Clairmont. “We were so thankful.”

There are still a few obstacles the NDSC has left to face with the development of the mobile safety lab. Clairmont mentioned it is more time consuming than expected to create these modules.

“We have invested more time and money than originally anticipated, but we want this entire ag safety program to be top-notch. When it’s rolled out, it will have the power to help prevent injuries and save lives,” Clairmont said.

Uhlir, a born-and-raised farm boy, agrees that the impact this trailer can have on the region is worth the investment.

“A lot of folks don’t understand the hazards until it’s too late. And they don’t always have safety nerds like me hired to train them,” Uhlir said with a smile. “I think the trailer has the potential to really make a large impact in the lives of a lot of farmers. If it reaches just one farm family and teaches them something to prevent a tragedy, that’s just awesome.”

The NDSC has a starting goal of taking the ag safety trailer to around 10-15 events in its first year, from cooperative annual meetings to 4-H groups and trade shows. The trailer debuted its first completed module at the Big Iron Farm Show in West Fargo, N.D., on Sept. 13-15.

The PTO (or power take-off) module demonstrates the dan-

gers associated with operating the powerful rotating system if it is not turned off before exiting the equipment. A PTO is needed to connect equipment to augers and other non-motorized equipment.

During the initial showing of the trailer, several groups of students from Lake Area Technical College in Watertown, S.D., took a peek at the interactive safety module. As they gathered around the trailer, one student made a comment that solidified the years of hard work the NDSC has dedicated to this innovative safety tool.

“We are here to find something that has to do with ag safety, and what is better than this?” he said.

By Emily Windjue



The power take-off module demonstrates how quickly a PTO electric motor rotates and what could happen if a hand or arm gets caught in the rotation.



Terry Guthmiller, an agriculture instructor and consultant who attended Big Iron Farm Show, talks with Lake Area Technical College students about the features of the NDSC ag safety trailer.

Minnkota and CoBank show concern for community

“Year after year, Minnkota and CoBank have offered their generosity in support of our mission, and we have been honored to help an increasing number of rural families as a result. As our service footprint continues to grow, every donated dollar makes a difference for farm families in crisis throughout the region.”

— Dan Erdmann,
Program Manager of Farm Rescue

Minnkota and CoBank celebrated a decade of jointly supporting nonprofits and community organizations in 2022 with another bountiful year of giving.

CoBank’s Sharing Success program matches charitable donations up to \$10,000 made by the cooperative to local and rural community organizations. As CoBank borrowers, Minnkota and Square Butte Electric Cooperative, which is owned by the same 11 cooperatives that own Minnkota, were each able to distribute an additional \$20,000 in CoBank matching funds across the region.

“This program is a really nice way to leverage additional contributions to several key organizations in our communities,” said Stacey Dahl, Minnkota’s senior manager of external affairs.

Minnkota’s donations included \$3,000 to the Community Violence Intervention Center (CVIC), \$3,500 to the Altru Health Foundation, \$2,500 to Farm Rescue and \$1,000 to the Greater Grand Forks Women’s Leadership Cooperative (GGFWLC).

Minnkota is very mindful of the organizations that have broad-reaching impacts to its community. CVIC is a service organization that operates throughout the Greater Grand Forks region and works to prevent and educate the community on domestic violence.

“The impact of Minnkota and CoBank’s recent and past gifts are incredibly meaningful to our mission to end violence in two generations,” said Kara Fosse, CVIC senior director of development. “With a focus on safety, healing, prevention and education, your support enables entire families to transform their lives from a place of fear to empowering freedom.”

With a membership strongly rooted in agriculture, Minnkota provides support to Farm Rescue each year as part of the Sharing Success program.

“Year after year, Minnkota and CoBank have offered their generosity in support of our mission, and we have been honored to help an increasing number of rural families as a result,” said Dan Erdmann, program manager of Farm Rescue. “As our service footprint continues to grow, every donated dollar makes a difference for farm families in crisis throughout the region.”

Altru Health Foundation supports a large number of patients within Minnkota’s service territory. The Sharing Success donation directly supported three different areas within the foundation, including a program that offers transportation assistance to cancer patients from across the region.

“Thank you so very much to Minnkota Power Cooperative and CoBank for your

generous support of Altru and the patients and families we are privileged to serve,” said Brittany Caillier, Altru Health Foundation’s director of philanthropy.

The mission of the Greater Grand Forks Women’s Leadership Cooperative is to empower female leadership within the community.

“Minnkota has been a strong supporter of the women of our organization since the beginning,” said Caitlin Gillespie, immediate past president of GGFWLC. “That support has continued to grow in several ways, with this generous donation being the latest. We’re grateful to have Minnkota as a community partner.”

Square Butte Electric Cooperative, the owner of Unit 2 at the Milton R. Young Station near Center, N.D., contributed \$10,000 to the Oliver County Rural Fire Department. The department will also be able to purchase a water tank to update its grass fire truck and update the safety equipment needed for the department’s volunteers.

“Without donations like the ones from Minnkota and CoBank, the doors of this volunteer department would have to close — leaving access to emergency services to the community over 45 minutes away,” said Mindy Rude, secretary and treasurer of the fire department’s board of directors.

CoBank’s Sharing Success program was established in 2012 and has allowed participants like Minnkota to contribute over \$66 million to local organizations. To learn more about the Sharing Success program, visit CoBank.com/citizenship.



Altru Health Foundation members (left to right) Geri Adair, Jennifer Haugen and Brittany Caillier accept a donation from Minnkota through the Sharing Success program.

Stacey Dahl, Minnkota senior manager of external affairs (far right), presents CVIC board members with a Sharing Success donation. (Left to right) Coiya Tompkins, president and CEO; Jodi Sorum, board chair; Emberly Lietz, director of development; and Kara Fosse, senior director of development.



Photos courtesy of the Oliver County Rural Fire Protection District.

(Left) The rural fire protection team has 20 volunteers and one junior volunteer ready to drop everything and help their growing community.



(Right) An Oliver County Fire volunteer helps a future volunteer try on different gear necessary to remain safe during an emergency.

CO-OPS VOTE

THIS NOVEMBER 8

The mission of Minnkota Power Cooperative is to continue providing our member cooperatives with safe, reliable and affordable energy by ensuring that all rural voices are heard by every level of government. That is why we participate in a national electric cooperative program called Co-ops Vote. Co-ops Vote encourages all co-op members to participate in national, state and local elections while educating political candidates and elected officials about the important role played by electric cooperatives in their communities.

Co-ops Vote is a national non-partisan grassroots program that works to enhance the political strength of electric co-ops and boost voter turnout. Whether it's a local or national election, your vote matters. Local elections represent who we are as a community and where we want to go. Making sure rural voices are heard is why we are encouraging our members to get out and vote during this upcoming election!

Here are three easy things you can do to make sure you are ready to cast your ballot on NOVEMBER 8!

VISIT **WWW.VOTE.COOP** TO FIND MORE INFORMATION ON THIS UPCOMING ELECTION AND TO ENSURE YOUR VOICE WILL BE HEARD THIS NOVEMBER 8!

1

Make sure you are registered to vote! Visit **www.vote.coop**, and click "Election Resources" to verify your voting status.



2

Get informed. Learning more about your current elected officials and potential candidates is one of the best ways to prepare for this election season. Follow **@coopsvote** on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram to stay up to date on current election information.



3

VOTE! Find out where your polling station is and get out to cast your ballot. If you are unable to attend a physical polling location, be sure to request an absentee ballot ahead of time so your vote and voice counts.

