

# Minnkota

NOVEMBER-DECEMBER 2022

MINNKOTA.COM

MESSENGER



**Major outage  
insight**

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*On the cover:*  
Minnkota plant specialist Roger Bauman (left) and engineer Sam Schwanberg complete project checks during a planned outage of Unit 2 of the Milton R. Young Station.

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](mailto:bfladhammer@minnkota.com).

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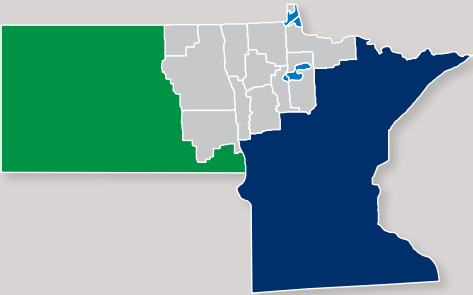
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Minnkota Power Cooperative is a generation and transmission cooperative headquartered in Grand Forks, N.D. It supplies wholesale electricity to 11 member-owner distribution cooperatives, three in eastern North Dakota and eight in northwestern Minnesota.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

# 2023 rates projected to be stable for sixth straight year

Despite global economic challenges and inflationary pressures, Minnkota Power Cooperative plans to keep its average wholesale electricity rates flat for the sixth straight year. The cooperative's board of directors approved the 2023 capital and operating budgets this fall, which anticipate no rate adjustment for the Class A member systems.

"We recognize the prices of many products and services are continuing to rise, which places pressure on families, businesses and communities in our region," said Mac McLennan, Minnkota president and CEO. "While we're not immune to these broad economic challenges, we are committed to finding ways to ensure resiliency and stability for our members."

The economy in Minnkota's service area remains strong with consistent growth coming from the major population centers and the agricultural industry. The budget anticipates the sale of 4.2 billion kilowatt-hours (kWh) to the Class A members in 2023 – a 2.5% increase from the previous year. Residential and commercial growth in the region are continuing to outpace previous Load Forecast Study expectations. Additionally, the two states Minnkota serves – Minnesota and North Dakota – rank first and third in the nation in unemploy-

ment rates according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Minnkota also anticipates a boost to its financials through stronger markets for its surplus power sales. With no major power plant outages scheduled in the coming year, ample power supply resources are expected to be available. Average energy and capacity prices in the MISO marketplace are projected to be higher than the 2022 budget.

"The demand and price for our surplus power has grown steadily over the last two years, which has been a positive for us financially," McLennan said. "There is still market volatility that will need to be managed, but we believe the current price trends will provide additional revenue."

Minnkota's revenue requirement in 2023 is budgeted at \$442.7 million. Expenses are budgeted at \$426.8 million. The net margin is projected to be \$15.8 million before the recognition of \$1.2 million of deferred revenue to reach the target margin level of \$17 million.

About \$64.6 million will be invested in capital construction projects and equipment in 2023. Approximately 72% of that total is focused on the power delivery system to address aging infrastructure, improve service and enhance reliability. Programs to rebuild legacy power lines and substations will

continue, as will efforts to add blink mitigation equipment to reduce momentary outages. Distribution automation technologies will also be added to provide enhanced communication and greater visibility over the system. Power production and security/reliability projects will make up the remainder of this budget.

Minnkota's financial position is also supported by previous years of strong operational performance. The cooperative has a deferred revenue plan in place to manage shortfalls and unanticipated expenses, as well as a Resource Transition Fund to address extraordinary market events and future power supply needs.

Minnkota is rated as an investment-grade utility in 2022. The cooperative currently has an A- rating from Standard and Poor's and a stable outlook.

"The energy industry continues to go through one of the most significant transitions in its history," McLennan said. "We're fortunate to be in a stable position financially to meet these challenges and opportunities head on. We look forward to continuing to work closely with our membership to provide reliable, affordable and sustainable electricity for the region."

By Ben Fladhammer



# Major outage insight

MINNKOTA'S YOUNG STATION TEAM NAVIGATES LENGTHY MAINTENANCE OUTAGE WITH PLANNING, TEAMWORK

**M**innkota engineer Sam Schwanberg and plant specialist Roger Bauman turned into a bit of a dynamic duo over the last quarter of 2022. They were in the midst of tackling projects only possible while the Young Station's Unit 2 was offline, and they needed each other's help to do it.

The planned maintenance outage of Unit 2 was just the second major outage

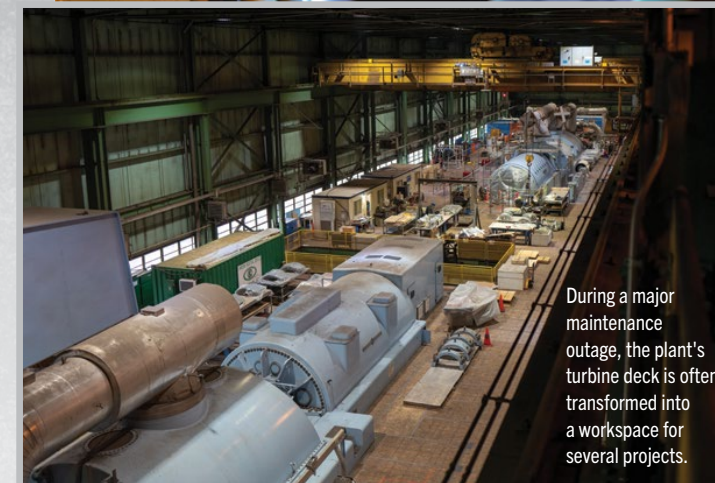
Schwanberg had experienced since joining the Minnkota team full-time in 2020. For Bauman, who was hired at Minnkota nearly 37 years ago (before Schwanberg was even born) the experiences are harder to count.

"I have no idea how many major outages that's been. No idea," Bauman said with a laugh. "But I can guess how many I have left."

Minnkota plant specialist Roger Bauman (left) and engineer Sam Schwanberg perform some mid-outage project checks at the Young Station.



Bauman and Schwanberg inspect a Unit 2 heat transfer sensor update.



During a major maintenance outage, the plant's turbine deck is often transformed into a workspace for several projects.

## Constant communication and care

Of the 50-plus projects planned during the Unit 2 outage, Schwanberg held engineering leadership over a couple of the largest ones. While Bauman's projects weren't as enormous, they were certainly more numerous, and had to be executed in the same timeframe and same portion of the plant – the Unit 2 boiler. Communication and coordination were critical to ensure safety and efficiency.

"One of the things that I've learned over the years is that whatever you do affects someone else, somehow, in ways you can't even imagine," Bauman said. "Over time, I've figured out a lot of these – I call them interferences. So Sam and I work together. We've worked through a lot."

"And we still are," Schwanberg said. "Constantly."

The duo takes a closer look inside the cyclone reentrant throat.



Schwanberg was quick to reply. "He jokes about retirement, but we won't let him leave," he teased.

This pair was two of hundreds of Minnkota employees and contractors working together through a unique 13-week to-do list of cleaning, inspecting and refurbishing many components of the power plant's second unit.

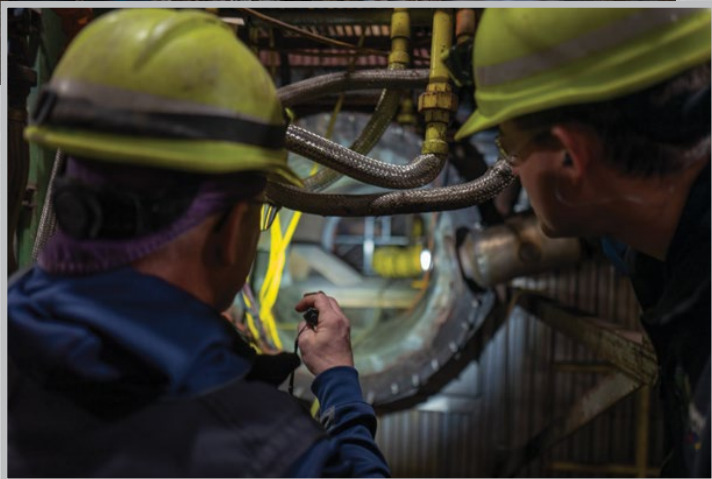
"Once every three years you get to look at the internals. You get to look at the guts," said Wayne Haag, plant manager of Engineering and Environmental. Haag described the intricate process of powering down the unit and then examining and fortifying every nook, from the water intakes all the way to the back chimneys. It's a load of work, and it takes a load of brains and brawn to pull it off every three years.

"It's an unbelievable number of people," he said of the average 130 employees and 250 contractors that passed through the Young Station daily. "It almost turns into a small city out here when you get going."





Bauman and Schwanberg stand inside the Unit 2 boiler, something that can only be done when the unit is taken offline.



However, Bauman and Schwanberg’s projects were only a part of the outage as a whole. A team of maintenance coordinators and project leaders must collaborate on a full outage plan to make sure work space, materials, and resources are always available when needed. When one aspect of a project plan shifts, it could quickly create an impact ripple effect.

“For example, someone has to sit down and say, ‘OK, you have the vacuum truck from here to here, and this team has the vacuum truck from here to here,’” Haag said, pantomiming stretches of time. “If those times overlap, you’ll need another vacuum truck. Small things like that, like just having a vacuum truck unavailable, can completely stop jobs.”

The coordinators of the latest Unit 2 outage had additional concerns to balance. The material shortages experienced by nearly every industry over the past two years made it a challenge to get key parts and equipment to the plant quickly, made all the more frustrating when unplanned maintenance work was discovered during inspections. And woven through all projects was the common thread of safety, a priority on which Minnkota doesn’t compromise. Contractors are always given a safety orientation at the start of outage work, and job safety plans

are discussed for every project with contractor safety personnel.

“Our safety department is constantly out and about. They’re always looking for potential hazards,” Haag said. “Safety is on everybody’s mind.”

**Passing the outage torch**

In Haag’s 16 years with Minnkota he has never seen a 13-week outage, which has allowed work to be performed at an easier pace (none of the around-the-clock work of a typical 6-week outage). But this outage was distinctive in another regard. The Young Station engineering team is young. With many veterans retiring over the past few years, the average years of experience on the team is only four.

“We have very few seasoned employees left. We have very few Rogers,” Haag said. “The learning curve is very steep for the



Bauman and Schwanberg discuss one of their larger projects – repairs to the Unit 2 pass hopper lower cone.

newer employees. They often don’t get the advantage that I had when I started here to have a seasoned employee to learn from.”

That’s where the “very few Rogers” come in, working side-by-side with the “Sams” to pass along the years of knowledge they’ve gained in the throes of countless planned outages.

“He’s taught me a thing or two, I’d say,” Schwanberg said, grinning at Bauman. “I go down to his office for one simple, little question, and I end up being down there for two hours with one thing leading to another. When I leave, I’m like ... that’s a lot to digest. Roger is super knowledgeable.”

“We have lots of new people, but our engineers are young, bright kids and they learn very fast,” Bauman said. “They’re doing great.”

“I’ve taught him a thing or two also,” Schwanberg continued, referring to a two-way street of knowledge transfer. “His street’s a little longer and wider, but I try my hardest.”

Through all of the collaborative checklists, sweat-drenched huddles, and shared victories of major outages, the Young Station team becomes smarter with the completion of each one. Both units of the plant continue to perform remarkably well after nearly half a century of producing power, and their reliability will persist due to the hard work and commitment of every Sam and Roger.

“It’s obvious that the employees here take pride in this place,” Haag said. “They want to see that it continues putting out safe, reliable, affordable electricity for many more years to come.”

By Kaylee Cusack / Photography Michael Hoeft

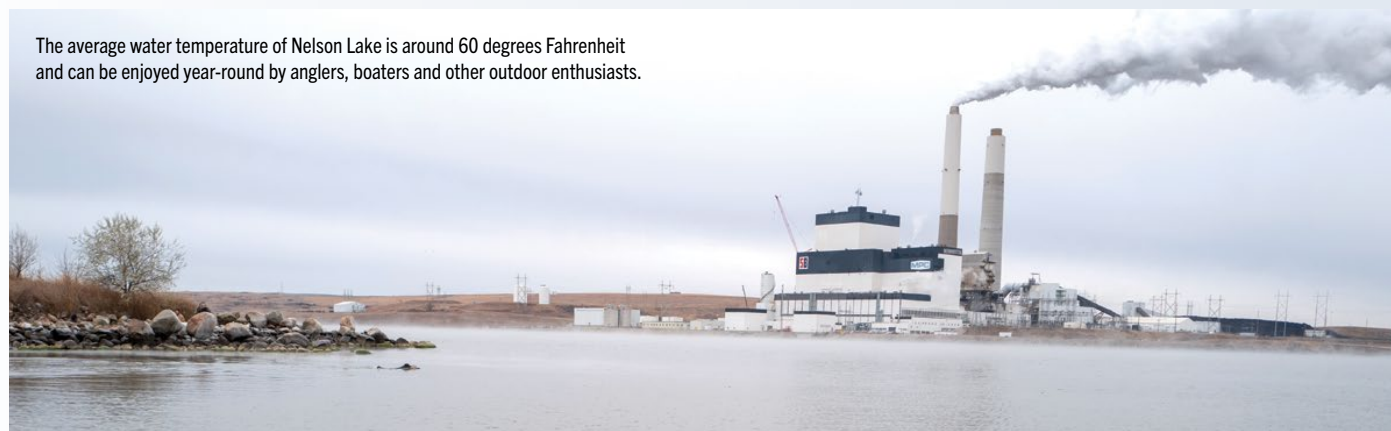


# Spaniels splash into Nelson Lake

MINNKOTA HELPS  
HOST WATER PORTION  
OF NATIONAL COCKER  
SPANIEL CHAMPIONSHIP



The average water temperature of Nelson Lake is around 60 degrees Fahrenheit and can be enjoyed year-round by anglers, boaters and other outdoor enthusiasts.



An early morning chill on Nov. 7 didn't dampen the spirits of eager pups waiting to show off their water retrieval skills. The warm waters of Nelson Lake were the perfect remedy for the foggy fall day.

For the second time, Minnkota's Milton R. Young Station and the adjacent Nelson Lake recreation area had the opportunity to host the water series event for the 2022 National Amateur Cocker Championship (NACC) – a competition that started with 52 cocker spaniels, before being narrowed to the top 15 ready to jump right in.

Jon Hunke, chair of the event, has been working with the American Kennel Club (AKC), who sponsored the NACC, for close to 20 years. The AKC had used Nelson Lake for the water series event during the Amateur Cocker Field Open Championship in 2020. So when it came time again to find the perfect location for this year's water event at the national championship, Minnkota was Hunke's first call.

"It's the partnership with the community that made us choose Nelson Lake," explained Hunke. "Looking around at locations, I knew that cooperatives are part of their communities, so I reached out and we made it happen."

Hunke explained the water portion of the competition helps demonstrate the skills of an all-around good hunting dog. The dogs must remain steady until they are given a command by their handlers. Once the gun fires, the dog waits for its cue to jump into the water to retrieve the bird.

One major obstacle Hunke has encountered when hosting this early November event in North Dakota is finding an open body of water that has not frozen over. Luckily, Minnkota has just the place to help. Nelson Lake was built to provide cooling water for the Young Station. The water is tested, processed and returned into the lake at well-above freezing temperatures so the lake rarely freezes over in the winter, making it a perfect year-round recreational area. In addition to winter water sports, the lake also boasts premier bass fishing.

"The Young Station's dedication to environmental excellence and stewardship allows us to give back to our community," said Scott Hopfauf, Minnkota's plant environmental superintendent. "It is very satisfying to see Nelson Lake used for various purposes outside Minnkota."

## Jumping in paws first

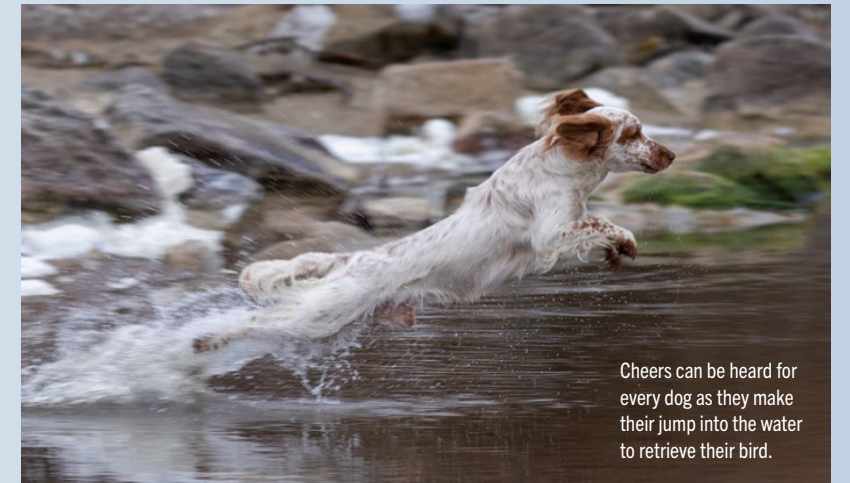
The NACC brings handlers and pups from across the United States to compete in rural North Dakota. From Seattle to Colorado, 20 states were represented at the start of the competition. Walt Leytham and his pup Jesse came from Virginia for their chance at a second national title.

"Two years ago, I was at the Nationals and she [Jesse] just had one great run after another. During the fifth series, everything complicated that happened to her, she just handled it," said Leytham. "It was a very special experience to win the nationals."

Back in the 1990s, John Bishop began training and competing with dogs because of his love of bird hunting. Bishop mentioned that while the genetics of a dog play a significant part in the overall temperament, developing a strong bond with a dog is what creates a winning team.

"I have won some big trials with this particular dog who is 10 years old. She's going deaf, but she is a sweet, powerful dog that's still going at it," said Bishop about his dog Kona.

Jesse and Kona were both successful during the water series and advanced into the fifth and final series of the NACC. Watch-



Cheers can be heard for every dog as they make their jump into the water to retrieve their bird.



Owners pose with their pups after a successful plunge into the water.



The competition is designed to test a dog's overall hunting ability over the course of five events.

ing their dogs skip like rocks to snatch their birds from the lake, several handlers were thankful for the warm water this time of year.

"These dogs are good dogs, but they are not ice breaking dogs, so it's good to have this resource, no doubt," said Bishop.

By Emily Windjue / Photography Michael Hoeft



# Building a legacy

Piece by piece, 11 million pounds of earth-moving equipment has risen up over the prairie this year outside of Center, N.D. The assembled parts make up the newest 757 dragline excavator in the world, but to the employees at BNI Coal, it represents much more – a Legacy. In fact, that’s the name of the new machine that will help ensure coal is efficiently mined to fuel the Minnkota-operated Milton R. Young Station.

“From a capital standpoint, I’m really excited that the mine is, with this purchase,

infinitely better positioned to service the long-term needs of the Young Station,” said Mike Heger, general manager of BNI Coal.

Before BNI considered the purchase of a new dragline, the company evaluated how much it would cost to make repairs to the oldest 757 dragline in their fleet, Big Jake, which had clocked over 340,000 hours of operation over the last 50 years. They soon discovered the amount of money it would take to make the necessary repairs was comparable to the price tag on a state-of-the-art dragline.



Legacy is equipped with state-of-the-art AC motors with about 1,990 horsepower.



The metal tub, which provides a base for the dragline to sit on, was repurposed from BNI's existing Big Jake dragline.



Brac Mettler points to some of the inner workings of the dragline. Mettler has been involved in two other dragline acquisitions and builds during his career.

Legacy originally operated in England before it was purchased by Mississippi Power. Following BNI's acquisition of the dragline in 2020, the equipment was disassembled and transported across the country in pieces so BNI could reassemble the massive machine on site in North Dakota.

The dragline will be used to efficiently move 375,000 pounds of dirt and rock, exposing the layers of coal hidden beneath. A 75-cubic-yard bucket scoops the earth in one fluid motion while rotating. As easily as it was scooped up, the dragline operator releases the earth to finish out a complete 360-degree rotation. All land disturbed in the mining process is returned to original condition or better than original condition through stringent reclamation requirements.

## What is a legacy?

After months of work, the Legacy dragline was named by a 30-year BNI employee and commissioned on Aug. 8, 2022. Alongside draglines Liberty and Big Sandy, Legacy will help ensure the successful operation at the Young Station well into the future.

“Our partnership with Minnkota as our sole customer is essentially everything to BNI. We are extremely appreciative of the way that we’ve been able to work together in the past and are looking forward to the future,” Heger said.

For Brac Mettler, the term Legacy has more to do with family. The dragline maintenance planner and Legacy project manager just celebrated his 20<sup>th</sup> work anniversary at BNI, and his dad worked at the nearby Young Station for almost 37 years as a control room operator.

“Growing up in Center, everyone in town either worked at a coal mine or a power plant. And I really wanted to play in the big sandbox,” Mettler said with a smile. Starting as a utility worker for BNI, Mettler worked his way up at the company, serving as a full-time mechanic and shop foreman before landing his current position in 2014.

Mettler is just one example of someone who embodies the legacy for which this powerful machine was named. The dragline itself is a symbol of hope for the mining industry as it demonstrates BNI and Minnkota's continuous dedication to providing reliable energy to North Dakota and Minnesota for the coming decades.

“I love my job,” said Mettler. “It seems like everyone else is tearing down and scrapping draglines, and I get to build one. I’m pretty pumped about that.”



Legacy's boom extends 310 feet in the air and is used to support the bucket as it scoops and releases dirt and overburden, exposing the layers of coal underneath.





In January 2023, PKM Member Services Manager Jeff Rustad will become the newest CEO of the Warren, Minn.-based co-op.

# Locally grown leadership

AS PKM ELECTRIC CEO MIKE SCHMIDT RETIRES, PROTÉGÉ JEFF RUSTAD BECOMES NEW CO-OP LEADER IN 2023

**P**KM Electric Cooperative territory has always been PKM CEO Mike Schmidt's home. He was raised on a farm 30 miles north of Warren, Minn., where his family grew potatoes and small grains. As the crops took stronger hold on the land year after year, so did he.

"I just like being in this area. It's where I grew up," Schmidt said. He explained that he was able to land a job as a PKM accountant in 1983 and his wife was a local teacher. Warren just felt right for their young family. "Small-town living was good for

my three kids. The goal was that we would raise all three kids in the same house, the same church and the same school."

Schmidt accomplished that goal, along with career goals that took him from accountant to CEO. Now, after nearly 40 years with PKM Electric, he's ready to hand cooperative leadership to another local of the territory – PKM Member Services Manager Jeff Rustad.

Rustad was an electrical contractor before joining PKM in 2004. At that time, Schmidt was looking for a master electrician in the Member

Services department. But Rustad brought more than a contractor's license.

"One great thing about coming to PKM was that a lot of my customers were PKM members," Rustad said. "That was the awesome thing. I was helping out customers I'd been working with forever. I had a lot of connections, because I grew up just north of Oslo [Minn.]."

In the 18 years they worked together, Schmidt and Rustad were able to find new ways to enhance the lives of their members (or rather, friends and neighbors). Two of their

highest priorities were keeping rates affordable and keeping outage times low – priorities that will remain high as Rustad takes over as CEO in January 2023.

"The changes that we've been making recently have been the right ones to reduce outage times. It's strategic," Schmidt said.

"We've been trying to get rid of our east-to-west lines and put them underground," Rustad replied, adding that the lines to be buried are ones that have historically caused problems during major wind events.

PKM Electric has seen more than its fair share of weather disasters, the most unforgettable being the devastating ice storm and flood of 1997. For two weeks, the PKM Electric staff worked out of the Minnesota Power Cooperative warehouse in Grand Forks, N.D.

"We were answering the phone without a computer system to look things up. We didn't have a backup generator, so we were using flashlights," he said. "We did our worst-case scenario planning, but this was

way off the charts for worst-case. We had every single account out of power."

The ice storm snapped around 3,500 of PKM's 33,000 power poles. Ten percent of their line infrastructure was on the ground. However, in true cooperative fashion, line crews from around the region arrived to help. "We normally have eight or nine linemen, and there were 140 linemen working here. That was memorable," Schmidt said.

## Time of transition

Rustad says he admires the leadership qualities of his CEO predecessor, especially his policy of open and honest communication. Rustad will continue Schmidt's monthly staff meetings to be sure the PKM family is informed of changes at the cooperative or the industry as a whole.

In addition to nearly two decades of learning from Schmidt, Rustad will also bring knowledge gained from the NRECA's Manage-

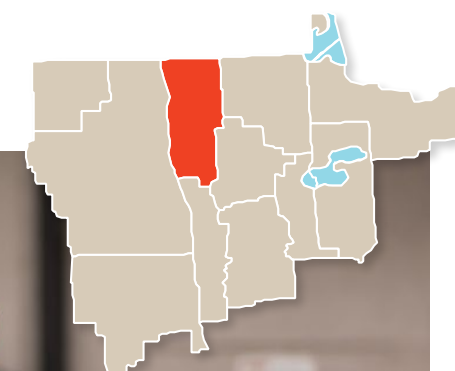
ment Internship Program (MIP), a six-week intensive course for aspiring cooperative leaders. At the start of the new year, he'll join the ranks of more than 40 other CEOs across Minnesota, many of whom took the same path to leadership as he did.

"I told Jeff that if he needs help in the future, I'm available," Schmidt said.

"You're not changing your phone number," Rustad teased back.

Schmidt might be harder to call in retirement, though. When he's not spending time with his three children and four grandkids, he plans to be casting a fishing line up in the Lake of the Woods. "We have a place that's remote, so it's me and the bears and the wolves and the deer. And I hardly get a cellphone signal – emails don't come in. So that's pretty good," he said with a smile.

By Kaylee Cusack / Photography Michael Hoeft



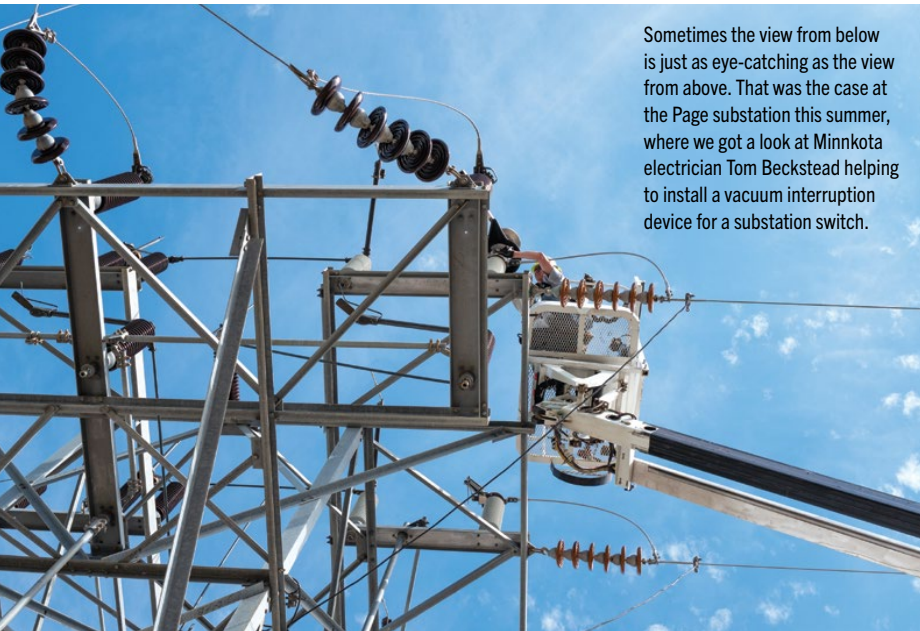
PKM Electric CEO Mike Schmidt (left) says he's confident Rustad will be a strong leader for the cooperative.





# Minnkota 2022 Photo Yearbook

Throughout the year, Minnkota captures hundreds of photos that are ultimately never used in our publications or digital platforms. Other photos, however, beg to be seen more than once. As we reflect on a busy 2022, we wanted to dig out some of our favorite snapshots of the year, courtesy of Minnkota Digital Media Specialist Michael Hoeft. Thank you to all of our employees, members and communities for all of your support throughout the year!



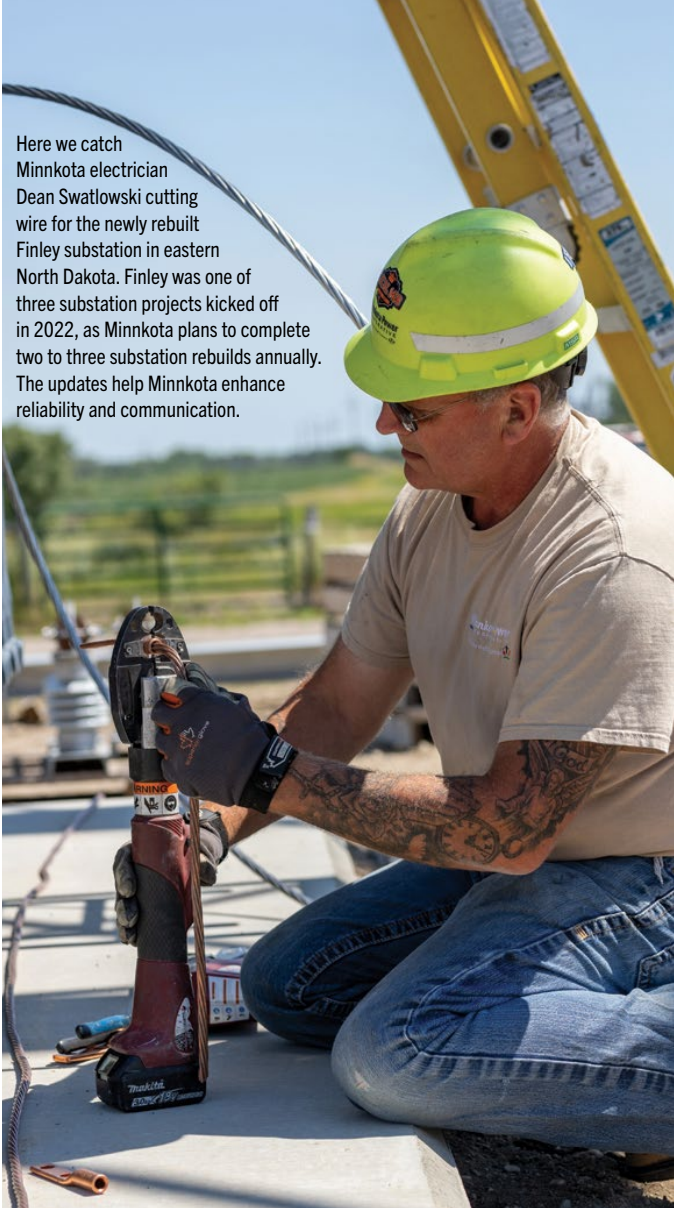
Sometimes the view from below is just as eye-catching as the view from above. That was the case at the Page substation this summer, where we got a look at Minnkota electrician Tom Beckstead helping to install a vacuum interruption device for a substation switch.



Minnkota foreman Nick Bye was part of a multi-team crew replacing a large transmission structure near International Falls, Minn., this February. Here, he uses hand signals to direct the lift of the new 120-foot galvanized steel H-frame.



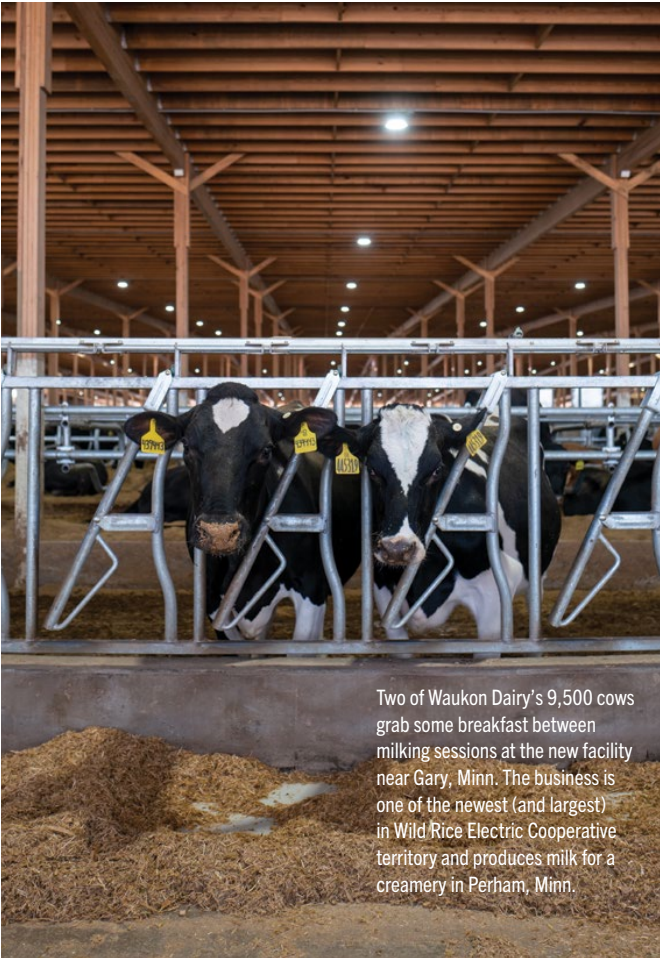
A devastating late-season ice storm hit western North Dakota this April, snapping hundreds of co-op power poles. Minnkota answered a call for help from Burke-Divide Electric Cooperative by sending a crew of six lineworkers to Crosby, N.D. This photo was captured as the team helped set a replacement pole in knee-deep, chilly water.



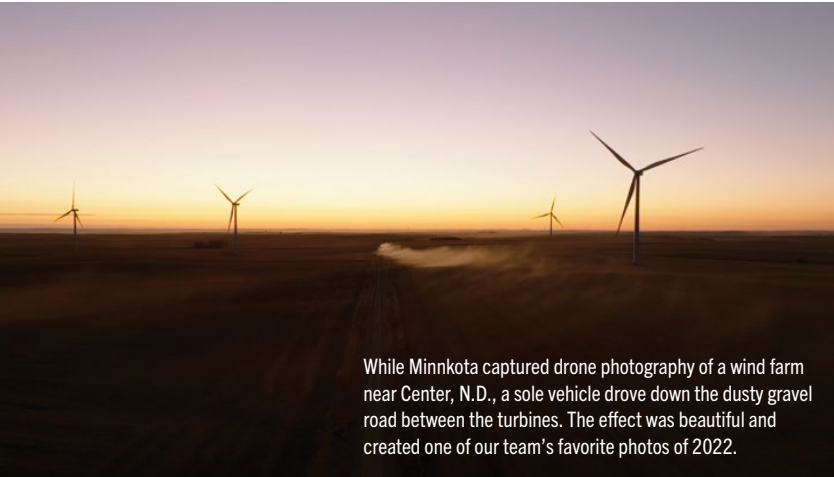
Here we catch Minnkota electrician Dean Swatowski cutting wire for the newly rebuilt Finley substation in eastern North Dakota. Finley was one of three substation projects kicked off in 2022, as Minnkota plans to complete two to three substation rebuilds annually. The updates help Minnkota enhance reliability and communication.



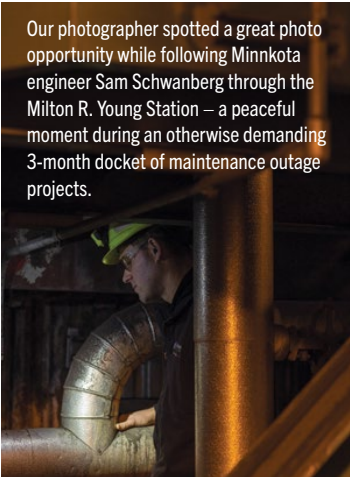
In March, Minnkota's Grand Forks facility hosted a community mobile packing event for Feed My Starving Children. This little volunteer was one of 1,248 people who helped pack more than 280,000 nutritionally complete meals for malnourished children around the globe.



Two of Waukon Dairy's 9,500 cows grab some breakfast between milking sessions at the new facility near Gary, Minn. The business is one of the newest (and largest) in Wild Rice Electric Cooperative territory and produces milk for a creamery in Perham, Minn.



While Minnkota captured drone photography of a wind farm near Center, N.D., a sole vehicle drove down the dusty gravel road between the turbines. The effect was beautiful and created one of our team's favorite photos of 2022.



Our photographer spotted a great photo opportunity while following Minnkota engineer Sam Schwanberg through the Milton R. Young Station – a peaceful moment during an otherwise demanding 3-month docket of maintenance outage projects.



Summer evenings on Nelson Lake (like this one in August) are not to be missed. With an average seasonal water temperature of 86 degrees Fahrenheit, the recreational area has been a favorite for local anglers and families for decades. It also helps the Milton R. Young Station keep cool as it generates electricity – and keeps the plant looking cool in photos, too.



Josh Emerson of St. Paul (and his pooch, Gunner) traveled all the way to Warroad, Minn., to skate on the community's Riverbend Skate Path during February's FriluftFest celebration. The 5.2-mile path on the Warroad River has become an annual feat supported by dozens of organizations – including Roseau Electric Cooperative.





Second-graders display notes of support for soldiers.

## Sending care from North Dakota

### MINNKOTA EMPLOYEES ASSEMBLE CARE PACKAGES FOR PLANT WORKERS SERVING OUR COUNTRY

**M**innkota's Dan Imdieke (Plant fuel yard operator) and Jordan Ternes (Plant Operations shift supervisor) share more in common than spending their work days at the Milton R. Young Station near Center, N.D. The two are also active members of the North Dakota National Guard, 957<sup>th</sup> Engineer Company, which recently completed a months-long deployment at the Texas-Mexico border.

As much as they missed being away from home, their Minnkota colleagues missed having them around the plant just as much. To show how much Imdieke and Ternes were missed, as well as the heap of gratitude for their service, the Young Station's employee events committee developed a plan: some good old-fashioned care packages.

When the soldiers were asked what kind of items would help them through their time away, they were

pretty clear in their response.

"The only request I received from them was original North Dakota foods," said Human Resource Coordinator Laura Fleckenstein.

Employees in Grand Forks and Center answered the call, gathering a delicious assortment of Dot's Homestyle Pretzels (Velva, N.D.), Colorado Jack popcorn (Devils Lake, N.D.), Giants sunflower seeds (Wahpeton, N.D.), Widman's "Chippers" chocolates (Grand Forks, N.D.), and many other local favorites.

As if the stash weren't "sweet" enough, Fleckenstein and Becky Berg, Minnkota administrative supervisor, reached out to their children's teachers and requested that the classes draw some pictures for the soldiers. The students were happy to participate, creating patriotic thank-yous to add to the care packages.

Berg's son is in the second grade. In the fifth grade class, there are an incredible six students who have a parent who works at the Young Station, including Fleckenstein's son, Tanner. "It's a whole class of Minnkota kids!" she said.

Imdieke and Ternes received their care packages less than a week later, and both were thankful for the little piece of home that showed up in the mail. The two headed back to North Dakota right before Thanksgiving and were able to celebrate gratitude with their family and friends in person.

Thank you for your service, Dan, Jordan, and all of our many Minnkota veterans!

By Kaylee Cusack



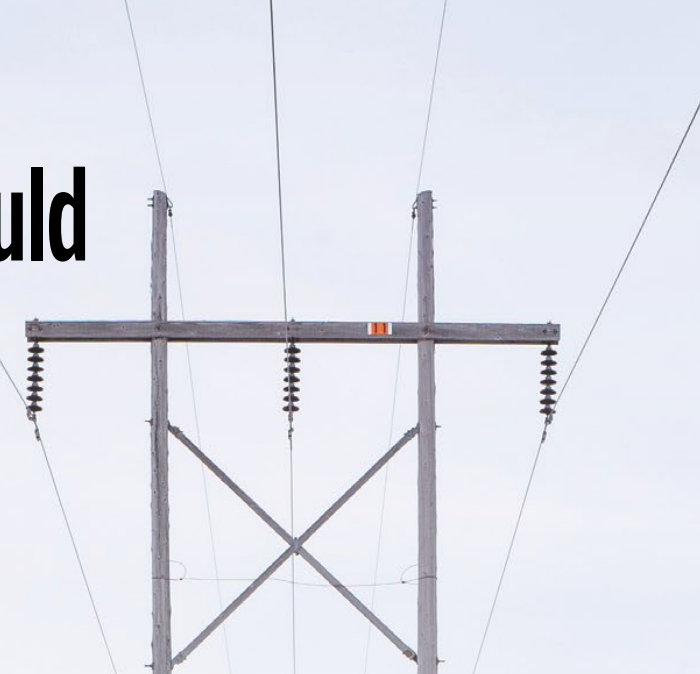
Jordan Ternes



Center-Stanton fifth graders created drawings to include in the care packages.

## Nation's electric grid could face winter challenges

NERC ASSESSMENT SAYS RISKS GROW WITH RETIREMENTS OF COAL, NUCLEAR GENERATION



**T**he increasing demand for electricity and the retirement of reliable power plants are contributing to an "unprecedented" risk of power shortages across the United States this winter, according to a report from the North American Electric Reliability Corporation (NERC).

NERC, the entity charged with maintaining the reliability of the electric grid, issued its annual Winter Reliability Assessment in November. This assessment indicates that the shutdown of dependable power plants, inadequate generation weatherization, fuel supply risks and a shortage of natural gas pipeline capacity could lead to requests for energy conservation and the potential for controlled power outages across the U.S.

"The bulk power system is impacted year after year, more than it has ever been," said John Moura, NERC's director of reliability assessment. "Weather is the most influential factor. The grid has to constantly balance supply and demand."

If power supply is not adequate to balance demand, controlled outages must be implemented to avoid

cascading failures. In extreme cold temperatures, short outages can present extraordinary hardships – and can even be life-threatening.

Minnkota Power Cooperative has more than enough electric generation resources (coal, wind and hydro) to meet its requirements throughout the year. However, Minnkota is interconnected with other utilities across the Upper Midwest through an organization called MISO. Challenges in other parts of the MISO region can and do impact Minnkota's operations.

Since last winter, more than 4.2 gigawatts (equivalent to 4.2 billion watts) of coal and nuclear power plant capacity were retired without adequate replacement in other areas of the MISO system. These resources provide vital reliability and resiliency to the grid because they have the ability to operate on a 24/7 basis and are built to run in subzero temperatures. Conversely, wind and solar farms can be prone to operational challenges in extreme cold conditions – including shutdown.

Minnkota is taking action to ensure it is ready for the winter season and is doing everything possible to

protect its membership from challenges, including:

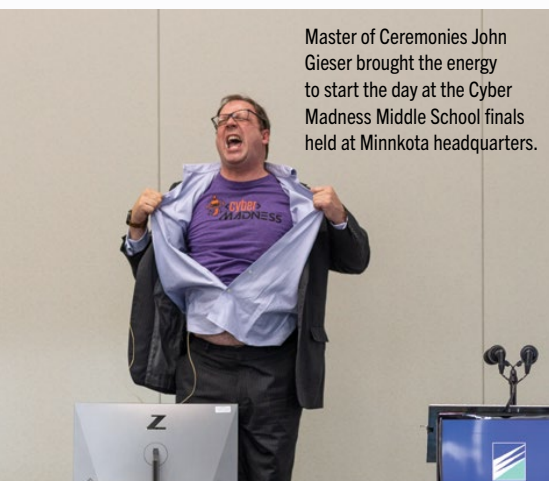
- Routine maintenance and weatherization of electric generation and transmission assets are conducted to ensure reliability.
- Minnkota continues to operate and maintain its coal-based resources, which have performed well in polar vortex events and during other weather-related challenges.
- Minnkota's robust off-peak program provides vital grid support during extreme events and helps shield the membership from high-cost energy purchases on the open market.
- Minnkota continues to advocate for a sensible energy transition that works toward environmental goals while still ensuring the reliability of the electric grid.
- Minnkota will continue to work with policymakers to help explain the impacts of legislation on the reliability and affordability of electricity.

By Ben Fladhammer / Photography Michael Hoeft



# Cyber Madness strikes at Minnkota headquarters

MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS PUT THEIR CYBER SKILLS TO THE TEST IN FIRST-EVER COMPETITION



Master of Ceremonies John Gieser brought the energy to start the day at the Cyber Madness Middle School finals held at Minnkota headquarters.

The excitement of Master of Ceremonies John Gieser radiated throughout the room as he ripped open his button-down shirt to reveal a 2022 Cyber Madness t-shirt underneath. Nearly 40 students carried that energy throughout the day during the first-ever North Dakota Cyber Madness Middle School Tournament finals in cybersecurity.

On Nov. 18, Minnkota hosted the six teams who represented the eastern region of the state while, simultaneously, Minot State University hosted the remaining five from the west via web conference. With an ever-increasing demand for cybersecurity professionals in all industries, the state-sponsored event is working to engage students at an earlier age with fun, interactive competitions. Cyber Madness provides an opportunity to use real-world security tools to help develop problem-solving skills and cyber abilities.

“K-12 is our next generation workforce in cyber,” said Chuck

Gardner of Cyber.org, an event partner. “They need to know cyber hygiene, and they need to be good cyber citizens first because cybersecurity is an issue of national security.”

The championship competition was conducted inside a safe, virtual environment known as a cyber-range. The students faced a series of tests to gain points for their teams under a Capture the Flag format, where challenges were selected from a board, similar to Jeopardy. As the students solved the problems, they learned many different aspects of cybersecurity.

“With the number of unfilled cybersecurity jobs continuing to grow at a rate of 350% over the past eight years, it’s important to get our younger generations excited about cybersecurity,” said Dan Inman, Minnkota Vice President and Chief Information Security Officer. “These young men and women will be the ones to protect our nation’s critical systems and help us keep the lights on.”

The team at the North Dakota Information Technology Department (NDIT) EduTech, who organized the event, work with teachers across the state on education and training courses in cybersecurity awareness.

Andrea Leier, coach for Napoleon Public School’s team Imperial Intellect, said her team of four eighth-graders were especially thrilled to be a

part of the competition.

“During the preliminary round, it was announced that our team didn’t make it into the top five,” Leier said. “When I reached out about the results, it turned out that we had been placed in the wrong region and had actually tied for fifth place.”

“We were so pumped,” said Addyson Erbele, a team member on Imperial Intellect. “We’ve learned a lot of new skills especially since this isn’t part of our curriculum. We’ve learned how to decode, a lot of encryption stuff and finding hidden messages in pictures. A lot of interesting things I’ve never learned before.”

Leier hopes that experiences like Cyber Madness open the eyes of her students to the different careers available and encourages them to keep learning more about the cyber world. Cybersecurity is a necessity moving forward in the workforce, and Minnkota was honored to help the next generation develop their new skills.

By Emily Windjue / Photography Michael Hoeft



Addyson Erbele (left) and her team, Imperial Intellect, work to solve cyber problems during the competition.

## Newsbriefs

### Minnkota employees give big to local food pantry

Every year before the holidays, Minnkota employees open their hearts (and wallets) to help less-fortunate local families during their greatest time of need. 2022 was no different.

This year, the Grand Forks Minnkota Cares committee asked employees to help “Fill the Bucket,” hoping to gather enough nonperishable food donations to fill the bucket of a bucket truck. Over two weeks,

the bucket was filled three-quarters full with donations, and an additional \$465 was raised for a Minnkota Cares cash donation.

Minnkota employees delivered the food and cash donation to the Thompson Community Food Pantry the Friday before Thanksgiving. Food pantry representative Mary Mitchell said the donations would be used to create Thanksgiving food baskets for families in the rural ar-

eas of Thompson, Reynolds, Buxton and beyond.

With economic pain hitting our community’s families harder than ever this year, it’s important that Minnkota’s cooperative principle of Concern for Community shines brightly. Thank you to all of our generous employees for keeping the Minnkota tradition of holiday giving alive.



The Minnkota Cares committee displays a small portion of the many goods donated to the Fill the Bucket food drive.



Minnkota's Jen Regimbal (left) and Brandon Allen (middle) present Thompson Community Food Pantry's Mary Mitchell with Thanksgiving donations.

### Minnkota to host 35<sup>th</sup> annual electrical continuing education classes

Minnkota Power Cooperative and its partners will again provide an opportunity for area electricians to obtain credits for license renewal by attending one of the six continuing education classes being offered throughout eastern North Dakota and northwest Minnesota.

Instructor Tim Pull will be covering the 2023 National Electrical Code (NEC) changes and other important NEC rules. The seminars

are approved in Minnesota, North Dakota and South Dakota for eight hours of continuing education credit necessary for renewing electrical licenses.

The classes will be held in Fargo (Jan. 11 or 12), Bemidji (Jan. 19), Fergus Falls (Jan. 26) and Grand Forks (Feb. 1 or 2).

This marks the 35<sup>th</sup> year of the successful program, which is aimed at providing area trade allies with

the latest information on electrical code and practices. Taking the class on multiple days will not qualify for 16 code credits. The registration fee is \$80 for eight code credits. Registration can be done online at [www.minnkota.com](http://www.minnkota.com) and must be completed at least seven days prior to the seminar.





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