

M I N N K O T A

MESSENGER



SEPTEMBER - OCTOBER 2023



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Running a farm often takes an entire family. Receiving state-wide ag honors takes a little bit extra – and that's what Beltrami Electric Cooperative member Rachel Gray has brought to Little Timber Farms.

On the cover: Rachel Gray (center) tends her cattle with three other farm generations (left to right): her son Nick, her father Murl and her grandson Jackson.

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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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.

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When cooperatives work together, great things happen. Minnkota and its cooperative partner CoBank teamed up again this summer to make a meaningful impact in our region by matching donations to local charitable organizations.

MATRIARCH OF THE HERD

Beltrami Electric Cooperative member
Rachel Gray receives regional honors for
agricultural leadership

By Kaylee Cusack /// Photography Michael Hoeft

Rachel Gray could tell a thousand stories about growing up on the family farm near Blackduck, Minn. Her father Murl Nord, a Beltrami Electric Cooperative board member and lifelong farmer, could also tell a thousand such stories about Rachel's childhood. But the tale may sound different depending on the narrator.

"When Rachel was a kid, I fired her often," Nord ribbed.

"Thirteen times in one week," Gray laughed back across the kitchen table. "That's like twice a day."

Nord can't wisecrack much about his daughter's efforts these days. Gray and the rest of the kin supporting her enterprise, Little Timber Farms, were recently recognized as 2023 Beltrami County Farm Family of the Year. The University of Minnesota Extension-bestowed honor is given annually to families in each county to mark their above-and-beyond contributions to agriculture and local communities. Little Timber Farms more than fits the bill, with Gray distinctively breeding

and marketing a herd of more than 500 F1 baldy heifers while Nord and the rest of the crew assist and cover the care of the cropland.

What's more, Gray was one of five finalists for Farmfest Woman Farmer of the Year, a state-wide recognition of females who are giving their all to the ag industry. With a resume like that, her dad won't be firing her again anytime soon.

Gray is the fourth-generation owner of the farm established by her great-grandfather nearly a century ago. She's now the one setting the pace, and she's hoping farm leadership will continue in the two generations that follow her. Her son, Nick Grundmeier, works full time on the farm by her side, with her grandchildren Audrey (5) and Jackson (3) always close behind.

"I think the dynamic of working with three generations all at the same time is really a blessing, because all three of us have different perspectives," Gray said. "When you combine that, if you get through the occasional power struggles and we all work together, we do well."

Beltrami Electric Cooperative and Square Butte Electric Cooperative board director Murl Nord poses for a photo in the pasture with his daughter, Rachel Gray.

Back to her roots

Farm management wasn't always Gray's plan. She earned her education degree from Bemidji State University and started a teaching career in Red Lake, Minn. That path brought her back to her hometown of Blackduck for an additional 14 years, where she taught kindergarten and sixth grade, along with coaching the volleyball team. She loved it. But the farm was calling.

"What brought me back home was a passion for it. I had always wanted to be back here in some form or another," Gray said. She explained that in the early 2000s her husband, Al, decided to continue his mining career overseas.

Together, they concluded this was an opportunity for the farm girl to get back to her roots.

"That was the first decision, that I would come back here and just help my parents," Gray said. "My mom had cancer, terminal breast cancer, and my dad was needing more help. So, I came back and said, 'I'm here. Let me help.'"

In 2012, Nord sold the farm to his daughter. She and Al began to accumulate a large herd of beef cattle and created a unique development program for bred heifers. Business thrived as Rachel marketed top-quality cattle to ranchers nationwide, fostering close relationships with the people she bought from and sold to.

To this day, she keeps precise documentation on each and every cow – from origin notes to vaccine records to ultrasound results and even headshots – to ensure they will be a good fit for the rancher and region to which they are sold.

"What really interests me is how much dedication she has," Al said of his wife. "The business has gone from here to here," he said, signaling low to high with an outstretched hand, "and there are a lot of people who ask her, 'Holy crap, how do you follow all of this?' It's incredible."

Nord remained a full-time pillar of the farm after the transition, supporting his daughter at ev-

ery turn, sharing wisdom and advice, providing a shoulder to lean on. In 2020, the time came when she needed to return the favor.

"After my wife died, for my part, I was thankful for Rachel. She kept me working," Nord said. "I'm proud of her. It really is the only way the farm could have continued."

Laying the groundwork

Nord passed many traits to Gray – like farm smarts, stubbornness and a strong sense of family. They also share a clear commitment to community, evidenced in the fact that both were named Beltrami County Farm Family at the height of their respective careers.

Before being elected to the Beltrami Electric Cooperative board in 2009 (and now serving as secretary-treasurer of the Square Butte Electric Cooperative board), Nord spent decades on regional boards committed to agriculture. Those organizations included Land O' Lakes, Blackduck Co-op Creamery, Blackduck Co-op Ag Service and others. "Co-ops are just the way, I think, farmers and ag people should do business. It's the best system for them," he said.

Gray's background has pulled her community compass toward ag education. As she transitioned into farm ownership, she found herself searching online to learn more about being a woman in agriculture. She wanted to be a part of the discussion of how those on the outskirts



Rachel Gray's husband Al spends some quality fun time with grandson Jackson as the herd looks on.

could succeed in an often-challenging industry.

In her research, Gray remembered the Ag in the Classroom curriculum she used to teach in her kindergarten class. She reached out asking to get involved, and that connection springboarded into a series of opportunities. She now volunteers with CommonGround, a Minnesota-based organization of women farmers who educate urban and suburban mothers about food and farming. Gray is also heavily involved with the local Kelliher Cattle Company, a group of high school students that is actively running a small herd of cattle.

"They actually decided the best way to learn about agriculture and different things in high school – whether it's science, math, or other things – is to learn about it through owning cattle," Rachel said, beaming. "I help them with their marketing education, their economics class, we go to live auctions, etc. We help them with whatever they need."

Gray sees a bright future for the next generation of farmers and ranchers, and she and her family are doing their part to provide the environment for it. Much like an electric cooperative, conservation, soil quality and water quality are of utmost importance to Little Timber Farms. The farm is certified under the Minnesota Agricultural Water Quality Certification Program, and the family utilizes a managed rotational grazing process to ensure their cattle's pastureland is the best it can be.

"In doing those things, we can build a business that we can not only hand to our son, but to either one or both of our grandkids if they choose to do this. We want to be sustainable," Gray said. "We ask, 'What are we giving back to our community?' and 'Are we able to be profitable?', but more importantly, 'What are we doing for our environment here?' We're trying to be good stewards," she added, receiving a nod of affirmation from her father.

"The demographics are changing. Farmers don't look like the old guy in overalls with a pitchfork anymore. They still can, and that's fine, but it can look like this, too."

Rachel Gray, owner of Little Timber Farms

FASTER THAN FAST, QUICKER THAN QUICK

Minnkota's Ford F-150 Lightning is turning co-op employees, members into EV advocates

By **Emily Windjue** /// Photography **Michael Hoeft** and **Emily Windjue**

While listening to “Electric Boogie” from a power-themed playlist, Minnkota employees Jordan Bresnahan and Sadie Gilbraith cruised around Thompson, N.D., in the latest addition to Minnkota’s fleet of vehicles – an all-electric Ford F-150 Lightning.

“It drives so smooth,” said Bresnahan. “I really like it.”

Gilbraith agreed. “I just can’t believe that a truck could ever be this quiet and smooth.”

Over the summer, the Lightning has parked its way into the hearts of employees from Minnkota and the Joint System membership, as well as people across the region who are intrigued by the concept of driving electric. With its bright red color and quick acceleration, the truck has even earned the nickname “Lightning McQueen,” a nod to the Pixar movie “Cars.”

Through ride-and-drive events, parades and other educational efforts, Minnkota’s team has had McQueen out and active in the

community. The truck boasts 320 miles of range when fully charged and can go from 0 to 60 mph in about four seconds.

Minnkota programmer analyst Jacob Messner had the opportunity to take the Lightning to a car show and parade this summer in McVile, N.D.

“Everything was great,” said Messner. “There were lots of genuine interest and lots of questions. There were even a couple of people who didn’t even know this kind of truck

even existed. My grandpa, who grew up with a horse and buggy, thought it was pretty cool.”

Minnkota’s accounting duo Alex Mutch and Jacob Pladson also spent some time exploring all the features offered in the electric pickup truck. From the navigation tools to the impressive sports mode, the pair found that the speed and comfort offered by the F-150 Lightning was something they could seriously consider owning one day.

“I think I should get one of these,” said Pladson with a smirk.

Electric vehicles (EVs) are equipped with regenerative braking systems that capture the kinetic energy every time the EV brakes and convert it back into usable energy. Minnkota’s compliance team tested this notable feature when they made their way to the Twin Cities area for a conference in late July.

“We averaged about two miles per kilowatt hour with normal interstate driving but, in stop-and-go traffic, we were getting three miles per kilowatt hour, which is about 390 miles of range,” said Andy Fuhrman, compliance analyst. “This truck is awesome.”

Our members got the power

Minnkota employees aren’t the only ones getting behind the wheel. McQueen took a trip down to Detroit Lakes, Minn., in August to spend some time with Minnkota member Wild Rice Electric Cooperative at an



(Above) Emily Windjue (left), Minnkota communications specialist, helps educate members in the Detroit Lakes area about the benefits of driving electric with Wild Rice Electric’s Tom Houdek (center), director of member services and communications and Mike Wade (right), president and CEO.



(Right) Jordan Bresnahan (front) and Sadie Gilbraith (back) test drive McQueen during an employee EV event held in August.

EV education event. Attendees were able to test drive the electric pickup and a wide variety of other EVs.

“I think the big thing is that our membership is interested in all sorts of technology, but for them, they want to figure out if EVs are going to work in a rural space,” said Mike Wade, Wild Rice Electric Cooperative CEO. “Whatever the technology is, Wild Rice wants to participate in it to make sure we understand it so we can share it with our members who have an interest in it.”

With the growing interest in EVs, Minnkota and its members are committed to providing real-world expertise to end-use electric consumers in the region. That commitment started in

2018 with the cooperative’s first electric vehicle – a Chevy Bolt. At that point, there were few EVs in Minnkota’s service area and even fewer public charging options.

With leadership from Minnkota’s member cooperatives and the Northern Municipal Power Agency members, things have changed significantly in recent years. Several Level 2 and Level 3 public fast charging stations have been installed throughout eastern North Dakota and northwestern Minnesota by these utilities. Rebates of up to \$750 are provided for consumers who install Level 2 chargers in their garage on the off-peak program, while other incentives exist for public chargers and electric buses.



Fosston is a community packed with amenities for its residents and Cassie Heide, city administrator, is excited to see her community thrive with its new EV fast charging station.

Leading the charge

The newest addition to the public EV charging network arrived this summer in Fosston, Minn., thanks to support from the city's municipal utility and a statewide grant. City administrator and NMPA board member Cassie Heide helped lead the charge for the city's newest amenity.

"We are literally on the map now," Heide said. "Our residents who have been thinking about getting an electric vehicle can feel better about it and have somewhere to fast charge if they need it."

Fosston was the first recipient of the funds to get its fast charger

into service. Two other NMPA cities – Warroad and Halstad – also received grant funding. It's part of a long-term strategy to get charging infrastructure in all 12 NMPA communities, according to NMPA General Manager Jasper Schneider.

"The vision for NMPA is at some point all 12 of our cities will have public NMPA-branded EV chargers," Schneider said. "I think utilities have a leadership role to play in putting this equipment out there and saying we support this kind of infrastructure. But also, I think it sends a message to people in the community that EVs are supported."

For Heide, the new charger is sparking other ideas for how the city can electrify.

"As we are updating our fleet and our next city bus, we are definitely looking at EVs. We are a utility company. We should be leading the charge," Heide said.

Lightning McQueen spotted!

Parades, job sites, community events, oh my! These are just a few of the locations you may have seen our red-hot EV this summer!



Engineering technician John Zeck put McQueen to work while surveying a job site.



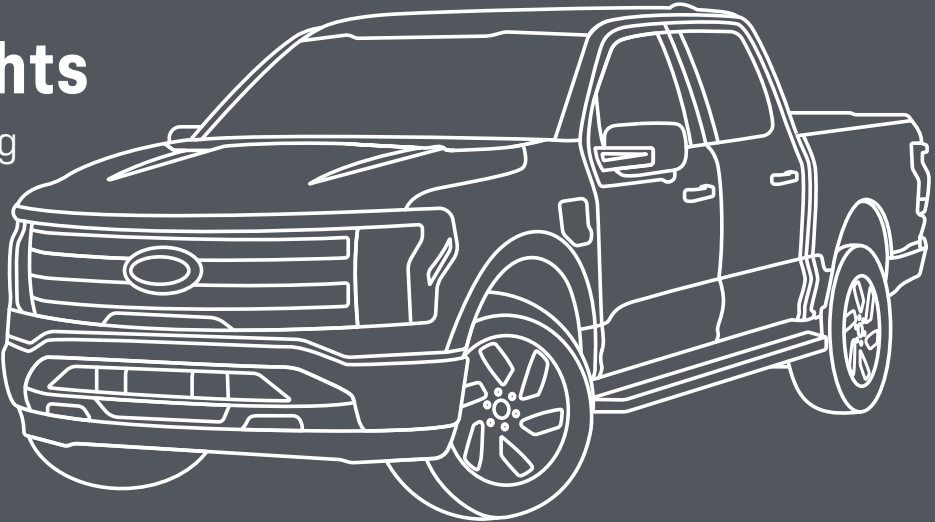
Brendan Kennelly, VP of Power Delivery, and his daughters took the EV for a cruise up to Park River for their Fourth of July parade.



Minnkota's compliance team tested out the storage frunk capabilities while visiting the Twin Cities.

Vehicle highlights

2022 Ford F-150 Lightning Lariat with extended range package

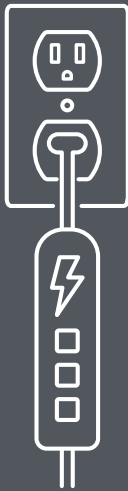


- **Range:** 240/320 miles per kilowatt hour
 - Standard range package/Extended range package
- **Max Power Towing:** 10,000 lbs. with extended range
- **Power Bumper-to-bumper:** 9.6 kW of power available with 11 convenient power outlets through the tailgate and power frunk
 - Includes a 240-kW outlet
- **Acceleration:** 0 to 60 miles per hour in about four seconds
- **Horsepower:** 580 horsepower with extended range package
- **Price:** Starting at \$69,995
- **Other key features include:**
 - Nearly instant torque
 - Additional 120-kW and 240-kW charging cables
 - 360-degree camera
 - Tailgate on-board scale

Getting charged up

Charging is one of the biggest questions on people's minds when they consider the idea of owning an EV. Thanks to the push for convenient public charging stations, EV owners have more options than ever when it comes to charging.

Level 1 charging: 120-volt charging

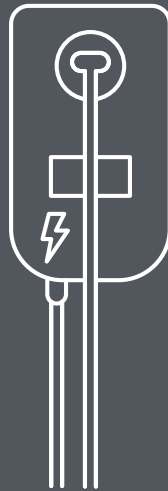


- Compatible with most outlets at your home or business
- Automakers include Level 1 chargers with EVs with no upfront cost
- Around 3-5 miles of range per hour of charging



Plug
Share

Level 2 charging: 240-volt charging



- Eligible for reduced off-peak electricity rate and other rebates when installed in your home
- Compatible with the same wattage used by household washing machine
- Around 25 miles of range per hour of charging



Value of
Electricity

Looking for where to charge? Check out [PlugShare.com](https://www.plugshare.com) or [ValueofElectricity.com](https://www.valueofelectricity.com) to see available charging options throughout the region.

Level 3 charging: DC Fast Charging



- Typically only found in public areas and more available in highly populated areas
- Requires utility involvement to install at high power and can be very expensive
- Can charge up to 80% in about 30 minutes

TWO MILLION REASONS TO CELEBRATE

Minnkota Safety manager attributes 2 million hours with no lost-time injuries to culture of openness

By Kaylee Cusack

In August 2023, Minnkota Power Cooperative employees at the Milton R. Young Station in Center, N.D., and the headquarters in Grand Forks, N.D., collectively realized a milestone never before recorded in the co-op’s 83-year history. Both locations reached 1 million work hours with no lost-time injuries – within two weeks of each other – creating a companywide tally of 2 million work hours.

The streak of safety began in August 2020 at the Young Station and January 2021 in Grand Forks. Since those dates, neither site had experienced an employee injury that resulted in five or more consecutive days away from work. Both locations have reached the “1 million” mark be-

fore (Grand Forks in 2016, Young Station in 2019), but those milestones were staggered in time.

“This is a new first for us,” said Minnkota Safety Manager Jason Uhler, who oversees Safety personnel at both Minnkota locations. He noted that several elements have helped lead to an incredible safety record, including investment in newer and safer tools and equipment, implementation of more safety programs and training, and the dedication of his staff to fostering good relationships and a culture of openness.

“My hat is off to the Safety team in Grand Forks and at the Young Station for facilitating that environment,” Uhler said. “But ulti-

mately, it’s the employees that have to be willing to bring concerns forward and be willing to learn. And they’ve done that.”

“I want to give hearty congratulations to every single employee in Center and Grand Forks. Two million work hours without a lost-time injury is a phenomenal feat, especially in an industry like ours,” said Minnkota President and CEO Mac McLennan. “We should all be proud of what has been accomplished with those 2 million hours of safe service to our members and their communities.”

Minnkota is an industry leader in workforce safety performance, maintaining incident rate statistics that are equal to or better than industry peers across the country. In addition to lost-time injuries, OSHA-recordable injuries (those that require treatment beyond first aid) have also remained low over the years.

For Minnkota, safety isn’t just about keeping statistics low or celebrating numerical achievements. It’s about caring for the others in the cooperative family.

“We want everyone to be asking themselves the right questions and looking out for each other,” Uhler said. “We know we’ll get a skinned knee here and there, but we want to make sure everybody is going home at day’s end. That truly is my number one goal.”

SAFETY AT MINNKOTA

1 MILLION HOURS

Minnkota miles driven without incident (2022)

1,483,394

worked without a lost-time injury

YOUNG STATION
2019 • 2023

GRAND FORKS
2016 • 2023

VOLUNTEER SAFETY TRAINING

Grand Forks
Emergency
Response Team

Young Station
Emergency
Rescue Team

Young Station
Fire Brigade

0.991

2022 EXPERIENCE MODIFICATION RATING (EMR)

Companies with an EMR lower than 1 have workers’ compensation claim costs lower than the industry average.

MINNKOTA’S SAFETY TEAM

SAFETY MANAGER



Jason Uhler

SAFETY PROGRAMS

- Minnkota 4 You safety recognitions
- Double Down safety inspections
- Regularly scheduled safety meetings
- Location-specific safety communication
- First-aid and CPR/AED safety training
- Defensive driving safety course
- Many more

YOUNG STATION



Troy Karlberg



Tim Krous

GRAND FORKS



Brandon Greene



Brandon Allen



LEADER OF THE COOPERATIVE FAMILY

North Star Electric Cooperative names co-op veteran Kevin Holen as new general manager

By Kaylee Cusack /// Photography Michael Hoeft

If you're going to ask Kevin Holen about his grandkids, prepare yourself for a proud grandpa moment. He'll likely pull up the latest photo of young Cody and Cole on his phone and tell you all about them.

Family is important to Holen. That's why, when North Star Electric Cooperative needed a new leader, he stepped up to become the co-op's latest general manager and CEO.

"I'm excited about it. I loved being able to become an employee at North Star, and I still have that enthusiasm. It's just been more of a family than anything," Holen said. "I'm proud to be part of North Star."

The North Star board of directors appointed Holen as the general manager at its July 5 board meeting. Holen had served as interim general manager for six months following the departure of Josh Compton, who took a CEO position at a Tennessee electric cooperative. Holen will also continue to serve as Member Service Manager for the foreseeable future.

Holen has spent his entire 28-year career at the cooperative. He grew up in Crookston, Minn., where he also attended the University of Minnesota Crookston. He worked as an apprentice electrician for contractors in the area before heading to Baudette, Minn., to join the North Star team, where he was hired as a journeyman electrician in the Member Service Department. He soon earned his master electrician license and was ultimately named the manager of Member Services.

"I think I've been to just about every member's home, most meters, throughout my time here," Holen said. "It shows you can work your way up from any point at the co-op. Everyone is very valuable at the co-op. You try to mentor the younger ones that are coming up and pre-

pare them. I'm a firm believer in cross-training and preparing the next generation, making sure they're ready to take the lead. Because we're all getting older," he added with a grin.

Over nearly three decades at North Star, Holen has served under four different general managers, each with their own unique style of leadership. He says he has learned something from all of them and will use that blended experience of management tactics and core values to benefit both the employees and the members of the co-op.

Holen is also grateful for the guidance of a board of directors that is focused on safety and is engaged in the latest transitions of the utility industry, especially in terms of new technology and energy policy.

"One of the biggest things we're focused on is the reliability of our grid. I've expressed to the board, and they've expressed to me, that we want to be transparent with the members and keep them informed on what's going on, and why it's going on," Holen explained. "It matters to have a unified voice to address these reliability issues. Our base-load generation is important – it's vital for us to sustain the lights being on."

North Star is maintaining momentum on several projects to enhance service, communication and accessibility for its members. The co-op recently rolled

out an interactive outage map on its website to keep the territory updated during storms and other power events, as well as a new way to report outages through the SmartHub app. They've also begun to sell generator transfer switches and portable generators to give members extra peace of mind, and co-op representatives are available to help to set them up safely.

On top of that, Holen intends to convert more of North Star's power lines from overhead to underground lines where it's feasible, protecting the lines from northern Minnesota's wind and ice. He understands power reliability is critical. He knows manageable family budgets are equally critical. "One thing that's always in the back of my mind as far as making any decisions, on purchases of equipment or changes in how we do things, is keeping the rates down and sustainable," he said.

North Star's new general manager is consistently putting family above ego – whether that's his grandsons, his wife and kids, or his cooperative family of colleagues and members.

"I'm optimistic about the future here. I want to put the members first, and I'll do my best to make that happen," Holen said. "At the end of the day, I want to do the co-op justice."

ROOTED IN COMMUNITY SUCCESS



(Left to right) BIO Girls CEO Missy Heilman accepts a Sharing Success matched donation from Stacey Dahl, Minnkota vice president of external affairs, and Brita Endrud, government affairs representative.



Minnkota employees, on behalf of Square Butte Electric Cooperative, present the Oliver County Fair Board with a \$20,000 donation during the fair's rodeo on Aug. 12.



Tim Sullivan, Farm Rescue executive director (center right), accepts a donation from Minnkota's Lowell Stave, vice president and COO (far left); Stacey Dahl, vice president of external affairs (center left); and Brita Endrud, government affairs representative (far right).



Minnkota CFO Kay Schraeder, who recently joined the board of directors at the CVIC, presents a Sharing Success donation to Coiya Tompkins Inman, CVIC president/CEO (left).

Minnkota and CoBank team up to distribute \$40,000 to local organizations in the region

By Emily Windjue

As an electric cooperative, Minnkota exists to support the communities it serves and improve the quality of life for people across the region. For more than a decade, Minnkota has partnered with its sister organization Square Butte Electric Cooperative to contribute to nonprofit and charitable entities in need through CoBank's Sharing Success program.

CoBank, a cooperative financial services provider, matched \$10,000 donations from Minnkota and Square Butte. Collectively, the organizations provided \$20,000 to the Oliver County Fair Board, \$10,000 to Farm Rescue, \$5,000 to BIO Girls and

\$5,000 to the Community Violence Intervention Center (CVIC).

"The Sharing Success program really encapsulates the message that we are invested in helping create strong communities," said Stacey Dahl, Minnkota's vice president of external affairs. "Minnkota and CoBank have a long-standing relationship and a lot of common interests in what drives our business, namely, the cooperative model."

Oliver County will be using the donation to complete a significant lighting upgrade at its fairgrounds. The Fair Board reached out in early 2023 about the idea for the project, which consisted of updating the main electrical panel, setting eight poles with fixtures around the grounds and moving all their electrical wires underground.

"Oliver County has been so good to Minnkota, and we want to find ways to give back. Here was a chance to support a lighting project and to help that event be a little brighter," Dahl said.

"We threw it out there and we did not expect that kind of donation at all from Minnkota on behalf of Square Butte Electric Cooperative," said Mikael Schmidt, president of the Oliver County Fair Board. "We are very grateful and very impressed. The donation took us roughly within \$7,000 of this project being completely paid for."

Rural farming communities are the backbone of Minnkota's membership. The cooperative is a longtime supporter of Farm

Rescue, which helps farmers and ranchers who have experienced a major illness, injury or natural disaster by providing the necessary equipment and volunteer workforce to plant, hay or harvest their crop.

"Eighty percent of what we do at Farm Rescue happens right here in North Dakota," said Tim Sullivan, Farm Rescue executive director. "The funds are used to support our volunteers in the field as they serve farm families in crisis. Funding will help cover the cost of food, lodging and fuel in the trucks for these good Samaritans as they support our assistance efforts throughout the area."

Minnkota is also a consistent advocate for the CVIC, which provides a holistic approach to serving adults and children experiencing domestic violence and sexual assault. Serving the Grand Forks community as well as several rural neighbors throughout Grand Forks, Polk and Nelson counties, the nonprofit delivers vital safety and healing services to individuals and families experiencing trauma and educates youth and professionals about how to prevent violence and develop healthy relationships.

"Generous private funds like this are the reason our agency can serve nearly 3,000 individuals experiencing domestic violence and sexual assault each year," said Coiya Tompkins Inman, CVIC president/CEO.

"This generosity makes it possible for us to serve clients in

emergency situations as well as those looking for healing and transitional services following some of the darkest moments in their lives. Companies like CoBank and Minnkota also help us educate students and professionals about how to prevent violence before it begins. With a bold vision to end interpersonal violence in two generations, CVIC truly appreciates these types of gifts because they have lasting impacts on future generations of children."

BIO Girls is an organization based in Fargo, N.D., that has been expanding across North Dakota as it celebrates its 10th anniversary in 2023. Its mission is to improve the self-esteem of adolescent girls through the empowerment of self and service to others.

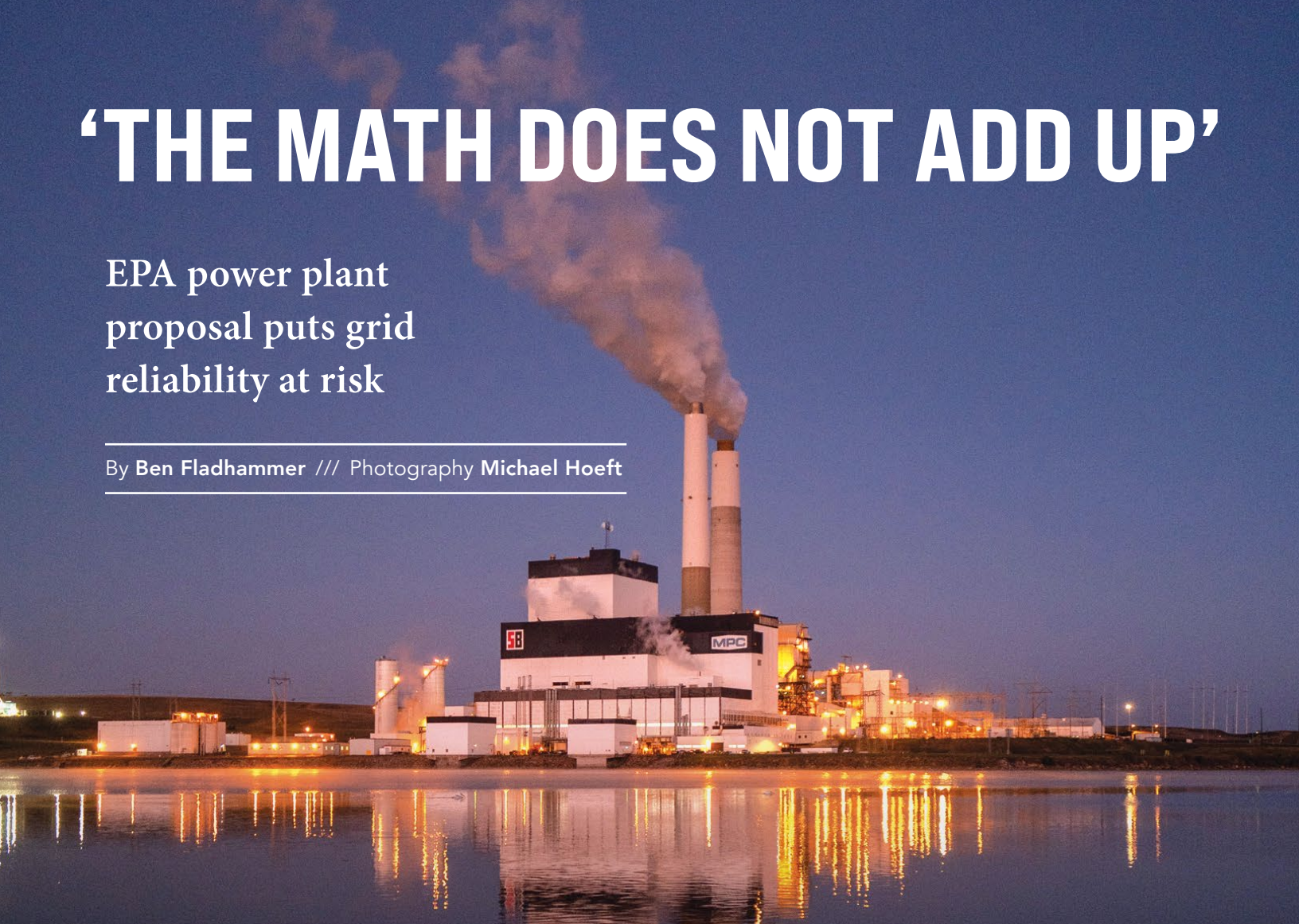
"These funds help us continue to grow and impact more girls specifically here in Grand Forks, where we have had a presence for over five years," said Missy Heilman, BIO Girls executive director and founder. "We really work to increase the impact in Grand Forks because we know when the volume of girls increases through our program, not only are we impacting those individual girls, but we are also making a community-level change."

Since its establishment in 2012, CoBank's Sharing Success program and its participants have donated over \$76 million to local organizations. To learn more about the Sharing Success program, visit [CoBank.com/citizenship](https://www.co.bank.com/citizenship).

'THE MATH DOES NOT ADD UP'

EPA power plant proposal puts grid reliability at risk

By Ben Fladhammer /// Photography Michael Hoeft



This summer, the Environmental Protection Agency rolled out new regulations for power plants that, if enacted as proposed, will accelerate grid reliability issues and threaten the affordability of electricity across the nation.

Minnkota Power Cooperative and its industry partners issued comments to EPA in August about the unworkable timelines and requirements in its most recent proposals to regulate greenhouse gas emissions from both coal and natural gas power plants. Utilities would be required to implement carbon capture and hydrogen technologies

that are promising but not yet commercially available, especially on an unreasonably expedited timeframe. This threatens to push more baseload and dispatchable plants offline in the next decade as the risk of electric grid instability and blackout issues continue to grow.



"Although Minnkota supports investment in carbon capture and storage (CCS) technology, the proposed rule overstates the technology's current and future capabilities as well as the timeline in which CCS can feasibly be deployed,"

said Shannon Mikula, Minnkota's environmental manager.

The rule requires that coal-based power plants be retrofitted with CCS technology by 2030 or consider various options leading to closure. Natural gas power plants are also required to install CCS, which has never been done on a gas plant before, or co-fire with low-carbon hydrogen, which currently has no reliable supply or transportation infrastructure. Some exceptions are available for peaking gas plants, which operate a limited number of hours each year.

EPA is expected to finalize its proposed power plant rule in the spring of 2024. It is anticipated that the final rule will be subject to significant litigation.

What about Project Tundra?

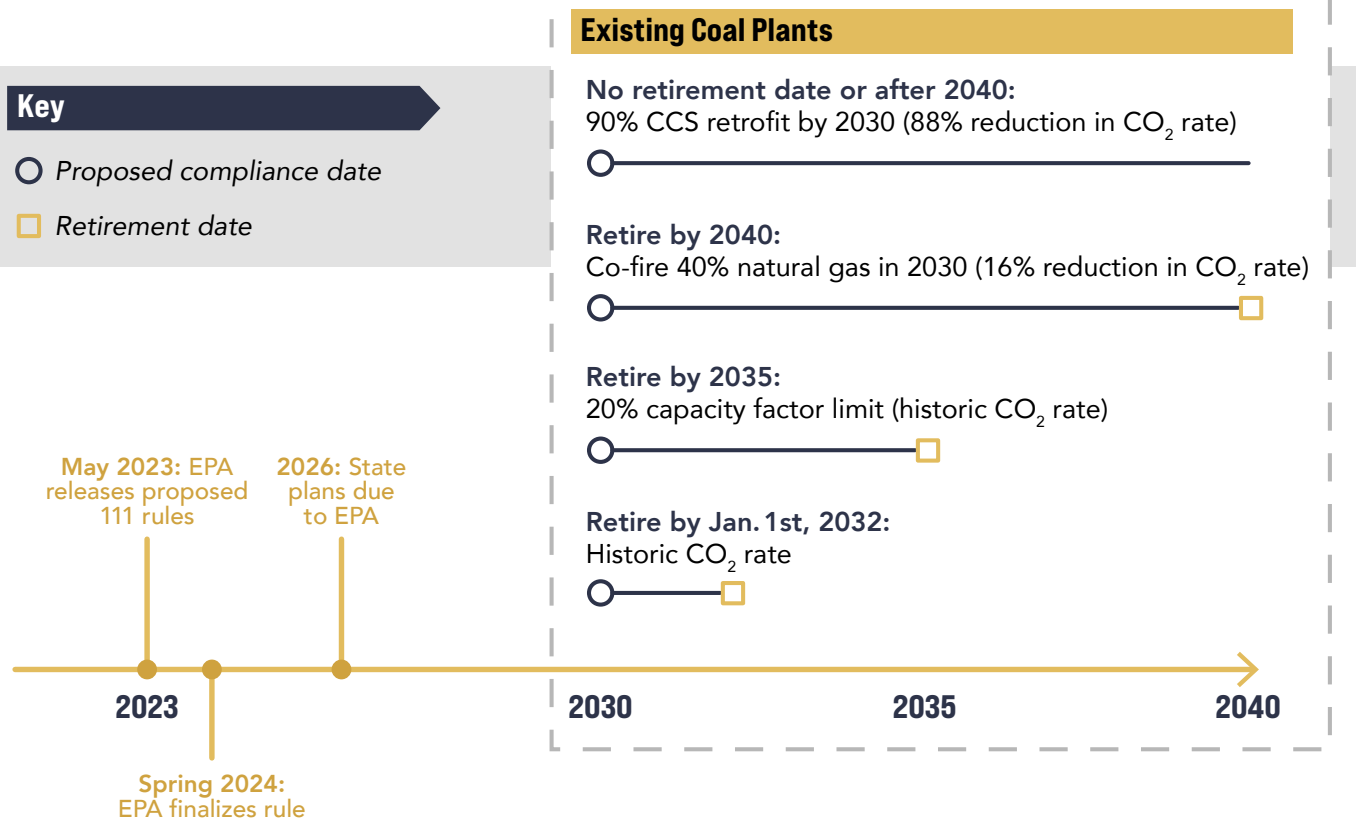
In 2015, the Obama Administration released the Clean Power Plan, the first-ever rule to regulate carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions from power plants. That rule was stayed by the U.S. Supreme Court and ultimately never implemented. The Trump Administration replaced the Clean Power Plan with the Affordable Clean Energy rule, which also faced litigation and was never implemented.

Minnkota has responded to these rulemakings by working to develop Project Tundra – one of the world's largest CCS projects at the coal-based Milton R. Young Station. During this time, Congress enhanced tax credits in 2018 and 2022 to incentivize CCS project development. Financing for the project is largely made possible through federal 45Q tax credits, which provide \$85 per ton of CO₂ that is permanently stored.

"Despite all the regulatory uncertainty, our board and staff have committed to the view that we are going to live in a carbon-managed world and

we'll need to develop technologies and strategies to help us navigate this challenge," said Mac McLennan, Minnkota president and CEO. "We want to be part of the solution, but there needs to be an understanding that America's electric grid can't be completely transformed overnight."

After nine years of development, Minnkota is nearing a final decision on Project Tundra in 2024. However, even Project Tundra would not meet full compliance with EPA's proposed requirements at both Young Station generating units.



"Project Tundra benefits from strong local, state and federal support, along with ideal geology for CO₂ storage directly beneath the power plant site," McLennan said. "Not every coal plant is equipped with these resources and it will be near impossible for another utility to start from scratch and develop its own unique CCS system on the timeline provided under this proposal."

Minnkota, grid operators express concern

Reliability has and always will be essential to Minnkota and its member cooperatives' mission. Regulators, lawmakers and grid operators have articulated rising fears of a reliability crisis, which will be further exacerbated by the EPA proposal. According to the North American Electric Reliability Corporation, the "disorderly" retirement of existing generating assets across the country, and insufficient replacement of that power capacity, is directly impacting reliability and increasing the risk of blackouts.

"The math does not add up," Mikula said. "Dispatchable generation is retiring faster than replacement resources are coming online. In the MISO region where Minnkota operates, the dearth of dispatchable resources is well-documented and places the entire region on a heightened capacity shortage alert."

MISO joined with the other major grid operators across the U.S. to issue public comments to EPA stating they "are concerned that the proposed rule could result in

material, adverse impacts to the reliability of the power grid."

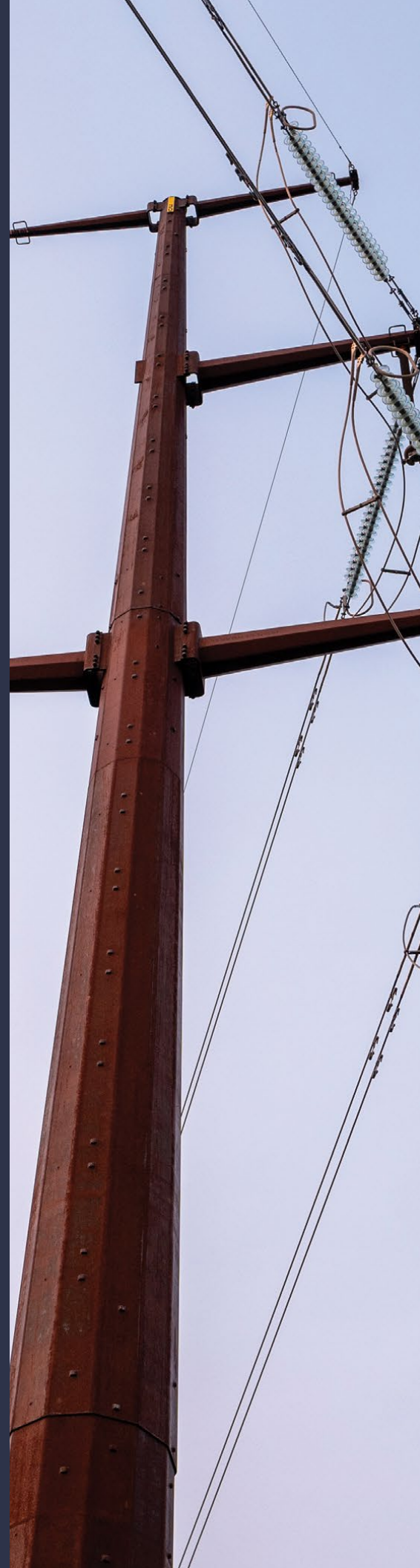
"If the technology and associated infrastructure fail to timely materialize, then the future supply of compliant generation — given forced retirements of non-compliant generation — would be far below what is needed to serve power demand, increasing the likelihood of significant power shortages," the grid operators said.

More regulations in process

Minnkota and its industry partners also issued comments in June on EPA's proposal to further regulate mercury and particulate matter emissions from power plants. While Minnkota has robust systems in place at the Young Station to significantly reduce these emissions, the rules would require additional cost for near unquantifiable benefits.

EPA is expected to issue its final rule in 2024. Again, the end result would be more reliable power plants being forced offline when America's electric grid needs them most.

"People use the phrase 'keeping the lights on,' but it's so much more than that," McLennan said. "It's keeping families warm in the winter, helping American businesses stay competitive, ensuring hospitals and essential resources are available at all times and protecting our national security. These are things that depend on a reliable electric grid and we should take that seriously."



MINNKOTA URGES FARMERS TO STAY SAFE THIS HARVEST SEASON

By Ben Fladhammer /// Photography Michael Hoeft

Fall harvest season is one of the busiest times of year in Minnkota Power Cooperative's service area. Although everyone is eager to get their farm work done before snow starts flying, Minnkota encourages farmers to take a moment to remind friends and neighbors to slow down and be aware of the electrical dangers surrounding the farm and field.

According to the National Ag Safety Database, an average of 62 farm workers are electrocuted every year. Even if you are not in harm's way yourself, your tractor or equipment could cause an inconvenient, dangerous or deadly situation for others.

Here are a few things to keep in mind as harvest hits full stride:

Today's larger equipment means more danger when driving around power lines. In the past few years, incidents with power poles and lines have risen in our local rural areas, as taller and wider machinery is integrated into farm fleets. If you have new equipment, don't assume you can follow your usual route to the field.

Remember the 10-foot clearance rule when moving large equipment like sprayers and planter arms that can tangle up in overhead lines. Keep a 360-degree minimum of 10 feet from power lines in all directions (above, below and to the sides), and have a spotter available to help get the right perspective.

Be mindful of line sag that happens as power lines age — a line you drove under last year may not have the clearance you need this year. If you believe a line is sagging low enough to affect the safety of your work, call your electric cooperative to find a solution to the problem. NEVER try to fix a line yourself.

Look out for guy wires when you are tilling or planting crops. They are the grounded wires that help to stabilize power poles. If they are broken, they can become extremely dangerous. If you're unsure if a guy wire is damaged, contact the cooperative right away to have an expert come examine it.

Don't forget the arc of electricity when working around overhead lines. Just coming

too close to a live power line can cause the electric energy to jump to any conductive material. It's not just metal objects like ladders and poles that can conduct electricity. Tree limbs, ropes and hay can become conductive in certain situations as well.

Keep your crew educated from the beginning of planting season to the end of harvest. It's easy to forget the dangers of the farm when the days are long and exhausting. Urge your family and employees to stay vigilant and to avoid taking risks with electricity.

If electric contact happens, call 911 immediately. It's critical that you do not leave your equipment or vehicle until help arrives and you are sure the line is de-energized. If you must leave because of a fire, jump off and away from your equipment, being sure to land with your feet together and touching. With your feet still touching and never leaving the ground, shuffle as far away as you can (at least three tractor lengths). Don't touch any machinery or people that have been in contact with electricity.



Minnkota celebrates new mine plan with Sen. Hoeven, BNI



Mac McLennan and Sen. John Hoeven look out over the Center Mine from inside BNI's dragline.

Minnkota and BNI Coal welcomed U.S. Sen. John Hoeven to the Center Mine on Aug. 23 to celebrate the approval of a new federal mine plan.

Hoeven's efforts to secure needed regulatory permits prevented \$35 million in unnecessary costs from being imposed on BNI, which is the coal provider for the Minnkota-operated Milton R. Young Station. Any increase in BNI's costs would have also impacted electricity prices for Minnkota's members.

"Securing approval for the operations under BNI's new coal

lease area is about ensuring access to affordable and reliable baseload power for homes and businesses that remains available 24/7, regardless of weather conditions. In particular, preventing these \$35 million in cost increases were key as we continue working to advance the coal-fired electric industry of the future through Project Tundra," Hoeven said. "We've put in place important tools, like 45Q and loan guarantees, to help coal-based projects get off the ground, and we continue working to make this technology a reality to promote U.S. energy security and

ensure a continued role for coal in our nation's energy mix."

Last year, Hoeven convened a meeting between Minnkota, BNI and Department of the Interior (DOI) officials to make the case for timely approvals of mine plans. The senator stressed the importance of preventing further energy price increases on American consumers and maintaining the affordability and reliability of the grid. The senator also secured a commitment from DOI Deputy Secretary Tommy Beaudreau to expedite the plan's review.

Without approval, BNI and Minnkota would have needed to make and implement costly contingency plans to move the dragline and develop other portions of the mine. Securing approval not only prevents increased electricity prices across the region, it supports the development of Project Tundra and the coal-based electric industry of the future.



Representatives from Minnkota and BNI joined Sen. Hoeven and his staff for a picture inside the dragline bucket.



(Left to right) Sen. Hoeven talks with Minnkota's Stacey Dahl and Brita Endrud in BNI's mining area.

MN PUC accepts Minnkota's Integrated Resource Plan

Minnkota's Integrated Resource Plan (IRP) was accepted by the state of Minnesota's Public Utilities Commission (PUC) on Aug. 24.

Jamie Overgaard, Minnkota's rates, load and planning manager, helped the effort in developing the 15-year plan, which is established to show that Minnkota's generation, transmission and demand response resources are adequate in meeting the cooperative's forecasted energy requirements.

"After many months of work on this IRP, we're pleased to have a positive outcome," Overgaard said. "Putting this plan together requires extensive collaboration from departments

across Minnkota. With the right resources in place, we are positioned to meet the needs of our members well into the future."

Minnkota staff met with the PUC in St. Paul to answer questions and discuss how Minnkota will maintain or improve electric service to consumers, maintain low electric rates and minimize environmental impacts and the risk of adverse effects from financial, social and technological influences.

The IRP process is advisory to Minnkota due to its cooperative status and member-owned governance model. Minnkota will submit its next IRP by Dec. 1, 2025.



Minnkota employees at the Milton R. Young Station had an opportunity to meet with U.S. Rep. Kelly Armstrong on Aug. 3. Armstrong provided an update on federal issues and discussed the important link between national security and

energy policy. Additionally, he expressed his strong support of North Dakota's lignite industry and the important work being done at the plant on Project Tundra. Following Armstrong's address, employees also had an opportunity to ask questions.

Minnkota supporting direct air capture feasibility study

The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) awarded \$12.5 million to the University of North Dakota Energy & Environmental Research Center (EERC) for the Prairie Compass Direct Air Capture (DAC) Hub. In the first phase of the project, the team will perform an initial engineering study on the potential to economically scale DAC technology in North Dakota while also studying the number of direct U.S. jobs and other economic opportunities that Prairie Compass DAC Hub would create.

Minnkota is supporting the initial feasibility work, which will focus on Minnkota's fully permitted CO₂ storage facility near Center, N.D., and the potential for the cooperative to provide support services to the project.

The Prairie Compass DAC Hub will utilize Climeworks' DAC technology. Climeworks is currently operating the world's largest and only commercial DAC plus storage (DAC+S) facility, "Orca," in Iceland. If successful in its first phase, the Prairie Compass DAC Hub would be eligible to apply for additional DOE funds to support DAC+S deployment to capture and store 1 million metric tons of CO₂ annually by 2030.

OUR SEVEN COOPERATIVE PRINCIPLES

October is National Cooperative Month and Minnkota is proud to provide power to the region! As a cooperative, we operate a little differently than other electric utilities. Since we are member-owned and operated, we are rooted in seven key cooperative principles that guide us in always putting our members' needs first.



Members' Economic Participation

Members invest fairly and control the cooperative's capital. Part of the capital remains the common property of the cooperative. Any surpluses are allocated by the members to serve goals like growth, reserve funds and approved ventures – and some even comes back to members in the form of capital credits!



Democratic Member Control

Members actively shape policies and choices for our cooperative. Directors are elected from within our membership and held accountable by our members. All members also have equal voting rights.



Cooperation Among Cooperatives

By cooperatives working together through local, national, regional and international structures, we can improve services, bolster local economies, and deal more effectively with social and community needs.



Education, Training and Information

Education empowers growth for the members, representatives and staff of Minnkota. Spreading cooperative awareness enhances understanding of the cooperative and the cooperative way to the community and beyond.



Open and Voluntary Membership

Membership is open to anyone who would reasonably use our services and embraces membership responsibilities, regardless of their background.



Concern for Community

As a cooperative, we are devoted to the sustainable development of our communities shaped by our member-supported policies.



Autonomy and Independence

Cooperatives are autonomous organizations controlled by their members! If the cooperative enters into an agreement with an organization or raises capital from an external source, it does so on terms that ensure democratic control for the membership.

Thank you to our member cooperatives for your trust and stewardship throughout Minnkota Power Cooperative's years of providing affordable, reliable and safe energy to the region.