



## Banding together for birds

# SPARKS

Red River Valley Co-op Power is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

Sparks (USPS 509-300) is published nine times a year – January, February/ March, April, May/June, July, August/ September, October, November and December – by the Red River Valley Cooperative Power Association, 109 2nd Ave. E, Halstad, MN 56548. Periodical postage paid at Halstad, MN 56548. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Sparks, Red River Valley Cooperative Power Association, P.O. Box 358, Halstad, MN 56548-0358.

Phone (218) 456-2139 or (800) 788-7784

[www.rrvcoop.com](http://www.rrvcoop.com)

Subscription rates: \$1/year

Rich Whitcomb, Editor

Mary Merrill, Graphic Artist

October 2019

Volume 63, No. 7

Halstad, Minnesota (USPS 509-300)

## OFFICERS & DIRECTORS

Roger Krostue ..... Fisher  
Chairman

Marvis Thompson ..... Perley  
Vice Chairman

Trevor Sorby ..... Glyndon  
Secretary-Treasurer

Bob Kinkade ..... Ada

Sarah Tommerdahl ..... Hendrum

Neil Wieser ..... Moorhead

Rich Whitcomb  
Chief Executive Officer

## Scheduled Board Meeting

Board meetings are held in Halstad at the cooperative office starting at 8:30 a.m. on the next-to-last Monday of each month.

**Outages: 800-788-7784**



**ATTENTION**  
**Dual Fuel Members**

Remember to check your backup propane or fuel oil tank levels periodically during the winter. It is important to always have adequate fuel reserves so your backup heating system runs during times when off-peak electric heating systems are being controlled. Off-peak members can see when they are being controlled by going to [www.rrvcoop.com](http://www.rrvcoop.com) and clicking on Off-Peak Status or by calling the cooperative at 800-788-7784.

## THE CEO'S REPORT



Rich Whitcomb  
CEO

# By the community, for the community

## October is National Co-op Month

When you think of October, harvest, Halloween and fall foliage naturally come to mind. But at your cooperative, October is notable for another reason – it's National Co-op Month! This is the time of year when cooperatives everywhere, including Red River Valley Co-op Power, reflect and celebrate who we are and the members we serve.

Cooperatives are different than other types of businesses. When the market declines to offer a product or service, or does so at a very high price, co-ops intervene to fill the need.

Similar to how your cooperative was built, beginning in 1938, by members who came together to bring electricity to our communities, cooperatives work together for the common good. Your electric co-op exists to provide safe, reliable and affordable energy to you.

As a co-op, we are well-suited to meet your needs because we are locally governed. Your board of directors live

locally on co-op lines. These board members have been elected to the position by neighbors like you.

We know our members have a valuable perspective. That's why we continually listen to your input to get a first-hand look at local priorities.

Another feature that sets our co-op apart is one of our core principles, "Concern for Community." We partner with and donate to local organizations like schools, 4H clubs, and community assistance programs. Many of our employees volunteer as well whether it be as a first responder or Meals on Wheels.

We hope you think of Red River Valley Co-op Power as more than your energy provider, but instead as a local not-for-profit business that supports the communities we serve.

We will continue to learn from our members because your electric co-op was built by the community, for the community.

## STATEMENT OF NONDISCRIMINATION

Red River Valley Cooperative Power Association, is a recipient of federal financial assistance from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA).

In accordance with Federal civil rights law and USDA civil rights regulations/policies, USDA, its Agencies, offices, and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, gender identity/expression, sexual orientation, disability, age, marital status, family/parental status, income derived from a public assistance program, political beliefs, or reprisal/retaliation for prior civil rights activity, in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA; not all bases apply to all programs; remedies and complaint filing deadlines vary by program or incident.

Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language) should contact the responsible Agency or USDA TARGET Center at 202-720-2600 (voice and TTY) or contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at 800-877-8339. Program information may be made available in languages other than English.

To file a program discrimination complaint, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form (AD-3027) found online at [http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint\\_filing\\_cust.html](http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_cust.html) and at any USDA office or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call 866-632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by: (1) mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; (2) fax: 202-690-7442; or (3) email: [program.intake@usda.gov](mailto:program.intake@usda.gov).

USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.



# Minnkota receives DOE grant for Project Tundra



**M**innkota Power Cooperative is ready to take the next step forward with Project Tundra thanks to grant funding provided by the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE).

Minnkota, Red River Valley Co-op Power's wholesale power provider, received \$9.8 million from the DOE, which then provided access to \$15 million from the state of North Dakota's Lignite Research Fund. The funding will be used to conduct a Front-End Engineering Design (FEED) study on Project Tundra's proposed carbon capture system at the Milton R. Young Station near Center, N.D.

"Project Tundra is a unique opportunity for North Dakota to lead the world in the advancement of carbon capture technologies," said Mac McLennan, Minnkota President & CEO. "This Department of Energy grant will assist us in completing advanced research and engineering design on the project – one of the final steps before deciding whether to move forward and begin construction."

The vision for Project Tundra is to equip Unit 2 at the coal-based Milton R. Young Station with technologies that will capture more than 90% of the CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. The CO<sub>2</sub> would then be permanently stored in a deep geologic formation more than a mile underground. The FEED study will support advanced design work, engineering and evaluation of project economics.

U.S. Sen. John Hoeven was instrumental in helping to prioritize the funding opportunity within the federal budget. Furthermore, Hoeven brought DOE leaders to Grand Forks on Aug. 20 to learn more about efforts in

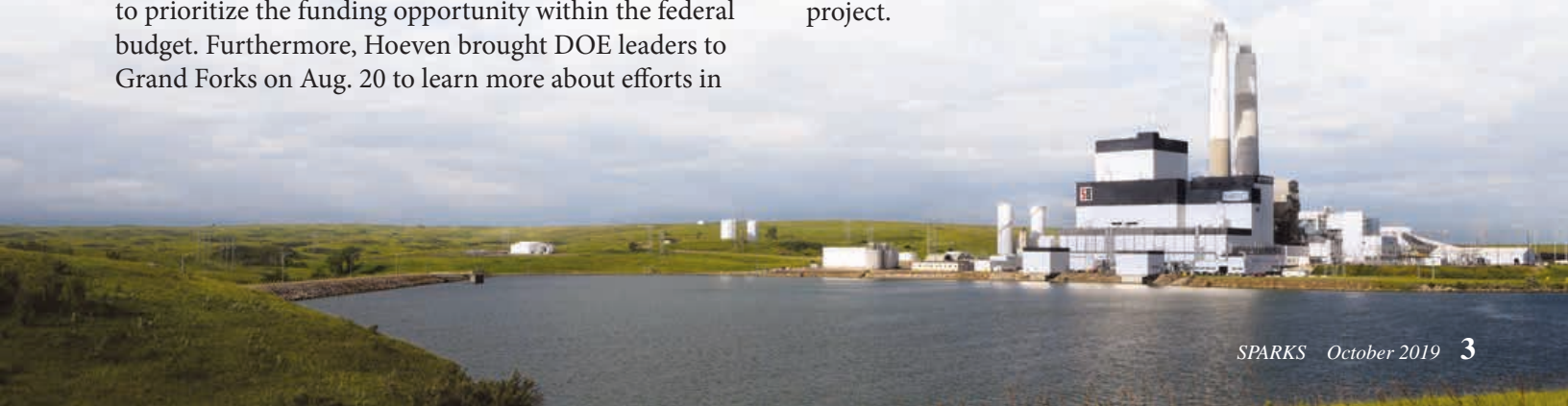
the state to advance carbon capture technology development.

"North Dakota is leading the way in developing carbon capture, utilization and storage (CCUS) technologies and these funds will help to advance these efforts, including enabling the completion Project Tundra's engineering and design study," Hoeven said. "Completion of this study will enable the implementation of the technology at the Milton R. Young Station, allowing more than 90% of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions to be captured from the station's Unit 2 generator. Developing and deploying this technology is a win both for consumers, who will continue to have access to affordable energy, and for environmental stewardship."

In addition to research on the CO<sub>2</sub> capture system, Minnkota is also conducting significant research on deep geologic storage of CO<sub>2</sub> near the Young Station. In September and October 2019, a geophysical survey will be completed near Center, N.D., to gather valuable information about rock layers in the deep subsurface. Minnkota engaged with landowners, local leaders and received state permits prior to beginning this research.

Project Tundra is estimated to cost \$1 billion. The project is currently seeking financial partners to help utilize existing 45Q federal tax credits, which are currently \$50 per ton of CO<sub>2</sub> that is captured and stored in a geologic formation deep underground.

Visit [ProjectTundraND.com](http://ProjectTundraND.com) to learn more about the project.



(Left to right) Minnkota electricians Mike Howard, Mike Vetsch and Jason Sather work to install distribution automation equipment at the Minto substation in eastern North Dakota.



# Making our grid smarter

DISTRIBUTION AUTOMATION PROJECT TO IMPROVE  
OUTAGE RESPONSE, COMMUNICATION WITH MEMBERS

**W**hen a power delivery system issue occurs in a rural part of Minnkota's service area, information can be scarce. (Minnkota is your co-op's wholesale and transmission power provider.)

Power system operators in the cooperative's Grand Forks control center are sometimes left to make an educated guess on the right crew and equipment to send out to the scene.

"It usually requires an exploratory trip either by the lineworker in the

area or one of our crews to say, oh, this is actually broken. Now let's go get what we need," said Jim Brower, technical maintenance superintendent.

Brower's crews are in the second year of a major effort to bring greater visibility to all corners of Minnkota's transmission and substation delivery system. As a part of the distribution automation program, technologies are being installed at distribution substations that will bring real-time

data into Minnkota's control center. Accurate information will help crews respond to outages and other issues more safely and efficiently.

"By receiving real-time data from the substations, we hope to more quickly respond to outages and other power quality issues," Brower said.

Three substations in Red River Valley Co-op Power's territory (Ada, Beltrami and Stockwood) are receiving the equipment this fall. The project should be complete by Nov. 1.

**“By receiving real-time data from the substations, we hope to more quickly respond to outages and other power quality issues.”**

– Jim Brower  
Minnkota technical maintenance superintendent



Jason Johnson, senior technician, completes telecommunications wiring work as part of the distribution automation project.

Advanced communication to Minnkota’s substation sites is made possible by adding a computer system, known in the industry as SCADA. This system will help gather and analyze data while also monitoring and controlling equipment processes remotely. All new substations have the technology in place.

### **Building connections**

The long-term focus of the distribution automation program is to have advanced communication equipment installed at all 212 of Minnkota’s distribution substations in eastern North Dakota and northwestern Minnesota. These substations are used to lower voltage so electricity can be safely delivered into local communities by the member cooperatives.

Communication is changing immensely with the installation of the new distribution automation equipment. Before the new technology, cooperatives would receive notice of an outage and investigate potential issues at the substation.

With the new technology, Minnkota knows when a substation is offline and is able to provide additional information to the member.

“We can actually tell our member cooperatives what’s going on,” Brower said. “At least they know the problem when their member-consumers start calling.”

With new distribution automation meters and regulators at several substations, Minnkota employees can now communicate with the regulator panels. If employees cannot connect to the regulator panel, they know to send technical maintenance personnel out to the site. If they can connect with the panel, they know it’s an electrical problem and construction and maintenance crews will then be sent out.

“If we have an issue, the alarm will come into the control center so we know right away, but we can also

make a maintenance connection on the devices and interrogate them from here in Grand Forks,” Brower said.

About 15 to 18 distribution substations are scheduled to receive the new equipment each year. Minnkota estimates investing about \$1 million annually into the program.

“The biggest part of it is getting SCADA visibility to all these load-serving substations,” Brower said. “The substations, the voltages, the current on each phase – all that data is available to them.”



The distribution automation project will help provide power system operations personnel like Mike Bedney with more information from the substations across Minnkota’s system.

# Banding together for birds



Ale Abeyta was clearly enjoying the moment on a foggy early October

morning as she cupped a black-capped chickadee in her hands, pausing for a moment before gently letting the bird fly away.

Abeyta, a freshman at Minnesota State University Moorhead (MSUM), was one of a couple dozen students gathered at MSUM's Regional Science Center east of Glyndon for a bird banding demonstration.

Put on by MSUM Professor Chris Merkord and North Dakota State University Professor Tim Greives, the annual bird banding demonstration was one way



NDSU Professor Tim Greives explains the banding process to students.

to introduce students to the beauty and wildlife of the area and maybe ignite a lifelong passion in a few along the way.

"Days like this are what students remember from college," Merkord said. "For some this is just a memorable experience, but for some it is a transformative experience (being up close to nature)."

The morning consisted of gently handling song birds, mostly chickadees and juncos, that had landed on vertical nets next to bird feeders. From there, the students measured, weighed, examined and banded the birds as part of a tracking program to learn more about their behaviors and habitat.

The multi-year banding demonstration also provides valuable data about how humans can be more effective in habitat restoration for song-birds and wildlife in general.

MSUM's Regional Science Center is unique in that it is adjacent to virgin prairie that has never seen a plow and the Science Center's 200 acres of grassland that is being restored to native prairie habitat.

Merkord, Greives and others are able to compare these adjacent areas for bird



A mix of MSUM and NDSU students learn to weigh, measure and band song birds as part of the demonstration.

diversity. They are happy to report that restored grasslands can support healthy and diverse bird populations as well.

"The data so far shows we can create good bird habitat," Merkord said, "so if we build it, the birds will come."

Red River Valley Co-op Power provides electricity to MSUM's Regional Science Center. The Center has about 400 acres of prairie and river forest habitat. The Center has hosted thousands of students over the years and offers a variety of educational and research opportunities. For more information, visit [www.mnstate.edu/science-center](http://www.mnstate.edu/science-center).

**UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE® (All Periodicals Publications Except Requester Publications)**

Statement of Ownership, Management, and Circulation

Publication Title: **SPARKS**

Issue Frequency: **Nine Times Year**

Publication Number: **509-300**

Issue Date: **10/1/19**

Number of Issues Published Annually: **9**

Annual Subscription Price: **\$4**

Complete Mailing Address of Known Office of Publication (Not printer): **PO Box 358 109 2nd Ave E Halstad MN 56548-0348**

Complete Mailing Address of Headquarters or General Business Office of Publisher (Not printer): **PO Box 358 109 2nd Ave E Halstad MN 56548-0348**

Full Names and Complete Mailing Addresses of Publisher, Editor, and Managing Editor (Do not leave blank):  
 Publisher: **Rich Whitcomb**  
 Telephone (include area code): **218-456-2139**

Red River Valley Cooperative Power Association PO Box 358 Halstad MN 56548-0348

Rich Whitcomb PO Box 358 Halstad MN 56548-0348

Managing Editor (Name and complete mailing address):  
 Red River Valley Cooperative Power Association PO Box 358 Halstad MN 56548-0348

Owner (Do not leave blank. If the publication is owned by a corporation, give the name and address of the corporation immediately followed by the names and addresses of all individual owners. If owned by a partnership or other unincorporated firm, give its name and address as well as those of each individual owner. If the publication is published by a nonprofit organization, give its name and address.)  
 Red River Valley Cooperative Power Association PO Box 358 Halstad MN 56548-0348

Known Bondholders, Mortgagees, and Other Security Holders Owning or Holding 1 Percent or More of Total Amount of Bonds, Mortgages, or Other Securities. If none, check box:  None

Headquarters Office: **USDA Rural Utilities Services, 11400 Independence Ave SW Washington DC 20220**

National Rural Utilities Cooperative Finance Corporation: **2201 Cooperative Way Herndon VA 20170-4383**

COBANK: **5500 S Quebec St Greenwood Village CO 80111-1914**

Printed on Recycled Paper (Check one):  
 Yes (has been changed during preceding 12 months)  
 No (has not been changed during preceding 12 months)

13. Publication Title: **SPARKS**

14. Issue Date for Circulation Data Below: **August/September 2019**

| 15. Extent and Nature of Circulation   | Average No. Copies Each Issue During Preceding 12 Months | No. Copies of Single Issue Published Nearest to Filing Date |
|--|--|---|
| a. Total Number of Copies (Net press run)                                      | 3824   | 3907  |
| b. Paid Distribution (See instructions to Publishers #4 page 80)               | 2922   | 2984  |
| c. Total Paid Distribution (Sum of 15b (1), (2), (3), and (4))                 | 3739   | 3822  |
| d. Total Free or Nominal Rate Distribution (Sum of 15d (1), (2), (3), and (4)) | 75   | 75  |
| e. Total Free or Nominal Rate Distribution (Sum of 15d (1) and (2))            | 3814   | 3897  |
| f. Total Distribution (Sum of 15c and 15e)                                     | 3814   | 3897  |
| g. Copies not Distributed (See instructions to Publishers #4 page 80)          | 10   | 10  |
| h. Total (Sum of 15f and g)  | 3824   | 3907  |
| i. Payment Post (PSN divided by 100 times 100)                                 | 98   | 98  |

**UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE® (All Periodicals Publications Except Requester Publications)**

Statement of Ownership, Management, and Circulation

16. Electronic Copy Circulation

| 16. Electronic Copy Circulation  | Average No. Copies Each Issue During Preceding 12 Months | No. Copies of Issue Published Nearest to Filing Date |
|--|--|--|
| a. Paid Electronic Copies  |  |  |
| b. Total Paid Print Copies (Line 15c) + Paid Electronic Copies (Line 16a)  |  |  |
| c. Total Print Distribution (Line 15b) + Paid Electronic Copies (Line 16a) |  |  |
| d. Payment Post (Sum Paid + Electronic Copies) (PSN divided by 100 × 100)  |  |  |

17. Publication of Statement of Ownership

18. Signature and Title of Editor, Publisher, Business Manager, or Owner: **Rich Whitcomb**, Editor, 10/1/19

# Heating 4 Options

## TO CONSIDER WHEN PLANNING A NEW OR RETROFIT HEATING SYSTEM

### Stand-alone air source heat pump or mini-split heat pumps

Air source heat pumps (ducted or mini-splits) offer some of the highest efficiencies available for heating and cooling, offering homeowners both comfort and savings. Standard air source heat pumps are ducted and look like central air conditioners. Mini-split heat pumps are smaller, sleek and operate without ducting to provide zoned heating and cooling.



Great rebates **up to \$500 per ton** from your cooperative are also available due to the extreme efficiencies of the units. Heat pumps transfer heat instead of creating it and cold-climate models are available (ask your contractor for details).

### Air-source heat pump with modulating plenum heater and gas backup

Air-source heat pumps are very efficient systems that transfer heat instead of creating it. In the summer, they work exactly like a central air conditioner, but in the winter they provide very comfortable and efficient heat until the temperature drops below the set point. Then the modulating plenum heater kicks in and works with the heat pump for extra savings. When controlled, a gas furnace kicks in.



What's nice about air-source heat pumps is how they provide year-round benefits and either pair nicely with a propane or natural gas furnace or in a heat pump/modulating plenum/propane furnace combination on the off-peak rate. This gives members the freedom to choose fuel sources.

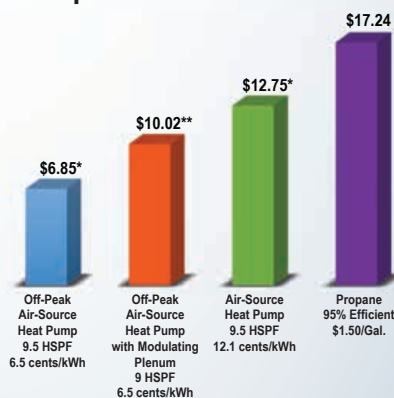
Plus, **great rebates up to \$500 per ton and \$30 per kW** are available that cover a large portion of an upgrade from a central AC to a heat pump.

### In-floor heat

A popular option for off-peak due to its comfort is in-floor heat. The key is to install the proper heat storage base with sand and slab or install a dual-fuel system. Complete perimeter insulation is necessary for both styles. A **\$30 per kW** rebate is available (to a cap amount).



Price difference in heating fuels per million Btus of heat



\* Outside temperatures fluctuate, affecting the heat pump's efficiency. Efficiency and price per million Btus is estimated at 47 degrees F. Need additional heat like plenum heater in winter.

\*\* Heat pump with modulating plenum assumes a coefficient of performance of 1.9 at 10 degrees F using information provided and reviewed by Electro Industries, Monticello, MN.

## COLD WEATHER DISCONNECT LAW

### Notice of Residential Customer Rights and Possible Assistance

The Cold Weather Law, Section 216B.097 of the Public Utilities Act, provides that a cooperative electric association must not disconnect the utility service of a residential customer during the period between Oct. 15 and April 15 if the disconnection affects the primary heat source for the residential unit when the following conditions are met:

- (1) Disconnection would occur during the period between Oct. 15 and April 15.
- (2) The household income of the customer is at or below 50% of the state median household income. Income may be verified on forms provided by the co-op or by the local energy assistance provider. A customer meets the income requirement if the customer receives energy assistance or other type of public assistance that uses an income eligibility threshold set at or below 50% of the state median household income.
- (3) A customer enters into and makes reasonably timely payments under a payment agreement that considers the financial resources of the household.
- (4) A customer receives from the co-op referrals to energy assistance, weatherization, conservation or other programs likely to reduce the customer's energy bills.

The purpose of this notice is to inform you of your rights and responsibilities under the Cold Weather Law. These rights and responsibilities are designed to help you meet winter utility bills. You must act promptly! If you choose not to assert your rights or choose not to enter into a mutually acceptable payment schedule, your service may be disconnected. Contact our office for provisions.

If you need help paying your electric utility bill, you may qualify for state or federal fuel assistance. For complete qualification and application information, contact your local county social service office or community/citizen's action council listed below. These organizations may also provide budget counseling.

### LOCAL ENERGY ASSISTANCE PROVIDERS

#### Community Family Service Center Tri-Valley Opportunity Council, Inc.

1407 Erskine Street  
Crookston, MN 56716  
(218) 281-9080  
(866) 264-3729

(All Norman & W. Polk Counties)

#### West Central MN Community Action

411 Industrial Park Blvd.  
Elbow Lake, MN 56531  
(800) 492-4805  
(Clay County Only)



**RED RIVER VALLEY  
CO-OP POWER**



**Win a pair of tickets to see UND play hockey,  
theater tickets and more!**

Red River is unique because it's member-owned. To celebrate Co-op Month, you have the chance to win one of five prizes.

1. **UND hockey tickets**
2. **\$40 energy credit**
3. **FM theater tickets**
4. **Minnesota State Park gift card**
5. **Pizza Ranch gift card**

**There are three ways to enter:**

1. In person at our office in Halstad.
2. Send a postcard or slip of paper with your name and meter number to: Red River Valley Co-op Power, PO Box 358, Halstad, MN 56548.
3. Email your name and account number, subject "Co-op Month," to [info@rrvcoop.com](mailto:info@rrvcoop.com).

All entries must be received by 4:30 p.m. on Thursday, Oct. 31.



*Buy a new electric water heater  
and get up to a \$450 rebate!*

| Gallon size   | Rebate |
|---|--------|
| 80-99 gal.  | \$150  |
| 100 gal.  | \$200  |
| Additional rebate for new construction                                | \$100  |
| Additional rebate for conversion from existing natural gas or propane | \$250  |

**Plus!**

*Receive an additional \$150 through  
PowerSavers!*

*(80-gal. minimum, must be on load control.)*

**Rebate Requirements for 80-Gallon or Greater:**

- Must be a new electric water heater installed on Red River Valley Co-op Power's system
- Must be on load control/off-peak
- Must be 240 volts, hard-wired
- Tankless water heaters do not qualify
- Hybrid heat pump water heaters do not qualify
- Multifamily dwellings do not qualify for rebate. Exceptions on a case-by-case basis
- Rebate limit of \$500 per member account

**We sell 85 & 105-gallon  
Marathon water heaters!**  
Call for pricing and details.

**218-456-2139 or 1-800-788-7784**  
[www.rrvcoop.com](http://www.rrvcoop.com)