



# POWER CONNECTION

member driven. community focused. energy smart.

JUNE 2020

## 2020 ANNUAL MEETING GOES VIRTUAL

AS THE COOPERATIVE CONTINUES TO ADAPT TO COVID-19 GUIDELINES,  
THE 2020 ANNUAL MEETING WILL TAKE PLACE VIRTUALLY.

***Stearns Electric Association makes plans to provide virtual annual update in place of our 2020 Bifurcated Annual Meeting – business meeting portion. The Co-op will continue its tradition of providing a butter and cheese giveaway to members.***

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Stearns Electric Association has had to rearrange plans for our Annual Meeting in 2020. The Cooperative's Board of Directors voted to bifurcate its traditional Annual Meeting in March into two different meetings: election results and business meeting. The election results meeting took place on May 7 and the results of

the election were shared in the May Power Connection and are also available on our website.

### **BUSINESS MEETING UPDATE**

Due to the continued social distancing guidelines, set by state health officials, the Cooperative is once again adjusting its traditional business meeting. In an effort to ensure the health and safety of our members and employees during this unique time, the Cooperative will provide a virtual annual update for our members in place of our traditional in-person business meeting.

A pre-recorded video will be posted on our website, [www.stearnsselectric.org](http://www.stearnsselectric.org).

[www.stearnsselectric.org/annual-meeting](http://www.stearnsselectric.org/annual-meeting), in late June. Members will have the opportunity to view the video online and submit questions to Stearns Electric. Member questions, along with responses from Co-op employees and directors, will be posted on our website for review throughout the month of July.

As there will be no action taken during the business meeting portion of the Annual Meeting, the virtual update is in accordance with the Cooperative's Bylaws.

***Continued on page 4 with door prize and giveaway information.***

## CEO'S MESSAGE



# CHANGES TO OUR WHOLESALE POWER SUPPLY

***In early May, Stearns Electric Association's power supplier, Great River Energy, announced plans to transform its power supply portfolio over the next few years.***

.....

The generation and transmission electric cooperative plans to phase out its remaining coal resources, add significant renewable energy and test grid-scale battery technology. The changes will benefit all of Great River Energy's 28 member-owners, including Stearns Electric, in the coming years.

### SIGNIFICANT ADJUSTMENTS

This announcement is one of the most significant in Great River Energy's history. Great River Energy's three-part approach aims to:

- Keep wholesale power reliable and affordable for its 28 member-owners
- Continue working to reduce carbon dioxide emissions
- Add cleaner electricity resources to its power supply portfolio

The actions that Great River Energy intends to take in upcoming years are:

- Retire the 1,150-megawatt (MW) Coal Creek Station in the second half of 2022
- Add 1,100 MW of wind energy purchases by the end of 2023
- Modify the 99-MW coal and natural gas-based Spiritwood Station power plant to be fueled by natural gas
- Install a 1-MW long-duration battery demonstration system
- Support the repowering of the Blue Flint biorefinery with natural gas

Great River Energy's CEO David Saggau explained in the official announcement: "We are building a power supply portfolio that will serve our member-owner cooperatives for decades. We are taking advantage of cost-competitive renewables and reliable access to market energy while fostering innovation as the technology of our industry evolves."

In recent years, Great River Energy has been working to improve the economic efficiencies of its power supply portfolio. Previous improvements came from exiting a contract for output of a Wisconsin-based coal plant in 2015, retiring the coal-based Stanton Station in 2017 and closing the waste-to-energy Elk River Resource Recovery project in 2019.

### COAL CREEK

Coal Creek Station began operations in 1979 in Underwood, North Dakota and has been a critical part of Great River Energy's power supply portfolio for decades. According to the news release, GRE plans to shut down both units of Coal Creek Station during the second half of 2022 as the coal plant has lost value compared to other alternatives in recent years. Great River Energy is willing to consider opportunities to sell the plant.

"Like all of Great River Energy's decisions, these changes are made in the best interests of our member-owner cooperatives," Saggau said. "Coal Creek Station is operated efficiently, safely and with pride by a dedicated and talented staff. We will make every effort to minimize impacts on our employees and the communities through this transition."

Great River Energy plans to make voluntary annual payments of the local government share of the plant's taxes for five years after the plant's closure in order to assist local communities during the transition.

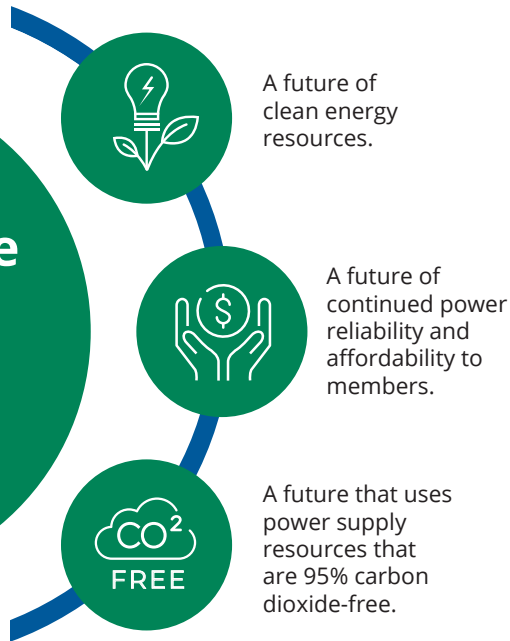
### WIND ENERGY

Great River Energy also implemented an agreement to purchase the output of several wind



*Great River Energy will retire Coal Creek Station in 2022.*

# Significant changes make for a bright future for Great River Energy.



energy projects in the coming years. GRE projects its renewable capacity to grow from approximately 660 MW in 2020 to more than 1,760 MW by the end of 2023. In addition to adding more clean energy to its power supply portfolio, the changes will reduce overall member-owner power supply costs.

Additionally, Great River Energy's power supply resources will be more than 95% carbon dioxide-free, virtually eliminating carbon risk.

### BATTERY STORAGE

According to its news release, Great River Energy is working with Form Energy, a battery storage technology developer based in Somerville, Massachusetts, on a first-of-its-kind demonstration of unique, long-duration storage technology. The battery project will be a 1-MW, grid-connected storage system capable of delivering its rated power continuously for 150 hours - far longer than the four-hour usage period common among lithium ion batteries. Long-duration storage will help maintain grid reliability in the future during extreme conditions, such as a heat wave or polar vortex. The battery system will be located in Cambridge, Minnesota, and completed in late 2023.

These changes have been carefully considered by the Great River Energy board of directors and are made in the best interests of Great River Energy's member-owners, including Stearns Electric.

Stearns Electric is proud to be a part of the Great River Energy family of electrical distribution cooperatives. Great River Energy and Stearns Electric will continue to work hard to provide you safe, reliable, affordable and environmentally friendly electricity.

Take care and be safe.

*Sincerely,*

**Robin C. Doege**  
Chief Executive Officer (CEO)

The regular meeting of the Board of Directors of Stearns Electric Association was held on April 23, 2020 at 1:00 p.m. via audio/video conference call due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Ms. Vicky Herkenhoff, Ms. Darla Honkomp, and Ms. Cindy Anderson presented information to the directors on the potential financial impacts to the Cooperative as a result of COVID-19. Manager of Member Services, Darla Honkomp shared how the Cooperative is working with its membership to manage the risk that could be associated with member's inability to pay their electric bills.

Manager of Finance, Cindy Anderson reviewed the March 2020 financial and statistical information with the Board.

CEO Robin Doege reported on extensive communication with the Minnesota Rural Electric Association from both a pandemic planning and legislative issues perspective.

A significant amount of time has been spent on understanding and implementing the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA) and how it helps employees affected by COVID-19.

The Engineering department reported that members and contractors are moving forward with construction and planning work in the 2020 building season.

Manager of Operations, Glenn Blommel reviewed progress on the first cycle of the right-of-way clearing plan. Several graphs and maps outlined planned and completed units, miles of line and the number of feeders covered by the work for each year. Overall, the work has resulted in fewer tree service orders and related outages.

As a result of the cancellation of the MREA annual meeting in March, voting information related to proposed revisions to ongoing resolutions, 2020 bylaw proposals and membership dues were reviewed by CEO Doege for the directors. A consensus to vote in favor of the official ballot items was submitted by the Cooperative's delegate, Jerry Fries.

Attorney Scott Dymoke is continuing to prepare for the May 7th meeting to wrap up the Cooperative election. Questions regarding the election were answered by Mr. Dymoke.

**Next Board Meeting:**  
July 30, 2020



# ANNUAL MEETING UPDATE CONTINUED

## BUTTER AND CHEESE GIVEAWAY

We have all experienced many changes in 2020 and we understand that holding a virtual update is not ideal for our members. We hope we can add some happiness to this year by providing you with our traditional Annual Meeting giveaway of butter and cheese.

Members can drive up to either our Melrose or St. Joseph offices on Thursday, June 25 between 9 a.m. and 10 a.m. to pick up one pound of cheese and one pound of butter quarters (one of each per vehicle). Quantities will be limited to 200 at each office and will be available to members on a first come, first served basis.

## REGISTER FOR DOOR PRIZES

We are also giving away the chance to win one of 10 - \$100 door prizes for members on June 25. Simply fill out the information to the right and bring it with you to Stearns Electric when you pick up your butter and cheese.

If you cannot make it to pick up butter and cheese, you can still qualify for your chance at winning a door prize by filling out our online form, available to all members on June 25 ONLY on our website homepage, [www.stearnselectric.org](http://www.stearnselectric.org). Door prize winners will be randomly selected on June 26.

## SAVE THE DATE!

Save the date for our Member Appreciation Donut Dash on Saturday, August 15.



## ANNUAL MEETING DOOR PRIZE FORM

First Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Last Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Account #: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_

State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Cell Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

## JOIN THE MEMBER ENGAGEMENT GROUP FOR A BEHIND THE SCENES LOOK AT YOUR COOPERATIVE

***Stearns Electric Association is currently seeking members to serve on the Cooperative's Member Engagement Group.***

The Member Engagement Group (MEG) serves two purposes. First, it gives you, our member-consumers, a chance to learn more about the Cooperative and our services. At each meeting it is our goal to provide new and valuable information about what is happening at the Cooperative and the ways in which we can serve you.



Second, this committee serves as a sounding board for the Cooperative. The MEG helps the Board of Directors and Cooperative staff gain ideas and proposals for new programs and helps evaluate existing services.

Serving on the committee is a two-year commitment for a total of 8 meetings. Meetings are typically held on the second Wednesday of September, November, February and May at 6:30 p.m. A light supper is provided.

In return for your participation, members on the committee receive a \$50 honorarium for each meeting attended, in addition to a mileage reimbursement. There are limited spots each year on this committee.

***If you are interested in joining, visit [www.stearnselectric.org](http://www.stearnselectric.org) and apply.***

*If you have questions you can call our office during business hours at (800) 962-0655 or email the Member Engagement Group Coordinator at [communications@stearnselectric.org](mailto:communications@stearnselectric.org).*



## YOU'RE INVITED TO A DONUT DASH!

Mark your calendars now and join us from 9-11 a.m. for our drive-through member appreciation event on Saturday, August 15, 2020 at the Freeport Community Center.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we have to modify our traditional Member Appreciation Pancake Feed in 2020. It was a very tough decision, but the health and safety of our members and our employees is most important. We know it's not ideal, but we hope you will still join us for our Donut Dash.

### WE WANT TO THANK YOU!

Every year, our member appreciation event is our chance to thank you and express our appreciation for your patronage throughout the year. We enjoy meeting our member-consumers who support us and play a role in directing the future of this Cooperative. Please join us on August 15 for our Donut Dash - this year's member appreciation event. We plan to return to our traditional Pancake Feed in 2021.

### DONUTS, MILK AND SCHOOL SUPPLIES

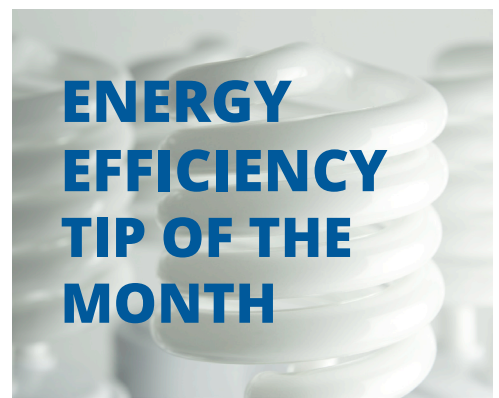
Although we can't gather together in the same space to enjoy pancakes like usual, we are still offering a drive-through treat for those who can attend.

Members who join us from 9-11 a.m. at the Freeport Community Center will receive a 6 pack of donuts from one of several local bakeries throughout our service territory, and milk from Stony Creek Dairy. (One six-pack of donuts per vehicle, please.)

Additionally, we will again offer a school supply giveaway for children between the ages of 2 and 18.\*

You can find complete details on our website. We hope to see you there!

*\*Children must be present at the event in order to receive a bag of supplies. Offer will be available while supplies last.*



## SAVE ENERGY WHILE USING YOUR A/C

*Home cooling makes up a large portion of your energy bill. Try to keep the difference between your thermostat setting and the outside temperature to a minimum. The smaller the difference, the more energy you will save.*



## ELECTRICITY AND WATER DON'T MIX

*Electricity travels very quickly through water and can lead to electrocution. Keep all electrical toys and appliances away from the water including pools, bathtubs, sprinkler systems, sinks, etc. In addition, make sure the electrical connections to your pools and hot tubs are fully grounded.*



LIKE US ON FACEBOOK

[www.facebook.com/stearnsselectric](https://www.facebook.com/stearnsselectric)



## MEMBER SUCCESS STORY

# WE PUMPED UP OUR REBATES SO YOU CAN SHRINK DOWN YOUR BILL.

Take advantage of hot promo rebates when you install a qualifying, energy-saving air source heat pump!

**Members can earn up to \$2,000 in rebates until June 30, 2020, when they install an air source heat pump (ASHP) with a heating seasonal performance factor (HSPF) rating of 9.0 or higher.**

ASHPs are an attractive option because they are capable of providing efficient cooling and heating for your home.

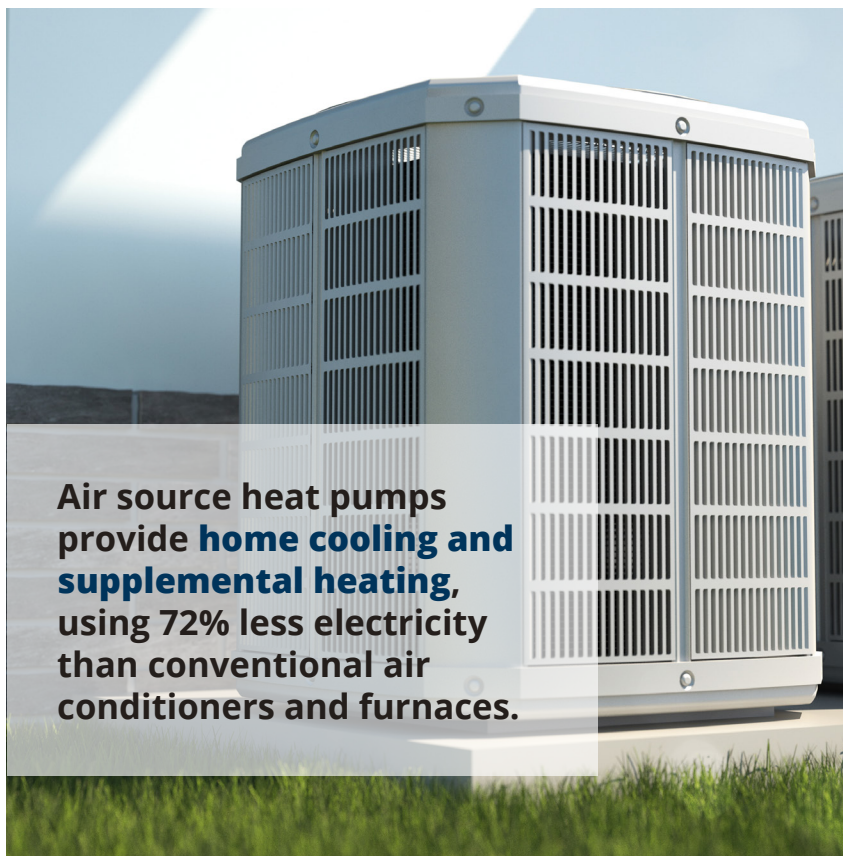
The nature of how a heat pump works makes it a more energy efficient, eco-friendly and budget friendly choice for heating and cooling your home. This is because a heat pump simply moves heat instead of creating it. The heat pump collects the heat that already exists and releases it where you desire, either inside or outside of your home depending on the season.

These systems can be installed as a ducted system (furnace-integrated forced air) using a ductwork for distribution or as a ductless system (mini-split) providing zoned comfort.

Visit [www.stearnselectric.org](http://www.stearnselectric.org) or call our Member Services department at (800) 962-0655 during regular business hours for more information.

ASHP	PROMO REBATE*
8.2 - 8.9 HSPF	\$1,000
≥ 9.0 HSPF	\$2,000
Ductless/Mini Split ≥ 9.0 HSPF	\$750

\* Rebate Qualifications and Requirements: Members must enroll on Stearns Electric's EnergyWise® Dual Fuel and Cycled Air Conditioning programs for the first time during the promotional period. Units must be checked out by December 31, 2020 to receive the rebate. Limited funds are available and awarded on a first-come, first-served basis.



**Air source heat pumps provide home cooling and supplemental heating, using 72% less electricity than conventional air conditioners and furnaces.**

*"We don't have duct work in our house, so we installed an air source heat pump this past summer for the air conditioning attributes. The ASHP eliminated the loud and energy draining window units we had in various rooms of our house - it's so quiet we often never know it's on."*

*It's very efficient as shown on our Stearns Electric bill, and provides evenly consistent temperature control with barely a whisper of sound. We mainly use the heat pump for summer cooling, but it's terrific in the winter at "taking the edge off" of a cold house if we arrive home outside of our normal programmed thermostat timing."*

*- Colleen Peters, Stearns Electric member*

## NEWS

### OFFICE CLOSED TO THE PUBLIC

In an effort to keep our employees and members healthy during the COVID-19 outbreak and continue to provide reliable electric service to our members, the Stearns Electric offices remain closed to the public. This includes both our Melrose Headquarters and St. Joseph Branch Office. Members can call our office at (800) 962-0655 with any questions or to report a power outage.

### OFFICE CLOSED FOR INDEPENDENCE DAY

Stearns Electric Association will be closed on Friday, July 3, 2020 in observance of Independence Day. Please call (800) 962-0655 in the event of an outage or emergency.

## EFFICIENCY IMPROVEMENTS

### SECURITY LIGHTING UPGRADES

Stearns Electric Association began a multi-year project in 2019 to upgrade approximately 4,400 security lights, street/highway lights and decorative lights connected to our distribution system. The project will upgrade existing high pressure sodium (HPS) lights to light-emitting diode (LED) lights. Before work begins in your area, members affected will be notified by a letter in the mail.

Upon completion, we anticipate the number of service calls to decrease by nearly 75% and the annual security/street light energy use to decrease by 66%. New LEDs offer a whiter, higher quality light and are expected to last four-times longer than the existing HPS lights.

Stearns Electric has contracted Skyline Utilities, LLC to perform the replacement of these fixtures in 2020. Skyline Utilities will make an attempt to notify you of the work to be performed once they arrive on your property. If you are not home at the time, the crew will leave a door knocker explaining the work that was completed.

While we strive to prevent interruptions to your electric service, you may experience a momentary interruption during the replacement. We thank you for your cooperation in helping us maintain our distribution system and will attempt to minimize any inconveniences. If you have any questions, please contact Stearns Electric directly at (800) 962-0655 and ask to speak with a Project Coordinator.



## COOKING CORNER

### BANANA BRAN MUFFINS

Submitted by: Kim Murphy Ellingboe  
Stearns Electric Member-Consumer

#### Ingredients:

2 cups flour  
¾ cup brown sugar  
1 Tbsp baking powder  
1 tsp cinnamon  
½ tsp salt  
1 cup milk  
½ cup oil  
1 egg  
1 ½ cups raisins  
bran cereal  
1 mashed banana

#### Directions:

Heat oven to 400 degrees. Line muffin tins with muffin cup liners. This recipe calls for 18 muffins. Combine flour, brown sugar, baking powder, cinnamon and salt in a bowl. Mix well. Stir in milk, oil, banana, and egg until moistened. Stir in cereal and fold in raisins. Spoon evenly into 18 muffin cups. Bake 18 to 22 minutes until golden brown. Take out of the oven, let cool and enjoy!

#### CONTEST DETAILS:

One member per account may submit one recipe per month. Recipes will be saved for future publications. The recipe selected each month will receive a \$10 credit on their electric bill. Submit recipes to [communications@stearnselectric.org](mailto:communications@stearnselectric.org) or mail to: Stearns Electric, Cooking Corner, PO BOX 816, St. Joseph, MN 56374.



## STEARNS ELECTRIC ASSOCIATION

900 Kraft Drive SE, PO Box 40  
Melrose, MN 56352

(800) 962-0655

[www.stearnselectric.org](http://www.stearnselectric.org)

**PERIODICALS  
POSTAGE PAID**

The Power Connection (USPS 016053) is published monthly (plus an Annual Report) by Stearns Electric Association, P.O. Box 40, Melrose, MN 56352, Subscription rate: \$4 annually. Stearns Electric Association is an equal opportunity employer.

Periodicals Postage Rate is at Melrose, MN, 56352 and additional mailing offices.

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

RANDY ROTHSTEIN

*President, District 4*

TONY AMPE

*Vice President, District 5*

STEVE NOTCH

*Secretary/Treasurer, District 6*

GREG BLAINE

*District 1*

ARLYN LAWRENZ

*District 2*

RJ DICK NATHE

*District 3*

LONNIE IVERSON

*District 7*

ERIC PETERSON

*District 8*

JERRY FRIES

*District 9*

### STAFF

ROBIN DOEGE

*Chief Executive Officer*

VICKY HERKENHOFF

*Vice President of Administration and Finance*

MATT O'SHEA

*Vice President of Engineering and Operations*

CINDY ANDERSON

*Manager of Finance*

GLENN BLOMMEL

*Manager of Operations*

DARLA HONKOMP

*Manager of Member Services*

JAMES PACHAN

*Manager of Engineering*

RYAN ZIERDEN

*Manager of IT*

### CONTRACT EDITOR

AMANDA GROETHE

*Fuller Creative*

WORK  
HERE  
LIVE  
HERE  
SERVE  
HERE



***Our employees don't just work here.  
They call our community home.***

*Stearns Electric Line Superintendent Jake Dooner makes our community a better place by serving as a baseball and football coach in Sartell. His love for sports and his children's involvement led to a perfect opportunity to teach the love of the game, hard work, and how to balance fun and competition. Having traveled early in his career, Jake knows what it's like to miss his kids' activities, so he takes extra pride in being there for the parents that can't. In addition to coaching, Jake also volunteers and fundraises often for the United Way of Central Minnesota.*