



JUNE
2023

member driven.
community focused.
energy smart.

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(800) 962-0655
WWW.STEARNSELECTRIC.ORG

VOLUME 23 | ISSUE 06

STACKS OF FUN!

JOIN US FOR OUR

MEMBER APPRECIATION PANCAKE FEED

SAVE THE DATE!

MEMBER APPRECIATION PANCAKE FEED
SATURDAY, AUGUST 5, 2023

8:00 - 11:30 A.M.

**FREEPORT COMMUNITY CENTER
FREE FOR COOPERATIVE MEMBERS**

Mark your calendars now and plan to join us for our annual Member Appreciation Pancake Feed for all you care to eat pancakes and sausage!

WE'RE SAYING THANK YOU!

Our annual member appreciation event is our chance to say thank you and express our appreciation for your patronage throughout the year. It is also an opportunity for those of us at the Co-op to meet member-consumers like you who support us and play a critical role in shaping and directing the future of this Cooperative.

BREAKFAST

Our local Kimball Lions Club will be serving up this delicious breakfast again for us this year. Milk, provided by Stony Creek Dairy, coffee, juice and water will also be available.

MEET LINEWORKERS

Don't miss your chance to meet a lineworker, learn about their tools and get your picture inside of a bucket truck! Our linemen will be at the event to show off some of the gear they wear to keep them safe while working on the power lines and answer your questions.

SCHOOL SUPPLIES

It's hard to think about it now, but August will bring with it back-to-school season. As you prepare your children to return to the classroom, we want to help. Each child between the ages of 2 and 18 who attends the Stearns Electric Pancake Feed will receive an age-appropriate bag of school supplies*.

Find more details on our website. We hope to see you there!

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

STEARNS ELECTRIC LAUNCHES NOVA POWER PORTAL

Are you thinking about installing solar panels? Have you considered having a backup battery system? These are just a few examples of distributed energy resources (DER) that may interconnect with Stearns Electric's distribution system. If you are considering installing a DER or having a vendor install one for you, you are required to notify and apply with Stearns Electric. Stearns Electric reviews these applications for potential system impacts, such as an undersized transformer, power quality concerns and system protection, among other items. These reviews help us keep the distribution system stable for our members and safe for our lineworkers.

To help make this application process easier, Stearns Electric has started using NOVA Power Portal. This online tool walks you through the necessary information to complete an application. NOVA also provides status updates, reminder emails and more.

NOVA POWER PORTAL:

www.novapowerportal.com/Home/Index/77

As you look at the Stearns Electric NOVA Power Portal page, there is a section called "Distributed Energy Resource Document Library." This section provides information about the application process, Stearns Electric's co-generation policy and rules, the co-generation rate schedule and additional



information about interconnecting a DER with Stearns Electric that may be useful to you.

A bit further down is the application queue. Here, every DER application will be listed in order of submission so you can see how many DERs are applying to interconnect with Stearns Electric.

For more information, visit www.stearnselectric.org > Save Money & Energy > Innovative Energy Use > Member Generation & More. You can also contact our Engineering department during regular business hours.

COOL OFF AND CRUISE!

WITH A \$25 REBATE FROM STEARNS ELECTRIC AND A CHANCE TO WIN AN ELECTRIC BIKE!

Get your AC Tuned Up and Ride Away on an Electric Bike!

From now through September 1, Cooperative members can receive a \$25 rebate when an air conditioning contractor performs a central air conditioning tune up. Plus you'll be entered into a drawing to win an Aventon Soltera Electric Road Bike.

Learn more and download our rebate form at
WWW.STEARNSELECTRIC.ORG



CEO MESSAGE

TRANSMISSION INFRASTRUCTURE NEEDED FOR LONG-TERM ELECTRIC RELIABILITY

At Stearns Electric Association, we take pride knowing our member-consumers have electricity over 99% of the time. Providing reliable energy to our members is just as important to us as it is to you. As Minnesota transitions to carbon-free and renewable energy sources, expanding and upgrading the transmission system is vital for maintaining the reliable energy we have all grown accustomed to.

There are three large-scale transmission projects currently being planned in and around Stearns Electric's service territory. Although these projects are not directly undertaken by Stearns Electric (Stearns Electric's distribution system operates at a much lower voltage than a transmission system), they are proposed by a combination of generation and transmission companies operating in Minnesota. These projects would significantly enhance electric reliability in our area and the entire state. Further information about each project can be found below.

ALEXANDRIA TO BIG OAKS

The proposed Alexandria to Big Oaks transmission project is a joint endeavor between several Minnesota energy companies. It includes stringing a second transmission line on existing transmission structures from Alexandria to near Becker. Many of you are likely familiar with the large transmission poles already in place along Interstate 94 throughout much of Stearns County. The existing transmission route travels from Alexandria to Freeport, then deviates south of the interstate on its way toward Becker. Most of the transmission poles are already in place, though approximately 60 poles need to be installed adjacent to existing poles to facilitate the second line. Landowners near the project's route have been notified and multiple open houses were held in April. After public review, and if approved by the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission (PUC), construction is planned to begin in late 2024. This project is managed by Xcel Energy. More information can be found at <https://alexandriatobigoaks.com>.

MINNESOTA ENERGY CONNECTION

Xcel Energy has also proposed a new double-circuit transmission line from near Becker to Lyon County in southwest Minnesota. The Minnesota Energy Connection transmission project has multiple route options currently being considered, including routes crossing the very southeast portion of Stearns Electric's service territory. The proposed transmission line will allow new renewable resources to be built in the wind-rich southern and southwest Minnesota regions and help carry that energy north to where it is needed. Xcel Energy will host open houses in June. A Route Permit application is expected to be filed with the Minnesota PUC in fall 2023. Additional information can be found at www.mnenergyconnection.com/.

NORTHLAND RELIABILITY PROJECT

The Northland Reliability Project is a 180-mile transmission line being developed jointly by Great River Energy (GRE), our wholesale power supplier, and Minnesota Power, an electric utility based in Duluth. It starts near Grand Rapids and ends near Becker. As generation resources shift from fossil fuels to renewable energy, the Northland Reliability Project is one part of the solution to maintain reliability. It will help to safely and reliably deliver clean energy from where it is produced to where it is needed. This project has already gone through stakeholder meetings and public open houses. GRE and Minnesota Power expect to file an application with the Minnesota PUC late this summer for a Certificate of Need and Route Permit. The Northland Reliability Project does not cross through Stearns Electric's service territory, but you can find additional information about it at www.northlandreliabilityproject.com/.

Continued on page 6.

BOARD MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

The regular meeting of the Board of Directors of Stearns Electric Association was called to order on April 27, 2023, at 1:00 p.m. at the St. Joseph office of Stearns Electric Association.

Highlights of the meeting include:

- Directors participated in a training and discussion regarding the rate adjustment, facilitated by Todd Stone, Senior Director of Rapp Strategies.
- Board members set the date of the next Annual Meeting as April 4, 2024 at the Melrose Area High School Auditorium.
- Comments made by member Scott Andreason at the March 30, 2023 Annual Meeting regarding the elimination of director term limits, which were passed in the 2020 Bylaw vote along with several other changes, were discussed. The Board decided no action was warranted, noting the dynamics of their decision to remove term limits in 2020 had not changed.
- The 2023 Integrity Contracting contract was approved.
- Directors signed Conflict of Interest Certification, and Disclosure Statement and Gift Statement forms.
- A resolution authorizing the CEO and Manager of Finance to obtain credit cards was reviewed and approved.
- A Letter of Conditions for a rural economic development loan for a member business was reviewed and signed.

NEXT BOARD MEETING
June 29, 2023



GOING GREEN: ELECTRIC LAWN MOWER DELIVERED TO LYNX NATIONAL GOLF COURSE

STEARNS ELECTRIC ASSOCIATION, GREAT RIVER ENERGY AND MEAN GREEN ELECTRIC MOWERS PARTNER TO PROVIDE COMMERCIAL-GRADE ELECTRIC LAWN MOWER TO LOCAL GOLF COURSE.

Stearns Electric Association, in partnership with our wholesale power provider Great River Energy (GRE), leased a 74-inch electric lawn mower from Mean Green Electric Mowers to replace a diesel-powered machine at Lynx National Golf Course in Sauk Centre. The new electric mower will spend the summer in Central Minnesota, mowing daily.

"As electric vehicles and equipment become more popular, we are committed at Stearns Electric to learning more about the different options available to our member-consumers. Through this pilot project, we will track the weekly hours and energy used, charge time and user experience for this electric lawn mower at the Lynx National Golf Course," John Pantzke, business development and energy service supervisor at Stearns Electric, said. "This local, real-time data and end-user feedback will benefit us as we help other commercial and residential members with their electrification needs into the future. Additionally, we anticipate the data will benefit Mean Green Electric Mowers, too."

This pilot project is the first of its kind for a golf course through Mean Green Electric Mowers, which developed its electric lawn mowers over a decade ago. This model, however, is the first commercial-grade, electric, zero-turn mower that can last all day on a single charge. The battery is made of lithium and fixed to the machine. The EVO mower offers up to eight hours of continuous mowing time, a 74-inch mowing deck and speeds up to 13 miles per hour. Its horsepower is comparable to a 40-horsepower diesel motor.

"Mean Green is very excited about this opportunity to partner with Stearns Electric and Lynx National Golf Course," Mike Magolan, regional business development manager of Mean Green Electric Mowers explained. "As an organization, we are always looking to work together on projects like this – testing is

how we continue to grow, educate and better our products."

"When we first started the idea for this project with GRE, I anticipated having a harder time getting a golf course on board," Pantzke said. "But that was not the case."

"When John from Stearns Electric called us up about this pilot project, I said 'why not?'" recalled Tim Hinnenkamp, owner of Lynx National Golf Course. "We are excited to see if this machine truly can cut the grass on our different slopes and terrains while maintaining a charge all day. I am excited to try this all-electric mower for the summer and see how it impacts business."

"By rough calculations, using the electric mower for eight hours per day will save about five to six gallons of diesel fuel daily," Hinnenkamp continued. "Additionally, the electric lawn mower will allow us to use even less oil on the golf course. The less oil on the course, the better!"

"This project would not have been possible without several partners. We are excited that Great River Energy, Mean Green Electric Mowers and the Lynx National Golf Course joined us in this exciting pilot program," Pantzke concluded. "We look forward to seeing even more Mean Green machines throughout our service territory in the coming years."

Stearns Electric Association offers many programs and rebates for our commercial and industrial members to help save energy and money. We are happy to work with our member businesses on new, innovative energy solutions that they are exploring. For more information or to start a conversation on how we can help support you in your energy endeavors, please contact our Energy Service department at (800) 962-0655.

A YEAR OF SAVINGS WITH
INNOVATIVE ENERGY SOLUTIONS

DAIRY PLATE COOLERS

member since 2006

McANDREWS FARM

WHY DID YOU ADD THE PLATE COOLER TECHNOLOGY ON YOUR FARM?

I've always enjoyed keeping up with technology and tinkering. We had looked into a plate cooler for years, but we really made the move during the winter of 2019, when propane prices were high, to offset some of that additional cost.

WHAT HAS BEEN THE BIGGEST BENEFIT?

The cost savings are the biggest benefit as we are saving both in cooling the milk and heating the parlor floor without needing to use a boiler. Our general clean-up is easier now too, which leads to less animal slips and injuries.

ARE THERE ANY INCONVENIENCES?

The only inconvenience was the initial set-up and collaborating the plate coolers exactly how we wanted with the correct settings for temperatures and flows.

HOW MUCH DID YOU RECEIVE IN REBATES?

We received a \$700 rebate when we installed our plate coolers.

HOW MUCH MONEY HAVE YOU SAVED?

The cost savings of using less energy to cool the milk and heat the parlor floor, along with lowering the run time for the bulk tank compressors, has led to nearly \$4,200 in annual savings.

HOW MUCH ENERGY HAVE YOU SAVED?

Our farm milks about 400 cows twice a day taking 18 hours each day. Since adding the plate coolers to aid in the milk cooling process, we save approximately 66,454 kWh of energy each year because of the inverting temperature process.

ENERGY WISE 



"I'M ALWAYS LOOKING FOR MORE EFFICIENT WAYS TO OPERATE OUR FARM. ADDING THE PLATE COOLERS LOWERED COSTS OF HEATING THE PARLOR FLOOR AS WELL AS OPERATING THE BULK TANK AND HAS LED TO LESS MAINTENANCE. THE WATER NOW IS ABLE TO BE REUSED FOUR DIFFERENT TIMES BEFORE THE COWS GET IT." – MICHAEL McANDREWS, McANDREWS FARM

STEARNS ELECTRIC ENERGYWISE REBATE DAIRY PLATE COOLERS

The Agricultural Dairy Rebate is available to agricultural members who purchase and install a dairy plate cooler. Dairy plate coolers reduce milk temperature before sending it to the bulk tank. This saves energy by reducing the cooling load in the bulk tank. The milk is run through one side of the heat exchanger while cool well water passes through the other side and absorbs the heat from the fresh milk.

Rebate Requirements:

- Purchase or lease must be final before funds are issued.
- Member and vendors must submit itemized equipment invoices, rebate applications and manufacturer equipment specifications.
- The Cooperative reserves the right to conduct random inspections of installations.
- Rebates must be applied for within 12 months of invoice date.
- Project must comply with all program-specific rules and qualifications.
- The member is responsible for checking with the Cooperative to determine funding and availability to verify program parameters.

*The maximum rebate amount is limited to 25% of the equipment costs or \$10,000, whichever is less. Based on project type, there are caps for each rebate.

Stearns Electric offers residential, commercial, industrial and agricultural rebates for our member-consumers. By upgrading to more efficient equipment and enrolling in our EnergyWise programs, you will save money and energy every month. Contact Stearns Electric at (800) 962-0655 for more information.

CEO MESSAGE CONTINUED

These proposed transmission infrastructure projects will have great impact on Minnesota's energy reliability into the future. Though these projects are not managed by Stearns Electric, our members will benefit from them. As always, please reach out with questions you may have. Your Cooperative is dedicated to ensuring a reliable and sustainable energy future for all of our members.



Sincerely,

Matt O'Shea
Chief Executive Officer

LEARN MORE ABOUT THE CO-OP: JOIN THE MEMBER ENGAGEMENT GROUP

Stearns Electric is looking for members to serve on the Cooperative's Member Engagement Group (MEG). The MEG gives members a chance to learn more about the Cooperative and our services. The MEG also serves as a sounding board for the Cooperative, helping the Co-op board and staff gain ideas and proposals for new and existing programs.

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

In return for your participation, MEG members receive a \$50 honorarium for each meeting attended, plus mileage. There are limited spots available in each district. If you are interested in joining, visit www.stearnselectric.org to apply. If you have any questions, call our office during regular business hours at (800) 962-0655 or email the MEG Coordinator at communications@stearnselectric.org.



ELECTRIC SAFETY

Never ignite fireworks near power lines. Always maintain a safe distance of at least 100 feet from power lines. Choose a safe location, such as an open park or field, far away from power lines, substations or transformers. Unpredictable winds or malfunctions can cause fireworks to veer off course, leading to contact with power lines and potential electrical faults, fires or injuries.

MEMBER NEWS

OFFICES CLOSED 4TH OF JULY

Stearns Electric Association will be closed on Tuesday, July 4 in observance of Independence Day. If you experience a power outage or emergency during this time, please call us at (800) 962-0655 or report your outage via SmartHub. Crews are on call 24/7 and ready to respond to any emergency situation.

REBATES AVAILABLE FOR AIR SOURCE HEAT PUMPS (ASHPs)

Stearns Electric members can receive up to \$1,300 in rebates when they install a qualifying ASHP and enroll in our EnergyWise® Dual Fuel and Cycled Air Conditioning programs for the first time. Promotion ends June 30. Learn more at www.stearnselectric.org or call our Energy Services team at (800) 962-0655.



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NORTHERN CO-OP SCHOLARSHIPS

Every year, Stearns Electric Association partners with the Northern Cooperative Foundation to award scholarships to students in a four-state area. Recipients must be a member of a cooperative, enrolled full-time at an institution of higher learning and take courses in business or economics that study the principles of cooperatives.

This year, the Northern Cooperative Foundation awarded six \$1,000 scholarships to the following individuals in

Minnesota, including two who are members of Stearns Electric (notated in bold):

1. Simon Kroll, Royalton
2. Madelyn Hunt, South Haven
3. **Gavin Petermeier, Avon**
4. Jade Benning, Eagle Bend
5. **Katie Orth, Randall**
6. Hank Tellers, Sebeka

COOKING CORNER

SALTED PEANUT BARS

Submitted by: Betty Martin

INGREDIENTS

- 16 oz dry roasted peanuts
- 12 oz peanut butter chips
- 2 Tbsp butter
- 1 can sweetened condensed milk
- 10 oz bag miniature marshmallows

DIRECTIONS

Use a 9x13 inch pan. Place half of the dry roasted peanuts into the bottom of the pan. In a saucepan, melt peanut butter chips and butter together. Remove from heat and add sweetened condensed milk until well blended. Stir the marshmallows into the mixture. Place mixture on top of the peanuts in the pan. Top with the remaining peanuts and press down. Let cool and cut to serve. Enjoy!



SUBMIT YOUR FAVORITE RECIPE FOR A CHANCE TO WIN A \$10 BILL CREDIT

Members may submit one recipe per month by email at communications@stearnselectric.org or mail to: Stearns Electric Cooking Corner, PO Box 816, St. Joseph, MN 56374. The recipe selected each month for publication will receive a \$10 credit on their electric bill. Recipes not selected will be saved for consideration in future publications.



STEARNS ELECTRIC ASSOCIATION

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BE PREPARED

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DOWNLOAD SMARTHUB AND REGISTER TODAY!

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