



Northern Plains Electric Cooperative held three district meetings in February. In his address to the membership, General Manager Seth Syverson reported on an overview of 2019, including the cooperative financial conditions, activities and an update on wholesale power suppliers.

Financial

The cooperative had a moderate year for energy sales in 2019, with overall sales slightly down from what was budgeted. The cold weather in the beginning of 2019 and the wet fall late in the year resulted in an increase of energy sales for both electric heat and grain drying. However, the sales were offset with reduced energy in irrigation and large commercial accounts. Even though the cooperative experienced a slight decrease in sales, Northern Plains was able to meet its financial targets.

Looking forward into 2020, the cooperative has forecasted conservatively for energy sales and revenue based on recent energy and growth trends. Our wholesale power costs were able to remain stable, which helped Northern Plains hold electric rates steady for 2020.

Bylaws

The Northern Plains Electric Cooperative board has recommended changes to the cooperative's bylaws and a summary of proposed changes were presented to those in attendance. Fundamental changes were made to



Syverson

the procedure for director elections, in addition to changes allowing additional opportunities to notify members of

the cooperative regarding meeting notices or bylaw changes.

Director elections are now conducted at each of the three district meetings by the membership that are present. Proposed bylaw changes would move the election of directors to the

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annual meeting and allow members to vote by mail, in addition to voting in person. This change is to help further promote a key principle of cooperatives, by providing democratic participation of all members of the cooperative.

Another change to the bylaws would expand on the forms of communication with members. A proposal is being made to allow electronic communication of meeting notices, in addition to the written and print methods currently used.

All proposed changes to the cooperative's bylaws will require approval from the members at the upcoming annual meeting on April 16 in Pingree. Proposed changes to the bylaws will be provided to the membership prior to the meeting

Cooperative activities

2019 was another successful year for system improvements, which included over 40 miles of cable replacement and conversions of overhead line to underground. The cooperative also started a pole

inspection program to help further identify areas of improvement. System improvements and ongoing maintenance help deliver strong results in the cooperative's reliability, which we saw continued in 2019.

2020 improvements to the cooperative's distribution system will focus on areas of capacity needs and improving reliability but will also include improvements from our transmission and substation owner, Central Power Electric Cooperative. Starting in 2020 and over the next few years, Central Power will be rebuilding portions of its transmission facilities that are more susceptible to outages from ice loading and high winds. This is in addition to adding a new substation in the Jamestown service area.

Power supplier

Northern Plains' wholesale power supplier, Basin Electric Power Cooperative, strives to provide affordable and reliable energy, but while also acting as an

environmental steward. Basin's resource portfolio continues to become more diverse and investments in renewable resources are on the rise to meet the growing demands of a carbon-free environment. At the end of 2019, 23.4 percent of Basin's portfolio consisted of renewables, primarily from wind, and an additional 4.7 percent from hydro. There are commitments for additional wind generation in the upcoming years and Basin recently announced that it plans on purchasing solar generation for the first time, which is expected to be available by 2023.

Coal is an important part of the portfolio, at 42.8 percent of available generation capacity, and Basin continues to utilize emission-control technologies, while supporting research into carbon capture and sequestration solutions. We feel that it's important to have an "all-of-the-above" energy strategy to provide reliable electric service to the membership during periods that renewable generation may not be available. ■



Mark Your Calendar

NORTHERN PLAINS ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

annual meeting

5:30-6:30 p.m. - Registration & complimentary dinner

6:30-7:30 p.m. - Meeting

**April 16, 2020
Pingree High School
Pingree, ND**

- DOOR PRIZES!
 - FREE DINNER!
 - \$500 IN CASH DRAWINGS!
 - \$1,000 IN LUCK-OF-THE-DRAW SCHOLARSHIPS!
- High school seniors whom are a dependent of a Northern Plains Electric member are eligible for the scholarships. Students must attend the annual meeting to register.



See you at the annual meeting

Most of us lead busy lives. We find ourselves multitasking, constantly checking phones and email to keep up with the demands of modern life. Thanks to technology, we can accomplish many tasks electronically and remotely to be more efficient. And with so many pressing obligations, we like to protect our “spare” time. Invitations to attend in-person meetings and gatherings are weighed carefully, as we decide whether or not our time and effort to attend is beneficial. The answer to the question, “what’s in it for me?” must be compelling. You may think attending Northern Plains Electric Cooperative’s (NPEC) annual meeting would be easy to lump into the “no benefit to me” category. However, we would ask you to think again.

NPEC exists to provide safe, reliable and affordable energy to its consumer-members (that’s you!). Equally important is our mission to enrich the lives of all members and to serve the long-term interests of our local communities. This is where you can help.

As a member of the community, you have a perspective that is valuable – and we invite you to share it with the co-op. At the annual meeting, co-op leaders will discuss priorities and challenges, and discuss the financial health and priorities for the coming years. Items under consideration include changes to our bylaws.

NPEC is one of the few local organizations that is uniquely positioned to bring together all members of the community. It is worth noting that the health of the co-op and the well-being of the community are closely intertwined.

Perhaps you may feel that you have nothing to add to the discussion, so there is no need to attend the annual meeting. However, every energy bill you pay to the co-op helps ensure better service and reliability for the whole community. Your dollars are reinvested locally into improvements that impact the reliability and affordability of your energy, and NPEC wants to hear from you to better inform our decisions as we plan for the future.

While NPEC provides convenient electronic options for bill paying and communication, there are times when there is no substitute for in-person engagement. When members of our community come together for a common purpose, we improve the quality of life for all in our corner of the world.

If you’ve never attended our annual meeting, or if it’s been awhile, please stop by. Our co-op family looks forward to visiting with you! We’ll have food, fun and door prizes, so mark your calendar for the annual meeting on April 16 at Pingree High School in Pingree. ■



NPEC line crew South



NPEC line crew North

The power behind your power

While Northern Plains Electric Cooperative (NPEC) strives to provide reliable electricity to our members, there are times when Mother Nature has other plans. Most of us can ride out a storm from the comfort and convenience of our homes. However, there is a group of professionals that spring into action when the weather takes a turn for the worst – co-op lineworkers.

Braving stormy weather and other challenging conditions, lineworkers often must climb 40 or more feet in the air, carrying heavy equipment to restore power. Listed as one of the 10 most dangerous jobs in the United States, lineworkers must perform detailed tasks next to high-voltage power lines. To help keep them safe, lineworkers wear specialized protective clothing and equipment at all times when on the job. This

includes special fire-resistant clothing that will self-extinguish, limiting potential injuries from burns and sparks. Insulated and rubber gloves are worn in tandem to protect them from electrical shock. While the gear performs a critical function, it also adds additional weight and bulk, making the job more complex.

In our community, NPEC lineworkers are responsible for keeping 6,793 miles of lines across 11 counties working to bring power to your home and our local community 24/7, regardless of the weather, holidays or personal considerations.

While some of the tools that lineworkers use have changed over the years, namely the use of technology, the dedication to the job has not. Being a lineworker is not a glamorous profession. At its essence, it is inherently dangerous, requiring them to work near high-voltage lines in the worst of conditions, at any times of the day or night. During storms, crews often work around the clock to restore power. While April is known for spring showers, there is also a day set aside to “thank a lineworker.”

Lineworker Appreciation Day is April 8. So, during the month of April, if you see a lineworker, please pause to say thank you to the power behind your power. Let them know you appreciate the hard work they do to keep the lights on, regardless of the conditions. ■

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Fighting the frost

Winter months seem to drag on and there was no exception for the first month of 2020. The last week in January brought foggy, cloudy weather resulting in breathtaking views of frost-covered trees. The foggy weather did not let up for days, building layers of heavy frost onto tree branches, wires or any other solid object.

In the electrical world, where there is frost, there is a potential for trouble. The heaviness of the ice weighed on our electrical lines, causing outages across the Northern Plains Electric system. Crews worked around the clock for days, knocking ice off the lines to restore power to members. Crews found lines weighed down so low that they could be touched by standing flatfooted on the ground.

Thankfully, the first of February brought sunny days and warmer temperatures melting the frost from the lines and transformers.

Northern Plains extends a thank you to those members who were inconvenienced with power outages but stayed patient as our crews worked diligently to restore their power safely. ■



5 keys to your cooperative



Cooperatives have strong ties to their members.

Rural electrification came about in the spirit of cooperation, and electric cooperatives play a vital role in the state today. As an electric cooperative member, here are five key points you should know about your cooperative that sets it apart:

1 You are a member.

Electric cooperatives are owned and democratically controlled by their members – the people who purchase the power. With voting power, you have a voice in how your co-op operates, by attending annual meetings and electing directors to represent you.

2 Members receive capital credits

Did you know that electric cooperatives return money to their members in the form of capital credits?

An electric cooperative exists to provide its members with electric service – on a nonprofit basis. Capital credits reflect each member's ownership in the cooperative. Electric cooperatives do not earn profits. Instead, any margins or remaining revenue after all expenses have been paid are returned to the cooperative's members in proportion to their electrical usage.

Capital credits are allocated to each member based on electrical usage. Those capital credits are the most significant source of equity for the cooperative. Equity is used to help meet the expenses of the co-op, such as paying for new equipment to serve members and repaying debt. Capital credits help keep rates at an affordable level by reducing the amount of funds that must be borrowed to grow and maintain a cooperative's existing electric system.

Upon completion of the rotation period, the board of directors will review the cooperative's financial health and can declare a retirement (your cash payment), and a portion of your capital credits are returned to you.

3 Your cooperative is nonprofit.

Electric cooperatives developed because many citizens who did not have access to electricity in the 1940s decided to band together and form their own companies to acquire power. Investor-owned power companies said they couldn't make a profit in areas with a small number of consumers per mile of expensive power line.

The cooperative business structure already was a well-established part of the American free enterprise system for providing services that were too big for individuals to do alone. Nonprofit cooperatives were a natural for distributing electricity in areas where making a profit would be difficult.

A co-op exists to provide high-quality service at the lowest possible price to its members.

4 You elect the directors.

Since an electric cooperative is owned by the members it serves, members elect their own representatives to the board. Members maintain democratic control of a co-op, which means they elect fellow members to represent them on the board of directors.

5 Your cooperative cares about your community.

North Dakota's electric cooperatives are continually involved in the communities they serve, from delivering more power to the oil boom to offering scholarships to college-bound students.

As one narrator notes: "When the electric co-ops were born, something much bigger happened. For when we turned the lights on, we helped democratize the American dream for the people, families, farms, ranches and businesses of rural America."

That dream continues as cooperatives help develop the communities they serve. ■



As well as earning his journeyman certificate, **Cole Gubrud** was presented by NDAREC's Safety Team the 2020 Outstanding Apprentice Award. Cole has been with the cooperative since May 2017 on the Carrington line crew.

Northern Plains lineworkers recognized at Apprenticeship Training & Safety Conference

The North Dakota Association of Rural Electric Cooperatives (NDAREC) hosted its 56th annual Apprenticeship Training & Safety (AT&S) Conference Jan. 15-17 at the Ramkota Hotel in Bismarck. The conference is an opportunity to reflect on what is happening in the industry and recognize the accomplishments North Dakota's electric cooperatives have made in training and safety. The conference also recognizes the exceptional means in which the apprenticeship program trains tradesmen.

"It is critical for North Dakota's electric cooperatives to plan for the future and train our workforce. Apprenticeship is an important part of that plan. Our apprentices recognize the value of paid on-the-job training coupled with a robust

educational component that helps build generational greatness in our industry," says NDAREC Safety and Services Director Christy Roemmich. "The AT&S Conference allows us an opportunity to

celebrate the success of our apprentices and provide them with the knowledge and tools to keep them safe on the job.

During an awards banquet, *story continued on page C8*



Congratulations to Cando lineworker **Keaten Mikkelsen** for completing the requirements to become a journeyman lineworker. Keaten joined the Northern Plains Electric team in June 2018.

story continued from page C7

NDAREC recognized several cooperatives and cooperative employees, including three lineworkers from Northern Plains Electric Cooperative (NPEC). Cole Gubrud, Keaten Mikkelsen and Tom Moravec were recognized for earning their journeyman lineworker certificates this past year.

To earn a journeyman lineworker certificate, requirements include 8,000 hours of on-the-job training in which 2,000 hours can be earned through a lineworker degree and passing of 40 written exams over a four-year apprenticeship.

At the awards banquet, NDAREC recognizes one individual for their outstanding performance

throughout their apprenticeship. This year's award went to NPEC's Cole Gubrud.

Congratulations to Cole, Keaten and Tom for a job well-done! ■



Congratulations to lineworker **Tom Moravec** for completing the requirements to become a journeyman lineworker. Tom has been a part of the Carrington line crew for NPEC since June 2018.



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