

# Connections

August 2021

For the member-owners of Brown County REA



Volume 25, Issue 8

Great River Energy power plant update...

## New ownership group found for Coal Creek Station plans for carbon capture & renewables

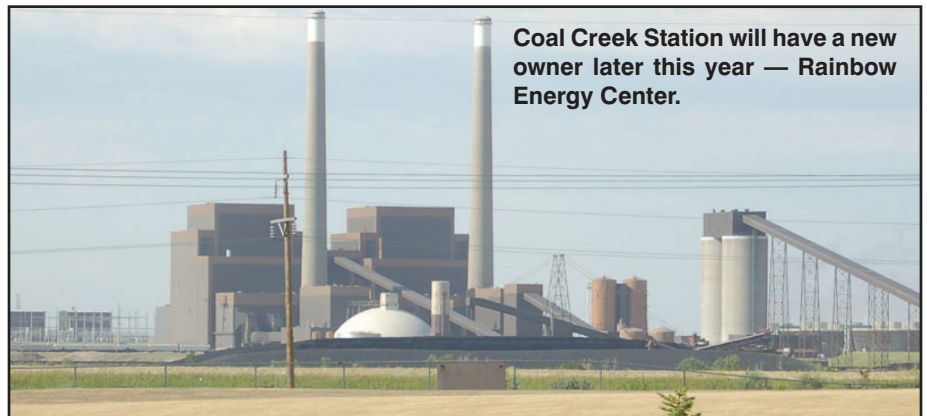
Great River Energy (GRE), Brown County REA's wholesale power provider, reached an agreement to sell the Coal Creek Station power plant to Rainbow Energy Center, LLC.

The sale of Coal Creek Station averts the plant's closure, which was scheduled for the second half of 2022 unless a buyer was found. Rainbow Energy Center will continue to operate the 1,151-megawatt (MW) power plant using current plant employees they hire. Rainbow Energy Center also plans to develop carbon capture and storage at Coal Creek Station.

"We are excited for what the future holds for our North Dakota employees and the communities surrounding Coal Creek Station," said GRE President and Chief Executive Officer David Saggau. Selling the plant also offers additional benefits for Great River Energy's member-owners compared with shutting it down.

Nexus Line, LLC has reached an agreement to purchase from GRE the high voltage direct current (HVDC) transmission system that extends between central North Dakota and Minnesota. GRE will operate and maintain the HVDC system under a 10-year contract.

"GRE's power supply changes deliver what our members want today



Coal Creek Station will have a new owner later this year — Rainbow Energy Center.

and set us up for success for a very long time," said Mike Heidemann, Brown County REA CEO.

Rainbow Energy Center and Nexus Line are affiliates of Rainbow Energy Marketing Corp. of Bismarck, North Dakota.

"The successful implementation of carbon capture and storage is central to our plans at Coal Creek Station," said Rainbow Energy Marketing Corp. President Stacy L. Tschider. "As a privately-held company, we are uniquely positioned to continue the successful legacy that GRE employees have established in North Dakota."

Rainbow Energy Center plans to add incremental generation from renewables to fully utilize the capacity of the HVDC transmission system.

GRE will also enter into a power

purchase agreement with Rainbow Energy Center, LLC.

These transactions will help ensure GRE continues to provide its member-owners with reliable and affordable electricity as the cooperative builds its future power supply portfolio.

"We are building a power supply portfolio that will serve our member-owner cooperatives with clean, affordable and reliable energy for decades," Saggau said. The cooperative will add 900 MW of wind energy by 2023 and remains on track to meet Minnesota's 80 percent carbon dioxide reduction goal ahead of schedule.

The sale of Coal Creek Station and the HVDC system is expected to close later this year after required approvals are obtained. ☺

### At A Glance



Brown County  
Rural Electrical  
Association

### Out and about again!

After more than a year's absence, it is great to show BCREA is back to community involvement with a host of activities in July. See the photos on Pages 4 & 5. ☺



# Suds, soap, soaking & savings... 10 ways to save energy in the laundry room

Your clothes washer and dryer account for a significant portion of energy consumption from major appliances. Make the most of your laundry energy use! Follow these easy ways to save energy and money in the laundry room. The Department of Energy recommends the following tips for saving on the laundry suds.

## Wash with cold water

Switching from warm water to cold water can cut one load's energy use by more than half. By using a cold-water detergent you can still achieve that brilliant clean you'd normally get from washing in warm water.

## Wash full loads when possible

Your washing machine will use the same amount of energy no matter the size of the clothing load so fill it up if you can.

## Use the high-speed or extended spin cycle in the washer

This setting will remove more moisture before drying, reducing your drying time and the extra wear on clothing.

## Dry heavier cottons separately

Loads will dry faster and more evenly if you separate heavier cottons like linens and towels from your lightweight clothing.

## Use the right dryer settings

If your dryer has this "cool down" cycle, you can save energy because the clothes finish drying with the remaining heat in the dryer. Plus, use the lower heat settings and you'll still use less energy.

## Use dryer balls

Dryer balls, usually wool or rubber,



Wash away the extra laundry costs with these energy-saving tips. Clean up your energy costs and laundry at the same time! Even your choice of laundry detergent makes a difference!

will help keep clothes separated for faster drying. Plus, they can help reduce static so you can eliminate dryer sheets.

## Switch loads while dryer is warm

This allows you to take advantage of the remaining heat from the previous cycle.

## Clean the lint filter after each drying cycle

If you use dryer sheets, remember to scrub the filter once a month with a toothbrush to remove excess buildup.


## Clothes line uses green energy

If it's a beautiful day, use the outdoors

clothes line to take advantage of solar and wind energy to dry those clothes. You'll also enjoy the free fresh air scent!

## Buy Energy Star washer & dryer

When it's time to purchase a new washer or dryer, look for the Energy Star label. New washers and dryers that receive the Energy Star rating use about 20 percent less energy than conventional models.

To discover additional actions on how you can save energy at home visit the Department of Energy at [www.energy.gov/energysaver](http://www.energy.gov/energysaver). Clean up your energy bill and laundry at the same time! 



# EGO Electric Chainsaw is a cut above

Chainsaws can be temperamental tools. You have to mix gas and oil and make sure the chain is tight, among other maintenance items.

The Ego Electric Chainsaw simplifies things. No need exists for a gas mixture. Simply snap in a battery and go saw. The Ego Electric Chainsaw also enables you to tighten its chain without taking anything apart or needing additional tools. Just twist the dial to the proper tension:

Other features include:


- Approximately 60 minutes of cutting from a single charge. Recharge time takes about 90 minutes.
- 16-inch bar and chain model works for sawing down branches, stumps and trees. A 14-inch and 18-inch model are also available.



The Ego Electric Chainsaw offers a good balance of power, ease of use and cutting time for an electric chainsaw. It can work for about 60 minutes on a single charge.

- LED lights illuminate your cut when you are cutting at dusk or in an emergency.
- 11,000 RPMs for efficient cutting.
- Brushless motor helps extend the life of the chainsaw.

- Five-year warranty exists on chain saw and three-year warranty on battery.

The Ego Electric Chainsaw is available at your local hardware store for approximately \$300. 

## Safety

# Safely recharge your electric vehicle

While it's normally a bad idea to stand on a wet surface and plug something in, electric vehicles are built to do just that.

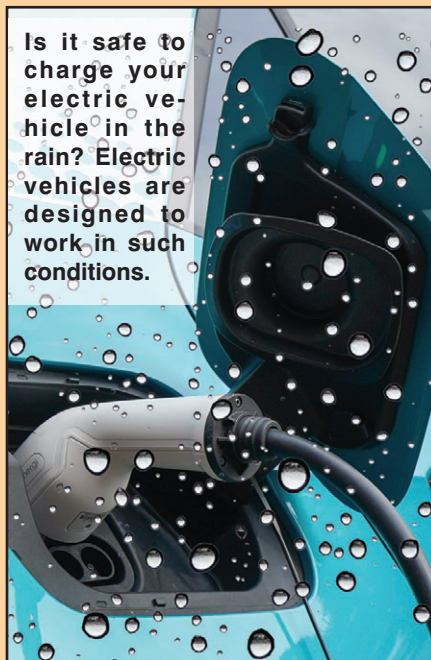
With electric vehicles growing in popularity people are curious about charging them in inclement weather.

For example, it might be pouring rain while charging. Perhaps owners have to brush snow off the charger before unplugging. Both of these conditions are suitable for factory charger and quality after-market chargers.

Electric vehicles are powered by an electric motor instead of an internal combustion engine. The battery that powers the motor is charged with a dedicated plug-in cord that connects it to a charging station or regular wall outlet.

When using a quality charging device, generally no safety-related issues exist, as long as the plug is


Is it safe to charge your electric vehicle in the rain? Electric vehicles are designed to work in such conditions.



not sitting in a puddle of water or the charging port on the car is packed with snow. The charging equipment

is designed to be insulated and waterproofed and undergoes testing by the Society of Automotive Engineers for almost any weather condition. The exception would involve extreme weather conditions, such as flooding.

When it's wet outside, the only area of concern is not where the plug meets the car, but where the charging cord plugs into an outlet or an extension cord. You want to make sure that all cords are appropriate for the use, are in good working order and that connections are not in water.

Safe Electricity recommends that electric vehicle owners always follow the manufacturer's instructions and check the charging equipment before using it. 

— Information courtesy of [safeelectricity.org](http://safeelectricity.org)

# Brown County Briefs

## Summer office hours



The office is open for business under summer hours Monday-Friday, 7:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. Phone calls are answered 24/7/365.

## Disconnects to resume



Brown County REA resumed disconnecting electric services for non-payment and charging penalties on past due account balances. If you have a past due account balance, please call the office now to make a payment arrangement to avoid service disconnection and potential fees.

Energy assistance crisis benefits have been extended and applications are accepted through September 1. Contact Minnesota Valley Action Council (MVAC) at 800-767-8139. Brown County residents can call 507-508-4041 for more information, income qualifications or to apply.

## Contractor work is underway

Carr's Tree Service began work in the co-op's service area in mid-July.

## Energy Efficiency Tip

A dirty filter causes your air conditioner to work harder than necessary. Remember to change your air filter every month (or every two months) to prevent dust buildup, which can lead to even bigger problems.

During summer months, run large appliances that emit heat (like clothes dryers and dishwashers) during the evening when it's cooler. This will minimize indoor heat during the day when outdoor temperatures are highest. ☺

## Grilling with BCREA Board of Directors



BCREA directors grilled burgers and hotdogs, sponsored and manned the concessions at the Leavenworth ballpark as the Orioles hosted Searles July 16. From left to right: Mike Heidemann, Jim Hanson, Brad Sprenger, Bill Berg, Jim Mickelson and Landon Sletta. Joel Christensen not pictured. ☺

## Adding electrical load this fall?

If you're planning to install, modify or replace electrical equipment, please contact BCREA with details to ensure:

- Co-op equipment is sized to handle your project
  - You and your neighbors won't experience power quality issues resulting from added load
  - Work is efficiently scheduled to eliminate delays
  - Project costs are kept to a minimum
- Call 800-658-2368 or 794-3331. ☺



## Mower and snowblower for sale



BCREA has the following two items for sale:

- 2002 725G2 Front Deck Zero Turn Lawn Mower: it has a liquid-cooled 25HP Kubota engine, 72-inch deck and 661 HRS.
- 108" Y1080C FK Snowblower-Hyd Spout, 1,000 PTO, Serial #20600982.



Both can be viewed at BCREA. If interested, please submit a sealed bid to BCREA, PO Box 529, Sleepy Eye, MN 56085 by Aug 27, 2021. Seller has the right to reject all bids. ☺



## BCREA out and about!



Former BCREA Director and GRE Board Member, Reuben Kokesch (left) retired from the boards in 2020 and was honored at a GRE gathering in July for his service. 📷



BCREA CEO Mike Heidemann (right) and Redwood Electric Cooperative General Manager Ron Horman (left) posed with Senator Gary Dahms following the Minnesota Rural Electric Association District 5 meeting held in Sleepy Eye. 📷

## Twins Play Ball! Youth Clinic



Clinician Keith Bateman worked with participants at the July 23 Twins Play Ball! Clinic in Sleepy Eye. Bateman (and clinicians Ken Paulson and Donny Geng) worked with about 50 area youth on baseball and life skills. Co-hosted by BCREA and Sleepy Eye Community Education, the event was presented through a GRE and Minnesota Twins partnership. 📷

## BCREA assists with house move



BCREA crews assisted by raising or removing power lines to allow clearance for a house to journey to its new location. 📷

## Small change adds up; apply for Operation Round Up today

The next meeting of the Round Up Trust Board is set for August 17. Organizations interested in seeking funding should submit an application before that date. Application forms are available on the BCREA website ([www.browncountyrea.coop](http://www.browncountyrea.coop)) under the *Operation Round Up* tab in *Programs & Services*.

Donations are made possible through the generosity of REA members whose electric bills are rounded up to the nearest dollar each month. For example, if your bill is \$93.50, you pay \$94. The 50-cent difference is placed in the Round Up Trust account and distributed quarterly to worthy causes throughout the cooperative's service area. For less than \$12 per year you can help make a difference. Contributions are tax deductible. 📷

### Sign me up for Operation Round Up!

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

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

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

Return this form with your next electric bill or mail to Brown County Rural Electrical Ass., 24386 State Highway 4, PO Box 520, Sleepy Eye MN 56085 ✂



**Your co-op will be closed  
Labor Day September 6**

**Crews will be on call in case of outages**


**Attention  
active military  
personnel:  
bill payment  
options exist**



**Rub a dub, dub we'll keep your tub  
filled with hot water**



**Call the electric co-op for your next water heater**

Minnesota law offers active military personnel additional payment options for their electric bills. The law covers disconnection, payment arrangements, appeal and an annual notice to co-op members. Similar to the state's Cold Weather Rule, an application must be completed and income guidelines exist. It's available for military personnel with active duty, deployed or a permanent duty station change. Call or e-mail us for details about the active duty military payment options and a form to sign up. 

**YOU'RE A PART OF SOMETHING BIGGER**

As a member, you have a say in how we efficiently deliver affordable, reliable and safe energy to power your life. And the lives of a few thousand of your closest friends and neighbors.



## Let's have a ball with some new meatball recipes! Round 'em up!

Round up your favorite meatball recipes! Do you make meatballs in a crockpot, oven, stove or even an air fryer? Send us your favorite meatball recipes whether it's an appetizer, main dish or in sandwiches. Mail to Editor, Federated Rural Electric, PO Box 69, Jackson MN 56143-0069 or e-mail to christoffer@federatedrea.coop by August 26. Add your name and phone number. Thanks for sharing with us! 📧

### Blueberry Crunch by Mary Mills, New Ulm

- 1½ c. fresh or frozen blueberries
- 1 box yellow cake mix
- ½ c. sugar
- ¼ c. margarine
- 1 large can crushed pineapple, undrained
- 1 c. pecans or walnuts, chopped

In a 9x13" pan place berries, pineapple and sugar. Mix lightly and spoon evenly over the bottom of the pan. In large bowl mix the margarine and dry cake mix with a pastry blender or fork; this will be a crumbly mixture. Sprinkle cake mix over berry mixture. Sprinkle nuts on top. Bake at 350° for 45 minutes. Serve hot or cold with whipped topping or ice cream. 📧

### Banana Loaf by Gail Rogers, Heron Lake

- ½ c. shortening
- 1 tsp. vanilla
- 1 c. sugar
- 1 tsp. baking powder
- 2 eggs
- 1 tsp. soda
- 4 T. sour milk (Add 1 tsp. vinegar to 4 T. milk; let set five minutes)
- 1½ c. flour
- 3 bananas, mashed

In a bowl mix the shortening and sugar. Add eggs, sour milk and vanilla; mix. Add bananas. Put into two greased loaf pans. Bake 350° one hour or until done. Bake at 325° if using a glass pan.

This recipe is from the 1940s and Ida Burmeister, my grandma. 📧

## Energy Assistance Program funds remain available — apply today for benefits

COVID has placed a larger burden on families already struggling to pay their bills or bring their accounts current. If you are experiencing difficulty paying your electric bill, the Energy Assistance Program (EAP) helps pay for home heating costs and furnace repairs for income-qualified homeowners and renters.

The Minnesota Department of Commerce expanded the EAP by raising income eligibility and extending the deadline to apply to September 1, 2021. Households with incomes at or below 60 percent of the state's median income may be eligible, which is about \$65,000 of annual income for a household of four.

To learn more about EAP or to apply just visit the Minnesota Department of Commerce's Energy Assistance

HOUSEHOLD SIZE	ANNUAL INCOME LIMIT
1 person	\$33,918
2 persons	\$44,355
3 persons	\$54,791
4 persons	\$65,228
5 persons	\$75,664
6 persons	\$86,101

**This chart shows the income eligibility requirements for families applying for energy assistance. If you make above the annual income limit for your household size, you do not qualify.**

website (<https://mn.gov/commerce/consumers/consumer-assistance/energy-assistance/>) for more details and to access the application portal.

If you are experiencing difficulty paying your electric bill and do not qualify for EAP, contact your electric cooperative's billing department. Hurry! Submit your application in August for these special funds. 📧

## Protect your home, business & cabin 24/7



Heartland Security can stand guard when you are gone. Environmental sensors protect from fire, carbon monoxide and freeze-up. Use your Smart phone to monitor video cameras or check temperature. Co-op members receive discount. Call 1-888-264-6380 or visit [www.heartlandss.com](http://www.heartlandss.com) 📧

## Pick up the phone before the shovel; call before digging!

**1-800-252-1166**



Call Gopher State One Call before doing any digging more than 12" deep — 48 hours before digging for foundations, trees, tiling and more. You can also register at [www.gopherstateonecall.org](http://www.gopherstateonecall.org) or call 811. Call a licensed electrician to locate the underground lines on your side of the meter. 📧



**Brown County  
Rural Electrical  
Association**

Brown County Rural Electrical Assn.  
24386 State Hwy 4, PO Box 529  
Sleepy Eye MN 56085

E-mail address: [bcrea@bcrea.coop](mailto:bcrea@bcrea.coop)  
Website: [www.browncountyrea.coop](http://www.browncountyrea.coop)  
Phone: 507-794-3331 or 800-658-2368  
Office hours: 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday-Friday


Mike Heidemann, Chief Executive Officer

**Board of Directors**

Thomas Hayes, President — 228-8954  
William Berg, Vice President — 766-1497  
James D. Hanson, Sec.-Treasurer — 829-6756  
Brad Sprenger — 317-5576  
David Wendinger — 276-3166  
Greg Mages — 794-3540  
Joel Christensen — 828-4550  
James Mickelson — 794-6298  
Landon Sletta — 439-6559  
The Board of Directors meets the last Thursday of each month.

# Board meeting highlights

The BCREA Board of Directors held its monthly meeting July 29 in the REA headquarters auditorium. Discussion and/or action was taken on the following items:

- Reviewed and approved the June 2021 board meeting minutes, new membership applications, member cancellations, payments to estates and assignment transfers.
  - Reviewed recent load control activities during the excessive July heat.
  - Discussed reconvening Member Advisory Council meetings, starting January 2022.
  - Set March 31, 2022 as date for the 85<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting at Sleepy Eye Event Center.
  - Discussed questions regarding procedures and paperwork needed with adoption of the cooperative's new bylaws.
  - Voted to approve the sale of Coal Creek Station to Rainbow Energy Center LLC and to approve the capacity purchase agreement with Rainbow Energy.
  - Updated on construction activities, including work in the Hillcrest Addition and the start of a three-phase work plan project.
  - Reviewed recent employee safety trainings.
- The next meeting is set for August 26 at the BCREA office in Sleepy Eye. 

# Staff Notes

## Understanding Power Cost Adjustment

Each month Brown County REA includes a charge on member's electric bills called the Power Cost Adjustment (PCA). The PCA reflects an adjustment for the actual cost of wholesale power during each billing period — above or below Brown County REA's base rate.

### Why is a PCA necessary?

In order to generate the electricity you consume our wholesale power supplier, Great




**Mike Heidemann  
Chief Executive  
Officer**

River Energy (GRE), obtains electricity from many sources, including coal, natural gas, wind and solar. GRE sets its rates each year based on variables, including the cost of fuel and amount, plus the cost of power purchased in the market. GRE also estimates the amount of power to be sold into the market. If its costs are greater than or less than the base rate, GRE will pass along the difference to Brown County REA and other member cooperatives on the monthly wholesale power bill. The co-op in turn, passes on the difference to you, our members. If it is an additional charge, it is added to your bill in the form of a PCA. If it is a credit, you will see a PCA credit on your bill.

### How is my total PCA calculated?

Members can calculate their own PCA each month by multiplying the PCA on the electric bill by the kilowatt-hours (kWh) used for the billing period. This formula charges all Brown County REA members equally for the increase or decrease in the cost of generating electricity, based on fluctuating costs.

### Do other electric utilities use a PCA?

Wholesale power cost is Brown County REA's largest expense item and the PCA is a pass-through from the wholesale power bill to the members' bill. Yet, this is not unique to cooperatives. In fact, all energy suppliers have a monthly adjustment for fluctuating fuel costs related to power production. The terminology may vary. You may see PCAs called a "Wholesale Power Adjustment," "Fuel Cost Adjustment" or other terms, but they are all fundamentally the same. 

## Congratulations to Journeyman Tyler Jensen



Tyler Jensen passed his final exam to become BCREA's newest Journeyman Lineman.

A Sleepy Eye native, Tyler attended Iowa Lakes Community College and then completed the Power Line worker training at Minnesota West Community and Technical College in Jackson. He worked for Highline Construction until joining the BCREA crew as an Apprentice Lineman in 2017.

Tyler completed the Dennis Merchant Job Training and Safety Program and has logged the required hours to achieve Journeyman status. 