




the power of human connections

# sparks

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

a monthly newsletter from Steele-Waseca Cooperative Electric

February 2025

Steele-Waseca Cooperative Electric (SWCE) legacy members will notice the Wholesale Market Adjustment (WMA) is increasing on their statement next month.

Steele-Waseca SMEC (Southern Minnesota Energy Cooperative) members (former Alliant Energy customers) will notice an increase to the monthly service charge and/or electric rate on their statement next month. For details on each, please read SWCE General Manager Syd Briggs' column on Page 2 of this month's Sparks newsletter.

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- 8 Applications being accepted for Youth Tour to Washington, D.C.

## calendar of events

### February

- 1 National Freedom Day
- 2 Groundhog Day
- 4 National Thank a Mail Carrier Day
- 9 Super Bowl LIX
- 14 Valentine's Day
- 17 Presidents' Day

## Residential rebates for co-op members in 2025 announced by Steele-Waseca

Steele-Waseca Cooperative Electric member-owners seeking to add value to their energy dollar may utilize rebates being offered by the co-op in 2025.



Rebates for Energy Star® central air conditioners are \$50 with a SEER2  $\geq$  14.3 and require a quality installation. To find a quality installer, visit Steele-Waseca's website, [swce.coop](http://swce.coop), click on "Residential Rebates," then "Qualified Installers List," listed under "Quick Links."

Rebates for ducted/hybrid Air Source Heat Pumps (ASHPs) are \$500 for those  $\leq$  5 tons,  $\geq$  14.3 SEER2, and  $\geq$  7.5 HSPF2; or \$800 for those  $\leq$  5 tons and 2025 CEE Tier 1 Listed.

Ductless ASHPs  $\leq$  1 ton,  $\geq$  14.3 SEER2, and  $\geq$  7.5 HSPF2 are eligible for a \$100 rebate. They become eligible for a \$200 rebate if they are  $\leq$  1 ton, and 2025 CEE Tier 1 Listed. The rebate increases to \$500 if they are  $>$  1 ton,  $\geq$  14.3 SEER2, and  $\geq$  7.5 HSPF2. The rebate becomes \$800 if it's  $>$  1 ton and 2025 CEE Tier 1 Listed.

Rebates for Ground Source Heat Pumps (GSHPs) with the Energy Star label is \$100 per ton.

Steele-Waseca has a \$50 rebate (retrofit only) for a residential HVAC Electronically Commutated Motor (ECM), which offers a higher efficiency rating than typical electric blowers or condenser fan motors.

Energy Star labeled refrigerators and freezers are eligible for a \$50 rebate, only if you recycle your old unit.

Dehumidifiers with the Energy Star label are eligible for a \$25 rebate.

Residential lighting rebates in 2025 for LED (light emitting diode) lightbulbs with the Energy Star label are \$2 per bulb (limit of 5 bulbs).

Steele-Waseca members installing a

50-100 watt LED yard light fixture (not the bulb) that is Energy Star or DLC (Design Light Consortium) rated are eligible for a \$30 rebate.

Wi-Fi smart thermostats are eligible for a \$25 rebate.

Energy Star labeled electric clothes dryers have a rebate of \$25. 31947

A tune up of your central air conditioner is eligible for a \$25 rebate.

Variable speed pool pumps with the Energy Star label have a \$100 rebate. Pool ASHPs are eligible for a \$200 rebate.

Steele-Waseca has a \$500 rebate for members participating in the ChargeWise program. This is a voluntary program offered by participating electric cooperatives for qualified members who own a plug-in (PEV) or plug-in hybrid (PHEV) electric vehicle.

The program allows members to charge their PEV/PHEV in their garage or carport using electricity from a specially installed 20-amp ChargeWise outlet. This ChargeWise outlet only provides energy during the off-peak hours of 11 p.m.-7 a.m. Members simply plug in the PEV in the evening and their vehicle is charged during those overnight hours at a reduced rate. They wake up to a fully-charged electric vehicle.

If you have a question, or wish to request a rebate form, please call Operations Assistant Cindy Butterfield weekdays between 8 a.m. and 3:30 p.m. Rebate forms are available on Steele-Waseca's website, [swce.coop](http://swce.coop), by clicking on "Residential Rebates." Please visit [energystar.gov](http://energystar.gov) to check the model number of qualifying products.

Completed rebate forms must be accompanied with a copy of the receipt and submitted within 90 days of purchase. Please allow six to eight weeks for processing. The rebate will appear as a credit on your Steele-Waseca bill.

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*This institution is an equal opportunity provider and employer.*

Website: [www.swce.coop](http://www.swce.coop)

Email: [info@swce.coop](mailto:info@swce.coop)



### Board of Directors

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### Office Hours

8:00 a.m.-4:30 p.m., Monday-Friday

### Operations Office Hours

8:00 a.m.-3:30 p.m., Monday-Friday

### For Customer Service, Billing Questions and Power Outages Phone:

507-451-7340 or 800-526-3514

### Before calling to report an outage

1. Check fuses and circuit breakers in your home and on meter pole.
2. Check with your neighbors to see if they have power.
3. Look for possible causes such as a tree branch on wires, a broken pole, twisted wires, etc.

### To leave a non-emergency message whenever SWCE's Office is closed:

Phone 507-451-7340 or 800-526-3514 and listen to the prompts. Please have your account number, phone number, and name on the account available.

**Call Before You Dig  
Gopher State One Call  
811 or 800-252-1166**

**48-hour notice required for ALL  
underground cable locations**

## manager connection

By Syd Briggs,  
*General Manager*



As most of our members know, Steele-Waseca Cooperative Electric pass increases in the cost of power on to our members through the Wholesale Market Adjustment (WMA) for our legacy members and the Power Cost Adjustment (PCA) for our SMEC members who joined the co-op on July 31, 2015, following the closing sale of the former Alliant Energy service territory.

In 2025, our cost of power is expected to increase about 8.1%.

Since the cost of power is our largest expense, it is important we stay current with passing the cost on to our members; if we delay passing the cost on for several

years, we end up with large increases in a later year rather than several small (hopefully) increases over several years. Many cooperatives and other utilities in Minnesota and across the nation are experiencing a similar situation.

With the forecasted usage of our residential class, their increase should average around 5.8% or about \$10 per month, and the average increase in the whole system should be around 4.8%. We also are in year two of a five-year strategic plan to merge the legacy and SMEC rates where we can have just one set of rates system wide, and only one WMA or PCA. 1109375

Your Steele-Waseca board of directors and employees have been working very hard year after year to minimize expenses without sacrificing service, and the results have been excellent. Our expenses, other than the cost of power, have grown very little and stayed consistent with growth in energy sales.

In review, the projected percentage increase is for the average member system wide. The increase each of you experience will be determined on whether your usage is over or under the average.

It is important for our rates to collect as much of the actual costs as is applicable to each class of service. Most of our cost of service is collected in the energy charge, and we try to lessen that with a reasonable customer charge with as much balance as possible.

Steele-Waseca will continue to work hard to provide the best service and realize cost savings whenever possible. We also have an excellent section on our website, [swce.coop](http://swce.coop), entitled, "REBATES/PROGRAMS," that provide many ideas and links about efficiency and conservation.

The rate adjustments are not large tones, and it will take effect on the bill you receive in February. Please feel free to call any of our customer service representatives if you have a question or need further clarification.

#swceTRUST

## EFFECTIVE WAYS To Lower Home Energy Use

Outside factors, such as fuel and equipment costs and extreme weather, can impact electricity prices. But you have the power to control home energy consumption by taking proactive steps to reduce energy use.



### Thermostat Management

The thermostat is one of the best places to lower your energy use because heating and cooling account for a significant portion of home energy consumption. During winter months, adjust your thermostat to the lowest comfortable setting to reduce energy use. The Dept. of Energy recommends 68 degrees or lower.



### Utilize Off-Peak Energy Times

Plan energy-intensive chores and tasks, such as running the dishwasher or washing clothing, during off-peak energy hours, when the demand for electricity is lower. Off-peak times are early in the morning or late evenings. By scheduling these activities during off-peak periods, you can help keep rates lower, reduce demand and relieve pressure on the grid.



### Seal Your Home

According to ENERGY STAR®, about 20% of heated or cooled air that moves through a home is lost due to lack of proper insulation and air leaks. Ensure your home has sufficient insulation levels and seal air leaks around windows and doors with caulk and weatherstripping. This is a simple, effective way to lower energy use and improve indoor comfort.



### Maintain Equipment

The health of your heating and cooling system is essential for comfort and can greatly impact energy bills. Maintain your system by regularly replacing dirty filters and scheduling annual inspections for maintenance and necessary repairs.

## MISO approves historic portfolio of high-voltage electric transmission lines

*Great River Energy (GRE) to be involved in three projects, including 765 kV 'superhighway'*

**M**ISO (Midcontinent Independent System Operator) approved of a new set of high-voltage transmission projects on Thursday, Dec. 12, that will help energy companies in the Upper Midwest, like Great River Energy (Steele-Waseca Cooperative Electric's wholesale energy provider), continue to deliver reliable energy. In addition, expand a robust electrical grid that features more carbon-free renewable energy and expected higher energy use.

The newly approved second set of projects in MISO's Long-Range Transmission Plan, known as Tranche 2.1, will deliver energy resources to customers where and when they need it. These projects will provide significant benefits, including reliable electricity in the face of a changing energy system and increased access to new generation. They will also help meet long-term electric growth expected throughout the Midwest in the coming decades.

Great River Energy will be involved in three of the 24 projects in the Tranche 2.1 portfolio, including two 345-kilovolt (kV) transmission lines in northern Minnesota and a new 765-kV transmission backbone that will start in South Dakota, traverse across southern Minnesota and into Wisconsin and Iowa. All projects will be developed jointly with other utility partners.

GRE worked closely with MISO over

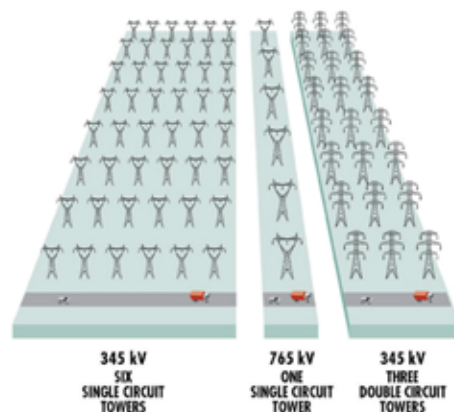
the last several years to advocate for the projects that are in the best interest of its members.

"This portfolio of projects is monumental for Minnesota and our members," stated Great River Energy Vice President and Chief Transmission Officer Priti Patel. "Introducing a 765-kV electric transmission superhighway is an important step for Minnesota's energy landscape that sets us up for the future."

This new set of high-voltage transmission projects will support the region's growing economy and serve customers throughout the Midwest with reliable electricity in a changing energy environment.

The \$21.8 billion portfolio includes 24 projects throughout the Midwest with several 345-kV lines and a 765-kV transmission backbone in Minnesota. While 765-kV transmission has been used in other parts of the United States for decades, the line will be the first for the Upper Midwest. A single 765-kV transmission line (see adjacent right image) can carry the same amount of electricity as six 345-kV transmission lines, for not much more right-of-way than existing 345-kV lines, maximizing the efficient use of land and reducing the overall impact on landowners.

As the region's electric system continues to transition from fossil fuels to



renewable resources such as wind and solar, and the way we use energy continues to evolve, more bulk power lines are needed across the region to ensure continued reliability. 1076299

**All projects will require approval from state regulatory agencies. Project partners will engage landowners, local governments and other stakeholders as part of the project development process.**

"As we move forward to develop these projects, there will be ample opportunity for public input through our engagement efforts and the state of Minnesota's permitting process," said Patel. "Great River Energy is deeply committed to ensuring our cooperative communities have a voice in the process of developing these lines."

#swceINNOVATION

## MISO predicts adequate resources to meet winter demand

*Courtesy: Great River Energy (GRE)*

**W**ith its annual winter outlook, according to MISO, resources are expected to be sufficient to meet expected demand with strong supply margins, but the organization recognizes the potential risks posed by extreme weather events.

"Situational awareness is critical for managing the impact of extreme weather events," said JT Smith, executive director of market operations at MISO. "Our seasonal readiness workshops involve coordination with our member utilities, key stakeholders and other industry partners to prepare for uncertainty during the winter months."

The winter weather forecast varies across MISO's footprint. The North Region, which includes Minnesota and the Dakotas, is expected to see normal tem-

peratures, while the Central and South Regions are projected to experience above-normal temperatures. January is forecasted to be the warmest winter month for MISO, with higher chances for cold weather events in February.

Winter demand could peak at over 107 gigawatts (GW), with 122 GW of supply anticipated to be available under normal grid and generation outage conditions. The all-time winter demand record remains at 109 GW, set on Jan. 6, 2017.

"After 2024's mild winter and summer, it's important to not become complacent," said Great River Energy Vice President and Chief Power Supply Officer Jon Brekke. "Our portfolio of power supply resources includes significant amounts of wind power engineered for cold weather operations. And we back

that up with dispatchable natural gas peaking plants that provide reliability needed for the energy demands of our membership."

Peaking plants are designed to quickly ramp up electricity production when needed, ensuring a stable supply of power.

Flexibility will be important on the coldest winter days, which is why most of GRE's peaking plants have the ability to switch from natural gas to fuel oil. If natural gas supplies become constrained, on-site fuel oil serves as a reliable backup to generate electricity and keep businesses operating and homes safe and warm.

"Whether it's a hot summer or a frigid winter, all of us at Great River Energy are prepared and ready to ensure our

*(Winter demand resources continued on Page 7)*

## cookin' connection

### Zesty Italian Crescent Casserole

Jane Freeman

Byron

1 lb. hamburger	1/2 c. sour cream
1/4 c. onion	8 oz. can crescent rolls
1 pkg. spaghetti sauce mix	1/3 c. Parmesan cheese
8 oz. tomato sauce	2 Tbsp. melted butter
1.5 - 2 c. Mozzarella cheese	

Brown hamburger and onion, drain. Stir in spaghetti mix and tomato sauce; heat until hot. Combine Mozzarella cheese and sour cream. Pour hot meat mixture into 13x9 ungreased pan. Spoon cheese mixture over meat. Separate crescent rolls dough into 2 rectangles. Place rectangles over cheese mixture. Combine Parmesan cheese and butter, and spread over dough. Bake at 375° for 18-25 minutes.

Please use a 3 x 5 card when submitting your recipe. The member whose recipe is published will receive a \$7 energy credit.



Steele-Waseca Cooperative Electric's solar subscribers will see a 12 kWh credit per panel on this month's statement for energy generated during December 2024. Learn more about community solar and The Sunna Project by visiting Steele-Waseca's website, [swce.coop](http://swce.coop). #swceINNOVATION

## Was your account number in Sparks?

Each month five account numbers are printed in *Sparks* and a total of \$35 in energy credits is divided among however many of those numbers are found. For example, if all numbers are found, a credit of \$7 will be applied to the members' following month's electric bills; or, if only one number is found, that member receives the full \$35 credit. Members finding their numbers who have a load management receiver on their dual fuel, electric water heater, air conditioner, or genset will receive an additional \$7 credit. When you find your number, phone our office no later than the 7th of the month following receipt of the *Sparks*, or the amount will be forfeited.

## January issue of Sparks



**Numbers found:**  
Raymond Srsen

**Numbers not found:**  
Paul Dragsten  
Alexander Hruska  
Eugene Myre  
Bryant Zahradnik



## Sparks in brief . . .

- **Want easy energy payments?** Sign up for **EnergyPay Plus**, our automatic payment plan, or **Energy Prepay**, our discounted advance payment plan. Contact our office for details. You may also pay your bill online at [www.swce.coop](http://www.swce.coop). By entering your Steele-Waseca username and password you can also view a 13-month history of your account.

- **If you have changed or added phone numbers**, please contact SWCE to update your contact information.

- **Need a new water heater?** For information about our Westinghouse Electric Water Heater Program, phone Cindy Butterfield at our office between 8 a.m.-3:30 p.m., 446-4204 / 800-526-3514.

- **December temps** – The average high temperature for December was 31°F, while the average low was 17°F. This resulted in 1,262.5 Heating Degree Days (HDDs), and 0 Cooling Degree Days (CDDs). They compare to last year's average high of 40°F and average low of 25°F. This resulted in 1,017 HDDs and 0 CDDs.

- **ENERGY STAR® Rebates** – In 2025, all ENERGY STAR refrigerators/freezers (with recycling), electric clothes dryers, dehumidifiers, central air conditioners, air and ground source heat pumps, light emitting diode (LED) bulbs purchased (limit 5) are eligible to receive rebates (may not be combined with special promotions). Rebate request forms must be submitted within 90 days of purchase. Rebate forms are available at [www.swce.coop](http://www.swce.coop). For more information or to receive a rebate request form, phone Cindy Butterfield at 446-4204 or 800-526-3514.

- **Steele-Waseca's tree service contractor** – Carr's Tree Service, Inc., is contracted to do SWCE's tree trimming. To report a tree concern, phone:

**507-451-7340 / 800-526-3514**

### STEELE COUNTY TIP LINE

## 866-878-7964

TO BE USED TO REPORT ANY CRIME OR SUSPICIOUS ACTIVITY ANONYMOUSLY

COVERS ALL OF STEELE COUNTY INCLUDING THE CITIES OF:

OWATONNA ELLENDALE  
BLOOMING PRAIRIE MEDFORD

## Space Heater Safety Tips

Space heaters are a great way to warm specific rooms in your home without having to crank up the thermostat, but using space heaters doesn't come without risk! Use the tips below to keep your home safe.

**DO:** Plug your space heater directly into the wall outlet.



**DO:** Keep your space heater in low-moisture rooms.

**DO:** Keep your space heater at a safe distance (at least 3 feet) from kids, pets and flammable items.

**DO:** Buy a unit with an automatic shutoff in case the unit tips over, or you forget to shut it off.



**DO:** Always follow the directions and take a broken space heater to a qualified appliance service center.



**DON'T:** Leave your space heater unattended. Always unplug it before you leave the house or go to bed.



**DON'T:** Use an extension cord to plug in your space heater. It can cause the heater to overheat, and can be a tripping hazard.



**DON'T:** Place your space heater near curtains, clothing, furniture or bedding.



**DON'T:** Try to repair a broken space heater yourself.



**DON'T:** Put your space heater in your bathroom. The moisture can damage the unit, which could cause it to malfunction.



AMERICA'S ELECTRIC COOPERATIVES

## TIPS TO AVOID ENERGY SCAMS

Scammers will try anything to deceive utility customers, including a tactic that claims customers have overpaid their bill. If you receive a call, text or email from someone claiming you overpaid a utility bill and need to provide your banking or credit card information to receive a credit, it's likely a scam. In most cases, your utility will apply a credit to your account to cover future charges or refund an overpayment with a mailed check.

Source: Utilities United Against Scams



## Snowmobile Safety

Beware of power poles and the wires that hold them in place

**SHARE THIS IMPORTANT INFORMATION** with family, friends and anyone you know who rides a snowmobile.

**SNOWMOBILING** underneath power lines can be dangerous. Keep these tips in mind this winter.

- Watch out for power poles and electrical equipment that can be hidden in the snow.
- Slow down, know the area and stay on marked trails.
- Power poles are often anchored with wires extending out from the pole. Avoid snowmobiling directly next to or underneath power lines.
- If you see a downed power line, stay away from it and call 911 to report it. Always assume it is live and can carry currents strong enough to kill.



## ad connection

### give away

WOODEN SPOOLS at SWCE. 451-7340/Todd.

**FREE ONLINE CLASSIFIEDS**, you place & remove your own ad on SWCE's website, [swce.coop](http://swce.coop), these are separate from Sparks & will not appear in Sparks unless mailed, delivered, or emailed to SWCE.

### wanted

(2) TIRES for an old forklift, 20" rim. 465-8244.

**TDR TRANSFER DEVELOPMENT RIGHTS** in Erin & Forest Townships, CPI vs CER calculation got you losing them? Sell & transfer off before deadline. 612-756-0271/Dan.

**BARN, GRANARY, &/OR OUTBUILDINGS**, I remove to repurpose the lumber; **OLD TIN; BARN SIDING; LUMBER**. 330-0258/Tim.

**JUNKERS & REPAIRABLES**, top \$ paid for used cars, trucks, & some farm equip. 332-2300.

**FORD DIESEL SKID STEER**. 330-1849.

### for sale

**LARGE ORTHOPEDIC DOG BED**, 40x30, \$30. 456-1217.

**2012 JD 6000-WATT GENERATOR**, elec. start, like new, only used 25 hrs, \$2000/obo. 676-5560.

**MINI STORAGE UNITS**, Blmg Prairie. 456-2957.

**FORD 801 SELECT-O-SPEED TRACTOR**, gas, gd body project? Offers negotiable. 456-0766/Mdfd.

**MIXED GRASS HAY BALES**, 4x5 round net wrapped. 676-6094.

**USED ENGINES & TRANSMISSIONS FOR CARS & TRUCKS; USED AUTO PARTS**, 30-day warranty. 332-2300.

**HVY DUTY ALUM. RAMP**, 4' wide by 10' long, \$350. 491-4565.

**55-GAL. PLASTIC & STEEL BARRELS** w/covers, \$5-\$15; **220-GAL. POLY TANK** w/valve in forklift frame, \$75. 421-2521.

**REG. SIZE BED** w/headboard, \$30. 451-2687.

**A-C TRACTORS C, B, CA; PICKUP FLATBEDS; JD 14' DISC; TRACTOR TIRES; FORKLIFT FORKS; 2004 CHEVY 2500HD**, 4x4, \$3000. 402-7679.

## All area codes are 507 unless otherwise noted

**2002 JEEP GRAND CHEROKEE LIMITED**, 170,000 mi., \$1800; **2009 KAWASAKI VULCAN 900**, \$4200. 444-9640.

**HUNTING BLINDS**, weather/rodent proof, insulated & more. 330-2452.

(2) **CARHARTT COATS**, new w/tags, blk w/blk lining, large regular size, will separate, \$115/each. 440-8831.

**FORCED-AIR WOODSTOVE**. 688-9410.

**HAY**, 4x5, net wrapped, alfalfa & grass mix, Owat. 213-8670.

**BOAT/RV STORAGE FOR RENT**. 475-2322.

**1994 IH 4900 STRAIGHT TRUCK** w/Johnson 18' cold plate box, \$5900. 334-7177.

**HOSPITAL BED**, adjustable, like new, \$325. 995-4074/leave message.

**FIREWOOD**, mixed hardwoods, Nfld area, \$350/cord. 651-357-5092/Paul.

**GRASS HAY**, sm. sq. bales by Waldorf. 327-3672.

**STUDENT DESK** w/hutch, 49"wide x 23"deep x 71"high, \$50; **OAK BOOKCASE**, 33"wide x 60"high, \$50; (4) **OAK COUNTER-HIGH BARSTOOLS**, \$80. 330-0326.

**GRASS HAY**, small square. 384-2910/Fbo.

'47 **DODGE**, 2 door, blk, runs & drives, everything works, call/text for pictures. 491-2667.

**FORTUNE CREEK TRL LOTS**, the covenant allows for a pole shed, starting at \$75,000. 332-4623/John.

**ELEC. POLES**, extra large, used, 55' long, used to support air system pipes for corn drying. 291-0281.

**TREE TRIMMING, REMOVAL, & STUMP GRINDING**, professional climber & aerial lift to U of M guidelines; **2007 FRONT CHROME BUMPER** for an F-650, new. 456-1609.

**NH 489 HAYBINE**, \$4000; **500-GAL. FUEL BARREL**, exc. cond., no pump, \$1000; '01 **KINGHITTER SERIES III POST DRIVER AUGER KIT**. 456-9213.

**BEACHFRONT VACATION CONDOS FOR RENT** in Fort Myers Beach, South Padre Island & Mexico, visit [www.sandysbeachfrontcondo.com](http://www.sandysbeachfrontcondo.com) for details & photos. 612-865-9604/Sandy.

**RENTAL**, Izaak Walton League Bldg., 4 mi. south of Owat., seats 100, full kitchen, grill, Wi-Fi, \$175. 451-7946.

(2) **DOWNHILL ROSSIGNOL SKIS**. 678-978-7444.

**CABELA'S VACUUM SEALER**, like new, used vry little, \$50; **1969 PICKUP BOX TRAILER**, 8' box, hvy duty, \$350; **MF 235 LOADER**, all hyd., incl. 4-way hyd. valve, 4 cylinders, \$275. 455-3881.

**Steele-Waseca Cooperative Electric (SWCE) assumes no liability for the content of, or reply to, any item posted. The party posting any advertisement assumes complete liability for the content of, and all replies to, any advertisement and for any claims against SWCE as a result thereof, and agrees to indemnify and hold SWCE harmless from all costs, expenses, liabilities and damages resulting from, or caused by, any advertisement or reply thereto.**

### travel

**WASHINGTON, D.C.**, April 25-29. Round trip Delta flights, 9 meals, guided Memorial and Monument tours, tram ride through Arlington National Cemetery, and more! \$1,799 pp with 2 per room.

**"PERFECT WEDDING,"** April 30, at Sidekick Theater in Bloomington, riotous comedy and touching love story, depart from Albert Lea, includes performance, lunch, dessert, and transportation. \$99 pp.

**CAPE COD & MARTHA'S VINEYARD**, June 14-22. Deluxe motor coach, 8 nights lodging, 15 meals, guided tours of the "Outer Cape," JFK Museum and more! \$1,899 pp with 2 per room.

**Call 4-Seasons at 373-4705 or 373-2473, from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. weekdays, to learn more about their tour information.**

*4 Seasons*  
Vacations, Inc.

TRUST OUR EXPERIENCE. LOVE YOUR VACATION.

### Sparks Free Classified Ad Form for all SWCE Members

Ads need to be received in our office by **February 5** to ensure being printed in the March Sparks. Please print neatly or type your ad of **20 words or less** on this form. We reserve the right to edit ad copy to allow space for more ads. Ads received after the 5th will be printed in the April issue.

☐ For Sale ☐ Wanted ☐ Give Away

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Phone # \_\_\_\_\_ Account # \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Clip and mail to: SWCE, PO Box 485, Owatonna MN 55060-0485, deliver to the SWCE office, or email your ad to: [sparks@swce.coop](mailto:sparks@swce.coop).

## member connection

### Soil Health Winter Workshop Highway 14 tour stop coming to Owatonna Feb. 18

The annual Soil Health Winter Workshop hosted by the Freeborn Area Soil Health Team has a long-standing history of speakers and information related to soil health and profitability. This year's focus is, **"Making soil health work with economics, research, and experience in the field."**

Speakers will include Sam Ireland, Ryan Gibbs, and Andy Linder. Sam is the manager of the Dakota Lakes Research Farm in South Dakota and will provide an inside look at the groundbreaking soil health research happening on the farm, sharing the latest findings, innovative techniques, and their potential to transform sustainable farming practices.

Andy is from Easton, Minnesota, and will be presenting his insights on the economics of soil health and discussing how he's successfully implementing conservation practices in a financially sustainable way on his farm.

Ryan is from Hopkinton, Iowa, and will share his experience with getting started in soil health and integrating composting on his farm.

This one-day event is from 8:30 a.m.-2:30 p.m., at Torey's Restaurant, 208 N. Cedar Ave, Owatonna. There is no cost to attend the event and lunch will be provided. RSVPs are needed by Tuesday, Feb. 11, to reserve your spot as seating is limited. To register for the event, call 507-320-3728, email [Lindsey.Cornell@mn.nacdn.net](mailto:Lindsey.Cornell@mn.nacdn.net), or register online at <https://soilhealthwinterworkshop2025.eventbrite.com>.

The event is sponsored by Steele SWCD (Soil and Water Conservation District), Waseca SWCD, Rice SWCD, Freeborn SWCD, Cannon River Watershed Joint Powers Organization, Comprehensive Watershed and Management Plan-Shell Rock and Winnebago, Saddle Butte Ag, Shell Rock River Watershed District, Farm Service Agency, Albert Lea Seed, Arcadian Bank, and the Clean Water, Land, & Legacy Amendment.

#swceCOOPERATION



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072-0325-10-00 Print Ad

(Winter demand resources continued from Page 3)  
member-owners have the energy they need to serve their communities," said Brekke.

#swceSERVICE

### Is my off peak/dual fuel being controlled today?

Visit Great River Energy's website at [www.greatriverenergy.com](http://www.greatriverenergy.com) and click on "Load Management." Need a history of controls? Click on "History" on the "Load Management" page. 1010260

## youth tour connection

# Applications being accepted for 2025 Youth Tour to Washington, D.C.

Steele-Waseca Cooperative Electric is sponsoring up to two eligible students

Steele-Waseca Cooperative Electric is accepting applications from eligible high school sophomores or juniors for an all-expense paid trip, valued at nearly \$4,000, to Washington, D.C., for the 2025 Youth Tour, June 16-21.

The tour is coordinated through the Minnesota Rural Electric Association (MREA) and hosted by the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA). Participating cooperatives sponsor a member student(s) to travel to Washington, D.C., to learn about cooperatives and our government, tour historical sites, and have fun meeting new friends from Minnesota and other delegates from across the nation.

To be eligible, the entrant must meet the following requirements:

1. The entrant is currently a high school sophomore or junior, and their parent(s)/guardian(s) are a Steele-Waseca member. Dependents of Steele-Waseca employees or directors are not eligible to participate.
2. All entries must include: a) the completed application form below; b) answers to both essay questions digitally videoed that also highlights the applicant's school and community information on the video at least two minutes in length and not to exceed three minutes; and c) two letters of recommendation (one from an instructor, counselor or administrator, and the other from a church or community leader).

3. Videos may be emailed to Member Services Supervisor Randy Sobrack at [rsobrack@swce.coop](mailto:rsobrack@swce.coop). Mail the application form and letters of recommendation to: Steele-Waseca Cooperative Electric, c/o Youth Tour 2025, PO Box 485, Owatonna, MN 55060. Entries must be received in Steele-Waseca's office on or before Tuesday, Feb. 18. The two Youth Tour recipients will be notified by Tuesday, March 18.

Each entry will be evaluated by a panel of judges for:

- the responses to the questions and activity involvement in 2-3 minutes.
- Personality and communication exhibited in the video.
- Quality of the production.

### Essay Questions:

1. Why would you like to be Steele-Waseca's delegate for the 2025 Youth Tour? What do you hope to gain from the experience?
2. What does commitment to community mean to you. Share how you contribute to your community. 1098900

### School and Community Information

- Highlight your school activities – note letters and honors earned, positions held, etc.
- Reflect on your community activities – include all church, community service and positions held.
- Share details regarding any work experience and other information that makes you the person you are.

MREA is requiring each participating cooperative's delegate(s) report to the Crowne Plaza Airport located at 3 Appletree Square in Bloomington for an orientation session on Monday, June 16, presently at 9:30 a.m. An afternoon flight to Washington, D.C., will follow the session.

#swceLIFE+



### Washington, D.C. Youth Tour 2025 — June 16-21

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Gender \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_  
Street \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_ County \_\_\_\_\_

Email address \_\_\_\_\_ Parent(s) or Guardian(s) \_\_\_\_\_

I am currently a high school \_\_\_\_\_ sophomore \_\_\_\_\_ junior at \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian consent: I/we hereby give my/our dependent high school student permission to enter the Rural Electric Washington, D.C. Youth Tour 2025 Contest. I/we understand if they're selected, I/we will be responsible for providing their transportation to the Crowne Plaza Airport in Bloomington and from the Minneapolis/St. Paul International Airport.

Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_ SWCE account # \_\_\_\_\_