



the power of human connections

sparks

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

a monthly newsletter from Steele-Waseca Cooperative Electric

November 2025

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SWCE office is closed
- National Diabetes Awareness
Month



Steele-Waseca members pose questions during town hall meetings in Owatonna

Steele-Waseca Cooperative Electric conducted four town hall meetings at Torey's Restaurant in Owatonna during September to not only share information regarding the co-op, but on their wholesale energy provider, Great River Energy, and legislative impacts taking place in Minnesota.

General Manager Syd Briggs was the emcee and addressed capital credits at Steele-Waseca. He detailed how the co-op has allocated \$78 million in margins, having returned \$28 million to members and past members of Steele-Waseca with \$50 million in equity which helps the co-op from having to borrow money to operate and conduct projects.

Briggs detailed the state's legislative approval to have 100% carbon-free electricity by 2040. He explained Great River Energy (GRE), Steele-Waseca's wholesale energy provider, in 2024 was at 44% carbon-free, and has plans to be



Steele-Waseca Cooperative Electric General Manager Syd Briggs detailed the co-op's energy portfolio provided by their wholesale energy provider, Great River Energy, to members at the town hall meeting, Sept. 16, at Torey's Restaurant in Owatonna.

90% carbon-free by 2035. This prompted members in attendance at each of the town hall meetings to question how energy is going to be available if the sun doesn't shine and the wind doesn't blow. Briggs explained GRE is able to obtain energy from MISO (Midcontinent Independent System Operator). He also noted Minnesota needs to lift

(SWCE town hall meetings continued on Page 3)

2026 Nominating Committee appointments announced by Steele-Waseca Cooperative Electric

The Steele-Waseca Cooperative Electric board of directors have approved appointments to the 2026 Nominating Committee.

It is the nominating committee's responsibility to prepare the list of director candidates, and post it at the cooperative's office at least 30 days prior to the annual meeting scheduled Tuesday, June 2, 2026.

Director election results will be announced during the business portion of the annual meeting, held at Steele-Waseca's headquarters, located

(Nominating Committee continued on Page 7)

District 7

Matt LaCanne 412-7143
Daniel/Stacy Maas 210-3738
Casey/Natalie Roeker . . . 380-8443

District 8

Ralph/Leann Miller 451-3249
Ron/Kay Keller 838-9843
Bert Wiersma 684-9665

District 9

Bruce Rumpza 583-2091
Lonna Selkirk 612-790-1457
Douglas Starks 451-8844

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 Owatonna MN 55060-0485

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Website: www.swce.coop
 Email: info@swce.coop



Board of Directors

PJ Duchene District 1
Vice President, GRE Director
 Anton Seykora District 2
 Neil Schlaak District 3
 Dennis Ringhofer District 4
 Rodney Krell, *President* District 5
 Weston Wilson District 6
 John Beal District 7
 Ronald Sommers District 8
Secretary/Treasurer
 Scott Carlson District 9
Assistant Secretary/Treasurer

Management

Syd Briggs *General Manager*

Division Managers

Kim Wilson *Member Services*
 Jon Stelter *Finance*
 Dan Meier *Operations*

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

During September, Steele-Waseca Cooperative Electric held four town hall meetings as has been our practice since 2010 (except of course during the COVID pandemic).

Steele-Waseca again had great attendance, and it is always rewarding to have time to present information in person to our members on things that are going on at the co-op along with the utility industry. Our members are very “plugged-in” to current events and we had many questions and topics addressed.

Our agenda started out with the topics of capital credits, changes at Steele-Waseca, our power portfolio, and a great presentation by one of our line foremen on Cooperatives Helping Cooperatives last year when we sent four of our line crew to South Carolina and Florida to assist with power restoration after the hurricanes.

Under capital credits, we reviewed the practice of the Cooperative Principle of paying back all margins we have earned over the 89 years of Steele-Waseca's operation. This means, as a non-profit organization, we keep track of all revenue that is in excess of our expenses; we allocate it to everyone who purchased energy during a given year and eventually pay it back to those responsible for creating it. Of the previous 89 years of operations, we have refunded 67 years of margins to our members, or 75% of our years of service.

Under the subject of power portfolio, we discussed the great job our power supplier, Great River Energy (GRE), is doing to provide a diverse and dependable source of “keeping the lights on”.

GRE is in the process of acquiring the most efficient and economical sources of power for us, in addition to planning to meet the 2040 Carbon Free bill that was passed a couple of years ago. We discussed the progress and the challenges that GRE faces to achieve all the requirements of that bill.

When we covered this subject some of the questions from our members were: Does carbon-free energy sources raise our cost of electricity? Are we looking



Briggs detailed SWCE's capital credit retirements during the Sept. 3 town hall meeting.

at nuclear generation? On the cost of carbon-free energy, GRE has done an exemplary job of finding very economical prices of renewable sources. Currently, my understanding is those prices are competitive with the cost of any new sources of generation including fossil fuels. 32753

We also discussed the advantage of fossil fuels being more reliable and the difficulty GRE is working on to get to 100% carbon-free energy and still have the excellent reliability in the far future. GRE remains positive on achieving all goals of efficient and reliable service through 2040.

On the subject of the possibility of nuclear generation, we discussed the work our statewide organization, Minnesota Rural Electric Association (MREA), is doing to get the nuclear moratorium repealed. Currently no nuclear generation is permitted in Minnesota, and it would be a great source of reliable carbon-free energy if the moratorium were repealed.

We also had a great presentation of the trip four of our line crew took to South Carolina and Florida last year to help with the power restoration after the hurricanes in October. It was amazing to see the extent of the damage and the immense amount of work and coordination required to rebuild much of the electric infrastructure system. Our crew was dedicated to long days of work in difficult situations, but were welcomed by members and customers there, just like here, when power is being restored. Our crew worked many times in debris-ridden, swampy areas as water rose and slowly receded from the rains and wind.

#swceTRUST

Faribault data center clears review amid Twin Cities growth

A proposed data center in Faribault has cleared the environmental review process and is up for the next round of city approvals, a project that comes at a time when the Twin Cities market is poised for growth.

The Faribault City Council launched an environmental review of the project earlier this year and recently determined that the planned Archer Datacenters Faribault Campus project doesn't have the potential for "significant environmental

impacts."

Jordan Milman, chairman and CEO of Archer Datacenters, LLC, told Finance & Commerce last November that the conceptual plan for the site is for a "footprint of up to 500,000 square feet across multiple potential data center buildings, and up to 120MW of power."

"After looking at numerous sites across the greater Twin Cities region, the Faribault site proved ideal for a number of reasons," including the "collaborative

approach to power procurement that we are undertaking with Steele-Waseca Co-op Electric and Great River Energy," Milman said.

(Courtesy: Great River Energy News Clips with credit to Finance & Commerce)

#swceGROWTH

(SWCE town hall meetings continued from Page 1)

their moratorium on nuclear power plants. Briggs stated nuclear power is carbon-free and would assist electric power to reach the state's 100% carbon-free mandate. When asked about the impact to rates going carbon-free, "Any new source will raise rates," said Briggs. "It's more expensive to be carbon-free."

Briggs also highlighted the co-op's history and its latest expansion with 12 electric co-ops combining to start the Southern Minnesota Energy Cooperative in purchasing Alliant Energy's service territory in Minnesota in July 2015. He also promoted the co-op's 90th annual meeting taking place Tuesday, June 2, 2026. 1089894

Other presentations included Steele-Waseca's new billing system through NISC (National Information Solutions Cooperative) that started May 5 this year. NISC is now being used by all electric cooperatives in Minnesota. The use of SmartHub on the co-op's website was explained for signing up for auto pay and obtaining information on your electric usage at your service location. The charging of electric vehicles at Steele-Waseca's charging station was highlighted. Starting Oct. 1,

Steele-Waseca members may only charge their electric vehicles at no cost from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Non-members will need to pay for use of the electric vehicle chargers at Steele-Waseca as of that same date. Expansion of residential rebates, starting Sept. 3, was highlighted at the town hall meetings. Some of the new eligible rebates from purchases made since Jan. 1, 2025, include battery-operated yard tools, electric bikes, small household appliances, and electronics. Details are available at swce.coop/rebates/.

Each of the town hall meetings concluded with Line Foreman Kevin Kjersten detailing Steele-Waseca's line crew response in helping restore power to the hurricane-stricken areas of South Carolina and Florida during October 2024. He detailed their travels to the area, the work completed during their week in South Carolina and week in Florida before returning home to Minnesota. Kjersten praised the appreciation the line crew

members received from the impacted residents for the power restoration work. Each town hall meeting ended with an ovation for Kjersten's presentation and appreciation of Steele-Waseca's line crew for their willingness to assist with the restoration efforts.

A number of additional questions asked during the town hall meetings are answered in Briggs' general manager's column on Page 2 of this Sparks newsletter.

#swceAPPRECIATION

sparks • november 2025



Steele-Waseca Line Foreman Kevin Kjersten showed photos of the damage members of the Steele-Waseca line crew dealt with as a result of Hurricane Milton near Dade City, Florida, to members at the town hall meeting, Sept. 22, in Owatonna.



Steele-Waseca Operations Engineer Steve Nordahl highlighted changes to the co-op's electric vehicle charging station starting Oct. 1 during the Sept. 3 town hall meeting.



Steele-Waseca Member Services Division Manager Kim Wilson during the town hall meeting, Sept. 3, in Owatonna, detailed the co-op's process and decision to go with NISC as their billing company as of May 5 this year.

cookin' connection

Hot Fudge Chocolate Cake

LaVerne Duban

Lonsdale

1 c. flour
3/4 c. sugar
2 Tbsp. cocoa

2 tsp. baking powder
1/4 tsp. salt

Whisk together the above ingredients, then whisk in:

1/2 c. milk
2 Tbsp. melted butter

1 tsp. vanilla
1 c. nuts (optional)

Then mix together and sprinkle on top of the batter in a 8x8 cake pan:

1 c. brown sugar
4 Tbsp. cocoa

Pour over this 1 3/4 c. hot water. Bake at 350° for 35-40 min. I usually double the batch, because it's so good. It makes its own pudding on the bottom. When serving, I flip it over on individual plates and put whipped cream on top.

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 43 kWh credit per panel on this month's statement for energy generated during September 2025. Learn more about community solar and The Sunna Project by visiting Steele-Waseca's website, swce.coop.

#swceINNOVATION

Was your account number in Sparks?

Each month five account numbers are printed in *Sparks* and a new minimum electric bill credit of \$15 is being awarded among however many members find their account number. For example, if all numbers are found, a credit of \$15 will be applied to the members' following month's electric bill. If only one number is found, that member receives a \$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 3rd of the month following receipt of the *Sparks*, or the amount will be forfeited.

October issue of Sparks



Numbers found:
Darrell Ingvaldson
Numbers not found:
Vincent Aimutis
Brent Nosbush
Grant Eipers
Adam Tibbals



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, or register your account with SmartHub. For instructions to use SmartHub, visit swce.coop/smarthub.

• **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 the SWCE office weekdays between 8 a.m.-4:30 p.m., or email rebates@swce.coop.

• **September temps** – The average high temperature for September was 75° F, while the average low was 53° F. This resulted in 97.5 Heating Degree Days (HDDs), and 80.5 Cooling Degree Days (CDDs). They compare to last year's average high of 78° F and average low of 54° F. This resulted in 65 HDDs and 100.5 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. For a complete list of residential rebates and their respective rebate form, visit swce.coop/rebates/. For more information or to receive a rebate request form, email rebates@swce.coop or call 507-451-7340 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

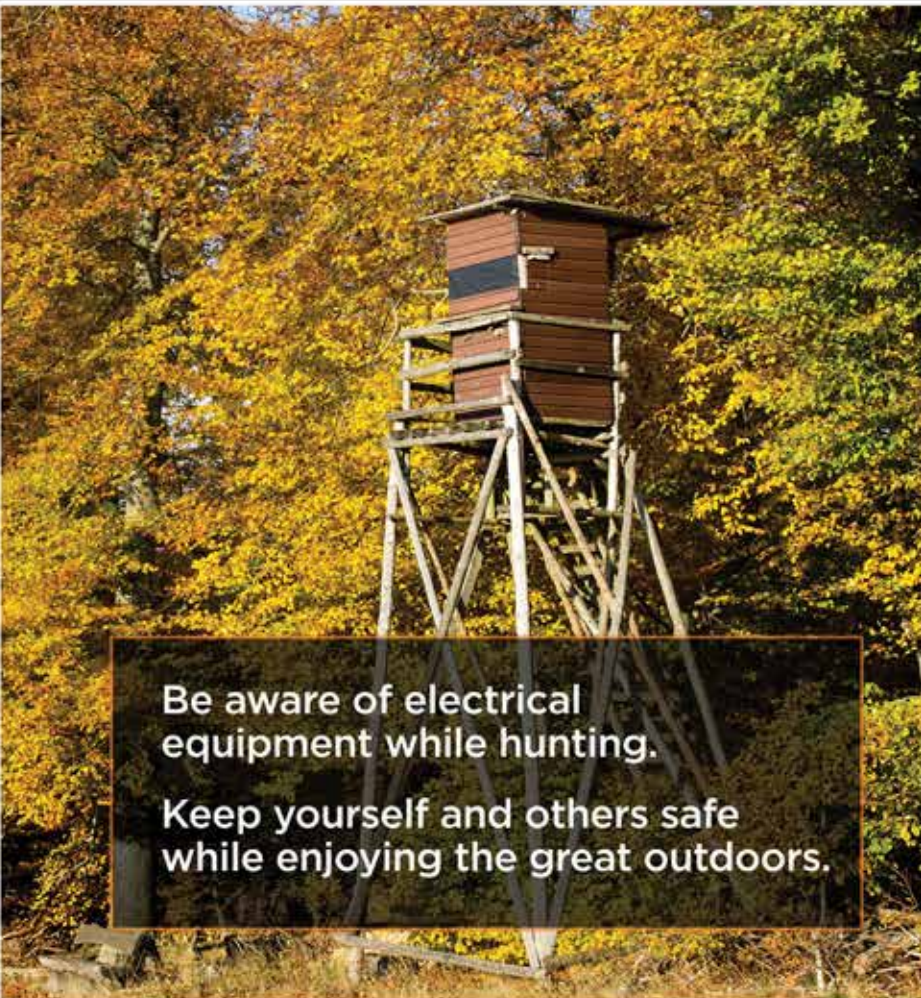
COVERS ALL OF STEELE COUNTY INCLUDING THE CITIES OF:

**OWATONNA ELLENDALE
BLOOMING PRAIRIE MEDFORD**

BEWARE of dangers above. Your LIFE depends on it.



Look up and look out for power lines.



Be aware of electrical
equipment while hunting.

Keep yourself and others safe
while enjoying the great outdoors.

TIPS TO AVOID ENERGY SCAMS

Scammers will try anything to pressure customers into providing their personal information. If you are ever asked to pay your utility bill through a third-party transaction app, such as Cash App or Venmo, it's a scam. Remember, utilities will never request a payment through a third-party app. Always use authorized payment methods when paying your utility bills.

*Source: Utilities United
Against Scams*



ad connection

give away

DEAD OAK TREES, you cut, haul, & clean up. 456-4254.

HORSERADISH. 581-2301.

TREES TO BE CUT DOWN & HAULED AWAY, mostly adult trees, a mix but mostly ash. 475-2799.

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

wanted

RECIPES for the *Sparks*, only from members who did not have a recipe published in 2025; please use a 3x5 card; the member who has their recipe published earns a \$7 energy credit on their SWCE statement.

FORD DIESEL SKID STEER. 330-1849.

LOOKING FOR CARPENTERS & REMODELERS! Flexible hrs, full- or part-time work, no experience needed, must have a valid driver's license, \$18-25 an hour, set up an interview with Eric. 676-4886.

JUNK & UNWANTED APPLIANCES, Fbo free drop off only. 210-6728/Dan.

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

RECORD ALBUMS BY OWAT. GROUP, "THE EXOTICS" OR "19TH AMENDMENT," from later 1960s. 438-0150.

TDR TRANSFER DEVELOPMENT RIGHTS IN ERIN & FOREST TWSPS, CPI vs. CER calculation, are you losing them? Sell & transfer off before deadline. 612-756-0271/Dan.

TOY TRACTORS, John Deere models, A through 80. 451-7091.

HUSQVARNA RIDER 155 w/40" deck. 456-2501.

ISO TRANSFERABLE BUILDING RIGHT IN WALCOTT TOWNSHIP. 651-260-9225.

for sale

11,000-BU. GRAIN BIN FOR RENT, near Millersburg; **JD 3020**, diesel, \$8000; **OMC 330 SKID LOADER**, needs wrk, \$2000; **JD 7800 MFW TRACTOR**, \$40,000. 330-3945.

All area codes are 507 unless otherwise noted

MEN'S SOREL WINTER BOOTS, size 13, gd cond., \$15. 363-6333.

CANNING JARS, qt & pt, \$3/dozen; **MISC. FARM EQUIP.**, best offer. 612-716-7587.

(2) WOODEN CHICKEN CRATES, 32"x4"x16"deep; **ASH FIREWOOD**, cut & split, you haul it, \$88 per pickup load; **WICKER "PRINCESS" CHAIR**, \$55. 210-5353.

BENELLI NOVA, 12 ga., 2.75-3-3.5, never shot, \$400/firm. 451-9727.

BOAT/RV STORAGE FOR RENT; 1999 CRESTLINER, 1-yr-old trailer, \$6900/obo. 475-2322.

MINI STORAGE UNITS, Blmg Prairie. 456-2957.

#1.5 DOUBLE SPRING COIL TRAPS, \$2; #1 STOP LOSS TRAP, \$2; 330 CONIBEAR BEAVER TRAPS, \$8. 384-2342.

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

(6) REFRIG. WATER FILTERS, Aquacrest, #AQF-F20, fits several brands. Half price \$30 w/free air filters. 451-1713.

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

A-C WD TRACTOR LOADER, recently painted, needs some wrk, \$850; **HYD. CYL.** for wood splitter, \$100; **METAL OFFICE DESK**, great for the shop, \$20. 455-3881.

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

JD 4440 TRACTOR w/duals, low hours; **WIL-RICH FIELD CULTIVATOR**, new shovels, good condition. 461-7405.

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

2020 EGO SELF-PROPELLED 21" LM2100SP w/bagger, mower only, light & little usage, \$100. 837-9986.

FORTUNE CREEK TRL LOTS, the covenant allows for a pole shed, starting at \$75,000. 838-5033/John.

GRASS HAY, full size sm. sq. bales. 451-2978.

IH 33 LOADER, manual 78" bucket, fits on M or Super M, vry nice shape, \$700. 327-4493.

(2) BOSTITCH ROOFING NAILERS; BOSTITCH FRAMING NAILER, \$80/each/obo. 456-5130.

MINI STORAGE UNITS, Ellendale. 456-1460.

61' WESTENDORF 10" AUGER w/hoppr, \$2800; **(3) 40' END DUMPS** w/o hoist, \$8500; **(3) 48' SPRD AXL FLATBEDS**, air ride, \$7500; **38'-42' FLAT FLR GRAIN TRLR** for veg., \$10,000-\$15,000. 456-1181.

ICE HOUSE, 8x14, 6 hole, sleeps 2-3, new tires & bearings, 110 + 12V stove, generator, auger. 951-2568.

STIHL CHAIN SAW, like new, located at Roberds Lk home, Fbo, best offer. 612-805-3033.

8' PICKUP TOPPERS, rear & side doors, \$70. 330-5670.

LATHAM RASPBERRY PLANTS, you dig them, \$1.50/ea. 581-2301.

REESE 18K SLIDER 5TH WHEEL, \$800; **1989 SYLVAN BOAT**, 16', 40-hp Mercury motor, Minn Kota motor, Shorelander trailer, \$2700. 210-6084.

CASE 600 FORAGE BLOWER w/applicator, nice, \$1200. 456-8461.

FENCING: T-post, 5.5' & 7', step-in, 2" tape & insulators; **2024 MIXED HAY**, green, vry gd; **HORSE EQUIP., SADDLES, BRIDLES, ETC.** 461-3697.

1994 IH STRAIGHT TRUCK w/18' freezer box, \$5200. 334-7177.

GRASS HAY BALES, sm. sq. by Waldorf. 327-3672.

MINI STORAGE UNITS in Morristown, any size. 330-4776.

(For Sale ads continued on Page 7)

travel

S. CARIBBEAN CRUISE, Feb. 3-15, 2026. Round trip air to Ft Lauderdale, 10-day cruise on the Enchanted Princess, 6 ports of call incl. Dominica, Barbados, & more! Starts \$5,299 pp w/2 per room.

GUYS & DOLLS, March 4, 2026. A grand spectacle of music & comedy at Chanhassen Dinner Theatre, includes transportation, performance, lunch, & a fabulous dessert! \$139 per person.

HAWAIIAN ISLANDS, March 17-29, 2026. Round trip Delta flights from Mpls to Honolulu, tour of Honolulu, Pearl Harbor, & more; 8-day cruise aboard Pride of America. \$7,699 pp w/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.



Sparks Free Classified Ad Form for all SWCE Members

Ads need to be received in our office by **November 3** to ensure being printed in the December *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 3rd will be printed in the January 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.

ad connection

(For Sale ads continued from Page 6)

GRASS HAY, sm. sq., 1st & 2nd cut, no rain, east of Fbo & Mdfd. 210-1158.

CASIO CT-636 KEYBOARD PIANO, \$50. 684-2144.

2004 WINNEBAGO VECTRA, 40', Model WK-S40AD, 350 Cummings, red top, diesel pusher; **2009 SMART CAR PASSION CABRIOLET CONVERTIBLE**, gas. 213-0869/leave message.

(3) STEER CALVES, weaned, on feed, all vet work done. 451-2722.

6' ARTIFICIAL CHRISTMAS TREE in tote, \$25. 456-7961.

OWATONNA AUXILIARY BAZAAR, Fri., Oct. 31, & Sat., Nov. 1, 8 a.m.-4 p.m. (both days) at St. John Lutheran Church, 1301 Lincoln Ave., Owat. 451-6563.

(2) CAST IRON BED FRAMES; VINTAGE FLOOR LAMPS; '77 CHEVY GAS TANK. 491-2667.

BATHROOM VANITY SINK; (3) PATIO HEATERS. 581-3901.

8' FARM KING SNOWBLOWER; 1992 S&S HORSE TRAILER; CATTLE HEAD GATE; 2017 YAMAHA GOLF CART; 24" DUAL STAGE SNOWBLOWER. 213-0443.

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

OAK FIREWOOD, very seasoned, you haul, \$125 per pickup load. 210-0316.

SEAHAWK PADDLE BOAT, seats 4, 94" long, 64" wide, \$200. 323-1566.

4 X 6 ROUND NET-WRAPPED BALES, some for \$40, some for \$45; **55-GAL. BARRELS**, \$12. 676-6094 or 390-0600.

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

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.

Air source heat pumps provide year-round comfort that is efficient and cost-effective

As the summer heat begins to fade away and cooler air returns for another season, consumers may find themselves considering how to efficiently and cost-effectively heat their home throughout another Minnesota winter.

Advances in electric heating technology, particularly air source heat pumps (ASHPs), are helping to make electricity the go-to choice. They perform well in cold climates and have quickly become cost competitive with conventional furnaces—even beating them in upfront cost when coupled with federal, state and local utility incentives.

ASHPs are three to five times more efficient than most traditional heating systems because it takes less energy to move heat around than to produce it. With a natural gas furnace, heat must first be created by burning gas and then additional energy distributes it throughout your home.

With an ASHP, the heat energy itself is

taken from the air outside (even when the temperatures drop well below freezing), meaning energy is only needed to transport and distribute that heat indoors. As a result, ASHPs are often far less expensive to run than other heating systems, translating to hundreds of dollars in annual savings for an average household.

While the annual expected cost of heating a home with a natural gas furnace can be slightly cheaper in some areas, ASHPs are far more affordable than propane. Members could expect to save \$600 annually to deliver the same amount of heat by switching from a propane furnace or boiler to an ASHP. Homeowners will also avoid the price volatility of oil, propane and gas.

Factor in available federal tax credits (30%, up to \$2,000 when installed before Dec. 31, 2025) and rebates from local electric cooperatives, ASHPs become an even more appealing investment.



Air source heat pumps are three to five times more efficient than most traditional heating systems because it takes less energy to move heat around than to produce it. (Source: Bonneville Power Administration)

(Courtesy: Great River Energy)

#swceSERVICE

(Nominating Committee continued from Page 1)

at 2411 West Bridge Street in Owatonna. The election of directors will be conducted by mail-in ballot similar to what was utilized last year. Once again, there will no voting for directors at the annual meeting.

All Steele-Waseca members are eligible to serve as board directors. The governance role of directors can be summarized as being responsible for setting the overall policy and monitoring the business affairs of the cooperative.

If you are interested in becoming a director, you may call Executive Assistant Jenifer Shimpach at Steele-Waseca, and a director nomination form will be sent to you.

Or, if you know another member who would make a good director, and

you want him or her to be considered, please contact the nominating committee member nearest you. However, before you make the request, be certain the person will accept the position if nominated. 1078606

The Nominating Committee will conduct two in-person meetings. The first is scheduled Wednesday, Nov. 19. The second meeting is scheduled Tuesday, Jan. 13, 2026. The committee would appreciate any assistance you can provide in helping them select director candidates.

All Steele-Waseca members are eligible to vote each year for all expiring board director positions.

The districts with directors up for election in 2026 include the following:

- **District 7:** Cannon City and Walcott Townships, and the Northwest Quarter (NW 1/4) and the Northeast Quarter (NE 1/4) of Wells Township in Rice County. (Represented by John Beal)

- **District 8:** Webster, Wheeling, Bridgewater, and Northfield Township in Rice County; and Greenvale Township in Dakota County. (Represented by Ronald Sommers)

- **District 9:** Forest, Wheatland, and Erin Townships in Rice County. (Represented by Scott Carlson)

#swceTRUST

Nuclear Power: Facts and Myths

by Darrick Moe, president and CEO, Minnesota Rural Electric Association (MREA)

When people think about nuclear power, they often picture Homer Simpson dozing off in a control room or Montgomery Burns scheming to cut corners for profit. Pop culture has shaped that image—but it couldn't be further from modern reality.

For decades, nuclear energy has quietly powered Minnesota's homes and businesses with reliable, carbon-free electricity. Yet despite this proven track record, nuclear remains one of the most misunderstood energy sources. As Minnesota works to meet growing energy demands and bold carbon-free goals, it's time to take a closer look at the facts.

Clean and Reliable—No Matter the Weather

Nuclear energy generates electricity by splitting atoms to produce heat, which turns water into steam to drive turbines—all without releasing carbon emissions. In Minnesota, nuclear is the state's largest single source of reliable carbon-free electricity, with the Monticello and Prairie Island plants running safely and steadily for decades.

While wind and solar are vital to our clean energy goals, their output depends on the weather. Nuclear fills the gap, providing dependable, always-on power when it's needed most. That's critical in Minnesota, where frigid winters and hot summers place heavy demands on the grid.

This reliability stabilizes costs, prevents outages, and powers key industries like farming, food processing, and manufacturing.

A Small Footprint, Big Results

Nuclear energy is also remarkably efficient in its use of land. Producing 1 million megawatt-hours (MWhs) of electricity requires about 17,800 acres of wind installations or 3,200 acres of solar panels. Nuclear can achieve the same output on just 103 acres.

For Minnesotans who care about preserving farmland, forests, and open space, that's a meaningful difference. Nuclear allows us to meet electricity demands without sprawling across productive or scenic land.

Addressing Safety and Waste

Safety is a reasonable concern with any energy source, and nuclear is no exception. The good news: U.S. nuclear plants are among the most heavily regulated energy facilities in the world. With built-in safety systems and decades of experience, nuclear has one of the strongest safety records in the industry.

Waste is another common concern. Yet all used fuel from U.S. reactors since the 1950s would fit on a single football field, stacked less than 10 yards high. That waste is securely stored and monitored, and has caused zero harm to the public.

To put it in perspective: waste from one person's lifetime of electricity use would fit inside a soda can.

Looking Ahead: Every Tool on the Table

No energy source is perfect. Building new nuclear plants takes time, investment, and careful planning. But if Minnesota hopes to meet future energy needs affordably while reducing emissions, nuclear deserves to be part of the conversation.

State law currently prohibits utilities from even exploring new nuclear projects. Lifting that moratorium wouldn't build a plant tomorrow—but it would allow for thoughtful discussions, research, and planning. 26041

At the Minnesota Rural Electric Association, we believe in an "all-tech-on-deck" approach to energy. That means supporting innovation in wind, solar, battery storage, and nuclear—alongside other tools that ensure affordable, reliable power for all Minnesotans.

Our energy future depends on practical solutions that strengthen the economy, protect the environment, and keep Minnesota powered in every season. With nuclear on the table, Minnesota can lead the way in building an energy system that serves our communities today and creates a brighter tomorrow.

 #swceINNOVATION

Great River Energy's E3 Commercial Financing Program brings value to communities

Through its Energy Efficiency and Electrification (E3) Commercial Financing Program, Great River Energy (GRE) provides a stable, affordable financing tool to help member-owner cooperatives and their communities invest in high-efficiency equipment and innovative electrification projects.

The result? Long-term energy savings, economic resilience and measurable carbon reduction.

The E3 Commercial Financing Program is designed specifically for Great River Energy's member-owner cooperatives to support commercial, industrial, and agricultural (CI&A) member projects.

The program provides low-interest, fixed-asset financing to facilitate the installation of energy-efficient equipment and support beneficial electrification. This program isn't just about cutting costs; it's about accelerating energy innovation and strengthening rural economies in an era of rapid transition.

A critical moment for rural investment

Macroeconomic pressures, higher interest rates, shrinking federal incentives and global energy shifts can create uncertainty for rural businesses. But while other sources of funding may waver, Great River Energy remains a reliable partner.

The E3 program continues to offer below-market interest rates with flexible terms, giving member-owner cooperatives a stable resource to finance the next generation of energy solutions. E3 loans also pair well with other local, state and federal economic development funding programs.

Examples of impactful projects:

- **Advanced HVAC systems.** Since its inception, the E3 program has supported the installation of advanced indoor climate control technology in CI&A businesses.

- **Manufacturing automation.** As Minnesota manufacturers adopt modern process automation technology, Great River Energy has worked with member co-ops to provide E3 financing for wood products manufacturers, thermoform plastic molding operations, equipment manufacturers and more.

- **Agriculture and food production.** E3 program funds can be applied to several different agricultural and food processing operations, with eligible uses including farming facility upgrades, advanced grain drying operations, commercial kitchen equipment and even automated robotic milking systems.

As rural businesses navigate economic headwinds, Great River Energy's E3 Commercial Financing Program is a lifeline and a launchpad. It empowers cooperatives to provide real value to their members through targeted investments in efficiency and electrification, all while keeping long-term costs down.