

THE HIGHLINE BY LINE

A NEWSLETTER FROM ARROWHEAD COOPERATIVE



GREAT RIVER ENERGY: 2020 IN REVIEW

In a year when many retreated into their homes for work, school and safety, the importance of dependable energy became clear.



The electric service provided by Great River Energy's member-owner cooperatives proved essential during the COVID-19 pandemic, powering health care facilities, keeping essential businesses operating, and enabling remote learning.

Early in the pandemic, Great River Energy adopted safe work practices and social distancing, while quickly understanding new energy usage patterns as members spent more time at home. Great River Energy's goal was to minimize disruptions within the company and continue to safely and reliably operate the electric grid. That early action paid off, as Great River Energy not only endured during a difficult year — the cooperative excelled.

By the summer of 2020, Great River Energy was ahead of its financial targets to such a degree that it began issuing refunds to member-owner cooperatives to assist with pandemic-related financial challenges. The cooperative returned \$8.5 million to its members to offset lost sales, provide late fee holidays, or use in any other way they deemed appropriate.

Great River Energy employees found ways to boost efficiency and control spending throughout the year, identifying more than \$30 million in avoided costs. Year after year,

Great River Energy's culture of business improvement and innovation produces new ways to serve member-owners better and more efficiently.

Great River Energy ended the year with excess margins, which are used to issue bill credits to members and pay down financial commitments. The cooperative also retired patronage capital for the second consecutive year, returning more than \$10 million to the membership.

While employees tackled new challenges and implemented health and safety measures, Great River Energy set a course that will fundamentally change the way it serves member-owners.

Great River Energy will phase out remaining coal resources, add significant renewable energy and explore critical grid-scale battery technology. These changes will reduce wholesale electric rates while cutting direct carbon dioxide emissions by 95%. As this transition unfolds, Great River Energy's fleet of fast-starting natural gas-fueled power plants will ensure energy remains reliable.

This decision was welcomed by the membership and financial community. Great River Energy's credit rating was

upgraded by Moody's due in large part to the reduced risk associated with its power supply plans.

Great River Energy remains active in the evolution of the power grid as the electric industry transitions toward more non-dispatchable generation resources such as wind and solar. The cooperative is a co-founding member of CapX2020, an alliance of 10 utilities focused on understanding the transmission needs of the future. These utilities released the CapX2050 Transmission Vision Report, which identifies the elements necessary for continued safe, reliable, and affordable electric grid operation.

At Great River Energy, employees understand there is no budget or timeline more important than their safety. Great River Energy had the lowest injury rate in its history in 2020, a particularly impressive achievement due to employees adopting new work practices related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Thanks to a supportive board of directors, engaged membership, and a talented employee team, Great River Energy entered 2021 stronger than ever and with a foothold firmly on the path to realizing its vision to competitively power the future.

ARROWHEAD COOPERATIVE ENTERS PHASE TWO OF VEGETATION MANAGEMENT PLAN TO REDUCE OUTAGES AND IMPROVE RELIABILITY

There are many ways that Arrowhead Cooperative provides you with safe, reliable electric service. One of the most common – and crucial – ways is referred to as vegetation management or right-of-way clearing.

A right of way (ROW) refers to a strip of land underneath or around power lines that your electric cooperative has the right and responsibility to maintain and clear. Arrowhead Cooperative works hard to ensure that rights of way are regularly cleared of trees and brush to help reduce potential outages and hazards. Trees and branches growing in or near power lines can cause interruptions in service. The uncontrolled brush can impede access to utility structures. Specifications can vary, but a general guideline for maintaining a safe ROW is 10 feet of clearance on either side of the primary conductors and 15 feet of overhead clearance above the highest wire on the pole.

Clearing the ROW is critical to keeping our members' lights on. Arrowhead Cooperative's electric system

consists of approximately 330 miles of overhead and 230 miles of underground power line. In 2018, the Cooperative began an integrated vegetation management (IVM) program to increase the safety and reliability of our electric system.

The first phase of this program was increasing the frequency of our clearing operations to a five-year cycle. If a tree encroaches on this safe distance, our vegetation management team will trim back branches and brush using chainsaws, bucket trucks, tree climbers, brush chippers, and mowers, or remove a tree altogether.

From 2018 to 2019 mechanical clearing of our power line corridors was completed in the Gunflint Trail and Grand Portage areas. Last year the project area was the West End, including Schroeder and Tofte. As we look forward to 2021, our plans include clearing around Lutsen extending to County Road 7. Our Forester, Justin Mayne, is working on making contacts with the landowners in this area to plan the upcoming work.



LEARN MORE AND PICK UP A FREE TREE FROM ARROWHEAD COOPERATIVE!

To keep you informed and show our care for the community, Arrowhead Cooperative is hosting a drive-thru tree giveaway event. Information will be available on our right of way maintenance plans and our Integrated Vegetation Management program.

In addition, we'll be giving away an assortment of native, low-growing trees and shrubs, including Choke Cherry, Hazelnut, and Nannyberry for planting outside of the power line right-of-way.

JOIN US

May 13:

3-5 p.m. at the Arrowhead Cooperative Headquarters in Lutsen

May 14:

10 a.m. - 1 p.m. at the Schaap Community Center/Midtrail Fire Hall



While our proactive clearing plan continues, phase two of this program begins this year and incorporates selective herbicide treatments to minimize regrowth in the areas we clear.

As we roll out the second phase of this program you can rest assured that we take the health of our environment and community seriously and the herbicide applications Arrowhead Cooperative uses during this phase are fully compliant with all Environmental Protection Agency regulations and will be applied by licensed professionals. It's important to note that inhibiting the regrowth of the fast-growing woody vegetation is not only the most effective way to maintain the right-of-way for a longer period of time, but it is also intended to promote the establishment of low-growing native species such as grasses, wildflowers, blueberries and more. Our contract applicators, Lake States Tree Service, will also treat any invasive plant species found within the scope of the project, as promoted by many environmental organizations.

We plan to return to the Gunflint Trail areas this year for selective herbicide treatment. Our contractor will be making contacts and will be available to discuss the specific details for each property owner. Lake States Tree Service has years of experience in the northland and has a knowledgeable and well-trained staff.

ROW clearing is also critical to ensuring that we provide members with affordable electricity. Staying ahead of the game keeps us from having to come out after a storm to restore power due to fallen trees. Every minute spent clearing a tree or branch off a power line is a minute in the delay of restoring power. While winds can blow down trees into power lines, it's often those trees that were left near the power line that cause the most damage. And that damage has an economic impact on the co-op and rates to members.

Not all outages can be prevented but investing in vegetation management has both immediate and long-term benefits. By prioritizing this right-of-way project, Arrowhead Cooperative is investing in enhanced safety, outage reduction, and increased reliability. As always, if you have any concerns please call our office and we will be happy to discuss.

CO-OP NEWS

ARE YOU INTERESTED IN SERVING ON THE BOARD?

Arrowhead Cooperative Directors possess a sincere interest in the Cooperative and the willingness to work together to ensure a strong future. They are available to participate in monthly meetings and special events, and are also accessible to the members whom they represent.

In 2021, there are three districts up for election; District 2: Maple Hill/Colvill, District 4: Rosebush/Devil Track, and District 5: Cascade/Pike Lake.

If you are interested in serving on the Arrowhead Cooperative Board or would like more information please call (800) 864-3744 or email newsletter@arrowhead.coop. The nominating committee will be meeting in mid-April, so don't wait!

SAVE THE DATE

The Arrowhead Cooperative Annual Meeting will take place on Saturday, June 5. Watch the newsletter for more details in the near future.

NEXT BOARD MEETING

April 29, 2021 at 9:00 a.m.



Know what's below.
Call before you dig.

Call 811 or visit
gopherstateonecall.org
before you dig.



OPERATION ROUND UP APPLICATION REMINDER

Operation Round Up funds are given to local civic organizations and worthy causes through an application and selection process. Grant guidelines and application forms are available online at www.arrowhead.coop. Applications must be submitted by 4:30 p.m. on Friday, April 16.

THANK A LINEWORKER

If you were asked to associate an image or a person Arrowhead Cooperative, we bet you would picture a lineworker. One of the most visible employees of the co-op, lineworkers work tirelessly to ensure our community receives uninterrupted power 24/7.

“Lineworker” is listed as one of the top 10 most dangerous jobs in the U.S. This is understandable as they perform detailed tasks near high-voltage power lines. Regardless of the time of day, having to brave stormy weather and other challenging conditions, lineworkers must climb 40 feet in the air, often carrying heaving equipment to get the job done.

Being a lineworker is not a glamorous or easy profession. It takes years of specialized training, ongoing education, dedication, and equally important, a sense of service and commitment. How else can you explain the willingness to leave the comfort of your home to tackle a challenging job in difficult conditions, when most are sheltering comfortably at home? This dedication and sense of service to the community is truly what sets them apart. That’s why we set aside the second Monday in April to celebrate and recognize the men and women who work around the clock to keep the lights on.

While lineworkers may be the most visible employees at Arrowhead Cooperative, it’s important to note that there is a team of highly skilled professionals working behind the scenes. Without them, our lineworkers wouldn’t be able to “bring the light” to our community. Our dedicated and beloved lineworkers are proud to represent Arrowhead Cooperative, and they deserve all the appreciation and accolades that come their way on Lineworker Appreciation Day.

On April 12, and any time you see a lineworker, I hope you’ll join us in thanking them for their exceptional service.



APRIL CALENDAR WINNER

Submitted by: Peter Elvin



SAFETY TIP

You know that large, green, ground-level box you may have in your yard? It houses the components of the underground electrical system. Keep it clear of vegetation and other permanent structures, as utility workers may need to access it during unplanned outages or routine maintenance.

ARROWHEAD COOPERATIVE

5401 West Hwy. 61, PO Box 39
Lutsen, Minnesota 55612-0039
Phone: (218) 663-7239 | (800) 864-3744
Fax: (218) 663-7850

www.arrowhead.coop
www.truenorthbroadband.com

CEO: John Twiest
BOARD PRESIDENT: Michael Littfin
EDITORS: Sara McManus
and Fuller Creative, LLC

This institution is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

