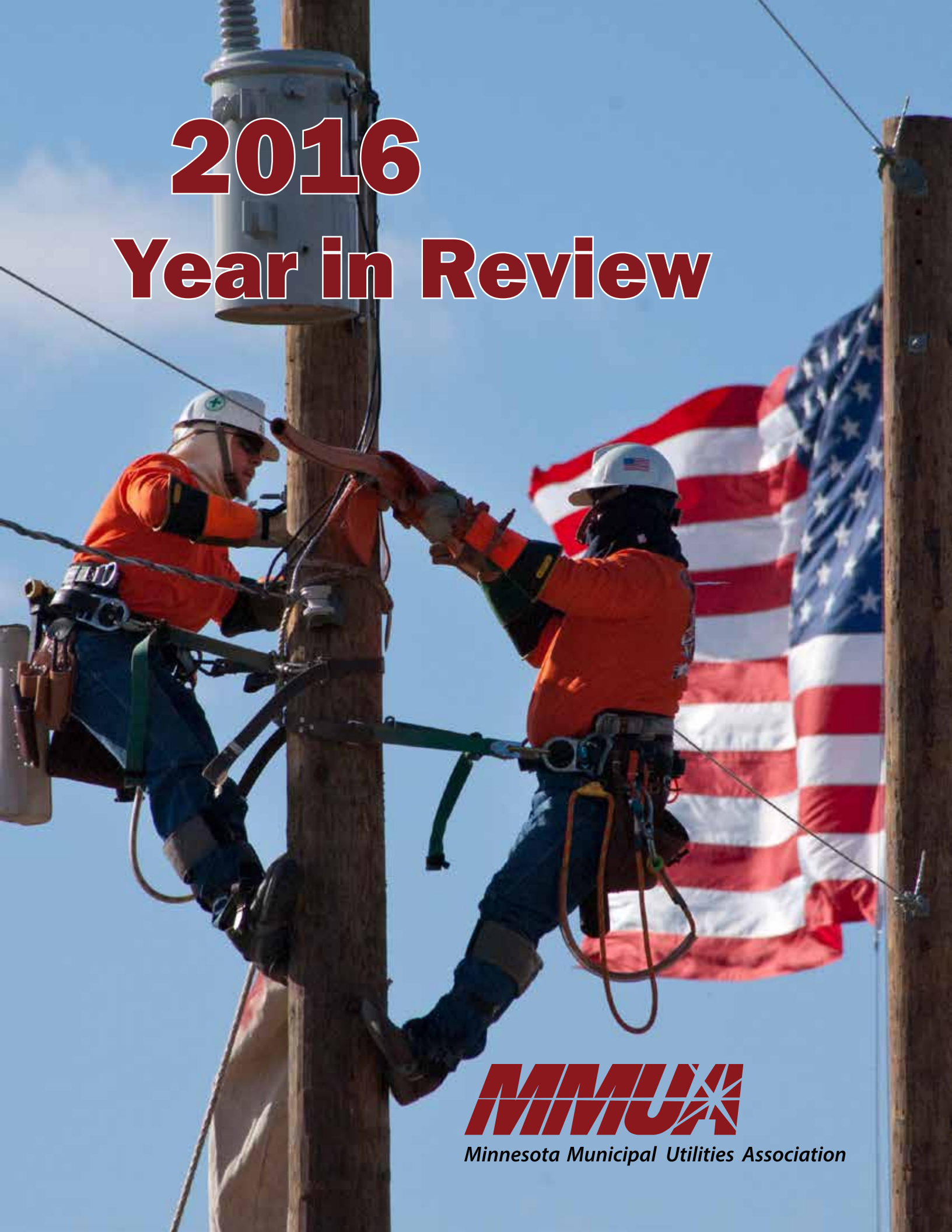


# 2016 Year in Review



*Minnesota Municipal Utilities Association*

# Introduction

Dear MMUA Members and Friends –

Welcome to our 2016 Year in Review. It was an action packed year as usual, with the added attraction of hosting the largest and coldest Public Power Lineworkers Rodeo in

history. It’s nice to take a few minutes and look back on everything we did.

We hope you enjoy this trip down memory lane.

*Jack Kegel*

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**The biggest event for MMUA in 2016 was undoubtedly co-hosting, with Shakopee Public Utilities, the national Public Power Lineworkers Rodeo. The event was held April 2 at Canterbury Park in Shakopee.**



**Minnesotans gathered for a group photograph following the national Public Power Lineworkers Rodeo banquet.**

## 2016 Timeline

*January 12-15* – MMUA holds its Transformer School and Pre-Conference at the MMUA Training Center in Marshall. Forty-five municipal utility employees attend, along with 16 from electric cooperatives.

*January 21* – MMUA asks for flexibility in meeting the proposed Clean Power Plan, in comments to the federal Environmental Protection Agency.

*Feb. 2-3* – MMUA holds its Rodeo Team Training Clinic at the MMUA Training Center in Marshall. This year's training was particularly intense, as teams readied for the April rodeo, to be held on their home turf.

*Feb. 16-19* – MMUA held its annual Basic Metering Pre-Conference and Meter School at the MMUA Training Center in Marshall. Forty-four students attend the Pre-Conference and 60 the Meter School.



**The Elk River Municipal Utilities contingent gathered at the conclusion of the Rodeo competition.**

*March 7-9* – MMUA staff and member representatives advance the public power agenda at the American Public Power Legislative Rally in Washington, D.C.

*April 1-2* – MMUA and Shakopee Public Utilities co-host the APPA Public Power Lineworkers Rodeo, at Canterbury Park in Shakopee. MMUA members turn out in droves—their volunteer help keeps things running smoothly. Competitors from other areas of the country gain a new appreciation for the term “wind chill factor.”

*April 3-6* – Much of the Minnesota public power delegation attends the APPA E&O Workshop, held for the first time in Minnesota, downtown Minneapolis. Numerous MMUA staff and members attend and many serve as presenters at the meeting.



**Instructor Scott Meinecke went over book work with a group of students at the January Transformer School.**

*continued on next page*



**Bill Schwandt of Moorhead, Patty and Brad Roos of Moorhead and Roger Moltzan of Detroit Lakes paused for a picture following the Annual Conference banquet and awards ceremony.**

April 11 – MPPA breaks ground on the 46-megawatt Shakopee Energy Park, one of the newest generation of municipal power plants in Minnesota.

April 15 – Eleven more municipal utility people graduate from the Firstline Supervision program.

April 16 – The busy spring continues as MMUA holds its Legislative Rally in St. Paul. The meeting is shortened to one day due to Capitol construction.

April 19-21 – MMUA holds its Substation School in Shakopee, with 37 attending.

April 26 – Crews from 21 municipal utilities converge at the rodeo grounds in Shakopee, speedily dismantling the field that was built the previous fall.



**Jerry Williams of Rochester, Mark Fritsch of Owatonna and Troy Adams of Elk River, from left to right, played leading roles in the development of the MMUA Executive Leadership Program, along with MMUA Executive Director Jack Kegel.**

May 4 – A group of MMUA members and staff select the top four winners in the Tom Bovitz Memorial Scholarship Award contest. First place, and a \$2,000 scholarship, goes to Ruby Irene Redekopp of Hutchinson.

May 17-20 – members ‘dig’ the MMUA Underground School, at the Training Center. Attending were nearly 70 participants from 32 municipal utilities in Minnesota, three in South Dakota and three Minnesota cooperatives.

June 9 – Minnesota Public Utilities Commission opens a docket on distributed generation tariffs of 14 electric cooperatives.

August 15-17 – The state’s municipals congregate for the 85<sup>th</sup> time under the MMUA banner, at the Annual Summer Conference, held at Cragun’s Resort near Brainerd. Bob Elston of Sleepy Eye assumes the president’s role from Troy Adams of Elk River Municipal Utilities.

August 16 – Municipal Utilities Action Fund and MMUA Executive Leadership Program unveiled at Annual Summer Conference.

September 13-16 – The Overhead School, one of MMUA’s largest and most complex events, is held at the Training Center. A total of 55 lineworkers attend the event.

October 18-20 – Cross Training School held at the Training Center.

December 6-8 – MMUA holds its annual T&O Conference at a new location, the Best Western Kelly Inn in St. Cloud.

December 13-15 – Not content to hold just one Transformer School a year, MMUA held its second of the year at the Training Center.

The double-up reflects not only the popularity of the training, but a slight reshuffling of MMUA’s training lineup.



**A group of students worked on a miniature transformer bank at the second transformer school, held Dec. 16 at the Training Center.**

## Public Power Lineworker's Rodeo—The event of the year



**The Rodeo brought people from all over the country to Canterbury Park in Shakopee for the annual competition.**

The biggest event for MMUA in 2016? Serving as co-host, along with Shakopee Public Utilities, of the 16<sup>th</sup> annual Public Power Lineworkers Rodeo. The American Public Power Association (APPA) event was held April 2 at Canterbury Park in Shakopee. Lineworkers at the event competed for professional recognition, attended training courses, and practiced essential skills in a safe environment.

There were approximately 650 people involved—competitors, volunteers and judges. It was the largest Rodeo ever held, in terms of competitors. There was also a large crowd of spectators and a variety of media present. Approximately 230 volunteers, mostly from Minnesota's municipal utilities, kept the event moving smoothly. Volunteers did everything from greeting, to auditing results, to hanging dummies for the 'hurtman' rescue, judging, helping in different areas and generally doing whatever needed to be done to make the event function smoothly.



**One of four pole lines on the Apprentice side of the rodeo field.**

The day dawned sunny but cold and windy. A 26,000 square-foot heated tent served as shelter and housed events and displays, including a vendor's show, dining area and children's area.

Among those competing were teams or individuals from MMUA members Austin, Blooming Prairie, Brainerd, Chaska, Detroit Lakes, Elk River, Marshall, Rochester, Shakopee and Willmar.

A Marshall Municipal Utilities (MMU) team of Tony Mead, Nate Janssen, Cody Raveling and Derek Varpness finished second in a journeyman event and MMU's Trevor Morin placed third in two apprentice categories. It was the best combined placement ever by a Minnesota municipal utility.

Rodeo day concluded with a gigantic banquet at the Minneapolis Convention Center. Public power retained a presence in Minneapolis over the next four days, with the APPA Engineering and Operations Technical Conference. MMUA staff and members helped plan for the event and served as speakers.

The APPA rodeo grounds were constructed in the fall of 2015, but teardown occurred April 26, 2016, as approximately 50 lineworkers, along with 30 bucket trucks and digger derricks from 21 municipal electric utilities, converged at the rodeo field. Crews speedily dismantled and removed the 14 pole lines (including 129 poles) built to exacting specifications. In a testament to the organizational abilities and work ethic of Minnesota municipal electric crews, the work was completed in less than one complete work day.

MMUA thanks everybody, including individuals, Regular, Affiliate and Associate Members, who helped make the rodeo a success. We couldn't have done it without your help.

## Government Relations

MMUA Government Relations staff represents the interests of municipal utilities before state and federal government entities. Our government relations staff includes Government Relations Director Bill Black and Government Relations Representative Amanda Duerr. We have two excellent outside consultants who assist us in this work—Doug Carnival of the McGrann Shea Carnival Straughn & Lamb law firm on the state level and Michael Nolan, MJN Consulting, on the federal level. Here, we divide our efforts into state and federal reports.

### State Government Relations

#### *Legislative Activities*

The 2016 Legislative Session convened on a historically-late March 8 and adjourned on May 23. The State Capitol was closed to the public; the only business taking place inside were floor sessions of the House of Representatives. The Minnesota Senate held its floor sessions in the newly-constructed Minnesota Senate Building, where DFL Senators also moved their offices.

Going into the Session, there appeared to be consensus that transportation, bonding, and taxes were the top priorities. However, none of these bills ultimately became law. Serious transportation negotiations never materialized. A last-minute bonding bill failed to pass both legislative bodies on the final night. A drafting error in the tax bill caused it to be vetoed. Though legislative leaders and the Governor discussed for months the possibility of a special session for a tax and bonding bill, these negotiations ended in stalemate.



**MMUA's government relations effort relies on the involvement of staff, contract lobbyists, and most all, the members of the association. Here, Doug Carnival of the McGrann Shea law firm pauses outside the House office building with Buffalo's Joe Steffel. The Capitol, under construction, is visible in the background.**



**For MMUA, government relations takes many different forms. In this picture from the Annual Conference, Darryl Tveitbakk, Rep. Deb Kiel, Dalene Monsebroten and Dan Boyce (from left to right), visit following the awards banquet. Kiel, a representative from Minnesota District 1B, received a Public Service Award. Tveitbakk and Monsebroten are with the Northern Municipal Power Agency and Boyce with East Grand Forks Water & Light.**

So, in what was largely a do-nothing Legislative Session, MMUA achieved several successes. Working with cooperative and telecom stakeholders, MMUA helped pass a new law governing railroad crossing fees. In establishing a one-time crossing fee and project approval timeline, utilities will now have more certainty when their facilities cross railroad right-of-way.

MMUA also collaborated with the LMC and MPCA to pass “regulatory certainty” legislation. If a wastewater facility voluntarily treated for nitrogen while removing phosphorus using biologic nutrient technology, MPCA would not raise their permit limits during the useful life of the equipment (up to 20 years).

#### *Regulatory Activities*

In 2016, the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission opened proceedings on two regulatory issues affecting municipal utilities, albeit somewhat indirectly. One involves potential changes to the state's model interconnection standards for distributed generation. The other is based on objections to fees charged to power generating customers of several electric cooperatives. The commission has undertaken detailed interpretation of the legal basis for those fees which also provides authority for municipal utilities to recover revenues to pay for infrastructure that generating customers avoid paying under the state's net metering laws. Government



**Above: House Energy Chair Pat Garofalo addressed our group at the MMUA Legislative Rally, April 19. Right: Visiting at the reception were, from left to right: Chris Olson and Al Crowser of Alexandria, Paul Hoeschen of Sauk Centre, Reps. Torrey Westrom and Mary Franson, Sen. Bill Ingebrigtsen, Bobbie Osterberg of Alexandria and Denny Rykken of Sauk Centre.**



Relations staff continues to monitor these proceedings and participate when warranted.

### *Stakeholder Collaborations*

At the request of Sen. John Marty and Rep. Dave Baker, MMUA met twice with representatives of the Division of Energy Resources, the Center for Energy and the Environment, and the Clean Energy Resource Teams to discuss ways to assist municipal utilities with the Conservation Improvement Program (CIP).

Government Relations staff participated in the LMC Telecom Committee and Rural Broadband Coalition meetings in demonstration of MMUA's support for border-to-border broadband.

Bill and Amanda regularly attended meetings of the Minnesota Chamber of Commerce's Energy Policy Committee.

MMUA Government Relations continued their involvement in the MPCA's Clean Power Plan stakeholder group.

Bill and Amanda frequently attended meetings throughout the year with the government relations staff of Minnesota's investor-owned utilities and cooperatives.

### *Member Outreach*

MMUA's Government Relations team attended the annual meetings for MMPA, CMPAS, and SMM-PA, which provided a great opportunity to connect with Agency staff and their member utilities.

MMUA Government Relations spent a lot of time on the road over the summer visiting member utilities, including: St. Peter, Madelia, Arlington, Round Lake, New Ulm, Hutchinson, Rochester, Austin, Owatonna, Moorhead, Detroit Lakes, Hawley, Virginia, Hibbing, and Ely.

Amanda attended the Transmission Access Policy Study Group (TAPS) conference in Duluth, the Midwest Energy Consumer's conference in Denver, and the Midwest States Public Power Association's annual meeting in Iowa.

### *Member Resources*

Amanda and Bill drafted "Guidance for Utility Installations Across Railroad Right-of-Way," which provided an overview of the new railroad crossing fees law and letter templates for members to use when communicating with railroads.

Amanda drafted the Legislative Report, which recapped the legislative proposals that were discussed and passed in the 2016 Legislative Session. After the votes were tallied, Amanda compiled an election analysis, describing the changes in the makeup of the Minnesota Legislature and MMUA's legislative representation.

### *Political Fund*

This year, the Municipal Utilities Action Fund (MUAF) was created. The MUAF is MMUA's Political Fund, which provides an organized means of making campaign contributions to key legislators.

The fundraising effort kicked off at the Summer Conference and continued at the T & O Conference. Individual MMUA members generously contributed towards the MUAF in 2016. With these funds, MMUA Government Relations staff attended several fundraisers, making contributions to key legislators and caucuses.



## Federal Government Relations

2016 was full of political tumult, division, and chaos—and that was just on the campaign trail. The halls of Congress were the same—contentious, partisan, and on edge. Progress was made, however.

In January, Senate Republican leaders put their first bill on the floor—the largest energy package in ten years. The bill had the general backing of the electric utility industry, including APPA, but quickly bogged down over non-energy matters, including the controversial handling of the Flint, Mich., water crisis. The episode set the tone for the year to come: start, stop, partisan divide, bog down, and move on. Could anything get accomplished in an election year?

Turns out, yes, we got some things accomplished in the areas of tax, environmental regulations, cyber security, and drones, and a big win came in the last few days of the 114<sup>th</sup> Congress when the utility industry's coal ash language was included in a major water projects bill. That was a big deal.

Early 2016 saw Congressional Republicans continuing their efforts to repeal or restrict the White House's many environmental regulations, including EPA's Clean Power Plan (CPP) and the WOTUS rule—Waters of the U.S., which would dramatically alter long-standing definitions of water bodies under the federal Clean Water Act. In February electric utilities caught a break when the U.S. Supreme Court imposed an unprecedented stay on the controversial CPP; environmentalists howled, but the stay continued through the end of the year, and beyond—until the Court decides anew.

March also featured the APPA Legislative Rally, and the pending energy bill was a top priority for MMUA members. A major battle was brewing over a sticky amendment on residential solar programs: the King-Reid provision sought to protect solar customers by limiting the authority of utilities and state agencies to retroactively change net metering standards. The amendment was opposed by the utility industry, NARUC, APPA, and MMUA, which shaped their arguments to emphasize the benefits of local community solar programs in several MMUA communities. In April the Senate easily passed the energy package but the solar amendment did not survive.



**MMUA Government Relations Director Bill Black addresses U.S. Sens. Al Franken and Amy Klobuchar at the MMUA meetings held as part of the American Public Power Association Legislative Rally.**

The spring also featured lots of debate around the FAA reauthorization bill, because the FAA has jurisdiction over unmanned aircraft systems (UAS, or drones), which are increasingly important to the utility industry. FAA wanted new regulations imposed on drone usage, but utilities opposed this—and won when the exemption for certain aircraft was expanded.

The spring was active with several key issues, including the Commodity Futures Trading Commission (CFTC), WOTUS, coal ash, and tax. A positive move for public power was the effort to reauthorize the CFTC, a bill to provide equal treatment for special entities using operations-related swaps.

The House and Senate finally reached agreement later in the year. And just before the Memorial Day recess the House, which had already passed their energy legislation in late 2015, named their long list of conferees to move to an energy conference with the Senate. Things looked promising for an energy package after all.

In the cyber world both the Homeland Security and Justice departments announced in the summer final guidelines on new federal cyber law known as CISA—Cybersecurity Information Sharing Act—long supported by the utility industry. The new provisions offered guidance on assisting non-federal entities to share cyber information, on privacy and civil liberties, and on a final process to receive cyber



threat information, all new language developed in consort with the electricity industry. During the August recess public power provided the industry witness to a field hearing on captive rail issues—Tom Heller from MRES. The hearing in Sioux Falls also featured all three STB commissioners who are working to resolve several issues for rail customers.

By the time September rolled around it seemed Congress had little fight left, let alone the energy to pass anything beyond the required continuing resolution budget package. Several controversial items remained unresolved, including the water crisis in Flint, relief for recent flood victims, new financial assistance for massive forest fires, and drought relief for Western states. There was also the House-Senate energy conference, plus coal ash and tax, with very little time left before Congress broke for the October campaign season. They wouldn't return until after Election Day.

As the energy conference got underway, public power's priorities developed at the same time: support energy efficiency provisions; support hydro relicensing reform; support the bulk power systems reliability impact statement; and support vegetation management language involving federal lands. But we also needed to oppose several sticky wickets, including: oppose new FERC development of electromagnetic pulse (EMP) regulations; oppose all PURPA-related items, including a House-adopted amendment on net metering interconnection standards for solar; and oppose language that would direct DOE to develop model guidance for interconnection of combined heat-and-power systems. Some of these came to pass during conference deliberations—the EMP language was dropped, so was the solar amendment—but the conferees ran out of time as the lame duck session came to an end.

But not before coal ash had one last chance. A stand-alone coal ash bill would never make it, but if the provision could be attached to a larger piece of



**MMUA Washington Representative Michael Nolan made a popular summer conference presentation.**

legislation, something that had a chance of passing, chances of victory increase. But time was running out, and legislative options were limited. One last shot came with a major water bill—the Water Resources Development Act, or WRDA. This is always bipartisan legislation since it has such broad authority over federal spending for infrastructure projects; the bill also was becoming a magnet for last minute “must pass” items, including drought and flood relief, and federal assistance for Flint.

The WRDA bill comes through the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee, which had just developed new bipartisan language on coal ash, language now supported by EPA. The provision would allow for state permitting programs to either implement the final EPA coal ash regulations, or operate a separate state program. The Senate went first—it easily passed a new WRDA bill, now dubbed the WIIN Act—Water Infrastructure for the Improvements of the Nation Act—and included the coal ash language. The House passed their own bill, but without coal ash. A struggle ensued during conference deliberations but the total package was agreed to just before Congress went home. With a new continuing resolution spending bill done, the 114<sup>th</sup> Congress ended, leaving a host of issues for the new 115<sup>th</sup>.

## Engineering and Policy Analysis

MMUA Director of Engineering and Policy Analysis Bob Jagusch was kept extremely busy in 2016 with many long-term policy and regulatory proceedings, which were actively meeting—until the November election. These activities included:

### *Legislative Energy Commission*

The Legislative Energy Commission (LEC) evalu-

ates the energy policies of the state, assessing the impact on the future of the environment and the economy. The commission also monitors the state's progress in achieving goals to develop renewable sources of electric energy; evaluates progress in reducing greenhouse gas emissions; reviews and recommends proposed energy legislation and takes public testimony on energy issues.

The LEC is currently working on the 2025 Minnesota Energy Planning Project. This process started in July 2015. The LEC Taskforce finished designing its Action Plan in late summer of 2016 to identify key areas to drive the state forward toward a 2025 energy future. The areas of discussion were Transportation; Electricity Supply and Grid Modernization; Efficient Buildings and Thermal Energy; Industry and Agriculture; and Local Planning. The group and its stakeholder committee held two meetings in 2016.

#### *e21 Initiative*

The e21 Initiative, convened by the Great Plains Institute and the Center for Energy and Environment, “aims to develop a more customer-centric and sustainable framework for utility regulation, that better aligns how utilities earn revenue with public policy goals, new customer expectations, and the changing technology landscape.” The initiative brings together a wide variety of interests to accomplish the above-stated goal and “enable Minnesota to continue to lead in shaping an electric system for the 21st century.” Phase II started in January of 2015, with meetings occurring monthly or more often in 2016. No consensus on reaching goals was reached by November and the report was delayed for re-writes.

*Minnesota Division of Energy Resources (DER):* Workshops were held and are continuing on multiple aspects of regulatory policy guidance including:

- Conservation Improvement Program (CIP) improvements for public power utilities with stakeholders from the Minnesota Legislature, DER, The Center for Energy and the Environment (CEE) and the University of Minnesota Clean Energy Resource Teams (CERTs). This process was a continuing discussion from Legislation proposed by MMUA in 2015. Though no formal changes have been made to the rule, the process has allowed a free flow of ideas among the stakeholders.
- Combined Heat and Power (CHP). This is another multi-year stakeholder group that is struggling with the development of standby charges for CHP projects. The group is working through the multiple proposed standby tariff formulas that the IOUs and Dakota Electric have proposed. This process will continue in 2017.
- Conservation Potential Study. This was a proposal from MMUA and MREA to study the potential for

continuing conservation improvements throughout the state. DER agreed that it was time for a new study since the last study was over five years old. A Request for Proposals to conduct the study was issued by DER with the study to commence in 2017.

#### *Minnesota Public Utilities Commission (MPUC) study groups*

MMUA participated in study groups on Smart Grid Technologies, cyber security, advancing solar opportunities and development of possible changes to the state’s distributed generation interconnection standard.

#### *Clean Power Plan (EPA)*

MMUA met with the MPCA and a stakeholder group throughout the year to discuss compliance with the proposed Clean Power Plan issued in 2014. The Final Rule was released by the EPA in 2015 with the CPP publication in the Federal Register in October of that year. MMUA was an active participant in the stakeholder process to define and guide the State Plan.

Along with the MPCA Stakeholder group, many sub-group meetings were held to help guide the larger stakeholder process. MMUA was active with multiple groups as the details of the rule were being developed. With the outcome of the November election, the future of the CPP is in doubt.

#### *Other efforts*

Jagusch presented to the Midwest Governors Association on the Research and Development efforts of the public power community.

Jagusch continued as a member of the American Public Power Association’s Demonstration of Energy and Efficiency Developments (DEED) Board of Directors and is public power’s representative on the National Energy Efficiency Registry, which is developing a national trade desk for energy efficiency credits. Jagusch also served as a member of the Minnesota Energy Storage Alliance and the Division of Energy Resources CIP Advisory Group. He also worked with the National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL), to develop a cyber security framework for small public power utilities.

Jagusch also served as staff support for the Solar Distributed Generation Task Force, the Minnesota Municipal Gas Association (an MMUA sister organization) and also for the Midwest Consortium of Municipal Utilities, MMUA’s financing arm.

# Safety and Training

2016 marked the first full year for Art Gatchell as MMUA’s primary Job Training and Safety (JTS) and Apprenticeship instructor. Gatchell brings 40 years of knowledge, experience and wisdom to the job. He was joined by a handful of other MMUA employees who are also experienced linemen, providing Job Training and Safety services.

Ninety-four utilities participated in the JT&S program and another nine in the On-site/On-demand Apprentice Lineworker Training program.

### Training Center

Cody Raveling joined MMUA in April as Training Center Coordinator/JTS Instructor. A journeyman lineman since 2011, Raveling also brought years of Rodeo competition experience to MMUA.



**Cody Raveling**

Six schools were held at the Training Center over the year (for more on these events, see the Meetings and Workshops section).

Schools were popular and typically well attended. Evaluations were very positive in regards to the quality of instruction, and students and MMUA members were generally supportive of the programs. In total, nearly 350 people participated in these experiential learning opportunities.



**Art Gatchell, left and Al Fisher conferred at the Underground School. The men epitomize MMUA’s Job Training and Safety program—experienced utility personnel committed to handing down a tradition of safe and efficient work practices.**

### Gas Circuit Rider

MMUA Natural Gas Circuit Rider Troy Dahlin worked with Minnesota’s municipal natural gas utilities. He addressed a variety of needs, including on-site training, pre-inspections and assisting with annual Minnesota Office of Pipeline Safety inspections, technical operator training and tracking regulatory changes. Membership evaluations of this program continued to be very positive.

*see next page please*



**A student walked down the hill from the Training Center office/indoor training area to the main section of the training field.**



**A visitor to the Training Center is typically greeted by this sign on the south side of the training field. Part of the office is visible to the right of the sign.**



**MMUA's safety and training program provides hands-on training in many areas, including the chance to use various types of the most modern utility equipment.**

*Safety Management program*

This program was MMUA's largest in terms of budget and staff, with 11 employees dedicated to this work full-time in 2016 and two splitting time between a Regional Safety Group and electrical training duties. The MMUA Safety Management program, under contract to the League of Minnesota Cities, provided a comprehensive safety program for all city departments.

*Regional Safety Groups*

Mike Sewell served as Regional Safety Group Program Leader. At the end of 2016, there were 27 RSGs comprised of 153 cities throughout the state, covering thousands of employees trained annually.

*LMCIT/MMUA generation projects*

MMUA has partnered with the LMCIT to put in place customized guidelines designed for safe operation of local electrical generating plants. An up-to-date written preventive maintenance schedule, including a comprehensive inventory of critical equipment, qualifies a utility for a 10 percent rate reduction on its property coverage rates. MMUA's Bob Sewell audited 52 MMUA member power plants, in the company of a utility staff

person. Audits included a review of equipment, procedures and records. The audit also provided an opportunity for member utility staff to discuss a variety of generation-related issues with MMUA's staff expert. Sewell produced a detailed Operations & Maintenance manual for five plants.

MMUA staff also conducted a number of other training sessions, per request on a fee-for-service basis, including Safe Chainsaw Operation and Arc Flash.

*Mutual Aid Program*

MMUA has taken the lead on a number of Mutual Aid situations over the years. To keep current information on a variety of topics, we initiated efforts for members to update their emergency contact information through Veracity Connect's web portal.

We also identified a number of electric utilities that were not current/did not have a Mutual Aid Agreement on file. Today 75 percent of our membership has an Agreement on file and we continue to work toward achieving 100 percent participation.

MMUA and member utilities provided mutual aid for several member cities/utilities. Although we were not called up to assist, we also were prepared to send lineworkers to the East Coast to assist with the aftermath of Hurricane Matthew.



**Electric service is either provided overhead or underground, and offerings at the MMUA Training Center in Marshall cover both methods extensively.**

## Meetings and workshops

For much of MMUA's history, association activities revolved around members meeting together, and that remains a large part of our activities today.

In 2016, MMUA conducted three major membership meetings, along with numerous schools and workshops.

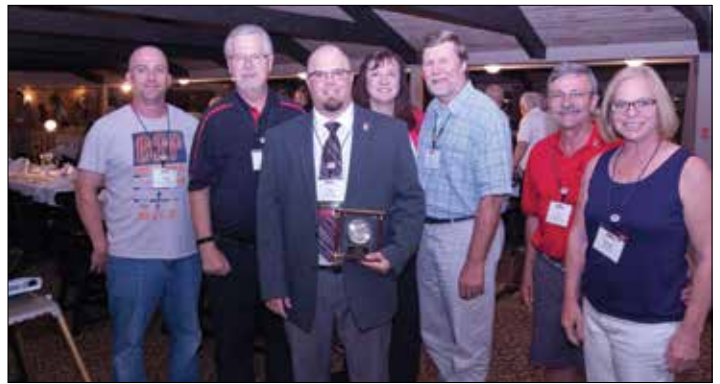
Staff and members were also heavily involved in American Public Power Association events. Under the MMUA banner, approximately 55 people traveled to Washington, D.C., to attend the APPA Legislative Rally, held March 7-9. Meetings with senators and congressional staff highlighted the meeting.

The signature event for MMUA in 2016 was also an APPA event—the national Public Power Lineworkers Rodeo, held April 2 at Canterbury Park in Shakopee. This event coincided with the APPA Engineering and Operations Conference, which followed April 3-6 at the Minneapolis Convention Center. Numerous MMUA Regular and Associate members, as well as some of our staff, attended the E&O and also served as speakers at the event.

The hectic April continued, with the MMUA Legislative Conference, held April 19 in St. Paul. The 2016 meeting was unique. The State Capitol, without running water, was closed to the public. It was also the first session where the new Minnesota Senate Building was open. With the disarray of construction, new facilities, and a short session, MMUA shortened its program to one day. Despite the disruption, over 70 people attended. The morning included a legislative briefing, and a luncheon



**The MMUA Annual Conference, held each summer, provides ample opportunity for utility and associate members to get together.**



**Troy Adams of Elk River (holding the clock) was thanked for serving as MMUA president in 2015-2016. He had ample support at the Annual Conference from utility staff and policymakers.**

speaker. The afternoon was taken up with legislative visits, and attendees re-connected that evening with each other, and legislators, at a reception.

The next major event on our meeting calendar came Aug. 15-17 at Cragun's Resort in Brainerd, as MMUA held its 85<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference. Backdrops to the event included a turbulent presidential campaign and an uncertain regulatory climate. Approximately 320 people attended the Annual Conference, making this our largest meeting. Included in that number were many associate members participating in a trade show. Sleepy Eye Public Works Director Bob Elston assumed the president's duties at the meeting, taking over from Troy Adams of Elk River Municipal Utilities.



**Sleepy Eye's Bob Elston took the MMUA president's reins at our 85<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference.**

Our second largest meeting of the year proved to be the Technical and Operations (T&O) Conference, which was held Dec. 6-8 in St. Cloud. Approximately 200 municipal utility personnel, vendors and MMUA staff attended the event, which featured a variety of technical talks along with sessions on leadership and a sharply-focused safety message.



**The 2016 Substation School, one of several MMUA technical trainings, was held in Shakopee.**

#### *Technical training*

MMUA held a variety of other schools, conferences and training events during the year.

#### *Transformer Schools*

Due to a quirk in schedules, MMUA held two Transformer Schools in 2016. The first Transformer School Pre-Conference was held Jan. 12-13 followed by the Transformer School Jan. 13-15, both at the MMUA Training Center in Marshall. Forty-five municipal employees attended, along with 16 from electric cooperatives. The pre-conference was attended by 34 from the municipals and 13 from cooperatives. The school featured a variety of hands-on and classroom teaching.

The second round of transformer training closed out the year. The Pre-Conference course on Basic Single-Phase Transformer Connections & Theory was held Dec. 13-14, at the Training Center. The Transformer Conference, dealing primarily with Three-Phase Connections, started the afternoon of the 14th and ran through the morning of Dec. 16. Thirty-four people attended, including 25 from Minnesota municipal utilities. Other attendees came from municipals in Maryland and South Dakota, a Minnesota cooperative, a Michigan investor-owned utility and one Associate Member.

#### *Rodeo Team Training Clinic*

This clinic was held Feb. 2-3 at the Training Center. This event was well-attended, as individuals and crews readied for the APPA Lineworkers Rodeo, which was just two months away at the time.

#### *Metering Conference*

Basic Metering Pre-Conference was held Feb. 16-17 and the Meter School Feb. 17-19 at the Training Center. Forty-four students attended the Pre-Conference and 60 the Meter School. Thirty-four Min-

nesota municipal utilities participated, along with one from South Dakota and 10 electric cooperatives. The class included an evening product show.

#### *Substation School*

There was a strong turnout to this April 19-21 school in Shakopee, with 37 attending. Thirty-two participants came from 18 municipal utilities (including one from Wisconsin), and five registered through the Minnesota Rural Electric Association.

#### *Underground School*

Nearly 70 participants from 32 municipal utilities in Minnesota, three in South Dakota and three Minnesota cooperatives attended this school, May 17-20 at the Training Center. Many thanks for the Regular and Associate Members that provided equipment, materials, served as instructors, etc.

#### *Overhead School*

A total of 55 electric lineworkers from nearly 30 municipals and one cooperative participated in this school, Sept. 13-16 at the Training Center. Most hailed from Minnesota, with some coming from South Dakota and as far away as Maryland. Sandwiched between general sessions were two days of hands-on training on the field. MMUA thanks all the utilities and companies that sent students, instructors and equipment.

#### *Cross Training School*

Not our largest in terms of attendance, this school provided good training for the non-lineworkers that attended Oct. 18-20 at the Training Center.

#### *Firstline Supervision*

Sprinkled throughout the year were six sessions of Firstline Supervision. Sessions were held either at the MMUA office in Plymouth or Central Lakes College in Brainerd. This popular program had 65 actively enrolled students in 2016 and 20 graduates.



**Firstline Supervision continues to be a strong program, with 65 participating in 2016.**

## Communications and Member Relations

Communicating with our membership and the general public is one of the fundamental reasons for MMUA's existence. MMUA Associate Executive Director Steve Downer works with many other MMUA staff members to fulfill this function.

Over the course of the year, MMUA researched and answered numerous questions in regards to operation of municipal utilities. At times, the answer was gained through posting an online survey on the MMUA website.

As is the case every year, MMUA in 2016 produced a number of informative publications, including 11 monthly *Resource* newsletters for MMUA members, 24 *Connector* newsletters for members to send to their customers, as well as 10 *Capitol Letter* electronic legislative updates. The *Capitol Letter* was produced by MMUA Government Relations Representative Amanda Duerr. After a several decade run, the *Connector* was discontinued for 2017.

MMUA also produced position statement booklets for the APPA Washington Rally and the MMUA Legislative Conference, and produced materials related to MMUA's training programs and meetings, including a meetings/training calendar. Government relations staff took the lead on publishing the Legislative Report,

MMUA Annual Sponsorships, which have proven to be quite popular, were solicited and administered, as was advertising in the *Resource*. The MMUA brochure, a brochure on municipal utilities, various maps and PowerPoint presentations were updated.

Staff endeavors to keep the MMUA website fresh with new photography, updated information and Breaking News. There is also a lot of behind-the-scenes work related to tying together the website and database. Numerous staff contributed to the website's wording and look, including staff in the communications area. Staff also used a variety of other communications tools, including an occasional tweet and flickr photo pages (these are generally accessed through various Events pages on the MMUA website.)

Communications and Member Relations staff played a number of other roles, including:



**MMUA Associate Executive Director Steve Downer (at right) performed a number of functions and made 55 member visits in 2016. Here he is in Moorhead, along with WAPA Administrator Mark Gabriel, Bill Schwandt, Congressman Collin Peterson and Dennis Eisenbraun (from left to right). Schwandt and Eisenbraun are with Moorhead Public Service.**

- Presentations before city councils, utilities commissions, etc., on a variety of topics relating to municipal utilities and their operation, including the formation of new municipal electric and natural gas utilities. At times, this type of work led to the giving of counsel and advice on a wide range of issues.
- Conducted 19 on-line surveys to gather information for members.
- Administered committees, the MMUA Tom Bovit Memorial Scholarship Award and the MMUA Drug and Alcohol Testing Consortium.
- Served as chair of the Salvation Army HeatShare Advisory Board, and participated in various meetings on a variety of topics with municipal power and non-profit interest groups, as well as government regulatory agencies.

MMUA associates with its members at their sites whenever possible. While staff likes to recount its activities in this publication, perhaps the most valuable thing we can do is to listen to our members. This helps us better understand the issues and pressures that affect individual members and the industry as a whole. This outreach is particularly valuable, as many municipal utilities find it difficult to break away to an association meeting. Steve Downer in 2016 made 55 visits to members.



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