

# The RESOURCE

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MMUA  
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*Improvements latest in a very long line . . .*

## Granite Falls upgrades its hydroelectric plant

by Steve Downer

Work is winding down on a \$2 million project to upgrade the Granite Falls Municipal Hydroelectric Plant. The improvements are the latest in a long line—the city has operated a Minnesota River hydroelectric plant for over a century.

It's a significant resource. The hydro plant, at times, meets approximately 30 percent of the city's total electrical need. The plant contains three hydro turbines and generators. The two smaller turbines are rated at 250 kilowatts (kw). The larger turbine is rated at 750 kw.

A 2013 inspection determined the two smaller turbines, which were installed in the 1930s, had reached the end of their useful life. Following an extensive



Granite Falls has generated hydroelectricity at its current site since 1911.

financial analysis, it was determined that it would cost an additional \$200,000 per year to replace the electricity generated by these units. New turbines were

installed. The generators were re-wound and placed back in service.

The 750-kw turbine was installed as part of a mid-1980s major renovation and was found to

be in good condition.

"The power we produce with the hydro-electric turbines is cheaper and cleaner than purchasing

*Hydro: see page 6 please*

## MMUA holds annual Technical & Operations Conference

MMUA held its annual Technical and Operations (T&O) Conference Dec. 15-17 at the St. Cloud Holiday Inn and Suites. Approximately 90 people attended. In addition, more than 40 businesses exhibited at the trade show, with numerous company representatives.

The conference was highlighted by a number of excellent speakers, and the ever-popular Trade Show and Reception, which closed the opening day.

Lisa Haen of Safety Leader Consulting opened the show with a presentation that urged attendees look beyond the surface when considering accident causes. Her talk was titled Error Management: What Safety Leaders KNOW – What High-Performing Employees DO!

A rapid-fire Vendor Product Showcase was held as a prelude to the trade show.

Kit Welchlin, an MMUA favorite, opened Wednesday's presentation with a humorous, penetrating look at Building and Leading Successful Teams. A brief apprentice Lineworker Recognition program, with MMUA's Mike Willetts and Don Harbuck of Northwest Lineman College, was held before the lunch buffet.

The program split into Manager



Bob Elston of Sleepy Eye Public Utilities participated in a small group discussion at the T&O Conference. Standing in the left back is presenter Kit Welchlin.

and Crew Leader/Foreman tracks for the afternoon. The Manager Track started with Dave Berg of Dave Berg Consulting discussing Developing and Maintaining Your Rate Structure. That was followed by Willetts and an update of the APPA Mutual Aid Plan Framework. That theme continued (after a break) with Graham Nelson, of Veracity Asset Management Group, and a look at A Collaborative Approach to Emergency Preparedness. MMUA's Bob Jagusch closed out the track with a talk on the MPCA's Clean Power Plan proceeding.

Troy Miller of S&C started the

Crew Leader track with a presentation on Using Energy Storage to Improve Reliability and the Effectiveness of Photovoltaic.

Chad Rasmussen of DGR Engineering talked Transformer and Power Cable Specifications. Kirk Peterson and Bob Meyer of HD Supply Waterworks discussed AMI, Going Beyond the Readings. Joe Steffel of Buffalo Municipal Utilities was the closer, with a practical talk on PCB Spills and Containment.

A really fascinating look at how lessons from an unsupported ex-

*T&O: see page 7 please*

## Brainerd selects AEP as electric power provider

The Brainerd Public Utilities Commission (BPU) Dec. 29 voted to accept a wholesale power supply offer from American Electric Power (AEP).

BPU in 2015 requested proposals for power supply. Following thorough analysis of a variety of offers and in-depth discussions, the decision was made to go with AEP.

"Our goal was to reduce and stabilize our power supply expense by accessing low-cost power in the wholesale power market," said BPU President Lucy Nesheim. "The AEP offer accomplishes that goal. It is clear that accepting this low-cost offer is in the best interests of BPU, our customers and community."

BPU's current wholesale power supply contract with Minnesota Power (MP) runs through June 2019. The AEP contract begins July 1, 2019 and will run through June 30, 2025. BPU has purchased wholesale electricity from MP since 1912. The two entities will maintain a business relationship, as MP will continue to provide electric transmission service to BPU.

BPU serves 7,900 electric customers in the city of Brainerd and part of Baxter. BPU was formed in 1892 and has provided reliable, competitively-priced electric service since that time. BPU owns a local hydroelectric generating plant and also provides water and wastewater service.

AEP serves nearly 5.4 million customers in 11 states, and is one of American's largest electricity generators. BPU is its first wholesale customer in Minnesota.

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## MMUA members benefit from meetings, well beyond the planned agenda

*Editor's note: The following originally appeared as a blog in the 'News' section at [www.mmua.org](http://www.mmua.org)*

The more I learn and observe, the more I am convinced that issues come and go but human nature stays the same.

This thought follows the MMUA Technical and Operations (T&O) Conference, held

Dec. 15-17 in St. Cloud. While MMUA does its best to present a program that will be of benefit to the membership, I cannot help but think the real value of these meetings is simply to get the utility people together and let them meet and talk together.

This thought first occurred to me during one of the first MMUA committee meetings

I participated in. We had our agenda. Prior to the meeting, member representatives entered into a discussion over some topic of particular relevance to them. It had nothing to do with our agenda. This may have been the most important issue the people around that table were going to discuss that day.

One of the best things about the T&O is seeing the utility people talking during breaks and after hours. Information is being exchanged and bonds are being formed. It is good to see old friends get together again. But it is particularly heartening when the exchanges involve younger people, who are forming new relationships and will carry the position of public power forward in the years to come.

I have in my possession an MMUA directory (Volume 1, Number 1), dated June 1933. There is much food for thought in this little booklet. For today, I will let these snippets suffice:

"Since the inception of this organization in June 1931 at St. Cloud, much good has come from this organization to the Municipal Utilities of Minnesota and especially to those who have been members and taken an active part. . . . It is very easy to forsee wonderful accomplishments provided the utility men look and become interested in Municipal Utilities beyond the boundary lines of their own immediate city.

"We cannot live unto ourselves, many particular problems and experiences are common to us all and the problems or experience of one property if given to another may, in a great many instances, save that property hundreds of thousands of dollars. Oftimes the same problem is solved differently by different men and when these solutions are cited through an organization of this nature,

they cannot help but be a benefit to a great many of us."

This purpose remains for MMUA. It is clear, from the above, that this purpose cannot be fulfilled without the active support and involvement of the utility people. MMUA member support and involvement, not only for the association but for the other municipal properties around the state, was displayed at the T&O Conference.

The issues may have been different, but the need for the municipal utility people to get together, talk, share information and develop relationships, remains the same. That was the real value.

P.S. Posthumous thanks to Mr. G.E. Basom of Fairmont, MMUA's first president, for putting his thoughts down on paper in 1933. They remain relevant today.

- Steve Downer

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## Natural gas cooperative starts service to Mahnommen, Twin Valley

The Minnesota Public Utilities Commission Dec. 17 approved a request from Community Co-ops of Lake Park (CCLP) for exemption from certain state laws regulating natural gas utilities, because it will be operating as a small utility under franchise to the cities of Mahnommen and Twin Valley. CCLP will also be serving in parts of four townships in Norman County and four in Mahnommen County.

CCLP provides various services, including propane and fuel delivery.

No natural gas service was available in these communities. CCLP worked with the municipalities to develop the system, with the understanding that it would be regulated by the cities under Minnesota's statutory exemption for small gas utility franchises.

Each municipality has granted CCLP a non-exclusive franchise. CCLP is currently providing service. CCLP and the municipalities have developed a single-system rate based on system-wide costs.

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DESIGNING FOR A BETTER TOMORROW

# Public power needs to stay fit as Congress is showing signs of moving again

by Joy Ditto

APPA Sr. V.P., legislative and political affairs

January is here and many of us are returning to gym routines left by the wayside. Muscle memory is probably helping us rebound, even if we're initially short of breath on the treadmill.

After a lengthy period of near-paralysis, Congress, in late 2015, started to get back into a routine and flex its legislative muscles again. The result: notably bipartisan energy legislation aimed at electric utilities cleared the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee. The full House approved similar legislation, although in a less bipartisan way than the Senate. Congress approved and the President signed a long-term transportation funding bill that folded in key APPA priorities.

Public power was able to move its priorities forward in this process because APPA members, grassroots advocates, and staff in Washington never quit our routines, as tempting as it may have

## Washington Report



been to take a break.

In 2016, we are focused on two bills that tee up items important to public power — H.R. 8, the North American Energy Security and Infrastructure Act (passed by the House in 2015) and S. 2012, the Energy Policy Modernization Act of 2015 (passed by the Senate Energy Committee in 2015).

Both bills have pending provisions that give the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission a role in reviewing major federal agency rulemakings that might affect electric reliability. (Another provision will spare utilities from choosing between reliability and compliance with other laws.)

Both bills contain important hydropower licensing reform measures to facilitate early coordination and provide additional resources where needed. FERC is designated as the lead agency to

coordinate project licensing or relicensing. Once the application is filed, FERC is directed to work with other agencies to develop a master schedule for all required reviews and authorizations. It will no longer be acceptable for an agency to delay a decision indefinitely.

While these issues are shaping up in a favorable way, public power advocates should consider taking a course in self-defense at the gym as the hydropower relicensing legislation will face environmental community scrutiny once the bill reaches the Senate floor. The sooner new hydropower licenses can be approved, the faster electric utilities can implement the more stringent environmental requirements under the new license.

Another fight looming on the Senate floor is about distributed generation interconnections, particularly rooftop solar. A number of bills and amendments proposed in 2015 use the Public Utility Regulatory Policies Act to insert the federal government

into what should be state and public power utility decisions about what distributed generation to interconnect with, and at what cost.

At the state and local levels, distributed generation interconnection and ratemaking issues are controversial enough. The strictly for-profit motives of solar companies that rely on deep subsidies through state net metering plans clash with public power's not-for-profit values. Public power is concerned that, where net metering programs provide excessive rebates, customers without rooftop solar are subsidizing solar customers with rooftop solar. Such language did not make its way into the Senate Energy Committee-passed bill, but it will be an issue for Democrats on the Senate floor.

The House approved an amendment filed by Representative Castor (D-FL) to allow community solar projects to interconnect with utilities and have the electricity credited directly to consumers that own a share of the sys-

tem. The amendment is redundant under current law, and bypasses the model in states without retail competition laws to allow third-party solar developers to sell directly to consumers.

Public power advocates must be in top condition to educate the Senate on the progress public power is making on solar offerings. We must assert why federal interference with public power's ability to make decisions will be unfair to customers.

We will also need long-distance aerobic training to protect our right to self-supply our own power generation. Provisions to this effect are missing from the House and Senate bills and must be included to ensure that the ability of public power systems to affordably supply generation resources to members is not impaired by mandatory capacity markets in the mid-Atlantic and northeastern Regional Transmission Organizations. We must ensure that RTOs' mandatory capacity markets do not spread to other regions of the country without the express, unanimous approval of the states in that region.

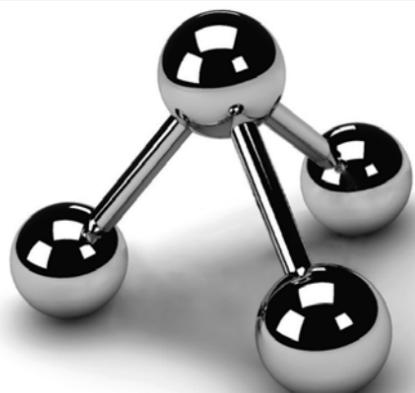
Public power utilities in regions with mandatory capacity markets have experienced high prices and have not seen new generation these markets were supposed to provide. They could even pay a penalty (and be forced to pay twice) for self-supply.

We also must stop those who want RTOs to report to FERC on whether assets bid into the market meet certain performance requirements — a backdoor means of feeding profits to some generators at the expense of a true, well-performing market. APPA made considerable headway in 2015 in educating Members of Congress and keeping the worst language on these topics out of the House bill. We now seek champions to advance these concerns in the Senate.

The presidential elections in 2016 may set Congress back in its routine. However, the progress made in 2015 by public power shows it pays to never rest, and never abandon the gym.

Public power advocates will be polishing our self-defense and aerobic capacities throughout 2016 to maintain progress on key issues. We want to ensure that distributed generation decisions do not become federal decisions, and that poor market constructs do not impair our ability to serve our customers.

Let's stay fit and prepared!



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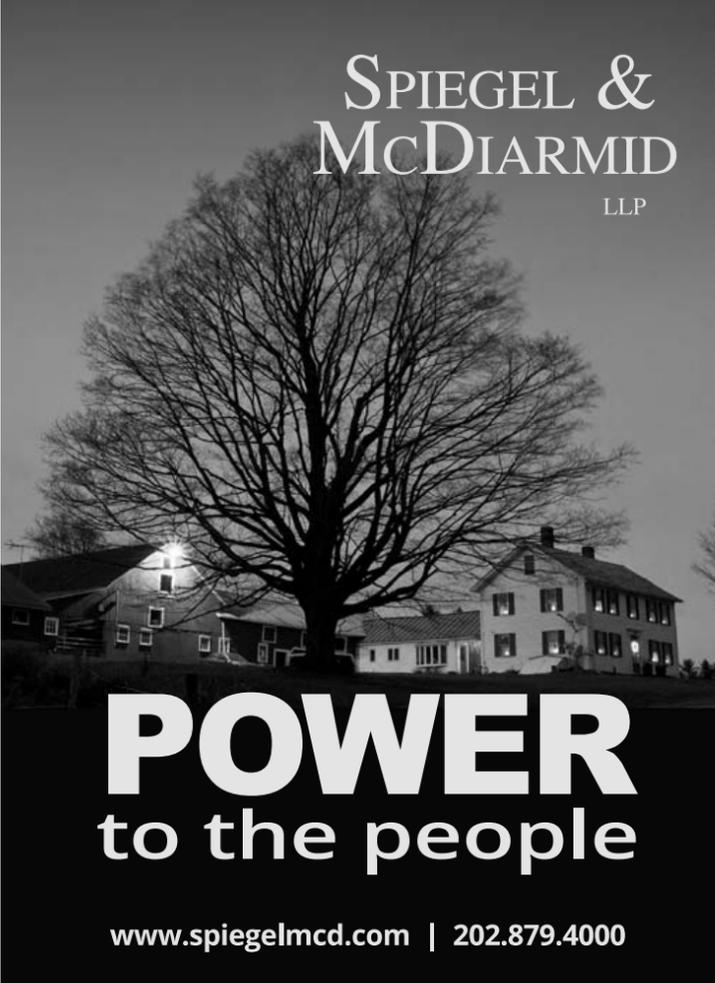


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Marilynn Ogden has decided to end her service on the **East Grand Forks Water and Light Commission** after 27 years. Her last regular Commission meeting, serving as Chair, was December 17, 2015.

Ogden has a professional accounting background, and was knowledgeable in many parts of the utility. She had an active role over the years in pay equity compliance and wage negotiations.

Water & Light achieved a number of milestones during her time on the commission, including recovery from the 1997 flood, construction of two new substations and a new Distribution Service Center. She was also instrumental in making the decision for the Department to become a member of the Minnesota Municipal Power Agency.

Bill Mars became mayor of **Shakopee** in January. He has stepped down as Shakopee Public Utilities Commission president, but will continue to serve on the Commission until his term expires March 31.

After more than 32 years, Dick Thynes is retiring from the **Willmar Municipal Utilities**. Thynes began his career with WMU as an Apprentice Lineman on July 5, 1983. He started as an Apprentice Lineman and retired as Line Distribution Supervisor. Thynes was a very important part of the WMU and will be greatly missed by all. His final day with the utility was Jan. 15.

Willmar Municipal Utilities has taken over full maintenance responsibilities for two utility-owned wind turbines. The utility anticipated record turbine output at the end of 2015.

**City of Keewatin** employees will no longer have to punch a time clock. The city council unanimously voted to discontinue the practice in December. The move will save the city \$1,500 a year in software costs and a \$400 monthly charge for phone lines.

A new power line into the city was put into service Dec. 16. A power outage of several hours was endured at that time.

The Iron Range Resources and Rehabilitation Board has granted \$200,000 to the City of **Nashwauk** for costs related to development of a new residential subdivision. The city was also successful in obtaining \$256,000 in state bonding for the project.

## Around the State



Bids for phase one of the project are expected later this winter. The city acquired 127 acres for the project, from Itasca County, in June 2011.

**Nashwauk's Public Utilities Commission** recently approved a thermographic and ultrasound survey of its electric distribution system.

The **Wadena City Council** in December approved an approximate electric rate increase of three percent per year for the next four years. Rising wholesale rates drove the increase.

Water and sewer rates will also increase over each of the next three years. The total increase is approximately 40 percent. The money is needed to pay for infrastructure improvements, increased operating costs and to meet environmental regulations.

The **Owatonna Public Utilities Commission** Nov. 24 approved its 2016 budget, including a 2.5 percent decrease in the residential natural gas rate and a three percent residential electric rate increase. The electric rate increase reflects a six percent increase in wholesale electric costs.

Commercial and industrial customers will see a two percent natural gas rate decrease.

The **Hibbing Public Utilities Commission** recently updated its customer service policies. Among the changes is a requirement that the property owner is now responsible for payment of all utilities to leased or rented properties.

The Commission also approved a four percent rate increase for electric, water and steam. Half of the increase went into effect Jan. 1; the second half is effective July 1. It is the first electric and water increase since 2009.

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## Agency reveals new name, logo and website

Blue Earth, MN – December 23, 2015 – Central Minnesota Municipal Power Agency (CMMPA) has changed its consulting division's name from Utilities Plus to Central Municipal Power Agency/Services (CMPAS – pronounced "compass"). Although the name changes, the agency will continue conducting electric portfolio management and consulting business for public power utilities in Minnesota, Iowa, and Wisconsin.

While serving as a municipal, consumer-owned, non-profit joint power agency, the name change to Central Municipal Power Agency/Services better reflects its relationships and presence in several states. CMPAS provides individualized consultative planning and procurement services for power supply, transmission, and MISO market services as both a power agency and utility services organization.



"As we grow and serve a larger geographical area, our name needs to reflect the municipal utilities we serve," said CEO Steve Thompson. "We wanted a name that reflects our members and affiliates while at the same time highlights our electric-



The CMPAS team, front row, left to right: CEO Steve Thompson, Vignesh Subramanian, Paul Leland, Christina Pierson, Amber Patten, Colleen Knudtson, and Andy Ristau. Back, left to right: Larry Blaine, Ben Nelson, Chad Hanson, Chris Kopel. Not pictured is Kyle Haemig. The picture was taken at a Dec. 21 open house.

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ity portfolio management and consulting services."

Along with the renaming, CMPAS unveiled a new logo and website ([www.CMPAS-Group.org](http://www.CMPAS-Group.org)) that includes in-depth project and service information, details about agency membership and affiliate member services, as well as information about rebates and other resources for electric consumers. CMPAS's full-members include municipal utilities in Blue Earth, Delano, Fairfax, Glencoe, Granite Falls, Janesville, Kasson, Kenyon, Mountain Lake, Sleepy Eye, Springfield, and Win-  
dom.

"Central Municipal Power Agency/Services will continue to serve as a municipal, consumer-owned, non-profit agency that helps municipal utilities identify strategies that minimize wholesale power costs, manage future risks, and maintain stable, competitive rates," said Mountain Lake City Administrator and CMPAS Board Chair Wendy Meyer. "The Agency remains committed to helping municipal utility boards address their full or partial requirement needs while allowing them flexibility and autonomy to customize their own electric energy portfolio."

In a consultative role, CMPAS offers individualized strategic, technical services that support municipal utility partnerships. Through transmission ownership or electric power contracts, these partnerships help municipals offset operational costs and stabilize rates for their consumers. The tag-line "Municipal Compass to Power" further describes the services and partnerships CMPAS offers to guide electric utilities in navigating the complexities of the power industry.

Over the Agency's 28-year history, CMPAS has attained transmission ownership status in the MISO grid, negotiated contracts for power purchases and other long-term projects, initiated coalitions to study power supply options, and arranged for excess energy capacity sales.

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## Granite Falls: continued from front page

power from other sources,” said City Manager Bill Lavin. “That savings, along with the bond structure, will mean we won’t have to increase our utility rates to pay for the turbines.”

The project includes upgrades to the Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition (SCADA) Systems, sandblasting and painting of the tainter (flood) gates and engineering, design and construction.

Along with a continued flow of locally-produced renewable energy, the project will provide the city with greater flexibility in its electric generation. New electronic controls will apportion the available water level across the turbines.

During periods of high flow, the city will be able to generate electricity by running all three turbines. At lower flows, because the two smaller units can operate at a lower flow than the 750-kw unit, the city can continue to produce power, while operating one or two turbines.

This efficiency is expected to produce a 14 percent increase in energy generation and net the city an annual \$35,000 in revenue. Payback on this part of the project alone is estimated at six years and three months. The city also

expects a significant decrease in maintenance expenses, due to a smoother functioning system.

The dam is 300 feet wide. The drop in elevation at the dam is approximately 18 feet. The original dam at the site was built in the late 1800s to supply mechanical power to a mill. The city first harnessed hydropower in 1901. A new power house was built in 1911 and the run-of-the-river hydro plant, continually upgraded over the years, has operated since that time.

The dam, spillways and generating equipment were modernized during a \$1.2 million project in 1984-86.

### *Illustrious electric history*

Granite Falls (population 2,879) once supplied electricity to a wide area. Neighboring towns, still without electricity 20 years after Granite Falls was wired, asked to buy current. Maynard took service in 1911 and Clara City and Wood Lake in 1913. Farms along the line were energized. In Stony Run township, a farm cooperative was formed and built its own lines and bought power from Granite Falls. This is believed to be the first rural electric cooperative in the country.

As it has throughout most of its history, Granite Falls also has additional electric generation. A three-unit,



Downtown, Granite Falls. The old city hall is in the background, along a curve of the Minnesota River.



The hydro transmission line was upgraded after the 2001 flood.



photos by Steve Downer

Millwright Bob Mashak, Granite Falls Superintendent Don Reznechek and Jerry Mashak, from left to right, in the hydro power house. The Mashak brothers work for the hydro project contractor.

6-megawatt reciprocating internal combustion engine plant was constructed in 2003. This plant is away from the river, tucked away in an industrial area on the city’s west side. The city is upgrading emissions controls at the plant at an estimated price of \$150,000.

Granite Falls is a member of the Central Minnesota Municipal Power Agency and also has an allocation of federal hydropower from the Western Area Power Administration.

The local electric distribution system was hit hard in recent years. A spring flood in 1997 was followed by an F4 tornado in 2000 and another flood in spring 2001. The twister destroyed between 500-600 trees and a third of the homes in the city sustained damage (a dozen simply disappeared). About a quarter of the municipal electric distribution system was damaged, including 300 poles. Damage was estimated at \$1.2 million.

The distribution system is in good shape now, said Superintendent Don Reznechek.

Following the 2001 flood, a new transmission line from the hydro plant across the river was built. A new flood wall

also has been built. Some river-side homes were torn down and businesses and city hall itself have relocated.

Granite Falls has operated a municipal electric utility since 1891. It maintains its own distribution system with

a three-man electric crew. Reznechek has been with Granite Falls 39 years and has been superintendent for 31 of those. Notable new developments include a new county jail and nursing home.



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## T&O: continued from front page

pedition to the North Pole translate to the workplace opened Thursday's meeting. The presenter was polar explorer John Huston. Marv Athmann of Shakopee Public Utilities, along with Willetts, Jack Kegel and Rita Kelly of MMUA updated the group on the MMUA website, preparations for the 2016 APPA Lineworkers Rodeo, which will be held April 2, 2016 in Shakopee.

MMUA staffers Kegel, Jagusch, Bill Black and Amanda Duerr closed the show with an update on all things MMUA.

MMUA thanks all of its associate members who generously sponsored breaks, reception hors d'oeuvres, beverage tickets and were part of the trade show. We also thank all who attended and the municipal utilities that sent them.

### Meeting Sponsors:

Trade Show and Reception: Altec Industries, Anderson Underground, FS3, SEH, Utilities Plus Energy Services. Breaks: Northwest Lineman College.

The meeting also featured a brief presentation to recognize recent graduates of Northwest Lineman College. They include:

- Darwin Anderson, Redwood Falls Public Utilities (December 2014)
- Nick Fast, Springfield Public Utilities
- Mitchell Girtz, Elk River Municipal Utilities
- Justin Hinnenkamp, Sauk Centre Public Utilities
- Tim Howard, Spring Valley Public Utilities
- Matthew Jacobson, Spring Valley, Public Utilities
- Zachary Johnson, Elk River Municipal Utilities (December 2014)
- John Marz, Springfield Public Utilities
- Matthew Schwartz, Elk River Municipal Utilities
- Shane Simonson, Spring Valley Public Utilities
- Doug Walton, Springfield Public Utilities
- Warren Willcox, Glencoe Light & Power

## Thanks extended to MMUA's 2016 Annual Sponsors

The initial offering of MMUA Annual Sponsorships proved very popular last year, but met with even greater support for 2016.

The MMUA Annual Sponsorship offers a convenient one-stop payment that allows a company to participate in our most popular events and have a significant presence in our most visible communications vehicles.

MMUA thanks those associate members who renewed their annual sponsorships for 2016, and those who signed-up for the first time!

Sponsorship benefits include increased visibility with MMUA members and recognition as an MMUA Annual Sponsor:

- on the MMUA website;
- on banners at MMUA events;
- in MMUA publications.

Additional benefits of becoming an MMUA Annual Sponsor include:

- One 2-column by 5-inch *Resource* newsletter ad,



with the option of upgrading to a larger size;

- Complimentary exhibit space (including power) and two complimentary registrations at either the Summer Conference or Technical and Operations Conference trade shows;

- Two meeting registrations at either the Summer Conference or T&O Conference.

The total value of the *Resource* ad, trade show exhibit space and meeting registrations is \$1,870. So you can see that the \$1,500 sponsorship package represents a solid value.

To sign-up as an MMUA Annual Sponsor, go to the Sponsors/Become a Sponsor link on our website. For more information, particularly related to advertising, call Steve Downer at 763-746-0702. Questions in regards to meetings should be directed to Rita Kelly at 763-746-0707.

The 2016 sponsorship price remains at \$1,500. Late sign-ups accepted!



Joe Whealy of T&R Supply, Don Qualley of Lake Park Public Utilities and Scott Grabe of the City of Henning, from left to right, visited during the trade show.



Dale Lyon of Melrose Public Utilities visited with former co-worker Tracy Ekola, now of SEH, at the trade show.



Tom Dew of Ortonville and Rick Hofteizer of Luverne (facing camera from left to right), talked with Andrew Romine (back to camera) and Toby Saxon of Chaska during a workshop discussion.



Steve Korte and Ty Severson of Cargill, visited with MMUA President Troy Adams of Elk River and Joe Steffel of Buffalo (left to right).



Richard Roen of Locators and Supplies talked shop with Steve Scholz of Melrose.

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## Eight more join the ranks of Firstline Supervision leadership course graduates

Eight more municipal employees recently completed the Minnesota Municipal Utilities Association Firstline Supervision/Leadership course through Central Lakes College. The graduates are: Todd Graves of Willmar, Paul Twite of Delano, Jeremy Carter and Myron Polzin of Hutchinson, Brad Gunderson and Todd Keach of Rochester, Shakopee's Cody Schuette and Matt Maiers of Stewart.

Nearly 300 municipal employees have completed the leadership series which is offered at CLC's Brainerd campus and MMUA headquarters in Plymouth.

The utility management program was developed in 1988 and has graduates in MMUA member cities all over Minnesota. The program is a cooperative effort, between MMUA and the CLC Business and Industry Center, designed to provide the leadership skills needed in challenging times. The 68-hour course is offered in four three-day sessions over two years. Participants work with and learn from each other, trained facilitators and instructors, using the internationally recognized Achieve Global leadership materials and specially created units with a utility focus.

Public works directors, finance and office managers, customer service personnel, utility superintendents, crew supervisors, parks directors, and other municipal employees from municipal



A big batch of graduates recently came from a group attending their final training in Plymouth, including Paul Twite, Todd Keach, Jeremy Carter, Myron Polzin and Brad Gunderson, from left to right.



Cody Schuette, left, and Matt Maiers are recent Firstline graduates.

power and water/wastewater departments have benefited from this highly interactive program that emphasizes

core leadership skills, performance management, communication, and handling challenging situations.

Past graduates from these cities include: Dick Thynes,

Ebert, Tony Hand, Corey Harmening, Teri Hofmeister, Jon Hombach, Dave Hundstad, Bruce Krueger, Dan Lang, Jared Martig, Brian Mehr, Jan Sifferath, Nate Smutka, Dale Sturges, Steve Sturgis, Bill Juair, and Lonnie Weerts of Hutchinson;

Mike Heimer, Jon Lenn, Linda Bly, Dale Olafson, Steve Fisk, Peter Bennett, Brian Nash, Dan Quimby, Randy Reinhardt, Mike Sommer, Steve Johnson, Kevin Meyers, Tom St. Marie, Bjorn Olson, and Mike Wilde of Rochester;

Brad Gustafson, Roger Hennen, Mike Enright, and Justin Rotert of Shakopee.

### Associate Member News

MMUA has been joined by two new associate members: Anderson Underground and Trenchers Plus.

**Anderson Underground** provides underground utility contracting services. The company is located at: 4985 Quail Road NE, Sauk Rapids, MN 56379. Telephone 320-203-1830, Fax 320-203-1031, www.andersonug.com

Main contact is Nick Anderson, President. He can be reached at 320-260-4938 or email nick@andersonug.com

**Trenchers Plus, Inc.**, is the distributor of Utility and Environmental equipment for: trenching, plowing, directional boring, vacuum excavating and jetting equipment, forestry mowers, brush chippers, stump grinders, utility loaders, cable/pole/transport trailers, power pole pullers/setters, generators, and air compressors. We have select units available for your rental needs as well. Manufacturers represented consist of "Toro" (Underground & Construction Division), RingOMatic, Rayco, MultiOne USA, Morbank, Easy Spot, Felling, Butler, Brooks Brothers, Redi-Haul, Magnum, Ingersoll Rand, Sullair, Doosan, and more.

The company is located at 2309 West Highway 13, Burnsville, MN 55337. Telephone 952-890-6000 or 888-203-1419. Fax 952-890-4563. www.trenchersplus.com

Main contact is John Rabideaux, Store Manager. He can be reached at Direct 952-890-4563 or Cell 612-868-5646. Email john@trenchersplus.com

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## Xcel files service quality, reliability report and MPUC sets goals for 2015

*Editor's note: As the reliability numbers of the state's investor-owned utilities have been of interest to members, we will take a look at more IOU numbers next month.*

The Minnesota Public Utilities Commission late last year accepted Xcel Energy's annual electric service quality report and set the company's reliability goals for 2015. The MPUC also required Xcel to convene a stakeholder group to discuss and identify new/additional metrics and appropriate standards to assess service quality.

The company missed SAIFI goals in two of its four work centers. The Southeast work center missed every goal in 2014.

Xcel's reliability data is "normalized to account for major storms by removing outages that start on a storm day." Xcel identifies "storm days" this way, using the previous five years of outage history:

- Calculates the number of sustained outages per day;
- Calculates the average number of sustained outages per day; and
- Calculates the standard deviation of the number of sustained outages per day. Xcel defines a "storm day" as any day meeting or exceeding the average number of outages per day plus three standard deviations.

In discussion of an action plan to improve reliability, Xcel noted that it "increased its achievement rate from 42 percent in 2012 and 2013 to 67 percent in 2014 (meeting eight of 12 goals). The South-

east work center, however, "experienced several significant events . . ."

These included an August substation transformer failure, icing and windy conditions on two consecutive December days, and four back-to-back June days that qualified for storm exclusion. The day before and day after, however, narrowly missed that exclusion level. According to the Minnesota DNR, June 2014 was Minnesota's wettest June, and wettest month, of the modern record.

Regulatory staff said the company's failure to meet any goals for the Southeast work center two years in a row is concerning. Xcel responded that it continues to train additional personnel to perform specialized substation outage activities. The company said it is also training line personnel to "restore before repair," which it hopes will improve its reliability numbers.

Xcel said "the issue in the southeast region is one of density and location of first responders," with four load concentrations—Faribault, Mankato, Red Wing and Winona—and the rest of the load distributed across a large rural area. "This makes it difficult to station first responders close to the outages all day, every day."

The company also reported 318 voltage investigations, with 38 percent caused by a specific voltage problem.

Staffing levels in the southeast work center have ranged from 74 to a low of 54 (in 2013), and stood at 57 in 2014. Metro East staffing has fallen

### Xcel - 2014 Performance and Goals

|            |       | Actual        | Goal   |
|------------|-------|---------------|--------|
| Metro East | SAIDI | 79.73         | 82.41  |
|            | SAIFI | 0.86          | 0.88   |
|            | CAIDI | 92.46         | 93.72  |
| Metro West | SAIDI | 83.02         | 97.41  |
|            | SAIFI | 0.84          | 0.95   |
|            | CAIDI | 98.50         | 102.11 |
| Northwest  | SAIDI | 82.80         | 90.27  |
|            | SAIFI | <b>0.82</b>   | 0.81   |
|            | CAIDI | 101.02        | 111.7  |
| Southeast  | SAIDI | <b>129.20</b> | 86.31  |
|            | SAIFI | <b>0.81</b>   | 0.71   |
|            | CAIDI | <b>158.78</b> | 121.42 |

### Xcel - 2015 Goals

|            |       |        |
|------------|-------|--------|
| Metro East | SAIDI | 83.51  |
|            | SAIFI | 0.91   |
|            | CAIDI | 92.17  |
| Metro West | SAIDI | 97.13  |
|            | SAIFI | 0.96   |
|            | CAIDI | 100.75 |
| Northwest  | SAIDI | 94.41  |
|            | SAIFI | 0.84   |
|            | CAIDI | 112.00 |
| Southeast  | SAIDI | 86.31  |
|            | SAIFI | 0.71   |
|            | CAIDI | 121.42 |

The numbers in bold indicate performance that did not meet goals.

### Reliability indices apply to all utilities; calculations explained

Minnesota statute 216B.029 STANDARDS FOR DISTRIBUTION UTILITIES apply to every electric utility in the state, including municipal utilities. The law requires each utility to adopt standards for safety, reliability, and service quality.

Reliability standards must be based on the system average interruption frequency index (SAIFI), system average interruption duration index (SAIDI), and the customer average

interruption duration index (CAIDI) indices.

SAIFI is the average number of interruptions per customer per year. It is determined by dividing the total annual number of customer interruptions by the average number of customers served during the year.

SAIDI is the average customer-minutes of interruption per customer. It is determined by dividing the annual sum of customer-minutes of interruption by the average number of cus-

tomers served during the year.

CAIDI is the average customer-minutes of interruption per customer interruption. CAIDI approximates the average length of time required to complete service restoration. It is determined by dividing the annual sum of all customer-minutes of interruption durations by the annual number of customer interruptions.

An interruption is defined as an outage of five minutes or more.

from 145 in 2003 to 129 in 2014 and the Northwest from 42 to 25. Staff in the Metro West area increased from 181 to 197 over that time span.

Xcel read 97.39 percent of all meters per month. Request for service at a new residential site took an average of 2.7 days and an average of 9.7 days at a new commercial site. The company answered 89.45 percent of calls within 20 seconds. This includes calls to its interactive voice response system. Agents answered 78 percent of calls within 20 seconds.

### City of Pierz, MP reach service area agreement

The City of Pierz and Minnesota Power Nov. 9, 2015, reached agreement on the transfer of Minnesota Power electric service territory within the city to the municipality. The agreement provides for compensation if at least one new customer in the area begins receiving service from Pierz in a future timeframe.

A 10-year compensation period will start upon a customer locating in the property. However, no compensation will be paid after Dec. 31, 2035, regardless of when compensation started.

The city will compensate MP \$0.01 per kilowatt hour "on all kilowatts connected in the described area to be paid annually to MP."

The area is on the south side of the city.

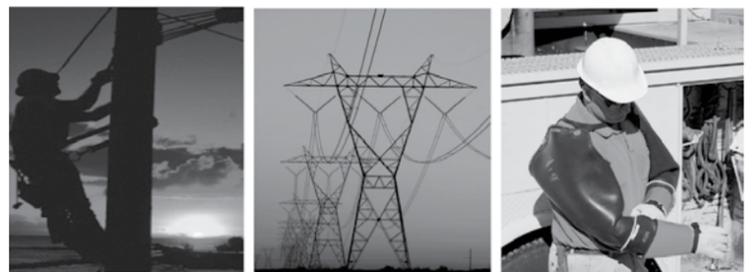


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APPLICATION PROCESS: Applications are available on the website or by contacting the Minnesota Work Force Center, 1215 SE 2nd Ave, Grand Rapids, MN 55744, 218-327-6760, Monday-Friday 8:00 AM to 4:30 PM.

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see next page please

prenticeship program. Have a thorough understanding of electric line work and corresponding knowledge associated with electric energy and safety and health matters. HS + 2-3 years of electric line school, and Journeyman status. Obtain an Iowa CDL and operate equipment. Some travel. Conditional to criminal background check and drug/alcohol test. \$80,000-\$90,000 DOQ. EOE and Affirmative Action Employer, with competitive pay and excellent benefits. Submit cover letter, resume and references to: Dawn Hyler, IAMU, 1735 NE 70th Ave, Ankeny, IA 50021-9353, Phone: 515.289.1999, dhyler@iamu.org Request for additional information contact same.

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For more information go to [www.mmua.org/event/rodeo-clinic](http://www.mmua.org/event/rodeo-clinic)

**MMUA Basic Metering Pre-Conference and Meter School**

**Basic Metering Pre-Conference**

**Feb. 16-17**

This session will use interactive classroom and hands-on training. Students needing to learn the basics are encouraged to attend the Pre-Conference and continue into the Meter School with more hands-on training. Topics covered will include theory, definitions, common formulas, meters and troubleshooting.

**Meter School**

**Feb. 17-19**

This School offers basic or advanced training.

*Basic Meter course*



The Basic course is aimed at personnel with little experience with electric meters. This training will build on the pre-conference session with more hands-on training.

*Topics Covered*

- Why do we have meters?
- Single Phase Meters
- Single Phase Meter Forms
- Current Transformers & Voltage Transformers
- PPE for Electric Meter Safety
- Electric Meter Safety
- Tools Needed for Working with Electric Meters
- Mounting Electric Meter Sockets
- Single Phase Socket Wiring
- Troubleshooting Electric Installations
- Theft of Electric Power

*Advanced Meter School*

The Advanced course uses self-corrected exam, interactive classroom and hands-on training.

*Topics Covered*

- Meter Exam - self correct to focus training needs
- Hands-on Training - 16 different stations available to work through
- Troubleshooting - instructors will create problems or recreate problem scenarios
- Question and answers all week long!

This class is flexible and students can progress as fast as their ability allows.

**About the Instructors**

Larry Chapman of Chapman Metering will be on hand with his staff. Larry is a highly-respected metering professional, working in the metering business his entire career! We are glad to have Larry back at our school!

Scott Murfield has 30 years of electric utility experience. He was Regional Safety Coordinator for MMUA. and is a Journeyman Lineman, Journeyman Electrician and Loss Control Professional.

*Additional instructors to be announced.*

The school will be held at the MMUA Training Center in Marshall. For more information, see Upcoming Events or go to the Events/Calendar section at [www.mmua.org](http://www.mmua.org)



A federal administrative law judge Dec. 22 recommended to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) that it reduce the base rate of return on electric transmission investments two percentage points, to 10.32 percent. If approved, the reduction would affect transmission owners in Minnesota and a number of other states.

The rate of return was challenged by large industrial customers and others, including the Minnesota Department of Commerce.

Minnesota Power has completed a three-year, \$260 million emissions-reduction project at its 585-megawatt,

## Bits & Pieces



coal-fired Boswell Energy Center in Cohasset. The new emissions control equipment was integrated with existing equipment during a 10-week outage of the unit. The upgrade will reduce mercury emissions by 90 percent and also significantly reduce the emission of sulfur dioxide and particulates.

Minnesota Power reported that over the past decade it has invested more than \$600 million to cut emissions from its power plants.

The company was also accepting bids through Janu-

ary for a natural gas-fueled turbine power plant. The plant would range from 200 to 400 megawatts and cost an estimated \$300 million to \$400 million.

Minnesota Power and Arcelor Mittal, the world's largest steelmaker and owner of the Minorca taconite operation north of Virginia, signed a new 10-year electric service agreement through December 2025.

The U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) issued its opinion that found that the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) use of certain social media platforms to urge public

support of its "Waters of the U.S." rule violated publicity or propaganda and anti-lobbying provisions contained in appropriations acts. GAO's opinion, which finds that EPA's rulemaking actions violated the Antideficiency Act, could have important implications for the pending WOTUS rule litigation, ongoing legislative efforts to block funding for the WOTUS rule, and within the Executive Branch. The GAO investigation was prompted by a New York Times article.

The Minnesota Supreme Court Dec. 15 declined petitions from the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission and Enbridge Energy to

review a Court of Appeals decision requiring an environmental impact statement (EIS) for the Sandpiper Pipeline. The pipeline would carry oil from North Dakota across Minnesota to a Superior, Wisc. The project first began seeking regulatory approval in 2012.

The developer obtained a certificate of need for the project from the MPUC in June. The Court of Appeals ruled the MPUC erred by granting the certificate before a full EIS had been completed.

According to press reports, Xcel Energy executives Dec. 3 at a New York investment conference unveiled a five-year, \$15.2 billion investment plan. The plan, for the eight states where the company operates, could grow by another \$1.6 billion.

The company is aiming for a 60 percent cut in carbon dioxide emissions from 2005 levels by 2030, and said it would like to own more renewable energy assets. That could benefit investors, as those assets would be part of the company rate base.

Xcel Energy announced it will acquire the 200-megawatt Pleasant Valley Wind Farm, in Mower and Dodge Counties.

Meanwhile, the west-metro city of Independence has budgeted funds for an electric generator at city hall. The generator is being installed in anticipation of spring power outages, apparently a common occurrence in the area.

Minnesota-based Mortenson Construction has announced it plans to get into the energy storage business. The company said its focus would be on engineering, construction and integration of systems. No specific projects were announced.

According to the December issue of *Power*, the following are the new nuclear capacity and shut down reactors during the years 2010-2015.

*New nuclear plants*  
 China, 19 reactors, 17.64 GW  
 S. Korea, 4 reactors, 3.9 GW  
 Russia, 3 reactors, 1.9 GW  
 India, 3 reactors, 1.32 GW  
 Iran, 1 reactor, 915 MW  
 Argentina, 1 reactor, 692 MW  
 Pakistan, 1 reactor, 300 MW  
*Nuclear plant shutdowns*  
 Japan, 11 reactors, 6.7 GW  
 Germany, 9 Reactors, 9.79 GW  
 U.S., 5 reactors, 4.18 GW  
 U.K., 3 reactors, 924 MW  
 Canada, 1 reactor, 635 MW  
 France, 1 reactor, 130 MW



## 2016 Meeting & Training Center Calendar

### Transformer School Pre-Conference

January 12-13

### Transformer School

January 13-15

MMUA Training Center, Marshall

### Rodeo

### Team Training Clinic

Feb. 2-3

MMUA Training Center, Marshall



### APPA E&O Workshop

April 3-6

Minneapolis



### Generation School

April 12-14

Locations TBD

### Substation School

April 19-21

Shakopee

### Basic Metering Pre-Conference

February 16-17

### Meter School

February 17-19

MMUA Training Center, Marshall



### APPA Public Power Lineworkers Rodeo

April 1-2

Shakopee



### Legislative Conference

April 19

Embassy Suites

St. Paul Downtown

### Underground School

May 17-20

MMUA Training Center, Marshall



### Annual Summer Conference

August 15-17

Cragun's Resort

### Overhead School

September 13-16

MMUA Training Center, Marshall

### Cross Training School

October 18-20

MMUA Training Center, Marshall

### T&O Conference

December 6-8

Best Western Kelly Inn, St. Cloud

### FirstLine Supervision Session 1 offerings

February 3-5

Central Lakes College

Feb. 24-26 & March 9-11

MMUA Office-Plymouth

### FirstLine Supervision Session 2 offerings

October 12-14 or

November 16-18

MMUA Office-Plymouth

October 26-28

Central Lakes College