

# A lot more than a rodeo

Marshall crew honed linework skills but found several unexpected benefits in 2016 event

by Steve Downer

Home cooking (and Minnesota weather) might have had something to do with it. More likely it was dedication and ability that contributed to success of Marshall Municipal Utilities (MMU) at the national Public Power Lineworkers Rodeo.

The MMU team finished second in a journeyman event, and an individual placed third in two apprentice categories. It was the best combined placement ever by a Minnesota municipal utility. Making the effort even more notable is that fact that the rodeo, held April 2 at Canterbury in Shakopee, was by far the largest in terms of competitors.

And consider these facts: 92 percent of the Marshall distribution system is underground, and the rodeo is entirely on overhead distribution systems.

The MMU crew doesn't consistently climb, which was one more disadvantage to overcome when competing with large utilities with overhead systems. But there is still overhead on the MMU system, and the crew has to know how to safely and efficiently build and maintain it.

The rodeo helps with that. Preparing and competing is "definitely hands-on training," said Tony Mead, 39, the MMU electric foreman. "It helps us keep our true lineman's skills."

Along with being the highest-placing Minnesota utility rodeo team ever, MMU may have also been the most experienced. Mead has competed in seven rodeos. Other MMU staff have also successfully competed or been involved in prior rodeos, in various capacities. Two members of

Rodeo: see page 7 please



photo by Steve Downer

Marshall's system is mostly underground, but training for the Lineworkers Rodeo helped the MMU crew keep its 'true lineman skills.' This picture, of an unidentified team, was taken at the rodeo competition.

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## Crews converge to 'wreck out' lineworker rodeo grounds in Shakopee

The final chapter of the 2016 Public Power Lineworkers Rodeo was written Tuesday, April 26, as crews and equipment from 21 municipal electric utilities converged at the Canterbury Park rodeo field. Approximately 50 lineworkers, along with 30 bucket trucks and digger derricks speedily dismantled and removed the eight pole lines (including 116 poles), built to three-phase specifications.

In another testament to the work ethic of Minnesota municipal electric crews, the work was completed in the span of less than one complete work day.

A number of utilities purchased poles that were used for the rodeo. These poles were carted off to the various utilities. A total of 95 poles were donated to the MMUA Training Center in Marshall.

Utilities and crews participating in the rodeo field dismantling included: Aus-



photo by Mike Willetts

Crews from 21 municipal electric utilities converged on Canterbury Park April 26 to dismantle the rodeo grounds used for the 2016 Public Power Lineworkers Rodeo.

tin, Brainerd, Chaska, Detroit Lakes, Elk River, Fairmont, Glencoe, Hutchinson, Le Sueur, Marshall, Melrose, Moorhead, New

Prague, New Ulm, North St. Paul, Owatonna, Rochester, Sauk Centre, Sleepy Eye and Willmar.

## MPUC staff 'grid modernization' report envisions greater role for customers

The Minnesota Public Utilities Commission (MPUC) staff in March 2016 released its Report on Grid Modernization. The report contains several items that may be of interest, or concern, to municipal electric utilities.

The MPUC initiated its inquiry into grid modernization in May 2015, with a focus on distribution system planning. Its aim is to "identify steps it could take to advance grid modernization to the benefit of Minnesota's electricity consumers."

Three workshops were held and two rounds of comments.

While falling short of an ac-

tual definition, the report notes a modernized grid requires five main smart grid technologies to work together: integrated communications; sensing and measuring technology; storage and superconductivity; advanced control methods; improved interfaces for decision support.

The MPUC cited four factors as driving the initiative, including changing customer demands, new technologies and evolving public policy. It noted that "Tomorrow's integrated electric grid will be more distributed and flexible and "will be operated in concert with customer owned resources to opti-

mize value . . ."

A number of initiatives and statutes address grid modernization. Only one utility—Xcel Energy—is currently required to address distribution grid modernization as part of its planning process.

Rochester Public Utilities Senior Electrical Engineer Steve Cook presented and participated in one of the workshops. He addressed what RPU considers some of the benefits and challenges of the issue. He stressed that as a municipally-owned and operated electric system, RPU is very sensitive to the reliability of its system and the potential

impact of investing tens of millions of dollars in grid modernization technology, without seeing a positive benefit to the majority of its customers from a reliability or rate perspective.

Each of the state's investor-owned utilities called on the MPUC for clarity in the regulatory environment, specific policy goals and a regulatory and rate-making framework that will help meet its goals.

Several parties argued that distributed generation will continue to proliferate. As impacts grow, ensuring a stable revenue

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## Rushford-based Tri-County Electric merges with Iowa co-op to form MiEnergy

Rushford-based Tri-County Electric Cooperative (TEC) keeps getting bigger and bigger.

Less than a year after purchasing Alliant Energy's assets and service territory within its footprint and increasing its customer count by 20 percent, TEC and Hawkeye Rural Electric Cooperative in Cresco, Iowa, will begin 2017 as a single co-op called MiEnergy Cooperative.

Voters of both co-ops approved the merger plan during special membership meetings held April 9. The nearly 62 percent of Hawkeye mem-

bers who voted approved the merger by about three-to-one. About 40 percent of eligible TEC members cast ballots, with 90 percent supporting consolidation.

"The boards of directors brought this vote to the memberships because it was the right thing to do for continued financial, service and operational success," said Tri-County CEO Brian Krambeer, in a prepared statement. Krambeer had been running both co-ops under a joint operating agreement. "This is an important step to ensuring continued stability now and

for future generations," added Krambeer, who will serve as CEO of MiEnergy.

Offices in Cresco and Rushford, located about 46 miles apart, will remain open, and the seven current directors of each of the co-ops will serve on the MiEnergy board. Once the merger is complete, the new co-op will serve more than 22,400 meters.

"We're forging ahead on combining the systems," Krambeer said. "Over the next eight months, staff will work to ensure the new cooperative is operational and

prepared to take early advantage of cost-saving opportunities as a result of the merger."

TEC was one of 12 cooperatives that formed Southern Minnesota Energy Cooperative, which served as a vehicle to allow the cooperatives to buy-out the assets and service territory of Alliant Energy in Minnesota. That transaction increased the TEC membership by 2,500 customers, or about 20 percent.

Krambeer, in the co-op's August 2015 newsletter, compared the acquisition to TEC's 1942 acquisition of

the Minnesota Utilities Company, which served a number of communities in southeast Minnesota. TEC also serves nine area municipal utilities at wholesale, including Rushford.

"That 1942 acquisition strengthened the backbone of our electric cooperative then and also provided growth and improved density to our system," Krambeer said. "I expect the Alliant Energy acquisition to be looked at as equally strategic as we progress ahead."

## Grid: MPUC staff notes third-party aggregation issue could be re-opened almost any time

*continued from front page*

base of the regulated utilities, enabling additional benefits to customers, and supporting innovation and market growth will challenge the existing utility business and regulatory model.

Distributed generation interconnection issues were

part of the discussion. Some parties called on the MPUC to require utilities to perform a "hosting capacity analysis," which would indicate the amount of distributed generation that can be safely interconnected at any given place on the utility's distribution system. Utilities urged caution on this idea.

Automated metering infrastructure penetration in Minnesota is relative low (less than 15 percent of end-use meters). Operational benefits can be substantial but may not cover the large up-front infrastructure investment costs, noted MPUC staff.

There was a diversity of opinion in regards to third-

party aggregation. Several parties view it as "a barrier to greater penetration of demand response." Staff said any party could raise the issue in a variety of proceedings and that the MPUC could revisit the discussion, and "narrowly tailor an exemption to its prohibition by considering the role aggregators of retail customers (ARCs) could play in utilities' distribution planning . . . the Commission could simply allow aggregators of retail customers (ARCs) to operate in retail procurement markets, which are operated by the regulated utilities and remain under the sole jurisdiction of the Commission . . . ARCs would be allowed to engage directly with retail customers and participate directly . . . as a resource.

The staff report continued, "While analysis would be needed to determine the vi-

ability of a retail market for demand response and other aggregated distribution services, it could be focused on in-state procurement needs. For example, electric vehicles utilizing third party charging equipment could allow that third party to aggregate and dispatch those EVs in response to utility needs."

Several parties, including SolarCity, have advocated for a much larger role for market participants in providing products and services. The utility would be responsible for reliability needs and operate a "distribution market for electricity services."

Time of use and real time pricing rates are already under consideration for Xcel Energy.

Where all of this will go remains to be seen. It appears clear, however, that these issues will not go away.



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##### JTS & Apprenticeship Instructor

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##### Natural Gas Circuit Rider

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##### Regional Safety Group Program Leader

Mike Sewell, msewell@mmua.org

##### Regional Safety Coord./JTS Instructors

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bwestergaard@mmua.org

Shane St. Clair,

sstclair@mmua.org

##### Generation Coordinator/JTS Instructor

Bob Sewell, bsewell@mmua.org

##### Training Center Coordinator/JTS Instructor

Cody Raveling, craveling@mmua.org

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Rich Maxfield, rmaxfield@mmua.org

##### Regional Safety Coordinators

Bruce Bousu, bbousu@mmua.org

Al Czecek, aczecek@mmua.org

Mark Hottel, mhottel@mmua.org

Julie Jelen, jjelen@mmua.org

Robin Klug, rklug@mmua.org

Dave Lundberg, dlundberg@mmua.org

Marc Machacek, mmachacek@mmua.org

Ryan Mihalak, rmihalak@mmua.org

Joseph Schmidt, jschmidt@mmua.org

Kevin Thompson, kthompson@mmua.org

Chris Trembley, ctrembley@mmua.org

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## 'Energy Policy Modernization Act,' supported by APPA, easily clears Senate

by Paul Ciampoli

A broad energy bill supported by the American Public Power Association passed the Senate by a wide margin of 85-12 in late April. The measure, the Energy Policy Modernization Act of 2015, must now be reconciled with an energy bill passed by the House last year.

On April 19, the day before the measure (S.2012) passed the Senate, APPA President and CEO Sue Kelly wrote to Lisa Murkowski, R-Alaska, chairman of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee, and the committee's ranking Democrat, Maria Cantwell of Washington, to reiterate APPA's support for the bill.

"APPA greatly appreciates your tireless work on developing a comprehensive energy bill and your outreach to public power utilities on electricity issues," Kelly said.

In her letter, Kelly highlighted the top issues addressed by the bill, including: reliability; hydropower licensing reform; energy efficiency;

### Washington Report



emerging utility workforce challenges; and expedited natural gas pipeline permitting.

The letter also highlighted a requirement for regional transmission organizations to report to Congress on capacity markets based on a balanced set of criteria, including reliability, diversity of capacity resources, and whether capacity market rules "provide an enhanced opportunity for self-supply of electric generating capacity resources."

Last summer, Murkowski and Cantwell released a 357-page energy bill that pulled together dozens of bills that had been considered by the committee over the previous several months.

At the end of January, the Senate appeared poised to pass S. 2012, but debate on the legislation came to a standstill in February.

Before the final vote on

April 20, the lawmakers adopted a set of amendments and then debated eight final amendments and voted on those.

APPA was opposed to one of the amendments that was adopted. The amendment, by Sen. Jeanne Shaheen, D-N.H., will provide model guidance for waste heat and combined heat and power systems.

"Public power utilities have a long history of supporting combined heat and power (CHP) and other distributed energy resources, but this amendment is unnecessary and appears to exclude any captured heat from a process designed solely to generate electricity," Kelly wrote in her letter to committee leaders.

APPA took no position on any of the amendments that were debated except for one by Sen. John Boozman, R-Ark., which would have imposed additional reporting requirements on projects authorized under Section 1222 of the Energy Policy Act of 2005. The amendment was rejected on a vote of 42-55.

APPA supported the amendment because of the association's longstanding concerns about Section 1222. In particular, APPA is concerned that as implemented, Section 1222 could require public power utilities to pay for transmission lines that they do not need and that are outside the statutory mission

of the federal power marketing administrations.

In terms of next steps, the House and Senate are both expected to request a conference to resolve the differences between S. 2012 and the House energy bill, H.R. 8, the North American Energy Security and Infrastructure Act of 2015.

As of early May, no additional details had been publicly announced with respect to whether a conference will take place to reconcile the bills and, if so, which lawmakers will participate in the conference.

Murkowski on April 20 said that she wanted to move quickly to a conference with the House, but acknowledged the process will be challenging due to the limited election year calendar and large differences between the two chambers on issues like the Land and Water Conservation Fund and the Department of Energy's loan guarantee program.

#### House passed legislation in December

The House passed H.R. 8 in early December by a vote of 249 to 174.

In a Dec. 2 letter to members of the House, Kelly noted that APPA supported the legislation, adding that H.R. 8 "includes several provisions important to public power utilities."

Among other things, APPA supported the inclusion of the Resolving Environmental and Grid Reliability Conflicts Act of 2015 in the bill. That provision "will ensure that electricity generators will no longer be forced to choose between conflicting legal obligations when acting to comply with emergency reliability orders from the Department of Energy," Kelly wrote in the letter to House members.

This provision was subsequently enacted into law as part of the Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act of 2015, or FAST Act.

APPA also supported the inclusion of language to expedite the permitting of interstate natural gas pipelines by reinforcing the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission's role as the lead agency for siting and requiring cooperating agencies to conduct environmental reviews concurrently.

"APPA supports the House and Senate energy bills and will work with the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee and the House Energy and Commerce Committee to ensure the provisions APPA supports are retained in conference and the ones we have concerns with are removed," said Desmarie Waterhouse, Acting Vice President of Government Relations and Counsel at APPA.

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### MMUA involved in formation of efficiency registry

The Department of Energy has earmarked an \$800,000 planning grant to "streamline the evaluation of energy efficiency investments." The six state effort, led by Tennessee and including Minnesota, is designed to create a voluntary national energy efficiency registry (NEER), which would standardize benchmarks for evaluating energy investment projects, from the mundane to advanced technologies that improve power grid efficiency.

MMUA Director of Engineering and Policy Analysis Bob Jagusch is representing the American Public Power

Association on the NEER Steering/Advisory Committee.

While energy efficiency is no longer a 'building block' for compliance with the EPA's proposed 'Clean Power Plan,' those involved with the process say it could help these projects qualify for compliance with the proposed regulation.

The National Association of State Energy Officials (NAS-EO) assembled a group of environmental agencies for the project from six states: Georgia, Michigan, Minnesota, Oregon and Pennsylvania, in ad-

dition to Tennessee. The team also includes APX Inc., which develops operating programs for energy and environmental markets, and the Climate Registry, a nonprofit that designs and runs greenhouse gas reporting programs. The grant envisions completion in a two-year period.

Stephen Cowell, of E4the-Future, said the registry would act as an "umpire" to review and authenticate energy efficiency investments. In addition to the state environment officials working on the project, several engineering services companies also support it, he said.

DOE said a registry would "streamline energy efficiency project verification, provide recognition of public/private investments, and support state energy and environmental planning."

It could also serve as the basis for a future market-based program for trading energy efficiency credits, DOE said.

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## Hutchinson entry wins MMUA annual Bovitz Memorial Scholarship Contest

by Ruby Irene Redekopp

The sun has been tucked into bed on a cold December evening of my childhood. Mom lowers a tater tot hot-dish into the oven and begins to flood the sink with warm water for washing dishes. Dad tugs the chain on Mom's antique lamp before flopping on the couch with the day's newspaper. Wrought with anticipation, my sister and I hold our breath as Scooby-Doo and the gang set a trap for the dastardly villain.

Growing up, I took public power for granted. Electricity to me was a mysterious, powerful animal that hid behind the holes in the wall and bit if you came too close. Splashing with a rubber ducky, it never crossed my burgeoning young mind that the water in my bathtub needed to be heated before flooding through the faucet. Aside from wondering about the man in a yellow vest who regularly trudged through our snowy backyard, I never thought about where

our power came from because I never feared it would stop flowing. I did not need to worry about the lights flickering out or opening the door to a frigid house because, unbeknownst to me, Hutchinson Utility workers like Bruce Krueger were watching out for my family. A municipal utility is the lifeblood of a town because it values consumers and propels community progress.

Forty-one years in the heart of the action left a deep impression on Krueger about how a municipal utility supports the consumer. Monitoring generation equipment and fixing problems, he recalls that as an operating engineer "there was no such thing as a typical day" because the plant regularly adjusts its generation to fit the market. If buying power from outside sources is cheaper than generating it, the plant reduces output to keep prices competitive for local businesses and homeowners. Unlike an investor-owned utility, public power deposits its annual profits into the city's general fund, bolstering the pockets of taxpayers instead of wealthy executives.

"They worked hard to keep costs down for the consumers in Hutchinson," said Krueger. From large corporations to nonprofits, Hutchinson businesses trust HUC will help them thrive because Commission members make decisions with the town's best interest

### Four top finishers receive educational aid

The MMUA Tom Bovitz Memorial Scholarship Award winners were selected Wednesday, May 4. The top four essays in the 17th annual contest are:

First Place: Ruby Irene Redekopp, Hutchinson

Second Place: Katie Desautels, Alexandria

Third Place: Abby Anderson, Rochester

Fourth Place: Abigail Jo Madson, Delano.

The first place scholarship carries an award of \$2,000, second place \$1,500, third place \$1,000 and fourth place \$500.

The contest was created as a public relations tool

to increase the awareness of public power and create goodwill in the community for the local municipally-owned utility.

The local essays were entered into the statewide contest. Judges included six MMUA member utility representatives and one MMUA staff member. The award is named in honor of the late Tom Bovitz, former general manager of Hibbing Public Utilities and MMUA president.

MMUA thanks all its members who forwarded contest materials to their local schools and all contest entrants.

in mind.

"They're not three states away in an office building," said Krueger. Instead, Commission members are neighbors, coworkers, and friends that value community progress as much as consumers.

Public power is a crucial community asset because of its ability to meet local needs head-on. When Hutchinson music-lovers decided to make their dreams of founding a music festival a reality in 2009, HUC gladly provided the electricity needed to blast rocking tunes and cook up corn dogs. Now headed into its eighth year, RiverSong is one of many HUC-powered events that draw crowds into Hutchinson. Mark Mucken-

hirn, RiverSong's electrical coordinator and construction manager at Quade Electric, praised HUC as one of the best utilities his company encounters.

"They put the community first and foremost," he said, citing the utility's quick response to emergencies and friendly, intelligent service representatives as examples of the high caliber of HUC employees.

"They care about the community and the success of the community," he said.

The advantages of a locally-controlled utility are also manifested by HUC's commitment to education. Each fall, HUC hosts an open house for families to explore topics such as how to identify natural gas leaks and ways to save energy. Passionate about keeping Hutchinson a safe place for everyone, HUC instructs elementary students about electrical dangers, posts safety messages on its website, and sponsors free programs such as a damage prevention seminar for professional excavators. These activities demonstrate that a municipal utility not only provides power to consumers but also seeks to inform and protect them.

The pulse of a community is determined by the strength and dedication of its utility. Thanks to the hard work of HUC employees, from the Commission President to the meter man, Hutchinson's pulse beats strong and steady. This dependability was affirmed by the American Public Power Association when it designated HUC as a Reliable Public Power Provider in 2014. The people of Hutchinson, however, have known this all along. Because of the faithfulness of their municipal utility, new generations of children will continue to drift off to sleep unafraid of the dark or the cold.



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## MMUA Nominations and Awards Committee accepting nominations for board

The MMUA Nominations and Awards Committee is now accepting nominations for the MMUA board of directors. Board members traditionally serve two three-year terms.

Three current board members will be up for re-election for a second three-year term, and there will be an opening for a policymaker.

Current board members who will be up for re-election include: City of Sleepy Eye Public Works Director Bob Elston, Virginia Department of Public Utilities General Manager Greg French, and

Redwood Falls Public Utilities Superintendent Chuck Heins.

In selecting board nominees, the MMUA Nominations and Awards Committee will consider the following: personal integrity; independence and knowledge of the industry; providing a broad geographic balance on the Board representing all sizes and types of utility operations; a commitment to the promotion of municipal ownership of utilities; willingness to commit the time and energy necessary to the organization and the office; and a

demonstration of interest in the affairs of the members and the Association through active participation and in furtherance of the goals and purposes of the Association.

Nominees must be designated representatives of member municipalities to be eligible for election. The Nominating Committee will not discriminate against age, race, sex, sexual preference or national origin in the nominating process.

Forms for submitting nominations to the MMUA board are available in the 'About' and then 'Awards and Recog-



Elston



French



Heins

nition' section of the MMUA web site.

If you have any questions, you may contact Bob Elston, MMUA President-Elect and Nominations and Awards Committee chairperson, at 507-794-4371.

Nominations will be accepted through July 15, 2016.

Election takes place during the MMUA Annual Summer Conference, which will be held at Cragun's Resort Aug. 15-17.

## Nominations now being taken for variety of MMUA individual and utility system awards

Doing an exceptional job locally is expected. So it often takes somebody from outside your community to recognize outstanding achievement.

At times, recognition of an individual is called for. These individuals can be utility employees, policymakers, or even a citizen. At other times, the utility as a whole should be recognized.

In addition, individuals outside of our cities and/or utilities often play significant roles in advancing the interests of public power. These people should also be recognized.

Those reasons, in part, are motivating factors behind the MMUA Awards and Recognition program.

The MMUA Nominations and Awards Committee and the MMUA Board of Directors have approved the following slate of awards.

While eligibility for the awards may vary somewhat, in general individuals and utilities must represent or be MMUA Regular Members. Individuals cannot receive the same award twice. Utilities can earn awards once every five years.

All nominations of MMUA's Awards and Recognition Program will be forwarded to the MMUA Nominations and Awards Committee for their consideration. Awards will

### Utility gives to customers

The Grand Rapids Public Utilities Commission is returning money to its customers.

During its Feb. 17 meeting, the Commission decided to hold 2016 rates steady and to refund an unexpected credit from its wholesale supplier—Minnesota Power. The estimated refund to be passed along is between \$80,000 and \$100,000. The credit will be returned through the purchased power adjustment of a customer's bill and will likely be applied in June or July.

be presented at the MMUA Annual Summer Conference Aug. 15-17, at Cragun's Resort.

### MMUA Honorary Lifetime Membership

This prestigious award symbolizes a long professional life dedicated not only to the advancement of municipal utilities locally, but also for the betterment of our industry on a state-wide basis.

Eligibility: Individuals who have concluded or are about to conclude a long and distinguished career in the municipal utility industry.

Criteria: Nominees should have:

- a long professional life dedicated to the achievement of excellence in the municipal utility industry;

- a strong record of involvement in MMUA and efforts on behalf of the betterment of the industry on a statewide basis.

### Public Service Award

This award is given to a local, state or federal elected or appointed official who has been a strong supporter of MMUA and its members.

Eligibility: Any publicly elected or appointed official at the local, national or state level whose activities have advanced the objectives of public power.

Criteria: Nominees should have:

- made substantial contributions to public power;
- made contributions with lasting impact.

### Community Service Award

This award is given to an individual who has performed long and well in support of a municipal utility at the local level.

Eligibility: An individual who has a long record of service to an MMUA member utility.

Criteria: An individual

who has performed long and well at the local level, but who may not have the level of involvement with MMUA to merit a lifetime membership.

### Distinguished Service Award

This award is given to individuals who perform outstanding service in support of the association and its goals.

Eligibility: Individuals who demonstrate leadership on various issues.

Criteria: Performance of outstanding service in support of the association or its goals.

### System Innovation Award

This award is given to a utility that has demonstrated leadership and innovation in customer service, energy efficiency or renewables, technology, or other areas.

Eligibility: The utility must be an MMUA regular

member system.

Criteria: Nominees should have achievement or sustained performance that:

- was widely recognized in the public power field;
- served to enhance public power's prestige;
- improved service to their communities;
- represented an earnest, coordinated effort on the part of the system.

### Nominate now

Nomination forms for each award are available in the 'About' and then 'Awards and Recognition' section of the MMUA web site.

Nominations are due to the MMUA office by July 15, 2016.

Please submit nomination forms to MMUA via e-mail at [tneddermeyer@mmua.org](mailto:tneddermeyer@mmua.org), via fax at 763-551-0459, or via U.S. mail at 3025 Harbor Lane N., Suite 400 Plymouth, MN 55447.

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**Municipal Compass to Power**

In 2015, Central Minnesota Municipal Power Agency announced a change in the name of its management and consulting division from Utilities Plus to **Central Municipal Power Agency/Services (CMPAS - pronounced "compass")**.

Although the name changes, CMPAS will continue to serve as both a project-oriented power agency and electric utility services organization.

## MMUA holds shortened Legislative Rally due to capitol construction

MMUA held its Legislative Rally April 16, in St. Paul. With the state capitol under construction, the annual event was shortened to one day and featured member visits with their legislators and a cordial, casual evening reception attended by many Senators and Representatives from member communities.

The Embassy Suites hotel served as rally headquarters. The morning included a legislative briefing by Bill Black and Amanda Duerr of MMUA, and Doug Carnival of the McGrann Shea law firm.



Buffalo Municipal Utilities Director Joe Steffel, right, made the afternoon rounds with the nattily-attired Doug Carnival, a partner in the McGrann Shea law firm.

ter effluent limits, broadband funding and small wireless pole attachments. (For a closer look at these positions, please go to the 'Public Policy' section of the MMUA website, and click on 'State' then 'Current Issues'.)

Rep. Pat Garofalo (R-Farmington), chair of the House Job Growth and Energy Affordability Committee, was an interesting and engaging luncheon speaker. Many attendees dropped in to the committee's hearing that afternoon, to hear debate on the environment, agriculture, economic development, and energy omnibus bill.

Shuttles ferried attendees back and forth from the hotel to the State Office Building. Over 70 people attended.



Rep. Dave Baker, left and Willmar Municipal Utilities General Manager Wes Hompe.

Members were free to discuss issues of particular concern with their legislators. Issues MMUA had taken positions on, and briefed its members on, included Conservation Improvement Program challenges, railroad right-of-way crossing fees, refundable sales tax for construction materials, the labeling of non-flushable wipes, regulatory certainty for wastewa-

North-central Minnesota was well-represented at the rally reception. Pictured here, from left to right, are: Chris Olson and Al Crowser of ALP Utilities (Alexandria), Paul Hoeschen of Sauk Centre Public Utilities, Reps. Torrey Westrom and Mary Franson, Sen. Bill Ingebrigtsen, Bobbie Osterberg of Alexandria and Denny Rykken of Sauk Centre.



Making the trip from northwestern Minnesota were, from left to right: Dale Narlock of Thief River Falls, Kevin Berg of Hawley, Dalene Monebrotten of NMPA and Don Martodam of Hawley.



### Municipals picked as climate-smart partners

Five Minnesota cities have reportedly been chosen to partner with five German cities to explore and advance economically beneficial, "climate smart" energy strategies. The

Minnesota cities include Duluth, Elk River, Morris, Rochester and Warren. All but Morris are MMUA members or have MMUA-member utilities.



Rep. Pat Garofalo, chair of the House Job Growth and Energy Affordability Committee, was an entertaining and insightful luncheon speaker.



That afternoon, Chair Garofalo, flanked by staff members, including GOP Research Consultant Bill Glahn (far left) and Legislative Assistant Meagan Rice (far right) presided over a committee hearing.



Larry Buboltz of Detroit Lakes, left, and Rep. Tim Miller.



Wes Hompe, Rep. Clark Johnson and Bill Black.



Scott Johnson of Springfield and Rep. Nels Pierson.



Pictured at left: Rep. Paul Anderson and Vernell Roberts of Detroit Lakes, from left to right. At right: Chuck Heins of Redwood Falls, Sen. Gary Dahms and Brad Roos of Marshall.



## MMUA submits letter of support for 'SunShot' grant proposal

MMUA has submitted a letter of support for a Minnesota Department of Commerce (DOC) \$2.5 million 'SunShot Incubator Program' grant application. The grant opportunity is made available by the U.S. Department of Energy.

The DOC, with its partners, proposes to develop a solar deployment modeling tool "that informs strategic pathways to achieve Minnesota's near- and long-term solar energy goals," and will undertake a "stakeholder engagement process to inform the choice between different solar deployment strategies

without seeking to set policy."

According to project documents, the development of Minnesota's solar deployment process "will build on a diverse set of existing and ongoing efforts to transition to a clean energy system. Examples include . . . the Value of Solar (VOS) methodology development, and Minnesota's continuing development of a clean power plan."

The work will culminate with a document to "put forth leading options for deployment in Minnesota."

The DOC will work with a number of grant sub-recipi-

ents, including Clean Power Research (CPR), Center for Energy and Environment (CEE) and the state-funded Clean Energy Resource Teams (CERTs). CPR, which has worked on Minnesota's VOS methodology, will build a solar deployment modeling tool. CERTS will "identify municipal and cooperative utility issues impacting solar deployment . . ."

Investor-owned utilities and Great River Energy will be engaged, as will MMUA Director of Engineering and Policy Analysis Bob Jagusch.



photo by Jack Kegel

Crews from 21 municipal electric utilities, including Marshall Municipal Utilities, converged on the rodeo grounds at Canterbury Park in Shakopee, to dismantle the pole structures and return the area to its pre-rodeo condition. Many of these same linemen also participated in the rodeo.

## Rodeo:

continued from front page

the journeyman team—Cody Raveling and Nate Janssen—also placed individually in past rodeos as apprentices.

As soon as the rodeo events were announced, the MMU team started preparing. Training was on their own time initially, though the utility let the men use a shop to practice in, on really nasty days. Eighteen-foot poles were set up in the shop and the team worked through each of the events.

As the event got closer, no matter the weather, they practiced outside. Weekends and after-hours time included an increasing amount of practice, including Easter Sunday afternoon. Family support was a necessary in-



Tony Mead



Nate Janssen



Cody Raveling



Derek Varpness

gredient to their success.

The utility also allowed a limited amount of practice time on work hours as the event drew near. Practice times to complete events were consistently lowered.

“We knew we would be competitive,” said MMU Electric Superintendent Larry Lamote.

With a little luck, the journeyman team could have finished third overall. One little

glitch pushed them out of the top overall rankings.

Lamote also spent a lot of time with apprentices Trevor Morin and Derek Varpness, drilling them on the “make or break” written test. He would make up a test out of the APPA Safety Manual. An area was set up similar to what the men would encounter at the actual event. He would stand in front of them, hand them the test, and start his stopwatch.

MMU Electric Operations Manager Steve Johnson served as a rodeo judge. He said that, in preparing for the rodeo, his linemen learn to become more proficient. It is also a “huge morale builder,” he said, bleeding into relationships on and off the job and building enthusiasm.

“I really enjoy seeing what goes on here,” Johnson said.

“It makes a nice, tight group,” Lamote said. “They

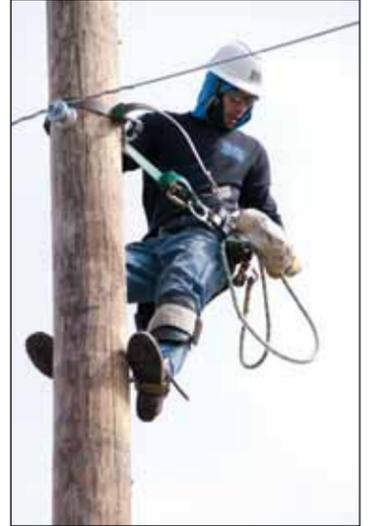
respect each other.”

Camaraderie extended not only within the MMU crew, but throughout all the Minnesota crews involved.

While he had competed in numerous rodeos, this year was a “totally different experience,” Mead said. That is because the MMU team was working with other Minnesota municipal utilities, starting last fall with the rodeo line field construction.

It meant a lot to work with the other linemen, Mead said. People got to know each other. The rodeo and other training events, Mead said, made linemen from different cities realize they are “part of a bigger thing.”

Mead was very complimentary to the other Minnesota teams. They all showed “a lot of respect and appreciation” for each other. Everybody, including family and friends,



Trevor Morin had a good day at the rodeo, placing third overall in the apprentice class.

cheered each other on.

MMU wouldn’t have been there without the help of the other utilities, Mead said. A lot went into the event from all the utilities, including donating to and building the line field and working to make the event function smoothly.

So while the rodeo was a competitive event, it felt more like working together to many of the Minnesota people involved.

Looking back on it, Mead said, the only downside was dismantling the line field they had built and so many had competed on together.



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## Two more cities getting natural gas distribution service

Two more Minnesota cities will be getting natural gas service in 2016. The Minnesota Public Utilities Commission (MPUC) has approved financial and other details for the extension of service to Ulen, Hittderal and surrounding areas in northwest Minnesota’s Clay County.

Northern States Power (Xcel) requested an extension surcharge rider to the cities and surrounding areas. Xcel also proposed to enter into an “assignment and assumption agreement” with Greater Minnesota Transmission (GMT) and West Central Ag Services (WCAS).

The MPUC in 1994 approved Xcel’s request for a tariff that would allow the company to extend natural gas service to areas that were otherwise uneconomic. This tariff was expanded and updated. The riders accommodate either a third party provider of services or Xcel constructed facilities.

The tariff allows a recovery term of up to 30 years, but in this case Xcel requested a 15-year term.

The company was granted a 75-foot service line extension allowance for new customers taking service. The state agreed with Xcel that all system customers benefit from the addition of the customers, and that it was reasonable to allow for a service line extension allowance.

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## MMPA breaks ground for Shakopee Energy Park distributed generation facility

April 11, 2016 – A 46-megawatt distributed generation power facility being built by the Minnesota Municipal Power Agency will soon be rising on the eastern edge of Shakopee, near Canterbury Park.

MMPA has broken ground on the six-acre site and expects the facility, fueled by natural gas, to be operational next year. MMPA is the wholesale power supplier to Shakopee Public Utilities, as well as 11 other municipal member communities.

MMPA's management partner, Avant Energy of Minneapolis, is managing the facility's design and construction.

"MMPA is committed to adding local, efficient resources to the Agency's generation portfolio," said Avant Energy's Vice President of Consulting and Development, Kelsey Dillon.

"The Agency sees significant advantages to the project, including local interconnection to avoid high voltage transmission, increased local



This artist's rendering of the Shakopee Energy Park shows architectural details familiar to many municipal power plants, including arched windows.

reliability of supply and supporting business development in our member communities," Dillon said.

John Crooks, Shakopee Public Utilities Manager and MMPA board member, said his community is enthusiastic about the project.

"We very much like having this generating facility in Shakopee because we see great advantage in having local production and distribution," Crooks said. "We're a growing community and we're pleased to have this opportunity to offer increased electric reliability to our customers."

Recent large, high-profile additions to Shakopee's busi-

ness base include Amazon and Shutterfly.

Crooks added that hot water recovered from the natural gas-fired reciprocating engines will be another important economic development tool for the Shakopee area. Further, he said, the facility will support the MMPA mission to provide competitively-priced, reliable power to its customers.

The power from Shakopee Energy Park will become an important component of MMPA's diversified portfolio of generation resources, which includes facilities like Faribault Energy Park, fueled by natural gas and its newest renewable energy facilities

—Oak Glen Wind Farm near Blooming Prairie and the Hometown BioEnergy facility in Le Sueur.

"MMPA is committed to being a good neighbor in host communities," Crooks said. "We are excited that in addition to power generation, the facility will offer energy education for students and Shakopee residents—providing a community asset for years to come."

Other municipal utility members of MMPA are in Anoka, Arlington, Brownston, Buffalo, Chaska, East Grand Forks, Elk River, Le Sueur, North St. Paul, Olivia, and Winthrop.

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### Energy Assistance available until July 1; crisis benefit expanded

The snow may be gone but many Minnesotans are still digging out from under winter heating bills. The Energy Assistance Program (EAP) helps low-income households pay their bills.

EAP has an opportunity to serve more households and offer additional benefits to households already served this year. This is because program participation is down due to energy and fuel prices remaining low, and mild weather.

With money available, EAP is taking action to deliver additional services to more households, including:

- Extending the deadline to receive applications from May 31 to July 1, 2016 (for this program year only);
- Increasing the maximum 'crisis' benefit from \$500 to \$1,000 for households experiencing an energy emergency (e.g. shut-off or threat of disconnect).

The EAP office reports that 70 percent of households eligible for EAP have not yet asked for help. With funds available, EAP wants to reach out to eligible Minnesotans who have difficulty paying their energy bills and encourage them to apply. Households that include children under the age of six,

people with disabilities, veterans, and seniors are especially encouraged to apply.

For a printable flyer to help spread the word, go to the 'Breaking News' section of

the MMUA website.

EAP encourages MMUA members to perform outreach to the people you serve, through whatever means are available.

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The Minnesota Public Utilities Commission (MPUC) May 31 approved a proposed 62 megawatt, 515-acre solar project on farmland four miles east of Marshall. This 'Aurora' project was contested by local residents, who argued it was illegal to use prime farmland. An administrative law judge found there was no feasible and prudent alternative.

The MPUC in April denied a landowner's petition to reconsider an earlier decision, clearing the way for the state's largest solar development, on 800 acres in Chisago County, four miles southeast of North Branch.

## Bits & Pieces



This development is expected to deliver 100 megawatts at peak output.

The Wright County Board April 19 approved an emergency moratorium on proposed solar projects. The action does not affect existing projects or current applications for permits. The moratorium follows months of discussion and is in effect until May 10. Numerous projects have been proposed in townships and 'Aurora'

project sites near Annandale, Buffalo and Montrose are underway. At the Buffalo site, 11 acres of mature trees were cut down to make way for the solar panels.

Two more wind farms have been proposed in Lyon and Lincoln counties. Geronimo Energy and EDF Renewable Energy (formerly enXco) are the developers. One development would cover 30,000 acres and another 35,000 acres. Output is expected to be 400 megawatts at full tilt.

The license for five Otter Tail Power hydroelectric plants will expire in 2021. The company held an open house April 18 to "fully engage interested stakeholders." The plants are Dayton Hollow, Hoot Lake, Pisgah, Taplin Gorge (Friberg) and Wright (Central). The plants generate about one percent of the electricity the company sells, and are valued for their longevity, reliability, and ability to provide renewable energy.

The most recent Minnesota Power 'Northland energy plan' proposes to cut coal-

based electricity by 42 percent by 2020. MP proposes an eventual mix of one-third renewable, one-third natural gas and one-third coal. That proposal is being decried by the Sierra Club as inadequate.

Over the past seven years, MP has installed more than 600 megawatts of wind and will add 33 megawatts of solar energy.

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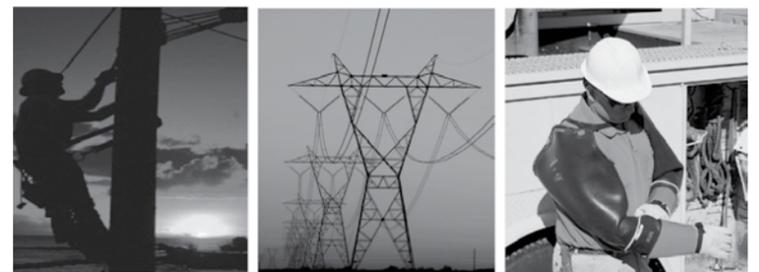
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The New Ulm Public Utilities Commission is currently seeking a full-time Electric Line Worker who will be responsible for constructing, maintaining, and repairing overhead and underground electric distribution, transmission, and substation systems for the City. Must possess a high school diploma or equivalent, must be able to respond to the Public Utilities building within 30 minutes, and maintain a valid Minnesota Class A Driver's License (CDL) within six months of hire. Submit a completed application to: Human Resources Office, 100 N. Broadway, New Ulm, MN 56073 or email personnel@ci.new-ulm.mn.us. To learn more, download an application, and for the full job description visit us at www.ci.new-ulm.mn.us or call 507-359-8236. Application deadline is 4:30 PM on May 20th. EOE

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at [www.MPSUtility.com/](http://www.MPSUtility.com/) employment; at the MPS office in Moorhead City Hall, 500 Center Avenue, Second Floor; or by calling 218.477.8000, Option 4. Applicants MUST complete an MPS Application for Employment to be considered for employment with MPS. EOE. Closing Date: Friday, May 20, 2016.

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The City of Rochester is seeking applications for the Limited Appointment-1,000 Hour position of Apprentice Line Worker. These individuals assist with constructing, maintaining, and repairing distribution and transmission facilities, overhead and underground, 120 volts through 161,000 volts, under the direction of a lead worker. Applications will be accepted until all positions are filled. Individuals hired will be limited to working not more than 1,000 hours. For more information and to apply online visit [www.rochestermn.gov](http://www.rochestermn.gov). Equal opportunity employer

#### WATER/WASTEWATER SUPERINTENDENT

The City of Le Sueur seeks applicants for the position of Water/Wastewater Superintendent. his position will plan, coordinate, direct and monitor the operations of the Water Utility and the Wastewater Utility. Minimum qualifications for the position are a High School diploma or equivalent and a satisfactory completion of a technical school program for water and/or wastewater operators and eight years of responsible experience in the operation of a Class A, B, or C systems facility or a similar sized industrial facility or 64 semester credits in college courses in a related field, six years of responsible experience as a licensed water or wastewater operator. Possession of a State of Minnesota Class B Wastewater and Class B Water Supply System Operator Certificate or ability to obtain within six month of the date of employment with the City; and possession of State of Minnesota Type IV Waste Facility Operator Certificate or ability to obtain within six months. Possession of a MN Com-

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### Training

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mercial Driver's License with tanker, hazardous materials, and air brake endorsement or the ability to obtain within six weeks. Due to the need for a timely off-duty response to emergencies, this position is required to live (maintain a principle residence) within a 60-minute drive as measured to the corporate city limits of Le Sueur as a condition of employment. The driving time is as defined as driving under normal driving conditions and at not greater than posted speeds. Employee must establish this principle residence within one (1) year of appointment. The salary for this position is \$61,686 - \$76,637 DOQ and includes an excellent benefits package. Applications will be accepted until the position has been filled. All applicants must submit a completed City application, along with a resume and cover letter.

Applications and a complete position description are available at the City's website: [www.cityoflesueur.com](http://www.cityoflesueur.com). Applications must be mailed to City of Le Sueur, 203 South Second Street, Le Sueur, MN 56058.

#### FOR SALE

#### Bucket liner

The City of Windom has a Dura Lift 24 x 24 bucket liner for sale. Make an offer. Call 507-831-6151 or email [winutl@windom-mn.com](mailto:winutl@windom-mn.com)

#### WANTED

#### Recloser

The Grand Marais Electric Department is in need of a ABB Type VR3S Recloser, serial number 503J192VR3LM. Contact Mike Taylor at [mtaylor@boreal.org](mailto:mtaylor@boreal.org). We are looking to buy or borrow one while we wait for our new one.



## MMUA Substation School draws 37 from municipals, cooperatives to training

MMUA held its annual Substation School April 19-21 at a familiar location, Shakopee Fire Station No. 1.

There was a strong turnout, with 37 attending. Of this number, 32 participants came from 18 municipal utilities (including one from Wisconsin) and five participants registered through the Minnesota Rural Electric Association.

The school opened Tuesday afternoon with a look at Substation Inspections and

Maintenance by Jeff Kranz of Rochester Public Utilities. This was followed by a substation tour, led by Shakopee staff.

Wednesday morning saw the students back at the fire station for a class on Fundamentals of Substation Equipment and Control Systems, by Charles E. Blecke of Power Systems Engineering. Following lunch, Dave Thom of East Central Energy presented on the "Ins and Outs" of Substations.



photo by Bob Sewell

Charles E. Blecke of Power System Engineering led a class at the Substation School.

Thursday opened with a look at LTC and Regulator Theory, Proper Settings and Operations, by David Aldrich of Beckwith Electric Company. Joe Adams of Shako-

pee Public Utilities (SPU) and Kevin Favero of Leidos Engineering wrapped up the presentations with a look at a recent SPU Substation Demo and Replacement.

This year's school was very successful. Thanks to all our instructors and attendees. We look forward to offering this school again next year!

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## Five municipal men earn NWLC lineworker certification

Five area municipal utility employees recently graduated from the Northwest Lineman College (NLC) Lineworker Certification Program.

They are: Nicholas Fast of Springfield Public Utilities, Daniel Joel of Westbrook Municipal Light & Power, James Schmitt of Grand Rapids Public Utilities, and Landon Starks and Matthew Scott, of the Pierre, South Dakota municipal utility. In addition, Anthony Hubbard of Elk River Municipal Utilities has graduated from the Northwest Lineman College Metering Technician Certification Program.

The NLC's Lineworker Certification Program (LCP) is for individuals already working in the trade who want to earn their lineman certification. Individuals must be enrolled and sponsored by their employer.

Called apprenticeship by some and lineman certification by others, successful completion of the LCP can earn the lineworker journeyman status.

Northwest Lineman College is one of the largest training institutions in the United States, with over 1,600 power delivery employees currently enrolled in the Lineworker

Certification Program. The Lineworker Certification Program is designed to serve the training needs of the power delivery industry—from an entry-level to a seasoned lineworker, the program curriculum is flexible and customizable.

The LCP administers up-to-date, comprehensive subject matter that illustrates how the power delivery system functions, including valuable knowledge regarding construction, maintenance, and operation of the system. The LCP is a correspondence-based educational model with companies choosing a three- or four-year format.

Tests can be facilitated by a designated city/utility staff member. Some MMUA members have tests facilitated by a staff member and MMUA staff. MMUA staff also helps students through the program in various ways as desired by the member utility.

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### Upcoming Events

**Underground School**  
May 17-20

**Annual Summer Conference**  
August 15-17  
Cragun's Resort

**Overhead School**  
September 13-16

**Cross Training School**  
October 18-20  
MMUA Training Center, Marshall

**T&O Conference**  
December 6-8  
Kelly Inn, St. Cloud