



**NORTH ITASCA
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**WATTS
NEWS**

VOL 29 NO. 2

PUBLISHED FOR THE MEMBERS OF NORTH ITASCA ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

FEBRUARY 2026

CEO Report

Happy blustery Sunday NIECI,

Sounds like Ol' Man Winter is looking to challenge our winter grit this week. I was looking at the forecast, and I saw the dreaded 30 below zero next weekend. That kind of weather is dangerously cold!

It is also dangerously boring; I refuse to do much when it gets that cold out. I'll take this as a prime opportunity to catch up on some sort of home project. I'm sure there's something that can use attention inside.

Our Board of Directors passed the 2026 budget. The 2026 rates are at right.

One of the highlights from the 2026 budget, we were awarded a \$100,000 grant from the Minnesota Dept of Commerce. This grant will support North Itasca Electric creating and adopting a Wildfire Mitigation Plan. This plan will enhance our right-of-way maintenance program. We are very thankful for this opportunity; safety is always our #1 priority at North Itasca Electric.

I'm still waiting to



Brad Dolinski, CEO

see the final numbers of 2025. It will be several months before the year is officially closed. Judging by the financial reports over the past several

CEO to p.2>

2026 Rate Adjustments (\$)	2025	2026
Member access	53.00	55.65
kWh	0.1378	0.14
kWh (June-Aug)	0.1578	0.17
Off-Peak Short Term	0.07335	0.08
Off Peak Long Term	0.06258	0.07

Member Services Update

by Drew Francisco

Hello again everyone! Wow, are the months flying by. I feel like I just got done writing my last update for you all.

I was able to take a few days away during the holiday break to get out on the ice with the family. Of course I was out-fished, but I feel as if it's due to me being an excellent guide. Most likely not, but that's what I'm telling myself!

The last month has been a busy one. With the Line Department's help, we were able to change out almost all our meters that assist in control of

our storage water heater program. With the new meter technology, it gives us localized control of these programs, and the need for additional load control devices is no longer. Running the program this way is going to save the cooperative thousands of dollars in future equipment purchases. It is exciting to see and be a part of these improvements.

On the subject of load control, a demo unit was shipped to me this week and I will be installing

one to do some testing. Training will begin soon and the plan is to start installing these new units on our system this spring, if all goes as planned.

As I mentioned before in past articles, these new cellular-based controllers are going to open some more doors for us. Not only is this a more cost-effective option, but it

Member to p.2>

GRE holds town hall on future energy plans

by Sally Sedgwick

Great River Energy brought a town hall to Grand Rapids in January to discuss the cooperative's Integrated Resource Plan with members.

The plan is required by the state every two years and describes GRE's projected power supply plans for the next 15 years. It's not a quick summary: this year's IRP might run 500 pages, explained Kyle Leier, manager of resource strategy and development for GRE.

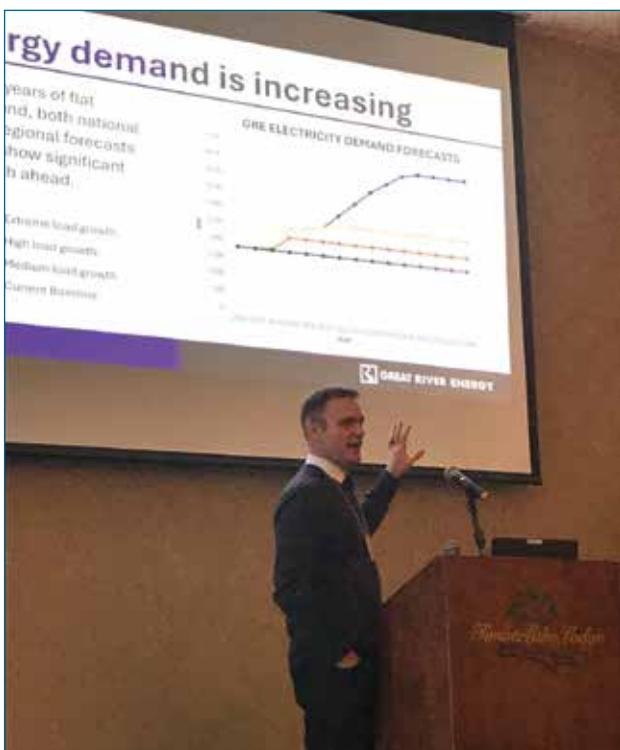
But this year's plan might be a little different than previous years. Radical change is coming, and it's unprecedented. It's driven by one thing: data centers. Just how the industry will cope is still being worked out. How much power and where, who's going to build it and who's going to pay for it are all in the discussion.

GRE starts its planning with forecasting. John Williams III, senior forecaster for GRE explained that his team provides a 20 year forecast on many factors, from weather to demand. That information feeds into modeling software that uses over a thousand variables and one time effects like the loss of wind production tax credits. Emerging technologies are also considered, although small modular nuclear plants are not currently permitted in Minnesota. All the successful models have to meet the state mandate of carbon free by 2040.

Ultimately, the results are tested for compliance, reliability and environmental cleanliness. Senior Portfolio Manager Nicole Kessler said that currently there are 35 scenarios that are under consideration.

All this planning has benefitted GRE's bottom

Town Hall to p.6>



< Kyle Leier, manager of resource strategy and development for GRE discussed GRE's Integrated Resource Plan. The slide shows the effect of data centers and high load growth on future power generation needs. (See p.6.)

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Office Hours

Mon. - Thurs.

6 a.m.-4:30 p.m.

On weeks with holidays, office hours are 7 a.m.-3:30 p.m.

CEO Report

>from p.1
months, it appears we will close the year in a good financial position. This is important; this is your electric cooperative. We run a delicate balance between collecting the correct revenues for the year, maintaining the system and financial obligations to our lenders. We are a very small cooperative; we have

roughly three members per mile of line. This simply means there are fewer of us to divide the costs among.

I'm excited to jump into 2026. We have an opportunity coming to work with our legislators on nuclear power legislation. We will have opportunities to improve our Off-Peak system equipment; Andrew is talking about these

changes in his article this month. We will continue to work with our friends and neighbors at Great River Energy to establish a new rate system to ensure fair and long-term rate options, thus leading to opportunities for new programs at North Itasca Electric. Most importantly, we will continue to improve our distribution system. These improvements will

affect safety, reliability, and satisfaction for you, our Member-Owners.

May 2026 bring you and yours all the health and happiness. I'm going to do my best to fish more, while spending time with family and friends. I'm not a big New Year Resolution guy, but I think these are a couple I could get behind.

By your side! Miigwech
Brad

Member Services

>from p.1
will also give us more opportunities with control schedules. We are hoping to capture savings in purchased energy – particularly during high demand times across our system. There is a lot more research and work to do with this program, but I'll be sure to provide updates when I can.

I don't have a lot more to update on right now as I have been pretty tied



Drew Francisco

up with these projects, but as always, if you need anything or have questions, please reach out. Happy to help!

Until Next time,
Drew Francisco

Keep us up-to-date

Please keep your contact information current with our office. Please notify North Itasca Electric of any changes in property ownership, mailing addresses, phone numbers and email addresses.

You can send in a change of address using the form on page 4.

Electrical Inspections

Except for minor repair work, all electrical work you do at your home, cabin, or property is required to be inspected by a State Electrical Inspector. A rough-in inspection must be made before any wiring is covered. A final inspection is also required. Please visit www.electricity.state.mn.us for more information.

The inspectors can be reached weekday mornings between 7:00 a.m. and 8:30 a.m.

- **Itasca County** – Eric Kluge (612) 772-6659
- **Koochiching County** – Brian Johnson (612) 757-9458
- **Beltrami County** – Wade Koons (218) 580-8589

We may have a check for you!

North Itasca Electric has a list of Members and former Members who have been sent capital credit checks, but whose checks were returned. Check the list at NorthItascaElectric.com. If you know anyone on the list, have them contact the office at (218) 743-3131 or 1(800) 762-4048, or email support@nieci.com to update your contact information and claim the check.





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WATTS NEWS

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North Itasca Electric Cooperative, Inc.
Board of Directors

Chairman: Larry Salmela, District 3
Vice-Chair: Wes Waller, District 2
Secretary: Lloyd Kongsjord, District 5
Treasurer: Roy Bain, District 9
Rep. to GRE Board: Lloyd Kongsjord, District 5

James White, District 1 Mary Rahier, District 4
Todd Christensen, District 6 Tom Kallio, District 7
Jeff Kilian, District 8

Highlights from the Board Room

NORTH ITASCA ELECTRIC CO-OP., INC.
MINUTES FOR THE REGULAR BOARD MEETING
Dec. 22, 2025

The regular meeting of the Board of Directors was held at the office and electronically through Zoom on Dec. 22, 2025.

Directors Present: T. Christensen, J. Kilian, M. Rahier, L. Salmela, T. Kallio and W. Waller

Directors Present Via Zoom: L. Kongsjord and R. Bain.

Also Present: CEO Brad Dolinski, Dan Heinecke, Andy Shaw, Drew Francisco, Daryl Pederson and Gina Vickerman.

Absent: J. White

- Pledge of allegiance was recited.
- Motion to adopt the agenda. Seconded; motion carried. A motion was made to consent agenda. Seconded; motion carried.
- A safety discussion was held by Brad. He discussed the icy road conditions and reminded everyone to stay alert because although your winter driving skills may be good, the other ones on the road may not be as careful.
- Dan presented the Operating Report. Motion to approve was made. Seconded; motion carried. Further review and discussion of the 2026 final budget was done. Motion to support the 2026 Budget. Seconded; motion carried.
- Board Policy: Board Policy 500.20 – Capital Credits. Motion of Policy 500.20 of being read and reviewed was made. Supports; motion carried.
- Daryl presented the Line Department report. MREA was on site for our Value Visit, the visit is to keep us up to date on safety record keeping. The crews have been busy working on retirements for line conversions along with a few service upgrades. Powell started the 2026 clearing work.
- Drew presented the Member Services report. Load control is in full swing and devices/submeter audits are ongoing for accurate control and billing. He has been preparing for the new Eaton Cellular devices. Meetings have begun to discuss purchasing, quantities, trial testing and monitoring software.
- Dan presented the Office Report.
- Brad presented the CEO report. W. Waller and L. Salmela will be attending the District 1 meeting on January 9th. T. Christensen, M. Rahier and L. Kongsjord will be attending BLC 926.1 Navigating in the Era of Uncertainty on March 16th and everyone, except R. Bain, will attend the Annual Meeting on March 17th & 18th. Motion to approve. Supports; motion carried. L. Salmela, T. Kallio and M. Rahier will attend the GRE Regional Meeting on February 4th & 5th. Motioned to support. Seconded; motion carried.
- Wes Waller gave the MREA report.
- Lloyd gave the GRE report.

Wisconsin Co-op Leader Urges Congress to Renew Crucial Cybersecurity Program

by Erin Kelly
staff writer, NRECA

Congress should act quickly to renew a crucial cybersecurity program that helps electric cooperatives protect the grid from rapidly changing cyberthreats, a Wisconsin co-op leader urged a House panel Tuesday.

“Securing the grid is essential to national security, but the threat landscape is evolving faster than ever,” Nate Melby, vice president and chief information officer at Dairyland Power Cooperative, told the House Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Energy.

“While cooperatives are committed to this fight, we cannot confront sophisticated nation-state actors alone.”

Melby asked for the subcommittee’s help to reauthorize the Department of Energy’s \$250 million Rural and Municipal Utility Cybersecurity Program, which prioritizes funding for co-ops with the greatest need for support and those that serve military installations and other key facilities.

Cybercriminals and some foreign nations, including China, “are among the most active and persistent threats” to the electric grid, he said.

“RMUC bridges the rural resource gap, ensuring that the security posture in rural America is as robust and formidable as anywhere else in the nation,” Melby said.

“This is accomplished by helping electric cooperatives make critical investments in three key areas: the people, processes and technologies necessary to secure the grid.”

Last fall, he said, DOE announced \$80 million in RMUC awards that would directly support more than 400 cooperatives’ cybersecurity programs, including those of generation and transmission co-ops like Dairyland as well as distribution co-ops.

“This funding includes \$3.5 million for Dairyland Power Cooperative, which will allow us to work with 20 of our distribution co-ops to invest in technologies that will boost cyber defenses across our shared systems.”

Unfortunately, he said, La Crosse-based Dairyland and other co-op awardees are still waiting for those funds, which would empower them to hire cyber professionals, strengthen information-sharing and use more advanced technologies.

Melby said moving these resources from the pipeline to the field will “expand and expedite the collaborative work to improve cyber defenses that

- Round Table discussion was held. Motion to adjourn. Seconded; motion carried. The regular meeting adjourned at 2:36 p.m.

Regular board meetings are generally held the fourth Thursday of every month. If you wish to speak with the board or have an item that you would like to have placed on the agenda, please contact CEO Brad Dolinski at least two weeks in advance to be included on the agenda.



Nate Melby, vice president and chief information officer at Dairyland Power Cooperative, testifies about cyberthreats to the electric grid at the House Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Energy. *Photo by Denny Gainer/NRECA*

is already being done between co-ops, statewide associations and NRECA [National Rural Electric Cooperative Association].”

There is an estimated \$160 million left in the overall RMUC program, which will lose its authorization from Congress in less than a year, Melby said.

“Given the importance of this program to electric cooperatives and our nation’s security, NRECA is strongly urging Congress to reauthorize this program and update the legislation to improve program access for co-ops with limited resources.”

He said not-for-profit co-ops “operate on thin margins in difficult terrain,” making it important to pair effective policy with resources rather than with burdensome bureaucracy.

“Every dollar we spend comes directly from our members’ pockets, so we need solutions that empower us to protect our communities without adding financial strain,” Melby said.

“We strongly urge the committee to advance the RMUC reauthorization to ensure we can keep the lights on for 42 million Americans.”

Article published on www.electric.coop, used with permission



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Cold weather rule & energy assistance program notice

In accordance with Minnesota's Cold Weather Rule, electric service cannot be disconnected for nonpayment between Oct. 1 and April 30 if electricity is the primary heat source and ALL of the following statements apply:

- Your household income is at or below 50% of the state median household income. Income may be verified on forms provided by North Itasca Electric Cooperative or by the local energy assistance provider.
- You enter into and make reasonably timely payments under a payment agreement that considers the financial resources of the household.
- You receive referrals to energy assistance, weatherization, conservation, or other programs likely to reduce your energy bills from North Itasca Electric Cooperative. Minnesota's Cold Weather Rule does not completely stop winter disconnects. Before disconnecting electric service to residential members between Oct. 1 and April 30:

North Itasca Electric Cooperative must provide:

- A 30-day notice of disconnection;
- A statement of members' rights and responsibilities;
- A list of local energy assistance providers;
- Forms on which to request Cold Weather Rule protection; and
- A statement explaining available payment plans and other options to continue service.

Energy Assistance Program

The Energy Assistance Program (EAP) is a federally funded program through the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services which helps low-income renters and homeowners pay for home heating costs and furnace repairs. Household income must be at or below 60 percent of the state median income (\$71,999 for a family of four) to qualify for benefits. Applications must be received or postmarked by May 31, 2026. To learn more about the EAP program or to apply for assistance:

- Visit the Minnesota Department of Commerce Energy Assistance website, <https://mn.gov/commerce/consumers/consumer-assistance/energy-assistance/>, for more details and to access the application portal.
- Contact your county EAP service provider for additional information and assistance, Kootasca Community Action (218) 999-0800. North Itasca Electric Cooperative exists because of you, and we are dedicated to the people and communities we serve. If you are having difficulty paying your electric bill and do not qualify for either of these programs, please contact Sheila Hafeman at (218) 743-3131 to set up a payment plan.



Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

Mid-winter is a great time to ensure you're making the most of your home heating system. Replace or clean filters to keep your furnace or heat pump running efficiently. Listen for strange noises and check for uneven heating—these signs indicate that the system may need servicing. Ensure vents and radiators aren't blocked by furniture or rugs as proper airflow helps your system work less and saves energy. A little maintenance along the way can prevent costly repairs and keep your home cozy through winter.

Doxo.com

There is an online bill pay website that appears to be affiliated with North Itasca Electric, but it is not.

Doxo.com is third-party website that allows people to pay their electric bills via their site. However, doxo.com may charge the member extra fees, and North Itasca Electric cannot control when we will receive

the member payments from doxo.com, possibly resulting in a late payment from the member or even disconnection due to non-payment. To make sure you're paying North Itasca Electric directly, visit our website www.northitascaelectric.com, for our direct link to the online bill payment portal, mycpsportal.com.



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The power surge factors driving the rising demand for electricity

Article provided by the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association

Across the U.S., the demand for power is climbing at one of the fastest rates in decades. As the economy becomes more reliant on electricity and data centers continue to sprout up in many parts of the country, electric cooperatives are preparing to meet the challenges that skyrocketing demand brings.

The North American Reliability Corporation—the watchdog for the U.S. electric grid—recently released the 2025-2026 winter reliability assessment, which echoed other recent reports, including longer-term outlooks that expect sufficient energy resources during normal conditions but potential supply shortfalls and outages under more intense weather conditions.

Extreme weather coupled with additional factors that are driving increased demand creates challenges for electric utilities, including cooperatives, in their mission to provide reliable power around the clock.

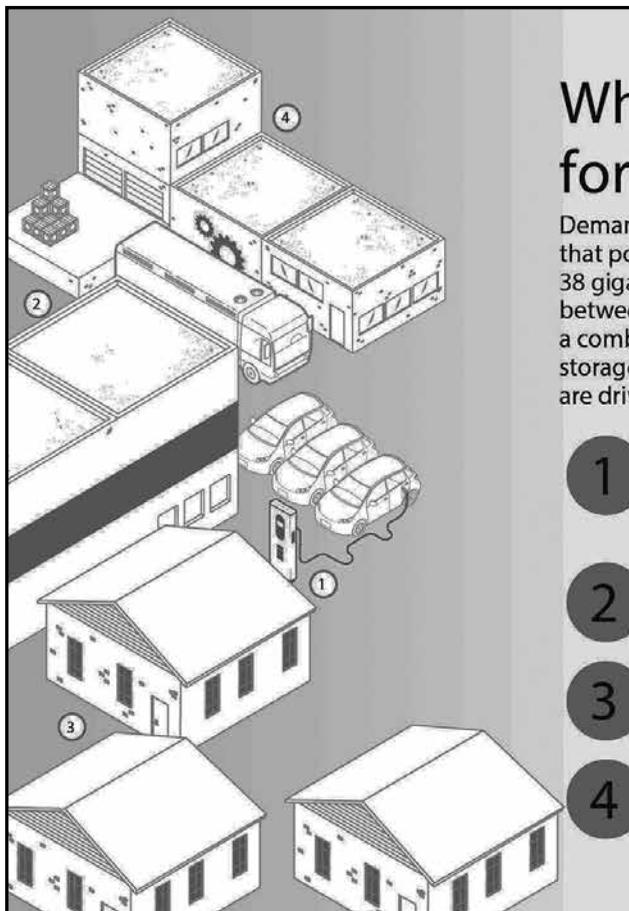
Several key factors are driving increased demand—including economic growth, expanded manufacturing, data center development and increased electrification in transportation. Together, these trends are reshaping how much electricity we consume and how quickly utilities like North Itasca Electric must adapt to meet future needs.

One of the biggest drivers of rising demand is increased electrification. More homes and businesses are transitioning to electricity for home heating, water heating and transportation. EVs are becoming more common on the road, and many states are offering incentives to help consumers make the switch. Additionally, electric heat pumps are replacing traditional furnaces in many homes due to their efficiency. These transitions mean more energy use and pressure placed on our electric grid.

Data centers are another major contributor to rising demand. As Artificial Intelligence (AI), cryptocurrency and cloud computing technologies grow, the need for data processing and storage has skyrocketed. Data centers require huge amounts of power to operate servers and cooling systems 24/7. Tech companies are building new facilities nationwide—many of which are in electric cooperative-served areas—and these regions are experiencing multi-year surges in electricity demand as a result.

Economic and manufacturing growth are also contributing to higher electricity use. As businesses expand and new industries take root, especially in rural and suburban areas, the demand for reliable, high-capacity power is increasing. The resurgence of domestic manufacturing has led to major facility construction. These facilities often require substantial energy loads, and many operate continuously to keep production lines running. This growth brings jobs and investment, but it also puts new pressures on the electric grid.

Population growth and housing development are also contributing to rising demand in many regions, and everyday life is becoming more energy dependent, too. Smart appliances, connected devices, home offices and entertainment systems are adding to overall



Why is the Demand for Electricity Rising?

Demand for electricity in the U.S. is booming. Recent data shows that power consumption nationwide is set to increase by at least 38 gigawatts (enough to power more than 30 million homes) between now and 2028. Meeting this new demand will require a combination of new power plants, grid upgrades and energy storage technology advancements. Here are the key factors that are driving increased demand.

- 1 **Increased Electrification:** Electric vehicle adoption, electrification of home heating and industrial electrification are increasing overall U.S. energy consumption.
- 2 **Data Centers:** Driven by explosions in AI, cryptocurrency and cloud computing, total U.S. data center load is projected to increase by 65% by 2050.
- 3 **Economic Growth:** Residential power consumption is expected to increase by 14% to 22% through 2050 due to increases in population and steady economic growth.
- 4 **Manufacturing Growth/Onshoring:** New, expanding and "onshored/reshored" manufacturing capacity driven by federal incentives is expected to increase industrial demand by 13,000 GWh per year.

consumption, even as efficiency improves.

While increased demand presents new challenges for electric utilities, it also has the potential to create significant opportunities for co-ops and the communities they serve, such as job growth, steady revenue and improved infrastructure. Electric co-ops are responding by planning carefully for the future—investing in grid modernization and offering programs and services to help co-op members conserve energy.

Strategic planning is critical to ensuring the grid can support everything from EV charging to large-scale manufacturing plants.

Electricity powers nearly every aspect of today's economy, and its role will only grow stronger. As electrification accelerates, long-term planning becomes more important than ever.

North Itasca Electric is ready to meet rising demand in our local communities. Through innovation, investment and collaboration, we are preparing for a more reliable and resilient energy future.

NRECA is the national trade association representing nearly 900 local electric cooperatives.

TIPS TO AVOID ENERGY SCAMS ⚠️

Enrolling in autodraft payments with your utility provider can help prevent certain types of utility bill scams. If a scammer contacts you with fake disconnection threats, you can rest easy knowing your bill is paid automatically through a pre-arranged, secure channel. Autodraft payments also eliminate the risk of exposing checks and personal banking info through the mail. If your utility offers autodraft payments, consider enrolling to stay on track and avoid certain scams.

Source: AARP

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North Itasca Electric CEO Brad Dolinski (l) visits with John Williams III, senior forecaster for GRE and Lloyd Kongsjord (r), North Itasca Electric director and delegate to the GRE board.

GRE holds Town Hall to discuss future

>from p.1
line. Last year its margin was \$25 million, said Leier, which the board of directors can redirect back to member cooperatives.

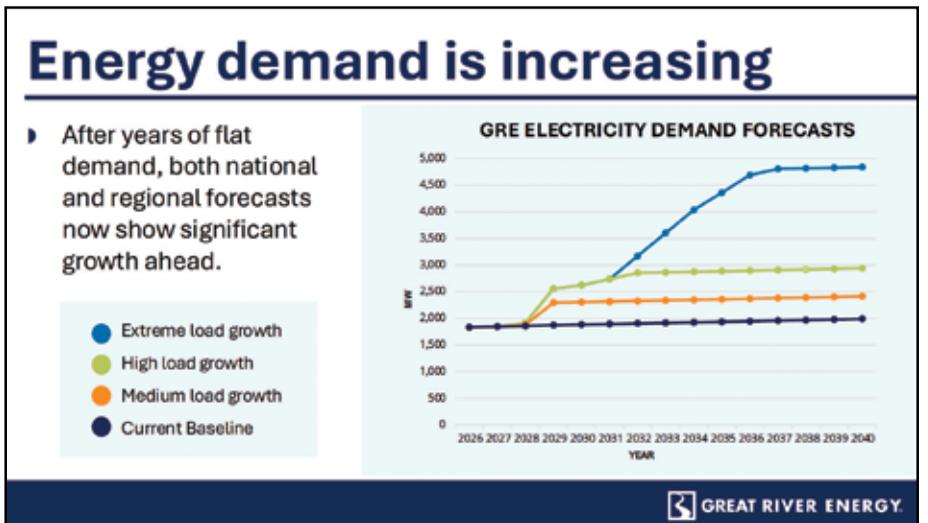
Part of this success is the ability to lock in pricing through planning ahead, which allows GRE to obtain good pricing for its energy purchases. In fact, it's a "five minute market" where energy is bought in the marketplace when pricing is favorable, but when prices and demand

are high (for instance during a cold snap), GRE's own resources can kick in and provide electricity to the system cost effectively.

In 2024, renewable power was about 49% of the power mix for GRE. Now wind power is getting congested and sometimes wind farms have to be shut down although the wind is blowing. The Emmons-Logan wind power facility in North Dakota is one underused facility that found a battery solution. Available energy is used to charge large batteries that then can release the power when pricing is right.

GRE is actively investing in battery storage research to try to solve the problem of intermittent supply from wind turbines and solar installations. GRE was an early supporter of Form Energy, which has developed an iron-air battery concept, and which now is in the pilot plant stage. The plant, being built in Cambridge, should be in operation this year. It's not the only possible solution: there are hundreds of startups that are working on novel battery solutions that are industrial-sized and can deliver over longer times.

There is also another way to manage cost, brought up by an audience member. Energy supply is split into two parts: demand, which is the peak amount of energy needed (like the capacity of a car engine), and energy, which is the ongoing amount of electricity used (like mileage on the car). Shaving off the demand peaks



Slide shows the effect of unknown demand due to data centers.

avoids having to spend the money to build enough power plants to meet total energy supply. It's a small amount – in the GRE models it's under 5 MW/year or about 33 MW over the 15 year period – but significant, and something members can help with. It's called demand response, or load management.

North Itasca Electric Cooperative CEO Brad Dolinski said that its members are positive toward load management. Even though each unit is much smaller than a power plant, he said, home heating systems are much more efficient than external plants in their conversion of energy.

The big unknown is still the data centers, powering the new industry of Artificial Intelligence. The use by these facilities are expected to increase overall energy demand by two or three times by 2040 – and they are always on. How will the increased power needed by data centers be paid for? Regulators are looking at two inputs, one from the data center owners and one from electricity providers. Each cooperative is now putting money into a pool to cover the unknown future costs. There is also a possibility that there is an "AI bubble" that has to be considered a risk factor.

It's an exciting time in the industry. By careful planning, GRE has negotiated market changes successfully, and the IRP is its roadmap to continue this into the future.

Dynamic line rating project earns GRE prestigious award

Great River Energy was recently selected as the winner of POWER Magazine's prestigious 2025 Transmission & Distribution Award, recognizing the electric cooperative's groundbreaking dynamic line rating project with Heimdall Power.

The Transmission & Distribution Award honors companies that have implemented groundbreaking projects to enhance grid reliability, efficiency and sustainability. It recognizes forward-thinking initiatives that leverage cutting-edge technologies and novel approaches to address the evolving challenges of modern power systems.

The dynamic line rating project uses a sensor called a "neuron" placed on transmission lines (shown to right in the picture) to measure parameters about the line and its environment to maximize the current



Heimdall Power line sensor "neuron" installed on a transmission line.

that can be carried at any one time. The one year assessment, covered in the September 2025 WATTS News, estimated the equipment would save GRE \$3.175 million over five years in avoided congestion costs.

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Stay alert: Scammers targeting members

North Itasca Electric is urging its members to stay alert as reports of scam calls, fake energy rebate offers and phony service disconnection threats continue to rise.

Fraudsters are now becoming more aggressive and convincing in their tactics to trick members — using impersonation, false urgency and digital deception to take payments or personal information from unsuspecting consumers.

These schemes often begin with a phone call, text or even an in-person visit from someone claiming to represent your local cooperative. Their strategies vary, but the goal is always the same: Pressure the member into acting quickly before they have time to verify the request.

Scammers may demand immediate payment and threaten that your electricity will be shut off within minutes, while others offer too-good-to-be-true incentives related to rebates, energy audits or free equipment installations. In many cases, scammers can manipulate caller ID to appear as though the call is coming from a trusted utility number.

We want our members to know that representatives of North Itasca Electric will never:

- Call and demand immediate payment from you.
- Ask for banking or account information over the phone.
- Pressure you to act without the opportunity to verify the situation.
- Encourage you to pay through prepaid debit cards, mobile apps or cryptocurrency.

Education and awareness are two of the most powerful tools we can use in this fight to combat scammers. Members are encouraged to talk with family, friends and neighbors about the warning signs of scams. Sharing information helps others stay safe and contributes to a stronger, more connected community.

If you receive a call, text, email or in-person visit from someone claiming to be from North Itasca Electric and something about it doesn't feel right, don't hesitate to hang up, close the message or refuse entry. Then call your cooperative directly using the number listed on your monthly bill or on NorthItascaElectric.com.



Roxanne's Sales Talk

by Roxanne Prather, Member Services Representative

"Happy New Year everyone!" I know you're thinking "What gives? She's a month behind...", but since I'm writing this in January, I feel I can still say it!

I hope 2026 treats everyone well. I also want to thank all of you for making last year a good one in our appliance department. For being a small-town appliance store we have something a lot of the big stores don't have. We have appliances in stock ready to go! If you come in and purchase an appliance, you can take it with you that day. That doesn't mean that we will have everything that you are looking for in stock, but we have a pretty good variety. And of course, what we don't have, I can order.

Did you know that North Itasca Electric is one of the only co-ops in the state that still sells appliances! We are, and you will have to trust me when I say, "It isn't because we make money on the appliance department," because we don't! The main reason we still have the appliances is for you, our members. We feel it is important to be able to offer appliances here because it is a benefit to our members not to have to drive a long way to purchase an appliance, and it's a benefit to be able to finance it through the Co-op. and pay it along with your electric bill.

We have been doing some brainstorming recently on how to hold people more accountable when it comes to their contracts. Nothing is in writing just yet, but I want to let you know that there are some changes coming, and I will let you know as soon as it is all finalized. I understand that sometimes money

is tight. Let me know upfront if you are struggling and need an appliance, and I will do what I can to help you.

There are some programs to help if you meet the guidelines. The income eligible program is there to help people who don't qualify for a contract and can't afford to buy a necessary appliance outright. However, there are stipulations on what you can buy through the program.

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800-252-1166
or 811



February Laundry Sale

WT6100CW-\$653.47 SALE \$588.12

4.3 c.f. white LG washer with impeller and slam proof glass lid. True Balance Anti vibration system, Smart Diagnosis (3.0), 3-tray dispenser, Load Sense, status indicators, end of cycle signal, control lock, auto suds removal, forced drain system, add a garment indicator, leveling legs, easy unload. Eight wash programs: normal, heavy duty, deep wash, bedding/waterproof, delicates, speed wash, tub clean, spin only. Four options: Heavy soil, control lock, water plus, rinse+ spin. Three wash rinse temperatures: cold/warm/hot.



MLTM45M4BWW \$486.64 SALE \$437.98

4.4 c.f. white, smart top washer. Features: stainless tub, soft touch glass lid, agitator, electronic mechanical knob and touch, end of cycle signal, powder and liquid detergent dispenser, softener dispenser, bleach dispenser, easy reach, error alarm, auto unbalancing detection, anti-vibration, auto power off, delay start, child lock. 2-year warranty. Program options: normal, bedding, heavy duty, towels, whites, quick wash, delicates, rinse & spin, tub clean, download. Options: Delay extra rinse, fabric softener, my cycle, smart control, signal, water level control: auto and manual, four water level options, four temperature options, four soil level options.



DLE7150M \$852.93 SALE \$767.64

LG 7.4 c.f. front load dryer. eight programs: normal, heavy duty, bedding, towels, perm. press, delicates, speed dry (manual dry), air dry (manual dry). Seven options: more time, less time, damp dry signal, wrinkle care, control lock, energy saver, signal. Three temperature settings: high, medium & low. Five drying levels: very dry, more dry, normal dry, less dry, damp dry, manual dry, timed dry 60 min., 40 min., 20 min., more time/less time. Fabric care features: sensor dry, precise temperature control with variable heater. Convenience features: 3-minute installation check, end of cycle signal, reversible door, FlowSense® duct clogging indicator, wrinkle care option, control lock, venting option electric: 4 Way. Remaining time display / status indicator(s), ThinQ® Technology, smart diagnosis, Energy Star certified, aluminized alloy steel drum.



DLE6100W \$627.33 SALE \$564.60

LG 7.3 c.f. white, rear control Energy Star dryer with sensor dry, dial-a-control. Five programs: normal, perm press, heavy duty, delicates, air dry, (manual). Three options: energy saver, control lock, damp dry option. Three temperature settings: high, medium, low. Three drying levels: very dry, normal dry and damp dry. Manual time dry: 60, 40, 20 min., sensor dry, precise temperature control with variable heater. Three-minute installation check, LoDecibel® Quiet Operation, end of cycle signal, FlowSense® duct clogging indicator, control lock, 4-way venting, remaining time display / status indicator (s).



WT7150CM \$947.70-\$75 (DENT)\$872.70 SALE \$800.00

LG 5.0 c.f. middle black, ultra large top load washer with impeller, slam proof glass lid, and water plus and cold wash options, SpeedWash® cycle, Intelligent electronic controls with dual LED display Dial-A-Cycle® control knob, NeveRust® stainless steel drum TrueBalance® anti-vibration system, Energy Star, certified direct drive motor 10-year limited warranty. Eight programs: normal, heavy duty, deep wash, waterproof, bedding, delicate, speed wash, tub clean. Nine options: soak, extra rinse, delay wash, control lock, water plus, cold wash, signal, rinse + spin only. Three rinse temperatures: warm, hot, cold. Three spin speeds: high, medium, low. Water level automatically adjusts to the load size. Fabric care features: smart rinse jet system, cold wash option, SenseClean system. 3-tray dispenser, auto suds removal, forced drain system, add a garment indicator, Smart Diagnosis.



DLE8200W \$960.09 SALE \$864.08

LG 7.3 white, electric dryer WiFi, AI sensor dry. Energy Star. Eight programs: normal, AI dry, bedding, delicates, quick dry, time dry, heavy duty, downloaded. Thirteen options: temp dryness, time, more time, less time, damp signal, air dry, wrinkle care, energy saver, control lock (3 sec.), signal (3 sec.). Five temperature settings: low, medium low, normal, medium high, high. Four drying levels: damp, less, normal, more, very. Precision temperature control with variable heater. Three-minute installation check, LoDecibel® Quiet Operation, end of cycle signal, FlowSense® duct clogging indicator, control lock, 4-way venting, remaining time display / status indicator (s). Smart Diagnosis (v3.0) WiFi, ThinQ Care ThinQ Up, remote start/cycle monitor, energy monitoring, smart pairing.



Happy Valentine's Day



DLE7400VE \$926.47 SALE \$833.82

LG 7.3 c.f. black matte electric dryer, WiFi, easy load, AI sensor dry. Easy load door, 3-minute installation check, LoDecibel® Quiet Operation, end of cycle signal, drum light, reversible door, FlowSense® duct clogging indicator, wrinkle care option, control lock, venting options, remaining time display/status indicators. Smart ThinQ Technology: smart diagnosis, (v3.0), WiFi, ThinQ Care, ThinQ Up, remote start/cycle monitor, energy monitoring, smart pairing, Energy Star certified. Eight programs: normal, AI dry, bedding, delicates, quick dry, timed dry, heavy duty, downloaded. Thirteen options: dryness time, more time, less time, damp signal, air dry, wrinkle care, energy saver, control lock (3 sec), WiFi (3 sec), remote start (3 sec), Signal (3 sec). Temperature settings: low, med low, normal, med high, high/high drying levels: damp, less, normal, more, very. Manual dry times: 20, 30, 40, 50, 60 minutes.



GTW385ASWWS \$542.36 SALE \$488.12

GE 4.3 c.f. top load washer with dual action agitator and cold plus sanitize with Oxi. Water level control, stainless drum, late lid safety lock, status notification, made in America. Wash programs: delicates, bulky, towels, sanitize, drain & spin, quick wash, whites, casuals, activewear, deep rinse option. Five water levels: auto, low, medium, high, max. Five water temperatures: cold, cool, mild, warm, hot.



WT7005CM \$813.37 SALE \$737.43

LG 4.5 c.f. white top load washer with impeller, never rust drum, and turbo drum technology. Cycles: tub clean, normal, heavy duty, speed wash, deep wash, delicate, waterproof, bedding. Three temperature settings: hot warm and cold. Three spin speeds: high, medium and low. Three soil levels: heavy, normal and light. Four options: cold wash, delay wash, deep fill, and extra rinse.



DLE7000W \$770.90 SALE \$693.81 Sale \$624.43

LG 7.3 c.f. ultra large capacity dryer. Eight programs : normal, perm press, heavy, heavy duty, bedding, delicates, speed dry (manual dry), air dry (manual dry), freshen up (manual dry). Seven options: wrinkle care, control lock, more time, less time, damp dry signal, energy saver, signal. Three temperature settings: high, medium, and low. Three drying levels. Manual dry time: 60, 40, 20 minutes, more or less. Sensor dry, precise temperature control with variable heater, three-minute installation check, LoDecibel™ quiet operation, end of cycle signal, wrinkle care, FlowSense™ duct clogging Indicator, reversible door, child lock, four venting options, remaining time display/ status indicators. SmartDiagnosis™.



HTW265ASWWW \$542.35

SALE \$488.11

Hotpoint 4.0 top load washer with agitator, end of signal, six rinse cycles, six rinse temperatures, six wash cycles, six wash speeds, six wash temperatures.



DLE3470M \$965.45 SALE \$868.90

LG 7.4 c.f. middle black, ultra large capacity electric dryer with sensor dry. 3-minute installation check, end of cycle signal, reversible door, FlowSense® duct clogging Indicator, wrinkle care option, control lock. Venting option: 4- way venting, 4 adjustable legs, remaining time display / status indicator(s). Eight programs: normal, heavy duty, bedding, towels, perm press, delicates, speed dry, (manual dry), air dry (manual dry). Seven options: more time, less time, damp dry, signal, wrinkle care, control lock, energy saver. Three temperature settings: high, medium, and low. Five drying levels: Very dry, more dry, normal dry, less dry and damp dry. Manual dry times: 60 min, 40 min, 20 min, more time/less time. Energy Star certified.



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Sale prices good through the month of February.
Questions call Roxanne 218-743-3132
or email roxanne@nieci.com



GLD38EASWWS \$548.96 SALE \$494.06

GE 7.2 c.f. white vented electric dryer with auto dry and 120' venting. Normal, delicate, casual settings. Three temperature settings: high, medium, and low.



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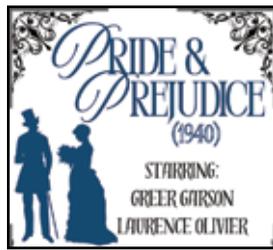


Come share your talent with an appreciative audience! Bigfork's annual talent show, the "Polar REVUE" will be at the Edge Center on Saturday, Feb. 28 at 2 p.m.

Singers, actors, dancers, musicians, comedians, and more are invited to bring their skills to the big stage in the Polar REVUE Talent Show! Open to all ages and talents, in the past acts have included instrumentals, singing, comedy, skits, light shows and even hula hoop routines. Please contact Jayme Rahier at (218) 244-5019 to sign up.

Admission is \$10 for adults, free for youth. Proceeds go to Ebb & Flow Dance, a K-12 independent dance group in Bigfork.

Classic Movie Series: *Pride & Prejudice*



by Jack Nachbar

February is here and, as everyone knows, it's the season of love. Stuff for Valentine's Day on Feb. 24 seems to go on sale the day after Christmas.

This year, the Classic Movie Series in Bigfork is playing along with all the

February days of romance and love. *Pride and Prejudice* (1940) was the first screen version of the 1813 classic novel by Jane Austen. The novel was the first great rom com. And the movie does it justice.

It was popular when it first came out and, currently, it has a 100% positive rating on Rotten Tomatoes, and Leonard Maltin, in his Classic Movie Guide, gives it a top four stars.

The romantic couple in

the film are played by two of the key movie actors of the 1940s. Both were born in England, the locale of book and movie, but both were in Hollywood for the filming of *Pride and Prejudice*. Greer Garson was so popular, she had earned a record five Oscar nominations by 1945. Laurence Olivier was so good that he was Knighted in England in 1947.

This often funny rom com master work will be shown at the Edge Center

Theater in Bigfork at 6:30 p.m. on Thursday, February 12 (just two days before Valentine's Day). It's FREE to all, and all are invited. And it's sure to give one and all that lovin' feeling.

MARCH CLASSIC MOVIE: A movie to ponder during the Lenten season. *Jesus Christ Superstar* (1973) will be shown at the Edge, Thursday, March 12 at 6:30 p.m.



Bigfork Youth Baseball

The Bigfork Valley Community Foundation recently contributed \$500 to the Bigfork Youth Baseball program for baseball jerseys. The Bigfork Valley Community Foundation is a 501 (c)(3) non-profit organization whose mission is to address current and future needs of the Northern Itasca Hospital District and its communities through charitable contributions.



Bigfork School Trap Team and Trap Range

The Bigfork Valley Community Foundation recently contributed \$1,000 to the Bigfork School Trap Team and for the Bigfork Lions Club Trap Range. Funds were used for team needs and for range improvements.

Trails feedback needed!

The Itasca County Land Department, the University of Minnesota and The PLUM Catalyst are conducting a two year comprehensive trails study measuring economic impact for both motorized and non-motorized trails. Input from all users is sought, including hikers, horseback riders, snowmobilers, bikers, off road vehicle users and skiers. Visit z.mn.edu/ItascaTrails to take the survey.

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FEBRUARY 1-7
BURN AWARENESS WEEK

Practical Water Wisdom series

Practical Water Wisdom: A Virtual Learning Series, is hosted by Itasca Waters. This FREE, hour-long program takes place online at noon on the first Thursday of each month (except July, when it's on the second Thursday). Each session includes a live Q&A. Register at <https://itascawaters.org/water-wisdom-2026>

February 5: What Lakes Do in Winter

Presenter: Ted Ozersky is an Associate Professor of Biological Limnology at the Large Lakes Observatory and the Department of Biology at the University of Minnesota, Duluth. Over the past decade, he has become increasingly fascinated by what lakes and the organisms that inhabit them do during periods of snow and ice cover. His research spans ice-covered lakes around the world, examining relationships between water quality, winter severity, and oxygen, nutrient and biological dynamics.

Topic Summary: Today, growing concern about rapidly changing winter conditions has led to a surge of interest in lake winter ecology. In this presentation, Dr. Ozersky will explore what scientists are discovering about the physics, chemistry and biology of lakes during winter—and what shifting winter patterns could mean for lake health and the vital ecosystem services lakes provide.

Bigfork makes annual appointments

by Sally Sedgwick

At its January 13 meeting, the Bigfork City Council released its right of first refusal to the ambulance building parcel. The ambulance service was transferred to Bigfork Valley as of Jan. 1 and will retain the building.

Annual appointments were made. Councilor Annette Buckingham was added to the Planning and Zoning Commission, all other appointments will remain the same. Selected appointments include Scenic Range NewsForum, legal publication; First State Bank of Bigfork, official depository; Paul Shaffer, city attorney; Widseth, city engineer; Samantha Olson, acting mayor; Drew Francisco, fire chief.

In other business, the council:

- Approved resolution delegating retail cannabis registration and compliance checks within the city to Itasca County.

- Approved 2016 Fire Protection contracts..

The next regular meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, February 10 at 5:30 p.m. at City Hall.

Excerpted from an article in the Scenic Range NewsForum

Dance for All with Sophia McLaughlin

The Arrowhead Library System is pleased to present Dance for All with Sophia McLaughlin.

All are welcome to this contemporary dance class. Using improvisation and set dance sequences the class will move together to create joyful community. Dancers will copy and create movements that represent shapes, qualities and patterns. Together the group will learn how observations and imagination can create new and innovative movement possibilities. No previous dance training is required as this class will be accessible for everyone.

Dance Artist Sophia has experience teaching children, young adults, elderly, blind communities, and people with mental and physical disabilities. If you have questions about accessibility for these workshops, please reach out to ALS for more information (als@alslib.info).

This program is one hour long and is suited for participants of all ages and abilities. Wear clothes you feel comfortable moving in when attending.

This free program is offered locally at 1 p.m. on Weds., Feb. 11 at the Grand Rapids Area Library.

This program, sponsored by Arrowhead Library System, was funded in part or in whole with money from Minnesota's Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund (ACHF). To learn more about Arrowhead Legacy Events, please see our calendar at www.alslib.info or like us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/alslibinfo.

Outdoor skills & stewardship

Try the Department of Natural Resources "Outdoor Skills and Stewardship" webinars. Each webinar begins at noon on Wednesdays and lasts less than an hour. For more information and to register, visit dnr.state.mn.us/fishwildlife/outreach.

Feb. 11 – How to maximize your bat box usage

Learn all about bat boxes, what species of bats rely on them, and why providing choices for bats can contribute to the health of bat populations in Minnesota. New guidelines from the Minnesota DNR will be discussed to help you maximize the effectiveness of bat boxes to provide quality summer roosting sites for bats.



TIMBERWOLF INN February Specials at Timberwolf Inn

Lunch Special: Half Sandwich + Cup of Soup \$9

Every Thursday: Asian Night

Every Wednesday-Friday: Early Bird Special 3PM-5PM Free Salad Bar or Soup with all Sandwiches

Next Asian Buffet February 5th & 19th

Sign up for our newsletter by scanning the QR code to get a first look at our Valentine's Day menu! Now taking reservations!



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2026 Paul Bunyan Scholarships

Paul Bunyan Communications is committed to the communities they serve and provides dozens of scholarships annually to local students within its service territory. They also offer local students the chance to apply for statewide industry scholarships and national industry scholarships. If you are a current high school senior or a student at one of the local post-secondary institutions, you can apply for a scholarship.

High School Scholarships

At least two \$500 scholarships are awarded to 16 area high schools within or near its service territory. The application process, winners, and distribution of funds are handled by each high school independent of Paul Bunyan Communications. Eligible high schools in North Itasca Electric's service area include Bigfork, Blackduck, Deer River and Northome. Apply through the school counselor.

Post Secondary Scholarships

Students who are members of Paul Bunyan Communications or whose parent/legal guardian is a member can apply for a \$500 scholarship through the following area colleges or universities: Northwest Technical College, Minnesota North College-Itasca, Red Lake Nation College, Leech Lake Tribal College and Oak Hills Christian College. Bemidji State University also accepts applications at bemidjistate.academicworks.com/ for scholarships provided by Paul Bunyan.

Application by members or children of members are also open for one of five \$2,000 statewide scholarships from the Minnesota Telecom Alliance Foundation. Application at www.mnta.org/page/Scholarship and is due to Paul Bunyan by **Feb. 13**. Thirty \$2,500 scholarships are awarded nationwide from the Foundation for Rural Service. Application at www.frs.org/programs/youth-programs/scholarships is due by **Feb. 13**.

Youth Tour to Washington, D.C.

Paul Bunyan sponsors one high school students, age 15-16 for the Youth Tour, organized by the Foundation for Rural Service. The tour allows youth to meet with members of Congress who represent rural constituents and participate in educational sessions about the Federal Communications Commission (FCC). Students visit some of the nation's most historic sites. The Tour is June 1-5 this year, application includes a short essay and is at paulbunyan.net/cooperative/documents/youth-tour/. It is due **Feb. 27**.

Squaw Lake Fire Department

2026 Schedule of Events

- Mar. 14th - Perch Jerkers & Spring Raffle 9am-1pm
- Apr. 11th - Fish Fry & Pie Auction 4pm-7pm
- June 6th - Take A Kid Fishing 9am-Noon
- Sept. 12th - Hog Roast 5pm-7pm



To stay up to date, follow us on Facebook

2026 Arvig Scholarships

High school seniors graduating from a school district served by Arvig, including Bigfork, and going into certain fields can apply for a \$3,000 Royale B and Eleanor M. Arvig Memorial Scholarship through the school counselor. Arvig also participates in the Minnesota Telecom Alliance and Foundation for Rural Service Scholarships. Visit <https://arvig.com/scholarships/> for more information.

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Community Cafe in Deer River

The Community Cafe is available to anyone who is in need of a meal. Each Monday - Thursday, 4:30 p.m.- 6:00 p.m. (or until gone), a nutritious three-course meal is served. Location: King Elementary School door #9. For more information, visit communitycafemn.org.

Northome Food Shelf

12059 Main St

Bring your own bags.

- 1st Mon.: 9 a.m.-noon
- 2nd Mon.: 2-5 p.m.
- 3rd Mon.: 9 a.m.-noon
- 4th Mon.: 2-5 p.m.

Blackduck

Community Library:
(218) 835-6600

- Tues: 1-6 p.m..
- Wed: 9 a.m.-noon.
- Thurs:12-5 p.m.
- Fri: 12-5 p.m.
- Sat.: 9 a.m.-noon

Northern Itasca Emergency Food Shelf

200 Main, Bigfork

- Thursdays 12:30-3 p.m.
- 3rd Thursday 12:30-4:30 p.m.
- (218) 256-4170

Northome Library

(218) 897-5952

- Mon: 9 a.m.-4 p.m.
- Tues: 9 a.m.- 3 p.m.
- Wed: 9 a.m.-4 p.m.
- Thurs: noon - 6 p.m.
- Fri: 9 a.m.- noon

Resource Centers:

Blackduck:
(218) 835-5768

Northome:
(218) 897-5952

Community Education

Try out a Community Education class!. To find programs in Itasca County, see getlearning.org. For Blackduck and Northome classes, see the school websites or Facebook pages..

Here are some of the offerings:

Painting Party at the Lodge: Friday, Feb. 20, 6-9 p.m. at Antler Lodge, 51754 Scenic Hwy, Bigfork. Join an experienced art educator as she guides you from start to finish through the creation of a new painting at the event. For ages 21 up. No art experience required, Materials included. \$50. Register by Feb. 15.

Smash and Stash Art journal: Thurs., March 12, 3:30-5:30 p.m. Bigfork School Art Room. Make your own creative art journal. Play with mixed media to experiment with textures, color, images, gel print and paint to make your own personal artistic journal. Ages 10-adult. \$28.

Adult Open Basketball: Bigfork School Gym, 18 and over, Wednesdays through March 25, 7-9 p.m. One time fee covers insurance, \$10.

SAIL classes

For more information or to register (required), contact ElderCircle at (218) 999-9233. New attendees may start anytime. Weights are provided but please bring your own water.

- Virtual via Zoom video conference
Mondays & Thursdays, 10:30 a.m.-12:00 p.m.
- Virtual via Zoom video conference
Tuesdays & Thursdays, 9:00-10:30 a.m.

In person at:

- Bigfork Old Scenic Church
Tuesdays & Thursdays, 9:00-10:30 a.m.
- Bowstring Town Hall
Tuesdays & Thursdays, 10:00-11:30 a.m.
- Deer River, Bethany Lutheran
Mondays & Thursdays, 10:30 a.m.-12:00 p.m.

area bookmobile stops

New to the area? Get your Arrowhead Library Card on the Bookmobile.

The 2026 schedule has changed for our area. See highlighted items for changes.

- Mondays: Jan. no stops; Feb. 9
2:45 - 3:30 p.m. Northome; Apartments
Canceled Alvwood; Hoot-n-Holler
4:15 - 5:15 p.m. Squaw Lake; Community Ctr
- Tuesdays: Jan. 20; Feb. 10
10:00 -11:00 a.m. Deer River: Comstock Ct.
Canceled Deer River: City Hall
11:30-12:30 p.m. Bowstring Store
1:45 - 2:45 p.m. Effie: Country Store
3:15 - 4:15 p.m. Bigfork: City Hall
- Thursdays: Jan. 22; Feb. 12
11:45 a.m.-12:45 p.m. Togo: Junction Bar & Grill

Bookmobile or Mail-a-Book information: call Arrowhead Library System at (218) 741-3840

Community News

Bigfork

Weekly events at the B.I.G. Community Center in Bigfork include Coffee Club and Cribbage on weekdays, 7-9 a.m., crafting group third Wednesday, 5-7 p.m.

Marcell

The January music jam was canceled due to weather, we'll try again in February at the Marcell Family Center! Come the fourth Thursday (Feb. 26) at 5 p.m. The event will continue as long as there is interest. Free.

General Interest

The Forest History Center in Grand Rapids will offer an Introduction to Fly Tying workshop for beginners ages 12 and up with MN Trout Unlimited on Sat., Feb. 7 from 10 a.m.-3 p.m. Cost is \$40.

Learn about different knots involved with fishing and tying flies and how each are used. On Saturday, Feb. 21, join a Winter Adventure Family Day with outdoor activities. Admission \$15 adult, \$8 child (5-17). College, military, senior \$12. More information, (218) 327-4482,



Marcell Family Center

Winter Frolic - Feb. 7
11 a.m.-12:30 p.m.

218-832-3444
49023 State Highway 38 Marcell, MN 56657

MFC hours:

Fitness Center, gymnasium, multi-purpose room, public computer room and WiFi hotspot.
Mon: 11 a.m.-2 p.m., 4-7 p.m.
Tues, Thurs: 11 a.m.-2 p.m., 4-7 p.m.
Fri: 11 a.m.-2 p.m., Sat: 9 a.m.-2 p.m.

~ February Calendar ~

- 3 Local political caucuses for 2026 elections, 7 p.m. Find your meeting location at caucusfinder.sos.mn.gov/
- 4 "The Club I Never Wanted to Join" breast cancer support group meets 3:30 p.m. at Zion Lutheran Church in the chapel, south entrance, Grand Rapids. More info with Lynn (218) 832-3612, lynn_etl@msn.com.
- 5 Jesse Lake Lutheran hosts a Grief Support Group at 10 a.m. on Thursday mornings. For more information, call Marion at (320) 293-5741.
- 5 Practical Water Wisdom online programs over the lunch hour with Itasca Waters. Topic: "What Lakes Do in Winter" with Ted Ozersky, an Associate Professor of Biological Limnology in Duluth. Register at itascawaters.org.
- 7 Winter Frolic at the Marcell Family Center, 11:00 a.m.-12:30 p.m. Family event: crafts, food and fun. Free.
- 9 ISD 318 School Board meeting, Administrative Board Room, 650 SW 7th St, Grand Rapids 6:30 p.m., open forum 6 p.m. Livestream at watchictv.org, 6 p.m. Information: jrasmussen@isd318.org or call (218) 327-5704.
- 9 Women of the Woods meet at 10 a.m. at Sand Lake Community Center. Call Pat Sievertson at (218) 659-2157.
- 9 Effie City Council meets at Effie Community Center, 6 p.m.
- 9 Blackduck ISD 32 School Board meets, 6 p.m. in the Media Center.
- 9 Perry Heide VFW Post 9703 meets the second Monday of the month, 7 p.m. at the Marcell Family Center. Everyone is welcome.
- 10 Stop & Stitch meets at the Marcell Family Center the 2nd Tuesday of every month, 9:30 a.m.-2:30 p.m. More info, call Debbie at (218) 360-1503.
- 10 Bigfork City Council meets at City Hall, 5:30 p.m.
- 11 The DNR Outdoor Skills and Stewardship series presents How to maximize your bat box usage, online at noon. Preregister at dnr.state.mn.us/fishwildlife/outreach .
- 12 ISD 317 School Board meets at Deer River HS, 6 p.m. Public forum 5:45 p.m.
- 12 Classic Movies presents *Pride and Prejudice* (1940), with Greer Garson and Laurence Olivier. 6:30 p.m. at the Edge Center, Bigfork. Free.
- 14 Valentine's Day
- 14 Pie and Ice Cream Social at Jesse Lake Lutheran Church, 2 miles west of Talmoon on Co. Rd. 4, 2-4 p.m. Also a whole pie silent auction.
- 16 No school, all schools. Presidents' Day. **North Itasca Electric offices CLOSED.** Note: weekday office hours 7 a.m.-3:30 p.m. this week

Area Church Directory

Alwood Community Church Sun 10:00a
58712 Co. Rd. 131
Blackduck 56630 218-659-4681

Balsam Bible Chapel Sun 10:00a
41516 Scenic Hwy 7
Bovey 55709 218-245-1960

Bear River Lutheran Church Sun 10:00a
11141 Hwy 22
Cook 55723 218-376-1012

Bethany Lutheran Church Sun 9:00a
35297 State Highway 6
Deer River, MN 56636 218-246-8398

Bethesda Lutheran Church Sun 9:00a
Mizpah 56660 218-897-5654

Bowstring Chapel Sun 10:15a
45114 Co Rd 133
Deer River 56636 218-832-3171

Calvary Covenant Sun 10:30a
54764 Co. Rd. 31
Northome 56661 218-897-5684

Centennial Lutheran Church Sun 8:30a
Hwy 46
Squaw Lake 56681 218-259-0115

Clara Lutheran Church Sun 9:00a
41447 Little Clara Drive
Deer River 56636 218-360-1503

Deer River Bible Church Sun 10:00a
33276 State Highway 6
Deer River 56636 218-246-9570

Dora Lake Alliance Sun 10:00a
59329 Co Rd 145
Northome 56661 218-659-4551

Effie Fredheim Lutheran Church (ELCA) Sun 8:30a
Hwy 1
Effie 56639 218-743-3368

First Presbyterian Church, BF Sun 10:15a
109 Ash St.
Bigfork 56628 218-743-3783

Gemmel Community Church Sun 10:00a
10609 Town Rd 34
Gemmel 56660 218-897-5966

Good Hope Church - Bigfork Sun 10:00a
101 Golf Course Ln.
Bigfork, MN 56628 218-556-9856

Grace Community Church (ELCA) Sun 10:15a
401 State Hwy 38 N
Bigfork 56628 218-743-3368

Hope Lutheran Church Sun 10:30 a.m.
12234 Third St.
Northome 56661 218-897-5654

Jehovah's Witnesses Tu 7:00p., Sun 10:00a
Hwy 38
Bigfork 56628 218-743-3275

Jesse Lake Lutheran Church Sun 8:30a
45834 Co. Rd. 4
Talmoon 56637 218-832-3883

Marcell Community Church Sun 10:30a
49103 State Hwy 38
Marcell 56657 218-832-3200

Northome Community Church Sun 10:00a
12071 Bartlett St.
Northome 56661 218-897-5040

Northwoods Chapel Sun 9:00a
50539 Mushgee Rd. (corner of Co. Rd. 622)
Deer River 56636 218-659-2784

Old Scenic Community Church Sun 9:30a
25747 Co. Rd. 340
Bigfork 56628 218-743-3953

Our Lady of the Snows Catholic Church Sun 9:00a
Mass also Tu, W, 9:00a.
320 Golf Course Ln
Bigfork 56628 218-743-3255

Sand Lake Alliance Sun 10:00a
55581 Co. Rd 4
Spring Lake 56680 218-659-2872
Church website: www.sandlakealliancechurch.org

St. Catherine's Catholic Church Sat 4:00p
52265 State Hwy 46
Squaw Lake 56681 218-743-3255

St. Michael Catholic Church Sat 7:00p
12026 Lake St
Northome 56661 218-743-3255

Suomi Evangelical Lutheran Church Sun 10:30a
42935 Co. Rd. 48
Deer River 56636 218-832-3883

True Life Church Sun 10:00a
45976 Terry
Talmoon 56637 218-244-7089

Church directory sponsored by North Itasca Electric Cooperative, send changes to editor, sedgwick@paulbunyan.net

- 17 Jessie Lake Lutheran free community meal 4-6 p.m.
- 17 Stitch-n-Bitch meets at the B.I.G. Community Center in Bigfork the 3rd Wednesday of every month, 5-7 p.m. Info, call Krista at (218) 410-2258.
- 18 ISD 363 South Koochiching-Rainy River School Board meeting, 7 p.m. at Northome School media center.
- 26 Music jam at the Marcell Family Center, 5 p.m.
- 22 Women of the Woods meet at 10 a.m. at Sand Lake Community Center. Call Pat Sievertson at (218) 659-2157.
- 24 Bigfork Valley Hospital board meets in public meeting, 9 a.m.
- 28 Polar Revue at the Edge Center in Bigfork, 2 p.m. Annual community talent show: music, skits, dance, comedy...bring your talent and perform on the big stage! To sign up, call Jayme Rahier at (218) 244-5019. Adults \$10, students free.
- 28 Annual Blackduck Stumpjumpers Drag Races on Blackduck Lake. 8 a.m. registration, 10 am. start. Many race classes, including kids, vintage and antique; more info on Facebook.

Winter wonderland: How trees survive the cold

Minnesota is well known for frigid cold and lots of snow, and this winter is no different. According to climate data, average 24-hour temperatures for December through February in the state are around 10 degrees in the north and 18 degrees in the south. But temperatures can plunge well below zero, as much of the state has experienced recently.

How do trees survive such cold? Like Minnesota's wildlife (and Minnesotans themselves!) trees have adapted to survive this cold. Here are four ways the forests survive those deep winter days and nights.

Natural "antifreeze"

Living trees are full of water – but since water expands when it freezes, what keeps trees from bursting open in winter?

The water inside their cells contains dissolved substances, like sugar and other compounds, that lower the freezing point and prevent damage. This helps native trees like quaking aspen, which can survive temperatures colder than 50 below zero.

Despite this natural protection, trees can get "frost cracks," which are vertical cracks in the wood caused by rapid temperature drops when the water and sap inside the tree freeze and expand. Those cracks tend to happen at a weak spot in the bark. Native trees can get frost cracks, but non-native trees are more susceptible if they're not adapted to the weather. Frost cracks aren't fatal, but they make a tree more prone to decay, insects, and disease.

Winter dormancy conserves energy

Hibernation isn't unique to animal species.

As day length shortens in fall, many tree species such as birch and maple enter dormancy, a resting state similar to hibernation. Their metabolism slows, above-ground growth stops, and energy use drops, allowing them to conserve resources until spring.

Drop or keep leaves

Deciduous trees, like maples, birches and aspen, have leaves that aren't very cold hardy. To conserve energy and water contained in their leaves, deciduous trees move nutrients from leaves into their hardier woody tissues in the fall, then drop their leaves.

Coniferous trees, on the other hand, hold less water in their leaves (or needles), which also have a protective wax-like coating that reduces their risk of freezing. By keeping their leaves through the winter, coniferous trees also

continue to produce energy through photosynthesis.

Shape for snow and sunlight

Conifer species dominate the coldest forests on the globe. There are a few reasons, but one is their shape. The traditional,

conical shape of a pine or spruce helps the snow slide off their branches, and their limbs are shorter and more flexible, reducing risk of breaking. The relatively longer lower branches of conifers, as compared to the more umbrella-like shape of some deciduous trees, also help the tree absorb more sunlight and photosynthesize when the sun is lower on the horizon, as it is during Minnesota winters.

These adaptations highlight the importance of native species in building resilient



ecosystems.

Landowners learn more about trees, forests, and what species would grow well on their land through the DNR Woodland Landowner Handbooks (mndnr.gov/woodlands) or by working with a professional forester to develop a woodland stewardship plan (mndnr.gov/foreststewardship/plan-writers.html). The DNR also offers native conifer seedlings through the Minnesota State Forest Nursery (mndnr.gov/forestry/nursery).

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Stop by the headquarters building in Bigfork to pick up your own 2025 Christmas Cookie and Candy Contest recipe book! You can also email Roxanne at roxannep@nieci.com or call her at (218) 743-3132 for an emailed copy.

2nd

Caramel Pecan Turtles

Thank you to Darlene Skaug for this second place Christmas cookie recipe!

Toppings:

<p>1 cup Crisco butter flavor or regular 4-5 cups flour 1/2 cup brown sugar 2 tablespoons milk 3 eggs</p>	<p>1 teaspoon vanilla 1-1/2 cups sugar 1-1/2 teaspoons soda 1-1/2 teaspoons cream of tartar 1 teaspoon salt</p>	<p>Caramel: 28 caramels 2 Tablespoons milk</p> <p>Melt in microwave for 1 minute. Stir until smooth. Drop rounded teaspoons on each cookie. Place 3 pecan halves around edge of caramel. (Or use your favorite caramel recipe, that's what I do.)</p> <p>Chocolate: 1 cup chocolate chips</p> <p>Melt in microwave. Stir until smooth. Drop rounded teaspoonful over top of caramel. Do not cover pecans. Cool completely. Makes about 6 dozen.</p>	<p>Caramel (what I like) 2 cups of butter 2 pounds brown sugar</p> <p>2 cups light corn syrup 2 cans condensed milk Pinch of salt</p> <p>Melt butter, add brown sugar. Mix thoroughly. Add corn syrup and mix well. Then add condensed milk gradually, stirring well.</p> <p>Cook over medium heat to 245°, until soft ball forms. Add 2 teaspoons vanilla. Use in any recipe calling for caramels. Thin as needed for your recipe.</p>
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Cream Crisco and sugars, add milk, eggs and vanilla. Mix well.
Add dry ingredients. Mix well.
Use small scoop and place on ungreased cookie sheet. Press down. Bake at 350°F for 5-6 minutes. Cool. Frost with topping.

Please share your recipe with us! If your recipe is chosen, you will receive a \$10 credit on your electric bill from North Itasca Electric Cooperative. Send your recipe to the editor, WATTS NEWS, P.O. Box 43, Spring Lake, MN 56680.

CLASSIFIEDS

AD DEADLINE
for the MARCH issue: **Wednesday, Feb. 18**

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Contact the editor by one Classified ads are free to members, \$5 per insertion to non-members or businesses.

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Wanted: Individual to assist in personal care giving, - 1 1/2 to 2 hours in the a.m. and in the p.m.. Two positions available, 5 days a week, some weekends. Wage negotiable with appropriate experience. Contact Cam at (218) 360-1952. 2/26

Emails will be answered; if no reply, please resend.

-HELP WANTED-

Wanted: Individual to assist in personal care giving, - 1 1/2 to 2 hours in the a.m. and in the p.m.. Two positions available, 5 days a week, some weekends. Wage negotiable with appropriate experience. Contact Cam at (218) 360-1952. 2/26

-FOR SALE-

For sale: Ruger American synthetic black 30-06 with vortex 3-9 scope new in box \$600 obo. Call (218) 556-9008 3/26

For sale: Firewood: 1/2 cord elm, \$100. 1/3 cord maple including delivery w/in 10 miles of Talmoon, \$90. Call (218) 259-1940 2/26

For sale: Lumber: 2x4, 2x6, 1 inch boards. Slab wood, \$15/bundle. Call (218) 639-2558 3/26

Notice

February Marcell Town Board Meeting

The February Marcell Town Board meeting will include representatives from the Itasca County Sheriff's Office, who will be in attendance to speak with residents about the possibility of sharing a dedicated deputy for the area.

Residents are encouraged to attend with questions or simply to listen and learn more.

The meeting will be held on Wednesday, February 11th, at 6:00 p.m.

Marcell Township



Heather Chapman
Agency Owner
Northern Minnesota District Office



55960 County Road 4
Spring Lake, MN 56680
Office 218-659-4370
Cell 715-817-3990
Tel 218-659-2200
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SWCD Native Plant Sale

The Itasca County Soil and Water Conservation District is offering its annual Native Plant Sale with an order

deadline of Tuesday, April 17. Order online at itascaswcd.org, where growing details and pictures of plants are shown. You can also stop in at the office at 1895 West Highway 2 in Grand Rapids.

Over 50 choices are available in wildflowers, grasses, shrubs and trees; flower kits, seed mixes, tree and shrub packs, and browse prevention items. Order early! Quantities are limited.

New this year are six flower varieties including 3 asters: calico, large leaf and silky; cardinal flower; Culver's root; and Maxmillian sunflower. In shrubs, American elderberry and pin cherry are new selections with larger sized plants for chokecherry, red Osier dogwood, Juneberry and plum. Eastern hemlock and peach leaf willow (a black ash replacement) are new under trees.

Trees and shrubs come 5 to a bundle, flowers and grasses 6/bundle. This year there are four flower kits with 36 plants each to cover 40-60 square feet: Monarch Special, Part Shade Garden; Rusty Patched Bumble Bee and Songbird Special. Seed mixes for lakeshore planting or pollinators are offered as well as tree packs of 25 (5 species) for either moist or wetland locations and a combination shrub/small tree pollinator pocket pack that is selected for the edge of a woodland. The sale also offers two browse prevention products.

Pick up dates are May 14 or 15 at the SWCD office in Grand Rapids.

For more information, visit the website, call (218) 999-4439 or email matthew.picklo@itascaswcd.org. SWCD staff run the sale and are available to answer any natural resource related questions regardless of whether you make a purchase or not.

Place a Classified Ad Today!

If you are an individual member of the cooperative, classified ads are free as a service from your cooperative. If you are advertising for a business or are a non-member, please remit \$5 per ad per month.

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Put WATTS AD in subject line.
If no response, please resend.

State utilities commission approves solar project in Itasca County

This story appears at <https://www.kaxe.org/local-news/2026-01-16/minnesota-power-boswell-solar-project-approved-itasca-county-mn>

This story was originally published by KAXE

The Minnesota Public Utilities Commission has approved a site permit for Minnesota Power's Boswell Solar Project, an up-to-85-megawatt solar facility in Itasca County.

The Friday, Jan. 16 announcement stated the commission also granted a route permit for the associated 2.5-mile, 230-kilovolt transmission line. The line will connect the project to the existing Boswell Energy Center Substation.

The project will be partially located in Cohasset, partially within Deer Lake Township, and partially within the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe Reservation, covering about 1,300 acres. About 500 of those acres will

be occupied by solar panels and associated infrastructure.

The PUC stated its decision followed a comprehensive environmental review and public engagement process. In response to feedback from nearby residents, tribal governments and state agencies, the PUC established some permit conditions.

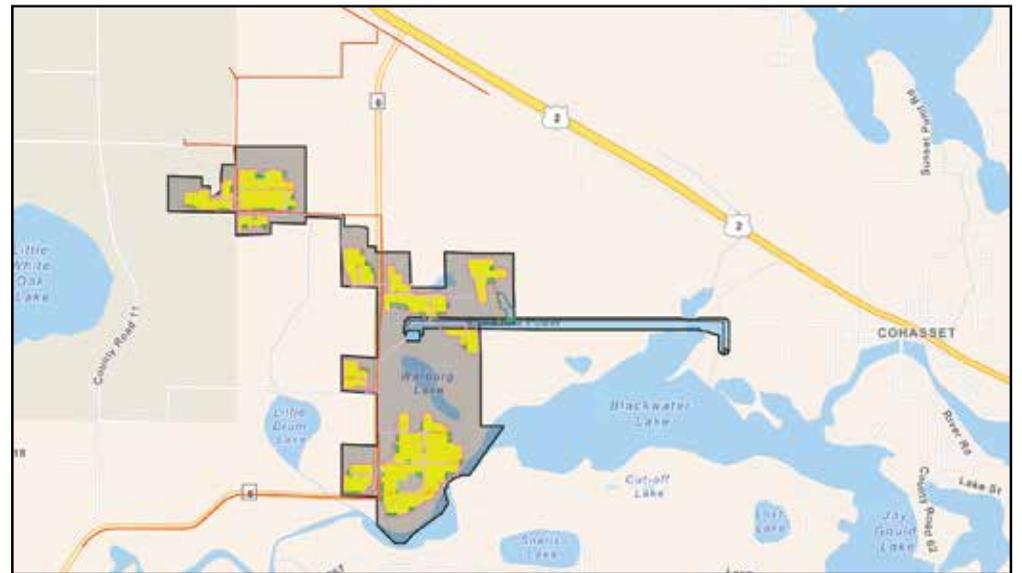
These include requiring a detailed visual screening plan to address potential visual impacts to neighboring properties, as well as engagement with the Leech Lake Band on economic and workforce development opportunities.

The Boswell Solar Project is a key component of Minnesota Power's Integrated

Resource Plan, which requires the utility to procure up to 300 MW of regional solar energy. This project delivers 85 MW toward that requirement and supports Minnesota's mandate to achieve 100% carbon-free electricity by 2040.

Construction is expected to begin early this year, with commercial operation anticipated in late 2027.

Full project details are available on the Boswell Solar Project webpage, <https://puc.eip.mn.gov/web/project/16003>.



A screenshot of an interactive map shows the locations of Minnesota Power's planned Boswell Solar Project, expected to begin operating in 2027. Contributed/Minnesota Public Utilities Commission.

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