

# MCLEOD COOPERATIVE POWER

# NEWS

SEPTEMBER 2021



**YOU'RE INVITED:  
MEMBER APPRECIATION OPEN HOUSE**

**LET US SAY THANK YOU**

MEMBER APPRECIATION EVENT

**OPEN HOUSE**

**OCTOBER 13**  
**1:00 PM - 6:00 PM**

**MCLEOD CO-OP HEADQUARTERS**  
3515 11<sup>TH</sup> STREET EAST, GLENCOE  
**RSVP REQUIRED**

*Every year, our member appreciation event is our chance to thank you and express our appreciation for your patronage throughout the year.*

As members of the cooperative, you are more than just customers, you are the owners of the cooperative. You are the owners of all the poles and power lines, the bucket trucks and facilities. This is your cooperative – you own it!

**This year we're hosting an open house on Wednesday, October 13, from 1:00 -6:00pm. at our new headquarters. The event will include a small group facility tour with a vendor showcase featuring water heaters, generators, heating equipment, electric vehicles, security products, and more.**

**We ask that members RSVP for this event by calling (320) 864-3148 to sign up for a timeslot to visit.**

The cooperative business model has a history of building community from the ground up. Nearly a century ago when utilities chose not to serve rural areas of America, it was farmers and ranchers who banded together to create the electric cooperatives that would power not only their homes and businesses, but also opportunities for the communities they live in.

That's because while the main product electric co-ops supply is energy, that isn't our sole business purpose. More than just power lines, co-ops build jobs, trust, communities and hope. They work to improve the quality of life for those they serve; donate time, energy and resources to organizations that help those in need; and take a leadership role in community development projects.

"Our co-op was built by our community and continues to belong to the community," said CEO Ron Meier. "Since we're a member-driven organization, we listen, adapt and grow over time to meet the needs of those we serve. The more viewpoints we hear, the better we are able to serve the needs of all corners of our community."

In addition to delivering safe, reliable and affordable electricity to members, electric cooperatives adhere to seven guiding principles that reflect core values of honesty, transparency, equity, inclusion, and service to the greater good of the community.

These values are demonstrated when McLeod Co-op Power sponsors local events, presents scholarships to students on a path to receive higher education and when we help coordinate loans for small businesses to expand in the area.

It's also these values that motivate us to communicate openly and welcome opportunities to connect with our members. These values are why we host our member appreciation event, like this year's open house, in the first place.

**Don't forget to mark your calendars for our 2021 Member Appreciation Open House on October 13.**

Maintaining a thriving community is a team effort — neighbors helping neighbors. You built us, and we'll continue working to serve you,

## NOMINATE A COMMUNITY DIFFERENCE MAKER

Each year, McLeod Cooperative Power celebrates volunteerism and community service with the Touchstone Energy® Community Award.

One winning organization receives a \$500 cash prize and competes with winners from other electric cooperatives for statewide recognition and an additional \$1,000 cash prize.

We are now seeking nominations! Applications for the award are now being accepted and are available at [www.mcleodcoop.com/touchstone-energy-community-award](http://www.mcleodcoop.com/touchstone-energy-community-award).

The application requires a description of the project, program or event, as well as the positive impact it brings to the community, and must be received by October 31, 2021.

Any civic organization or nonprofit in our service territory is eligible to compete for the award, which recognizes outstanding contributions to the local community.



Organizations are eligible to apply for the award themselves, or community members may apply on behalf of a deserving organization.

As a Touchstone Energy Cooperative, McLeod Co-op is a partner in a national alliance of more than 750 local, consumer-owned electric cooperatives dedicated to the values of integrity, accountability, innovation and commitment to community.

**MEMBER SURVEY  
RESULTS SUMMARY**

02

**MEMBERS ASK:  
WHY RIGHT-OF-WAY?**

03

## FIVE REASONS TO FOLLOW US ON FACEBOOK

**1 OUTAGE INFORMATION**  
Get the most recent outage updates and learn how to prepare for summer storms and keep your family safe.

**2 COOPERATIVE NEWS**  
Never miss important news and announcements from McLeod Co-op Power.

**3 YOUR CO-OP CARES**  
Check out spotlight stories on how your Cooperative supports the community.

**4 ENERGY SAVING IDEAS**  
Who doesn't like saving money? Check our page regularly for current promotions, rebates, and simple ways to save.

**5 MEMBERSHIP MATTERS**  
One more way to connect with your Cooperative.

  
**LIKE US ON FACEBOOK**  
[www.facebook.com/McLeodCoop/](http://www.facebook.com/McLeodCoop/)



MANAGER MESSAGE

I'm pleased to be the guest columnist for this month's newsletter to provide an update on the results of the 2021 Member Survey. The survey was mailed out to our members earlier this year, and we were fortunate to have 1,665 surveys returned.

Before I dive into the results, I should give a brief background on this endeavor. The survey itself is designed to measure members' satisfaction on a wide array of topics. The Co-op has traditionally conducted this survey every other year. This allows us to analyze trends over longer periods.

This type of survey allows us to identify issues and opportunities as early as possible. The bottom line, we get an opportunity to find out how our members feel we are doing. Below is a summary of several key survey categories from this year's survey.

RELIABILITY OF ELECTRIC SERVICE

As with the other main categories, members were asked to rate their satisfaction level with the three options being Poor, Satisfactory, or Excellent. This was one of our highest-rated categories with 83% responding that the Co-op is Excellent at providing reliable service (up from 79% in 2018). Furthermore, 78% of survey respondents rated us as Excellent for restoring power promptly (up from 72% in 2018). This may not be too surprising as reliability continues to be a key priority for us.

CUSTOMER SERVICE

Supporting our members is key to all we do, so this is an important area of focus for us. With this survey, 74% of respondents gave us an Excellent rating. We also scored the same rating when asking if we have helpful employees. We will continue to focus on improvement given that 1% of respondents indicated a Poor ranking. To that point, we believe our new SmartHub application can enhance our customer service by offering various communication, such as text alerts, and online payment capabilities.

COMMUNICATIONS

Although 62% of the respondents gave the newsletter an Excellent rating, this is the only survey question that dipped in its rating from 2018 (down from 67% in 2018). In 2020, we did a redesign to the newsletter as it had been several decades since our last update. The goal was to save costs (we went from 8 pages to 4 pages), but more importantly to make the newsletter more relevant. We're committed to accomplishing this goal. To that point, we have a new "Members Ask" column to tackle some key questions that we received in the comments section of the survey. This is just one example of how we're striving to bring more value to our newsletter.



DAN EHRKE

BOARD & MANAGEMENT

When asked to rate MCPA as a well-managed organization, 60% gave an Excellent rating (up from 54% in 2018). In fact, only 6 individuals of the 1,665 total respondents gave a Poor rating. Member engagement is key to ensuring the Co-op is a well-run organization. This survey is a good first step, but the Board & Management Team are looking forward to more opportunities to hear directly from our members. The Open House on October 13th will be a great opportunity for just that. We're also planning some "district" focused gatherings for 2022.

RATES

The Co-op scored the lowest satisfaction ratings within this category. With that said, ratings in this category have increased considerably since 2010. This would seem logical as 2021 is our third year in a row without a rate increase. Even with more improved rankings, rates are and always will be a topic of discussion for the member-owners, Management team, and the Board of Directors.

OTHER

As mentioned earlier, we also received some great feedback in the comments section. Some operations topics included vegetation management, converting overhead lines to underground, and our pole replacement schedule. These are great topics that we will be covering in the next couple of editions of the newsletter to give members more information.

To wrap up this column, I'd like to thank all of you who returned your survey. Getting this input is very important as it allows us to take a step back from our day-to-day activities and evaluate our work. Of course, getting input doesn't always have to take the shape of a formal survey. Our members are always welcome to stop by or call us if they have any ideas or feedback.

Best Regards,

*Dan Ehrke*

Dan Ehrke  
Member Services Manager

AUGUST 2021  
BOARD MEETING  
HIGHLIGHTS

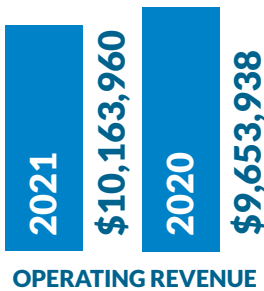
The Regular Meeting of the Board of Directors of McLeod Cooperative Power Association was held on August 24, 2021, at McLeod Co-op headquarters. Eight board members, the attorney, CEO Ron Meier, and department managers participated in the meeting.

Highlights of the meeting included:

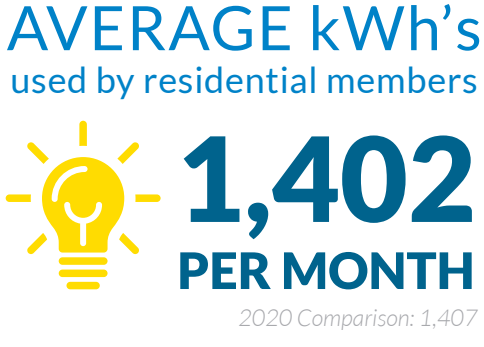
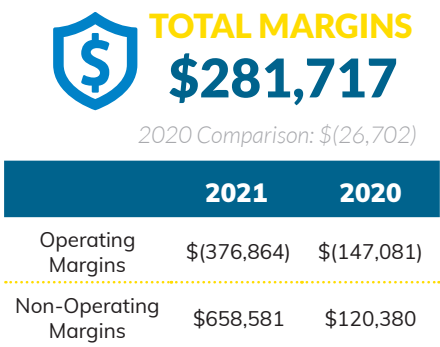
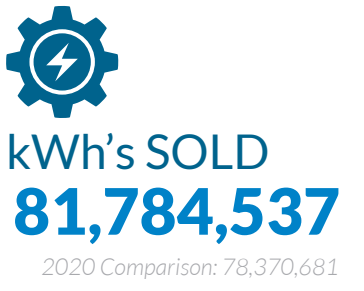
- The outage report for July was reviewed with a total of 77 outages, affecting 406 consumers. Planned outages included transformer change-outs and overhead to underground conversions.
- A motion was carried to hold the Annual Meeting on Tuesday, July 12, 2022, at the Hutchinson Event Center.
- Finance Manager Jakel presented the Operating Statement and Balance Sheet for July 2021.
- The 10-year Financial Forecast Model was reviewed. This tool allows for management and the Board to make informed business decisions, view trends (past vs. future), maintain financial goals while realizing the impact on the member/owners.
- A motion was carried to adopt the PCA calculation by using a blended cost/credit per kWh reflecting the PCA from Great River Energy.
- A motion was carried to approve Resolution 2021-08-01 HSS Guarantor's Certificate of Resolutions and Incumbency for Heartland Security Systems line of credit with National Cooperative Services Corp.
- A motion was carried to approve CEO Meier as the Voting Delegate for the CFC Director election.
- A motion was carried to approve the non-union employee wage change proposal effective October 1, 2021.

BY THE  
NUMBERS  
Q2 2021

McLeod Co-op Power's leadership spends substantial time managing and providing oversight of the Co-op's operations, including ensuring that the organization remains in a strong and stable financial condition. Included is an overview of our Second Quarter Unaudited Financial Report.



	2021	2020
Cost of Purchased Power	\$6,554,277	\$5,751,857
Other Operating Expenses	\$3,986,547	\$4,049,162
Total Cost of Electric Service	\$10,540,824	\$9,801,019





# HELP US, HELP YOU

In working to keep a safe, reliable, and affordable supply of power flowing to your home or business, we need your help.

## KNOW WHAT AND WHERE YOU ARE PLANTING

If you are planting a tree on your property, make sure not to plant them within at least 25 feet of power lines for short trees, and at least 40 feet away for medium-sized trees.

## NEED SOME HELP DECIDING?

Download the Right Tree Brochure at [www.mcleodcoop.com/safety/tree-trimming-vegetation-management/](http://www.mcleodcoop.com/safety/tree-trimming-vegetation-management/) for more information.

## REPORT PROBLEMS

Do you have a concern about a potential overhead power line hazard near your property? Report your concern by calling our customer service department at (800) 494-6272.

While we're sure you enjoy the beauty trees add to our neighborhoods, we know you also enjoy the comfort of knowing power will be available when you need it. Many potential problems can easily be avoided with a clear right-of-way and by planting the right tree in the right location!

# PEOPLE BEHIND YOUR POWER

## BLAKE HUWE APPRENTICE LINE WORKER

Blake recently joined the McLeod Co-op Power's team as an apprentice line worker after working in the field with Highline Construction for the last three years. He enjoys the trade of linework, working with his crewmates, building and maintaining power lines, and serving the Co-op's members.

**Fun Fact:** Blake's favorite hobbies include hunting and fishing, and he is looking forward to goose hunting this fall the most.



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

McLeod Co-op works hard to ensure that the right-of-way is regularly cleared of trees and brush to help reduce potential outages and hazards. Our electric distribution system consists of approximately 1,459 miles of overhead and 449 miles of underground power line. To address vegetation management concerns across our service territory, the Co-op began a more aggressive clearing plan in 2014 to increase the safety and reliability of our electric system.

### WHAT IS RIGHT-OF-WAY?

A right of way refers to a strip of land underneath or around power lines that your electric cooperative has the right and responsibility to maintain and clear. Specifications can vary, but a general guideline of maintaining a safe right-of-way is 10 feet of clearance on either side of the primary conductors and 15 feet of overhead clearance above the highest wire on the pole.

### WHY IS RIGHT-OF-WAY CLEARING IMPORTANT?

#### 1. OUTAGE THREAT

Clearing the right-of-way is critical to keeping our members' lights on. An average of 3 percent of power interruptions occur when trees grow too close to power lines or fall into power lines due to high winds or decay. If a tree encroaches the safe distance defined by right-of-way standards, crews will trim back branches and brush using chainsaws, bucket trucks, tree climbers, brush chippers, and mowers, or remove a tree all together. Right-of-way maintenance is one of the best and most effective proactive measures McLeod Co-op can take to prevent power outages.

#### 2. SAFETY

Right-of-way clearing creates safer working conditions for our employees and also keeps your family safe by ensuring that tree branches do not become energized due to close contact with a downed power line. McLeod Co-op's distribution power lines are operated at 7,500 volts, and an energized tree branch due to close proximity or contact with a power line is incredibly dangerous – even deadly. Be mindful when around trees close to power lines, and make sure your children know that climbing trees near power lines is extremely dangerous.

#### 3. AFFORDABILITY

Right-of-way clearing is also critical to ensuring that we provide members with affordable electricity.

Staying ahead of the game improves outage restoration times, reduces maintenance calls and prevents equipment damage. All of which have an economic impact on the Co-op and on rates to our members.

### HOW DO YOU DECIDE WHAT TO TRIM?

Our crews start by reviewing what is already impeding the right-of-way creating hazardous conditions. But it's our job to address long term concerns not just immediate threats. So we also look for dead or dying trees, leaning trees, and/or animal and mechanical damage that might create issues in the future. Vegetation type, location, growth factors, property aesthetics and more are also considered when determining corrective action for vegetation concerns.

### HOW DOES CLEARING IMPACT MEMBERS?

The reality of this project is that many of you will find McLeod Co-op crews or Burnham Companies, our contract tree trimming service, in your neighborhood over the course of our tree trimming rotation identifying and addressing hazard trees. We realize that cutting and trimming trees on your property is not always ideal. Our crews work closely with members to only remove and trim what is needed for the safety of the public and our line workers, and the reliability of our distribution system. Members are notified that tree trimming work will be completed on their property by a door hanger or direct conversation.

### WHAT AREAS ARE TARGETED IN 2021?

McLeod Co-op's tree trimming efforts are planned by township. In 2014, we started on the east side of our service territory and have been working west since. You can view the Co-ops trimming schedule in the image below. This year the townships of Bismarck, Collins, Moltke, and Round Grove are targeted for vegetation management work.

As line patrol takes place, service orders are created and critical areas are addressed first. In addition, hot tickets called in by members or the community are added to the work schedule in a timely fashion based on priority and level of concern.

**Not all outages can be prevented but investing in vegetation management has both immediate and long-term benefits. By prioritizing this right-of-way project, McLeod Co-op Power is investing in enhanced safety, outage reduction, and increased reliability. As always, if you have any concerns please call our office at (800) 494-6272 and we will be happy to discuss.**

## TREE TRIMMING BY TOWNSHIP

2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	Future	
				Acoma	Hutchinson	Hale	Winsted	Hollywood	Watertown
Kingman	Osceola	Brookfield	Boon Lake	Lynn	Hassan Valley	Rich Valley	Bergen	Camden	
Bird Island	Melville	Hector	Preston Lake	Collins	Sumter	Glencoe	Helen	Young America	
Norfolk	Palmyra	Martinsburg	Grafton	Round Grove	Penn	New Auburn	Green Isle		
	Bandon	Wellington	Moltke	Bismarck	Transit	Dryden	Arlington		
					Alfsborg				



# COLD WEATHER RULE & ENERGY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM NOTICE

Notice to members who are behind in your bill payments: the Cold Weather Rule may not protect you! Make plans now to pay your bill to avoid being without electricity this winter.

The Cold Weather Rule, which is part of the Public Utilities Act, prohibits utilities from disconnecting a residential customer for nonpayment during the coldest months of the year if the customer has met the requirements under item 1 below. Your Cooperative strictly adheres to that law and offers sources of help for those unable to pay their bill. The law reads as follows:

An electric cooperative must not disconnect and must reconnect the utility service of a home between October 1 and April 30 if the disconnection affects the primary heat source for the residential unit and all of the following conditions are met:

- Your total household income is less than 50 percent of the State Median Income.
- You have contacted McLeod Co-op, have set up a payment arrangement, and are reasonably current with your scheduled payments.

If all of these items are not satisfied the electricity may be shut off due to nonpayment.

Before disconnecting service to a residential member during the cold weather months, McLeod Co-op will provide a disconnect notice, statement of member rights and responsibilities, a list of local energy assistance providers, and available payment plans or options to the affected member. Inability to pay forms are available upon request.

If a residential member is disconnected during the cold weather months they can either pay their outstanding balance or set up a mutually

acceptable payment arrangement in order to be reconnected.

The Cooperative will not disconnect service to a residential member who has not responded to a disconnection notice without first investigating whether the dwelling is occupied. This investigation includes a personal visit to the dwelling. If the unit is found to be occupied, the cooperative will immediately inform the occupant of his or her rights under this policy.

Involuntary disconnections between October 1 and April 30 will not occur on a Friday or on the day before a holiday.

Members have the right to a hearing with the Cooperative's Board of Directors in the event of a dispute over a residential member's inability to pay for service, income eligibility, the reasonableness of payment schedules, or any other issue related to the Cold Weather Rule. Both the cooperative and the member will have the right to present evidence and be heard in person at that hearing which will be followed by the Board of Directors' written decision within 10 days. No disconnection will occur while a dispute is pending.

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.

# ENERGY ASSISTANCE PROVIDERS

## KANDIYOHI, MCLEOD & MEEKER COUNTIES

United Community Action Partnership  
(800) 992-1710  
Willmar: (320) 235-0850  
Hutchinson: (320) 587-5244

## MCLEOD COUNTY AREA

McLeod County Social Service Center  
(320) 864-3144 | (800) 247-1756  
Hutchinson: (320) 484-4330

## RENVILLE COUNTY AREA

United Community Action Partnership  
(320) 523-1842

## SIBLEY COUNTY AREA

Sibley County Public Health & Human Services  
(507) 237-4000 | (866) 396-9963

## MN Valley Action Council

(800) 767-7139  
Gaylord: (507) 237-2981  
Mankato: (507) 345-6822

## CARVER COUNTY AREA

Scott-Carver-Dakota  
Community Action Agency  
(952)-496-2125

## WRIGHT COUNTY AREA

Wright County Community Action  
(320) 963-6500

# SUPPORTING OUR YOUTH: CO-OP AWARDS LOCAL STUDENTS \$500 SCHOLARSHIPS

The Ridgewater College Foundation has awarded two \$500 scholarships on behalf of McLeod Cooperative Power to students Jayda Sletten and Marisa Uecker. Each year the co-op donates \$1,000 from its unclaimed capital credit fund to be used by the Ridgewater College Foundation to support local students furthering their education. Congratulations to our recipients!



Jayda Sletten, a Hutchinson graduate, is a first-year entering the psychology program because no matter what her future career looks like, it will be centered around people and their development.



Marisa Uecker, a Hutchinson graduate, is a first-year entering the registered nursing program. As someone who enjoys doing purposeful work, her goal as a nurse is to make a difference in patients' lives.

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