

Red River Valley Cooperative Power Association

# SPARKS

December 2025



# SPARKS

Red River Valley Co-op Power is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

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Rich Whitcomb, Editor  
Jennifer Erickson, Graphic Artist

December 2025  
Volume 69, No. 9

Halstad, Minnesota (USPS 509-300)

## OFFICERS & DIRECTORS

Paul Baukol ..... Hendrum  
Chairman

Curt Stubstad ..... Sabin  
Vice Chairman

Bob Kinkade ..... Ada  
Secretary-Treasurer

Roger Krostue ..... Fisher

Trevor Sorby ..... Glyndon

Kelsey Jensen ..... Moorhead

Rich Whitcomb  
Chief Executive Officer

## Scheduled Board Meeting

Board meetings are held in Halstad at the cooperative office starting at 8:30 a.m. on the next-to-last Monday of each month.

**Outages:**  
**800-788-7784**

**On the cover:** An aerial lineworker twists an airflow spoiler around a conductor of a 345-kilovolt transmission line near Aneta, North Dakota.



## Rate adjustment in January

by Rich Whitcomb, CEO

Since early fall, I've been relaying to members that a rate adjustment is coming due to wholesale power increases and rate pressures on materials and costs like insurance.

In November, directors reviewed a detailed draft of next year's budget and approved the final budget at their December meeting. This budget includes a rate increase effective January 1, 2026 that will be reflected in the February statements.

Wholesale power costs increased 8.3% in April of this year and will increase

another 4.1% in 2026. Minnkota Power Cooperative, our wholesale power supplier, is in a period of generation and transmission reliability enhancements, like many other power suppliers, and also feels the same material and cost pressures that we do.

To obtain the necessary revenues to meet our lender requirements and maintain strong reliability, directors approved the rate adjustments in the table below. A third-party cost of service study was also completed a few months ago which helped us decide which components to change.

Class	Component	Current	New
Rate 1 (Residential/Small Ag)	Facility Charge	\$51	\$58
	All kWh	12.5 cents	13.3 cents
Rate 2 (Small Commercial)	Facility Charge	\$63	\$71
	All kWh	12.5 cents	13.3 cents
Rate 3 (Large Power)	Facility Charge	\$72	\$82
	All kWh	9.2 cents	9.9 cents
	Demand per kW	\$11.30	\$11.90
Apartment	Facility Charge	\$37	\$43
	kWh	12.5 cents	13.3 cents
Off-Peak (Dual Fuel/Cycled)	Facility Charge	\$6	\$6
	kWh	6.8 cents	6.8 cents
Off-Peak (Short-Term)	Facility Charge	\$6	\$6
	kWh	8.3 cents	8.4 cents
Yard Light Standard	Fee	\$9	\$9.50
Yard Light Decorative	Fee	\$10.75	\$11.25

\*Rates 3A/AA (Industrial) and 3B (Irrigation) also will see increases as well.

As a not-for-profit cooperative, Red River Valley Co-op Power increases rates only when necessary and after reviewing expenses thoroughly.



# 2026 DIRECTOR ELECTIONS

## 2026 DIRECTOR ELECTIONS

Red River Valley Co-op Power members in District 2 and 3 can now submit nominations to compete for a seat on the board of directors.

As a cooperative, Red River Valley Co-op Power is owned by its members. Members elect a board of directors to represent them at the cooperative. Two directors will be elected at the 2026 annual meeting on March 24.

### Directors whose terms expire in 2026 are:

**District 2** (three-year term): Paul Baukol

**District 3** (three-year term): Trevor Sorby

## HOW TO RUN

To run for a director position, interested members in the above-mentioned districts (see map) must request to have the material mailed to them or pick up the packet at the office in Halstad. Per the bylaws, any 15 or more members who reside in District 2 or 3 may nominate an eligible member for a director position in that specific district.

No member may be elected to a director position unless nominated in this manner. No write-in ballots will be accepted. **The cooperative must receive the completed petitions and forms from the packet no later than 4 p.m. on Friday, Feb. 20, 2026.** Please see below for the section of the bylaws pertaining to nominations and qualifications. Please call with questions.

## DIRECTOR DISTRICTS

### DISTRICT 1 TOWNSHIPS

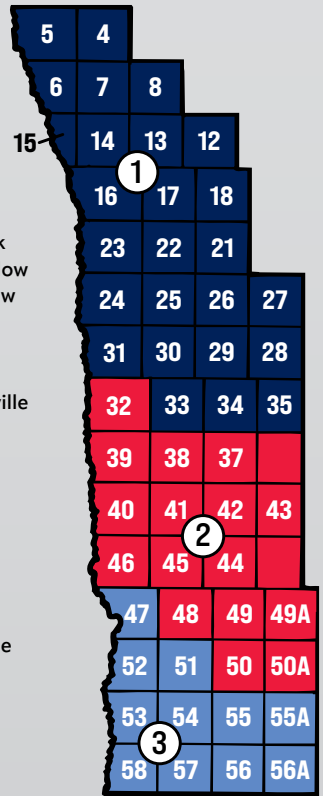
4 - Nesbit	22 - Scandia
5 - Huntsville & Rhinehart	23 - Hubbard
6 - Bygland	24 - Shelly
7 - Fisher	25 - Good Hope
8 - Lowell	26 - Lockhart
12 - Fairfax	27 - Spring Creek
13 - Andover	28 - Green Meadow
14 - Roome	29 - Pleasant View
15 - Tynsid	30 - Anthony
16 - Vineland	31 - Halstad
17 - Hammond	33 - Hegne
18 - Russia	34 - McDonaldsville
21 - Reis	35 - Lake Ida

### DISTRICT 2 TOWNSHIPS

32 - Hendrum	44 - Flowing
36 - Rockwell	45 - Morken
37 - Winchester	46 - Kragnes
38 - Mary	48 - Moland
39 - Lee	49 - Spring Prairie
40 - Georgetown	49A - Cromwell
41 - Viding	50 - Riverton
42 - Felton	50A - Hawley
43 - Hagen	

### DISTRICT 3 TOWNSHIPS

47 - Oakport	55A - Skree
51 - Glyndon	56 - Barnesville
52 - Moorhead	56A - Humboldt
53 - Kurtz	57 - Alliance
54 - Elmwood	58 - Holy Cross
55 - Elkton	



## Petition for Nomination

The following members wish to nominate [insert name] \_\_\_\_\_, for the three-year [insert "District 2"] or for the three-year [insert "District 3"] \_\_\_\_\_ director position, and to place such name on the ballot for the March 24, 2026, election at the annual meeting of the Cooperative, in accordance with Article III, Section 4, of the bylaws.

	NAME	ADDRESS	ACCOUNT NO.
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			
5.			
6.			
7.			
8.			
9.			
10.			
11.			
12.			
13.			
14.			
15.			
16.			
17.			
18.			
19.			
20.			

The Cooperative must receive the completed petition no later than 4:00 p.m., February 20, 2026. At the annual meeting scheduled for March 24, 2026, elections will be held for a three-year term each for one director in District 2 and one director in District 3.

The directors whose terms expire in 2026 are as follows:

DISTRICT 2	DISTRICT 3
3-year term	3-year term
Paul Baukol	Trevor Sorby

Any 15 or more members who reside in District 2 or 3 may nominate an eligible member for a director position in that district. No member may be elected to a director position unless nominated in this manner. In the event of joint membership, only the signature of one joint member shall be acceptable.

## RED RIVER VALLEY COOPERATIVE POWER ASSOCIATION BYLAWS

### ARTICLE III - DIRECTORS Section 4. Nominations.

- Any fifteen (15) or more members who reside in any one district may nominate an eligible member for a director position in that district. Such nomination shall be in writing and signed by said fifteen (15) members, or more, and delivered to the Secretary at least thirty (30) days before the members' meeting.
- No member may be elected to a director position unless nominated in the manner provided by this section. No write-in ballots shall be accepted.
- The members may, at any meeting at which a director or directors shall be removed, as heretofore provided, elect a successor or successors thereto without compliance with the provisions herein with respect to nominations.

Continued on page 7

# A HIGH-VOLTAGE HIGH-WIRE ACT

## Minnkota leverages airborne linework partner for transmission line reliability projects

By Kaylee Cusack

Photography Michael Hoeft

### Wind and wheat.

North Dakotans are accustomed to an abundance of both in the late summer season. The combination creates a visual effect that early American patriots wrote songs about – amber waves of grain, and all.

But when you're hovering a helicopter within spitting distance of an energized 345-kilovolt (kV) transmission line, with your teammate actively adding equipment to the hot conductor, a wave through the amber grains means a wind gust. And wind gusts are bad news for chopper blades.

It's a good thing George Denton is a seasoned utility pilot for HLH Aviation, the company Minnkota Power Cooperative (Red River Valley Co-op Power's wholesale power supplier) contracted to assist with a July through October maintenance and outage mitigation project on one of its largest transmission lines. Denton flies for jobs like this all over the country, but the Red River Valley proved to be a challenge.

"Minnkota has been good to us, but North Dakota has not been good. It's flat and windy," he joked after pulling off his flight helmet for a break. The pilot and his crewmate had just set down in a rural landing zone near Ane-ta, North Dakota. They had to change their flight plan for the day due to a change in wind direction. "We'd be fighting a crosswind, and the aircraft doesn't like it."

HLH Aviation's precision, experience and airborne equipment made them a perfect collaborator for the first phase of Minnkota's four-year project to improve reliability on the 250-mile transmission line that runs from Center to Grand Forks, North Dakota. The initial phase focuses on the 80-mile span from Binford to Grand Forks and will continue to the west in the years to come.

### Power over the wind

In the first months of the project, HLH performed "hot work," floating more than 100 feet off the ground to add airflow spoilers to the energized 345-kV line. The airflow spoilers, 16-foot plastic spirals, wrap around the conductor at 15-foot intervals. This creates a profile that makes it difficult for ice to form on the line.

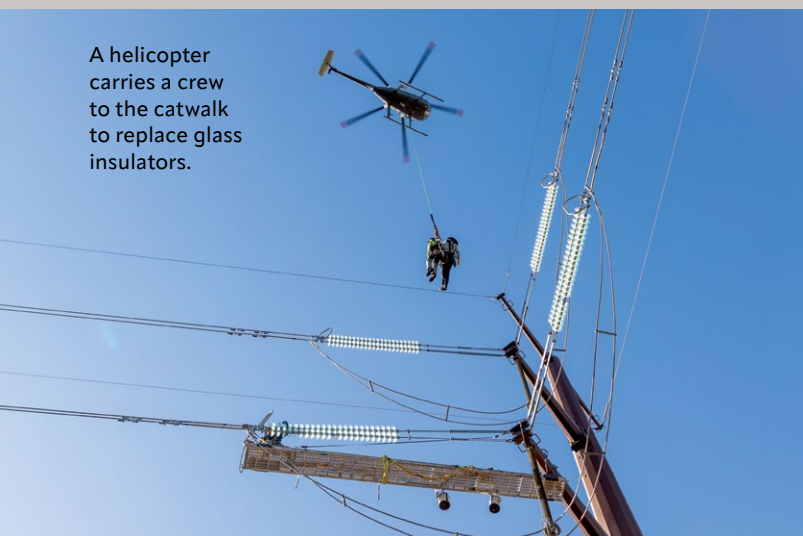
"When ice forms, it can create an airflow like an airplane wing. And that's one of the main mechanisms for galloping lines in the wind," explained Brenden LaHaise, Minnkota transmission engineer. "That's what gives it the lift to start to move, and that motion can get violent and cause outages."

In addition to 20 miles of airflow spoiler placement, HLH took advantage of a multiweek planned maintenance outage at Minnkota's Milton R. Young Station to perform additional work on the line while it was de-energized. During that time, three helicopter crews installed new phase vibration dampers to mitigate aeolian vibrations.





An HLH Aviation crew hovers beside a 345-kilovolt transmission line near Aneta, North Dakota.



A helicopter carries a crew to the catwalk to replace glass insulators.

This kind of vibration occurs as wind flows over the phases and, over time, can cause damage to the arms or other structural components. Finally, the crews took care of some general maintenance while aloft, such as changing out broken glass insulators.

Over just four months, the helicopters completed work that would have taken Minnkota much longer from the ground.

"For the airflow spoilers alone, we would have to drive, put one or two on, and then drive another 30-40 feet, put more on, and keep going," LaHaise said. "That would get excessively monotonous, and we'd be burning up a lot of time doing it. These helicopter crews can just float and put them on as they go."

Damage to land would also become a consideration, as larger equipment would be needed to reach the 100- to 150-foot-tall lines.

"Some of this 345-kV line is in less-than-ideal terrain," said Minnkota's Jake Beckel, the project's construction coordinator. "It doesn't run right along a road like a lot of our 69-kV system does. It's very cross country."

"The helicopter doesn't care about that," LaHaise added.

## 'Copter kinship

HLH Superintendent of Line Operations Caden Callaway has been flying with pilot George Denton for several

years, executing airborne power line projects across the country. They've built a mutual confidence that strips away any fear of heights.

"I mean, I'm aware of it," said Callaway in his slight Southern drawl. "But you just make sure you're tied off and you trust in your equipment. One of the biggest things is trusting the pilot, and once you have that down, you're fine."

Aerial linework isn't for the anxious. Lineworkers often dangle from benches or harnessed chairs as they fly to a site, relying fully on the pilot's steady hand to maintain balance as they perform intricate tasks on the line. On top of the daredevil work itself, the HLH Aviation crew is constantly on the move from one state to the next to help utilities like Minnkota with their toughest jobs.

"I'm around these guys more than my wife and kid. Which is hard," said Callaway, who just welcomed a baby boy this year. "But the main thing that keeps me going, especially in my position, is just getting the next guys up and ready to go and making sure everybody's safe."

As much as the North Dakota wind proved to be troublesome for his crews, there were some qualities of the area that worked in their favor. For example, Callaway personally experienced North Dakota Nice several times while finding on-the-fly permission for landing zones.

"I just pulled into a driveway and started talking to somebody, and you would've thought I was their neighbor for the last 20 years," he laughed. "I ended up having to tell him, 'Hey, I gotta go to work, but it's been great talking to you.'"

The HLH team concluded their work before the start of November but will likely be back for future phases of the 345-kV project. And now it won't just be the wind and wheat welcoming them.

"That's a great thing about North Dakota," Callaway said. "There are plenty of wide-open places, a lot of options. Especially with everybody being so friendly."

# WATCH THE WIRES HOLIDAY TRAVEL SAFETY

In the Upper Midwest, driving during the holiday season can turn treacherous, with icy roads, reduced visibility and unpredictable conditions descending at any moment. When you add the risk of hitting a power pole or a downed power line, knowing what to do can be lifesaving.



## IF YOU HIT A POWER POLE

1

### STAY IN THE VEHICLE

Unless the car is on fire, the safest place is inside your vehicle. The ground around the car may be energized.

2

### CALL 911

Let dispatch know you may be in contact with live electricity. They'll coordinate with the co-op/utility to shut off power before you exit.

3

### WARN OTHERS

Warn others to stay away by signaling or shouting to keep bystanders away from the vehicle or any downed lines.

4

### ONLY EXIT IN AN EMERGENCY

If you must get out due to smoke or fire, jump clear of the vehicle with both feet together, without touching the car and the ground at the same time. Then, shuffle away, keeping both feet on the ground to avoid creating a path for electricity through your body.

## GENERAL WINTER TIPS

Always slow down in winter conditions, especially near power poles, intersections or bends.

Keep an emergency kit in your car, including a flashlight, blankets, water and a phone charger.

Familiarize yourself with your co-op's emergency contact number: (800) 788-7784

## IF YOU SEE A DOWNED POWER LINE

1

### STAY AT LEAST 35 FEET AWAY

Electricity can arc across distances – even the length of a school bus. This is especially true on ice or slush.

2

### DO NOT DRIVE OVER THE LINE

Even if it looks harmless, a live wire can energize your car and the surrounding ground.

3

### CALL 911 AND YOUR CO-OP/UTILITY

Emergency crews are trained to handle electrical hazards safely.





- (d) If a member is absent from any meeting, the member may vote by mail for the election of directors as provided in these Bylaws, or as may be permitted by law.

Failure to comply with any of the provisions of this section shall not affect in any manner whatsoever validity of any election of directors.

## Section 2. Qualifications.

Persons eligible to become or remain a director of the Cooperative shall:

- (a) be a member in good standing receiving electric service;
- (b) have voting rights within the district from which the director is to be elected;
- (c) not be employed by, materially affiliated with, or have a material financial interest in, any individual or entity which either is:
  - (1) directly or substantially competing with the Cooperative; or
  - (2) selling goods and services in substantial quantity to the Cooperative; or
  - (3) possessing a substantial conflict of interest with the Cooperative;

For purposes of this section, the terms "material" or "substantially" shall be interpreted as constituting a minimum of 5% of a member's total hours of employment, sales or income on an annual basis;

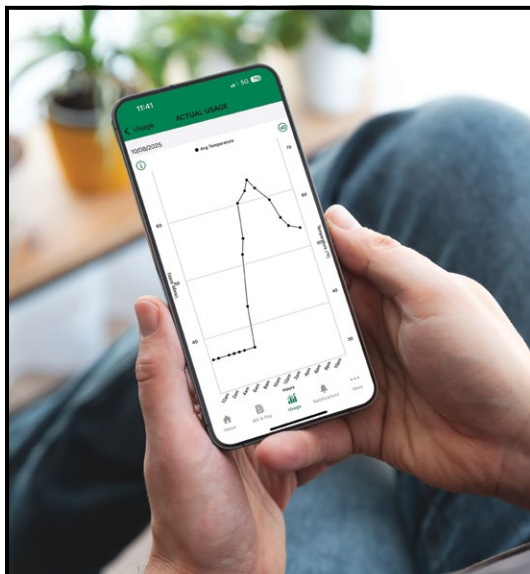
- (d) not be an employee or not have been an employee of the Cooperative within the last three (3) years;
- (e) not be a close relative of an employee, or of a director, unless the close relative is a candidate for the director's seat, where as found in these Bylaws "close relative" means any individual who is, either by blood, law, or marriage, including half, step, foster, and adoptive relations, a spouse, child, grandchild, parent,

grandparent, or sibling, or principally resides in the same residence;

- (f) be only one (1), and not more than one (1), member of a joint membership, provided, however, that none shall be eligible to become or remain a director or to hold a position of trust in the Cooperative unless all shall meet the qualifications herein set forth;
- (g) if a member of the Cooperative is not a natural person, i.e. a corporation, partnership, limited liability company, or similar, then the member may appoint or elect one (1) duly authorized natural person, residing within the external boundaries of the district from which (s)he is nominated, to be eligible for election as a director to the Board of Directors;
- (h) never have been convicted of a felony;
- (i) agree, upon election, to regularly attend all Board, regular and special members' meetings; and
- (j) not become physically or mentally unable with reasonable accommodation to perform substantially all of the duties of Director, and the condition that creates such inability is reasonably expected to last six (6) months or more.

**Exception.** In regard to the restrictive provisions of this section that are based upon close relative relationships, no incumbent director shall lose eligibility to remain a director or to be re-elected a director if, during a director's incumbency, a director becomes a first kindred relative of another incumbent director or of a Cooperative employee because of a marriage or an adoption to which the director was not a part.

Nothing contained in this section shall, or be construed to, affect in any manner whatsoever the validity of any action taken at any meeting of the Board of Directors.



## YOU HAVE THE POWER TO...



- Go paperless and receive an email notice when your bill is ready to view.
- View and pay your bills online.
- Compare energy use to changes in temperature.
- View daily and monthly energy use.

**SIGN UP FOR SMARTHUB:**  
**RRVCOOP.COM**

For assistance, call us during regular business hours at 218-456-2139 or send an email to [info@rrvcoop.com](mailto:info@rrvcoop.com).



**RED RIVER VALLEY  
CO-OP POWER**

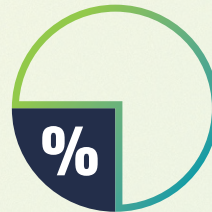
# CAPITAL CREDITS

## A Benefit of Membership

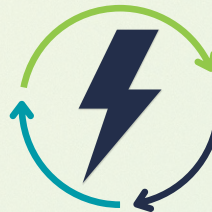
Red River Valley Co-op Power is a member-owned, not-for-profit cooperative. In keeping with its principles, your cooperative is returning **\$317,800** back to members who purchased electricity from us in 1998 and a portion of 1999.

Members who were part of the co-op at that time will see their capital credit amount as a credit on their January statement. Since its inception, your co-op has returned more than **\$11.6** million worth of operating margins back to members.

## Capital credits work like this:



Red River Valley Co-op Power is not-for-profit. As such, the cooperative only needs a margin to meet lender requirements and to operate.



Before being returned to members, operating margins are reinvested into the cooperative to help finance construction and maintain the distribution system.



Directors decide when to retire capital credits based on the cooperative's financial condition and other factors.

Please call **800-788-7784** if you have questions about your capital credit balance. Remember to provide us with your new address if you move outside the co-op service territory. For a list of unclaimed capital credits, go to **[www.rrvcoop.com](http://www.rrvcoop.com)**, click on My Co-op and Capital Credits.