



Photo: Lisa Slaughter, June Calendar Photo Contest Winner

# Agralite Electric Cooperative NEWSLETTER

June 2023

## EMPOWERING

communities with  
innovative, sustainable  
energy solutions

FOR OVER

# 75 YEARS

## 2023 Annual Meeting Of Agralite Electric Cooperative

Agralite Electric Cooperative is pleased to invite you to the 84th Annual Meeting of Agralite Electric Cooperative. This is your opportunity to take part in the governing of your electric cooperative. This year, District 5, District 6, and District 7 seats are up for election. In District 5, Orvin Gronseth is up for election for another term. Orvin has served on the Board of Directors for the cooperative since 1993 and has been President since 2016. In District 6, Andrea Thomson is up for election for another term. Andrea has served on the Board of Directors for the cooperative since 2014. In District 7, Warren Rau is up for election for another term. Warren has served on the Board of Directors for the cooperative since 2010 and has been Vice President since 2012. Mailed separately, you will find the 2022 Annual Report for the cooperative, as well as the financial reports. Join us June 22nd and enjoy some good food, great music, and partake in the proceedings of your electric cooperative!

### Voting

All voting will be done by either delivering it by hand or depositing it in the U.S. Mail. The ballot shall be enclosed in a sealed official envelope bearing your name and address, and addressed to the secretary. Ballots are due to the Agralite office no later than 3:00 p.m., June 22nd. Ballots will not be accepted at the meeting.

## 84<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting

All Members Welcome  
Please Attend!



June 22nd, 2023



Benson High School  
Performing Arts Center  
1400 Montana Ave.  
Benson, MN 56215



Registration & Supper  
5:30 – 6:45 p.m.  
Steak supper grilled by West  
Central Cattlemen's Association



Business Meeting 7:00 p.m.



Hundreds of dollars  
in door prizes



Each registered member  
will receive a gift

## Get Involved! Join Us At The Annual Meeting!

by Jenny Stryhn

One of my favorite events is coming up on Thursday, June 22nd, when Agralite Electric Cooperative will host our annual meeting for you, the members we proudly serve. I always look forward to this event because it's a great opportunity for me and our employees to talk with our members and hear what's on their minds. 1363700

The annual meeting provides an opportunity for members to engage in accomplishments of the cooperative and to receive a full annual report detailing the cooperatives business programs and plans for the future. It is also a time to celebrate you, our members! We'll have activities for the kids, delicious food, a gift, and exciting door prizes.

Spending time with you and hearing your take on our community's energy future is so important to us.

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## Agralite Electric Co-op

We're member-owned!

320 US-12, Benson, MN  
(320) 843-4150  
1-800-950-8375  
www.agralite.coop

Like us on Facebook



Summer Office Hours:  
7:00 A.M. – 3:30 P.M.



Touchstone Energy®  
Agralite is a Touchstone Energy® Cooperative.



## Find your account number and win a \$100 credit!

If your account number (as it appears on your monthly electric bill) is one of the [four account numbers](#) hidden in this issue, give our office a call by the end of the month and you will receive a \$100 bill credit. If more than one member finds their account number in a single issue, \$100 will be split equally amongst them.

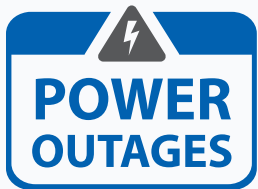
### Energy Saving Tip:

Looking for additional ways to save energy this summer?



Your laundry room is a great place to start. Wash clothes with cold water. It can cut one load's energy use by more than half. Your washing machine will use the same amount of energy no matter the amount of clothes load, so fill it up when you can. When drying clothes, separate the heavier cottons. Loads will dry faster and more evenly if you separate heavier cottons, like linens and towels, from your lightweight clothing.

Source: Dept. of Energy



Call Day or Night  
1.888.884.3887

[Do not call the office for outages](#)

May Energy Payment is due June 20.\*

\*We accept Visa, Discover & Mastercard.

## Get Involved! Join Us At The Annual Meeting! *Continued*

In fact, it's essential because everything we do is shaped by the members of our community. As I'm sure you know, the energy industry is in the midst of massive change. Consumer needs and changing technology impact nearly every aspect of how we manage and deliver energy to local homes and businesses.

Gaining guidance and perspective from our members and board helps set priorities for the co-op and guide future decisions. The Annual Meeting is also a time for members to vote on the co-op's Board of Directors.

Our Board of Directors is comprised of seven members who live and work right here in our local service area, so they are in the best position to know where community investments are most needed. This local input means those closest to the community know its needs and priorities and help direct where co-ops dollars are spent. Every year, we invest funds to make updates to our local system, which helps maintain reliability and grid resilience. Think of it this way, every time you pay your electric bill, you're actually investing in your community because all the money we take in stays here in the local community. By making these investments in our local system, we can ensure you have reliable power for everyday life.

Most consumers likely don't equate active involvement with their electric company with helping their community. But Agralite Electric Cooperative is not an ordinary utility company. We're a co-op, and our business model is meant to serve the members and the community in which it operates.

Our core purpose and mission are to provide safe, reliable and affordable power. But as a co-op, we're also motivated by service to our community, rather than profits. We hope you'll exercise the benefits of your co-op membership and join us for the Annual Meeting on Thursday, June 22nd. You will be receiving an official notice of the annual meeting in a separate mailing a couple weeks prior to the meeting outlining the details for the meeting. We look forward to seeing you!

## Agralite Is Issuing \$1.3 Million In Capital Credit Checks

Your Board of Directors has authorized the return of approximately \$1.3 million dollars in capital credits to members who purchased electricity during 1998, 1999, and 2018.

For eligible active members of the cooperative, capital credits of \$20.00 or less will be issued as a credit on your May electric bill, that will be sent out the first part of June. You will see this credit as a separate line item on your bill. For members whose capital credit refunds are greater than \$20.00 and current on their electric bill, a check has been issued. Whether we return it to you in the form of a bill credit or a check – you can see the value of membership!

As a cooperative, Agralite allocates capital credits each year. At the end of the fiscal year, the amount of your capital credits allocated for that year is listed on your monthly bill.

Capital credits are normally retained by the cooperative for a number of years and used as operating capital. Once the Board of Directors deems appropriate, they approve the refund of these capital credits. As a perk of being a member-owner of Agralite Electric Cooperative, you get money back.

After the 2023 capital credit payout this year, Agralite will have returned over \$14 million in capital credits to its members. That's the power of the cooperative membership!



# Twins FREE! YOUTH BASEBALL CLINIC!

**SATURDAY, JULY 1 / BENSON, MN**  
OPEN TO EVERYONE, AGES 6-12!



**FIELD:**

Benson Baseball Field  
1400 Montana Ave  
Benson, MN 56215

**HOST:**

Agralite Electric  
Cooperative

**TIME:**

1:00 - 3:00 PM

**REGISTER:**

PLAYBALLMN.COM

Twins  
**COMMUNITY FUND**



## Minnesota Twins Community Fund Youth Baseball Clinic Is In Benson, MN, On July 1, 2023

MINNEAPOLIS-ST. PAUL, Minn. – The Minnesota Twins will conduct a free youth baseball clinic in Benson, MN, on Saturday, July 1, 2023. The clinic will take place at Benson Baseball Field in Benson, MN, and will run from 1:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m. Presented by Great River Energy, Play Ball! Minnesota youth clinics are for boys and girls ages 6-12. Participants are required to register for this free clinic at [www.playballmn.com](http://www.playballmn.com).

Minnesota Twins youth instructors will provide all of the necessary equipment for the clinic; however, players should bring their gloves.

Minnesota Twins youth clinics are available to participants and communities free of charge. Funding is provided by the Twins Community Fund and Great River Energy. 883605



“For more than 60 years, Twins youth clinics have provided baseball instruction to young players in communities throughout Twins Territory,” said Kristin Rortvedt, Executive Director of the Twins Community Fund. “We’re proud to continue this tradition for a new generation of ballplayers.”

Created in 1961 by longtime Twins scout Angelo Giuliani, the clinic program serves to promote baseball and softball to boys and girls throughout the region. Since the beginning of the program, more than 800,000 youth have participated in a Twins youth clinic. For a complete 2023 Minnesota Twins Community Fund Youth Clinics schedule, visit [www.playballmn.com](http://www.playballmn.com). Governed by a public board of directors, the Twins Community Fund was chartered as an independent public charity in 1991 with the mission to enrich local and regional communities by providing resources for the healthy development of children and families through an association with baseball, softball, and the Minnesota Twins. The Twins Community Fund and its grant programs are supported in part by Target, US Bank, Treasure Island, and Nike.

Great River Energy is a not-for-profit cooperative that provides wholesale electric service to 28 distribution cooperatives in Minnesota. Those member cooperatives distribute electricity to approximately 700,000 member-consumers. With \$4 billion in assets, Great River Energy is the second largest electric power supplier in Minnesota and one of the largest generation and transmission cooperatives in the nation. [Learn more at greatriverenergy.com](http://www.greatriverenergy.com).

### Join Us For Family-Friendly Fun with the Twins!

Parents/families are encouraged to stay to play with their children alongside the Twins clinicians!

Concessions, by the Benson Lions Club, will be available for purchase.



# 5 STEPS FOR SAFE DIGGING

Working on an outdoor project?  
Careless digging poses a threat to people, pipelines, and underground facilities.

Always call 811 first. Here are five easy steps for safe digging:



Know what's below.  
Call before you dig.

## 1. NOTIFY

Call 8-1-1 or make a request online two to three days before your work begins. The operator will notify the utilities affected by your project.

## 2. WAIT

Wait two to three days for affected utilities to respond to your request. They will send a locator to mark any underground utility lines.

2-3

## 3. CONFIRM

Confirm that all affected utilities have responded to your request by comparing the marks to the list of utilities the 8-1-1 call center notified.



## 4. RESPECT

Respect the markers provided by the affected utilities. The markers are your guide for the duration of your project.



## 5. DIG CAREFULLY

If you can't avoid digging near the markers (within 18-24 inches on all sides, depending on state laws), consider moving your project location.



Source: [call811.com](http://call811.com)

**This institution is an equal opportunity provider and employer.**

To file a program discrimination complaint, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, AD-3027, found online at [http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint\\_filing\\_cust.html](http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_cust.html) and at any USDA office or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by: (1) mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue SW, Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; (2) fax: (202) 690-7442; or (3) email: [program.intake@usda.gov](mailto:program.intake@usda.gov).

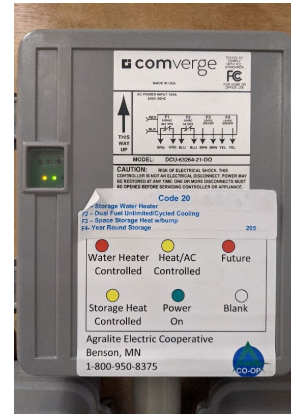
## Updating Load Management Equipment

Approximately 3,500 members participate in load management programs that allow Agralite to cycle their air conditioner, water heater, electric heat or some other load for a period of time on high-demand days. Because of this, Agralite has the ability to control up to 40% of its peak load on the hottest summer days. Overall, these programs help Agralite manage our retail power costs to our members. For participating in these peak-reducing programs, members receive a reduced electric rate. Our current load management system is obsolete and is no longer supported by our vendor. We are currently in the process of updating all of our load management meters and load control switches over the next couple of years. The impact of the installation is minimal, however we will need to enter your home to gain access to the equipment.

Some benefits of the new load management equipment include:

- More efficient power distribution which helps keep member costs down
- Improved power quality
- Better detection of load shed
- Information collection about your power use to give us a greater awareness of our load shed capabilities

## Old Load Control Switch    New Load Control Switch



We will be in touch with you to schedule a time that we can get into your home and do this work. Please make sure we have your current contact information on file.

# CONSIDERING SOLAR? LET AGRALITE HELP YOU

Agralite supports making electricity more environmentally responsible while keeping power reliable and affordable for our members.

However, we have been alerted that some deceptive companies are beginning to take advantage of our members' growing commitment to go "green." Many are offering too-good-to-be-true solar panel systems that may leave you in debt—and the dark. Not all solar companies are out to scam you, but be on the lookout for these signs that a crook may be afoot

## SOLAR BURNS



Some **fraudulent companies** will try to resemble utility representatives and contact homeowners by phone, email, or even door-to-door. These salespeople may spout exciting claims that you can get rid of your electric bill entirely or that you will soon miss the boat on important federal tax incentives.



If you encounter a **pushy solar salesperson** who isn't answering your questions clearly, you should take pause. These people may be looking for a sale whether or not solar is right for your particular situation. If they try to force a deal without an onsite inspection or contract, just say no.



Be wary of any **online ads, social media links or emails** that tout free or zero-dollars-down solar panels. These are usually scams. Always go through a company's official website to schedule an in-person meeting and solar evaluation.

## PROTECT YOURSELF



Do your research and read online reviews of solar companies, including from the Better Business Bureau.



Contact Agralite before signing any agreements while solar panel planning. Our experts will help you determine if solar interconnection is right for you.



Get a few in-person site evaluations and quotes before signing any contract.

## Is Your Cooling System Ready For Summer?

By taking action now, you'll save money and stay cool during the hot summer months.

Air conditioning takes a big chunk out of your summer operating budget, accounting for nearly 15% of total annual electricity use in a typical commercial building. 854100 By taking steps to ensure that your cooling system and your facility are operating at peak efficiency, you'll stay cool and realize some hot savings.

### Optimizing System Performance

Maintenance, combined with small upgrades, will help ensure that your cooling system is ready to handle the hot, humid days of summer.

- **Maintain your system.** Winter can be hard on rooftop air conditioning units and other outdoor system components. Have your air conditioning system cleaned and inspected by a qualified professional before the start of the cooling season. Check air filters monthly and replace if needed.
- **Seal ducts.** Leaky duct systems can result in energy losses of 15% to 30%, increasing cooling costs and reducing comfort. Test ductwork with fan pressure or flow meters to identify the extent of leakage. Seal accessible ducts with mastic tape. Hire a qualified contractor if you suspect a problem.
- **Install economizers.** Economizers bring in outside air to provide free cooling. Connected to the outdoors, an economizer is comprised of a sensor and a damper. When outdoor temperature and humidity levels are right, the damper opens and brings in outside air. Economizers are most effective in moderate climates.

### Around Your Facility

Cooling efficiency doesn't stop at the air vents. There are plenty of things you can do around your facility to save energy this summer.

- **Adjust temperatures.** Set building temperatures to accommodate your hours of operation or occupancy schedule. This is the simplest and most cost-effective method for controlling cooling costs. Wi-Fi enabled programmable thermostats automate the process, providing convenience and adding advanced features, such as remote control.
- **Circulate the air.** Circulating air fans reduce the need for air conditioning by making people feel cooler. Large ceiling fans are particularly effective in circulating air throughout a space. In some cases, using a ceiling fan allows you to raise the thermostat four degrees with no loss in comfort.
- **Weatherize.** Air leaks reduce the effectiveness of your cooling system, costing you money. Check for air leaks around doors and windows and seal with caulking or weatherstripping. Make sure your building is insulated according to levels recommended in ASHRAE 90.1: Energy Standard for Buildings or your local energy code.

If your cooling system is more than 15 years old, or in need of repair, consider upgrading to a new, energy-efficient unit. ENERGY STAR®-certified commercial cooling equipment is more efficient than standard units while still providing the same level of comfort and performance.



# LOVE THE OUTDOORS?



## BE SAFE OUT THERE



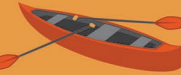
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of lightning fatalities are associated with outdoor recreational activities.

**Do not use generators in enclosed areas.**



The same goes for grills, camping stoves or other small appliances that produce carbon monoxide.



Pay attention to weather forecasts **before you go canoeing or boating.** Get off the open water as soon as you **hear thunder.**



**Going for a hike?**

If you hear thunder or see lightning, **do not seek shelter under a tree.**



**Look up** for power lines while fishing or sailing.

**FACT: Fishing is the most common outdoor activity associated with lightning-related deaths.**

**Tent camping?**

Plan ahead, seek shelter in a hard-top vehicle or four-sided building during a storm or at the first sight of lightning.



For more information, visit:

**Safe Electricity.org**

## CURRENT AGRALITE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Kathy Draeger, Clinton

*District 1*

Jeff Hufford, Morris

*District 2 - Secretary/Treasurer*

Bennett Zierke, Hancock

*District 3*

Steve Nelson, Starbuck

*District 4*

Orvin Gronseth, Murdock

*District 5 - President*

Andrea Thomson, Benson

*District 6*

Warren Rau, Appleton

*District 7 - Vice President*

## MINUTES OF MEETING BOARD OF DIRECTORS April 2023

Board Chairman Orvin Gronseth called a meeting of the Board of Directors of Agralite Electric Cooperative to order at 8:30 a.m., April 27, 2023. All members of the Board were present except Director Draeger. The agenda, minutes of the last meeting, the monthly disbursements, the payment of capital credits of deceased members, Work Order #543, and Special Equipment for March were approved. 1534501

Jonathan Messner, Manager of Member Services, reported on activities of his department for the month. He discussed load control for the month. He discussed the April 13th Operation Round Up meeting. He discussed the new Mini Sota Children's Museum coming to Benson and the potential for Agralite to create an electricity exhibit. He discussed CoBank's Sharing Success program and a discussion was held. The Board approved donations of \$2,000 to Kerkhoven Parks and Recreation, \$2,000 to Benson Family Aquatic Center 2nd Slide by 2025, and \$6,000 to Mini Sota Children's Museum and to submit applications for each to CoBank Sharing Success for matching funds. He discussed the free MN Twins Youth Baseball Clinic on July 1st.

Ralph Martin, Manager of Finance/CFO, discussed margins for the month of March. He discussed allocations and the RUS audit. He discussed the Bank of the West accounts and that he is going to transfer money to CoBank for additional security and interest earned. He discussed the MREA Finance Managers conference he attended. Ralph brought forth RUS Loan Contract, Treasury Rate Note, and Secretary's Certificate for approval and signatures and the Board approved them. Ralph discussed capital credit retirement options and the Board

# SWIMMING POOL SAFETY WORD SEARCH



Water and electricity never mix. Always practice safety when you're near or in the swimming pool this summer. Read the following safety tips, then find and circle the **bolded** words in the puzzle below.

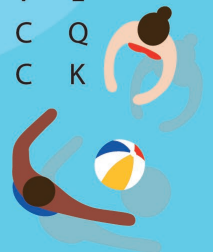
Never bring electrical **devices** near a swimming pool. **Electrical** devices that come in contact with **water** can cause electric shock.

When possible, use **battery**-operated devices when **outdoors** near a swimming pool.

Outdoor electrical **outlets** should be **dry** or covered.

If you hear thunder, immediately exit the swimming **pool**. Thunderstorms and lightning may be near.

C	Y	P	G	V	Q	B	X	S	E	D	R	N	L	Y
I	R	O	J	R	H	S	R	L	J	M	R	I	J	F
I	E	O	X	M	W	O	E	V	T	W	G	Y	L	A
M	T	L	T	J	O	C	M	H	O	H	M	H	K	H
V	T	P	A	D	T	M	C	K	T	Z	G	E	U	Q
E	A	Y	T	R	P	O	Z	N	E	J	K	Y	M	B
H	B	U	I	P	T	E	I	D	Q	K	C	X	Q	M
Z	O	C	L	F	W	N	W	W	C	N	K	J	N	S
R	A	I	T	B	G	G	S	D	R	T	H	T	I	K
L	E	I	T	K	J	K	N	H	X	Z	C	B	Y	J
L	K	T	A	Z	X	T	Y	H	E	Q	D	P	R	R
N	X	M	A	X	M	Q	S	E	C	I	V	E	D	F
Z	O	Y	D	W	O	U	T	L	E	T	S	U	V	L
X	N	P	Y	C	Y	O	H	O	P	J	L	R	C	Q
Z	M	J	Y	L	X	R	L	B	E	N	B	H	C	K



approved Option 1 retirement and Great River Energy's capital credit payout. The checks will be mailed out in the beginning of June.

The financials were given by Ralph with a PowerPoint presentation. Tom Hoffman, Manager of Engineering & Operations, reported on activities of his department for the month. He discussed line crew projects and outages for the month. He has hired Reece Larson and Preston McGee for summer help. He discussed the grant applications he has been working on. He met with STAR to discuss bids and purchasing for 2024 materials.

Tom gave the safety report.

Jenny Stryhn, General Manager/CEO, reviewed her report to the board. She discussed April

meetings she attended and CVEC's solar project. She discussed an update to the RUS environmental review process. She stated that Landis & Gyr sent payment for the August 2022 load control event error. She discussed WAPA REC retirements. She reported on the STAR board meeting. She discussed her meeting with the City of Benson in regards to the proposed industrial park. A discussion was held. The Board made a motion to allow Jenny to explore other land options with Attorney Don Wilcox.

Jenny Stryhn will be the 2023 CRC voting delegate. The May board meeting was set for the 25th.

Being no further business came before the Board, the meeting was adjourned.