



Co-op Advantage

HQ pollinator habitat expands

During the summer of 2020, native pollinator habitat was planted in a portion of preexisting lawn at ECE's Braham Headquarters. Over the next several years, the native habitat took root and is now blossoming with bees, birds, and butterflies of all kinds.

Employees have found the area to be ideal for a mental health break. Alicia Kroll, Member Account Specialist and pollinator project lead, highlights, "Walking through the blooms and witnessing the pollinators at work brings us all a sense of peace during our workday. It's a healthy way to recharge and come back from break refreshed."

While the habitat is considered a success, a population of invasive weeds surrounds the plot, threatening to replace the pollinator-friendly native species. The co-op has decided to convert more of the surrounding area back to native plants.

As Alicia mentions, "The expansion will help alleviate the threat of undesirable plants taking over. At the same time, with

more native plants adjacent to the pond, run-off from nearby roads will be better filtered. We're excited to create an improved habitat for the many animals calling it home."

As we celebrate Pollinator Week June 19-25, the project underscores ECE's commitment of implementing conservation measures outlined in the agreement to protect monarch butterflies through the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. How do we know our conservation efforts are working? Results for 2022 show that the vast amount of milkweed growing within our rights-of-ways supports an average of 19 monarchs per acre!

"The potential listing of the monarch as an endangered species is looming," Alicia cautions. "It's essential that we remain good stewards of the land and continue to promote the health of pollinators. That's what this project is all about."

Pictured right: Photos from last summer's pollinator habitat at Braham HQ.



Swamp milkweed bloom



Blazing Star

Take a look at our ESG report!

Part of being a member-owned cooperative is being held accountable. We hold ourselves to a high standard and you should, too. To show that ECE takes our commitment seriously, we chose to create an Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) report for 2022.

The environmental section describes some of our ecological initiatives, while the social portion highlights our community support. The report closes with governance, explaining how our board of directors supports the cooperative's mission and vision.



Read the two-page report at
[eastcentralenergy.com > Your Cooperative > Sustainability](https://eastcentralenergy.com/YourCooperative/Sustainability)



Best Annual Report to Members SPOTLIGHT on Excellence Awards

Your co-op's Communications team is award-winning! Our 2021 Annual Report won a Gold Spotlight on Excellence Award in the category of Best Annual Report to Members for the third year in a row. The 2022 Watt's Cookin' calendar (featuring YOUR recipes) won Silver in the Best Wild Card category. On top of that, the Co-op Advantage newsletter won Silver in the Best External News Publication category.

The Spotlight on Excellence Awards program recognizes outstanding work produced by electric co-ops across the country. With 18 categories, entrants are judged against co-ops of similar size. The program is sponsored by the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association and the Council of Rural Electric Communicators.



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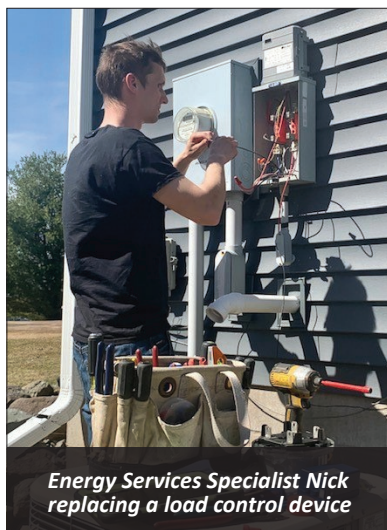
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Power poles are not bulletin boards

We need your help to keep ECE's lineworkers safe! It may seem harmless, but please refrain from hanging items on utility poles. Foreign objects cause poles to deteriorate faster, plus they can rip gloves and other personal protective equipment that are meant to insulate workers from high voltage.



When you illegally nail, screw, or staple items like flag holders, sale signs, or satellite dishes to poles, you're putting the lives of our lineworkers at risk. Think twice!



Energy Services Specialist Nick replacing a load control device

Load Control Device replacement

As we continue to receive the necessary materials, our Energy Services Specialists will be replacing around 13,000 load control devices on member homes. Current load management technology is becoming obsolete.

Thank you to those who participate in our load management programs. The device located near your load management electric meter helps us shift energy use, saving power costs and resources. In exchange, you take advantage of lower energy rates.

There is no additional cost to you, and it will be a quick process with little to no power interruption.

If you want to check out how it works, scan the QR Code to the right to watch a short video! Still have questions? Email loadcontrol@ecemn.com.



Checking in with Zeus

In our September 2022 newsletter, we introduced you to “Zeus,” the 2022 Ford F-150 Lightning owned by employee Pete Leibel. At the time, Pete was excited to test the electric vehicle’s two motors, advertised 320 miles per charge, and towing ability of up to 10,000 pounds. He was also interested to see how winter weather would impact the truck’s driving and range.



Now that winter is over, Pete reports, “We’ve put on about 18,000 miles so far. Winter weather impacted the range by about a third. It handled great in the snow and towing was more than adequate, depending on how fast we were driving. My son always teases me about having an EV, but he sure does like to borrow it every chance he gets.”

The biggest issue? Lack of charging stations. “Due to the size of the truck battery, it takes longer to charge at an ordinary charger. We really need a fast charger. Plus, we have extended family in the Dakotas and there is no way we could take Zeus westward. However, I’m confident the infrastructure will be here soon.”

We’ll check in with Pete one more time after his summer adventures. Don’t forget, we’re offering a \$750 rebate to install a level 2 charger on either the time-of-use rate or off-peak storage rate.



Have you found yourself noticing more EVs on the road? Perhaps you’ve heard friends or coworkers make comments about EVs and you’re wondering what’s accurate. As an electric cooperative, ECE has an important role to play in this increasingly divisive conversation. While not everyone has an interest in driving one anytime soon, we’re here to help.

In 2018, the co-op purchased an all-electric Chevrolet Bolt in the hopes of learning more about EVs and how our members might be impacted. Employees were surprised at its quick acceleration, clean handling, and great range. Some of you also know that I’ve been driving my own personal EV for nearly two years. In that time, I’ve driven more than 45,000 miles and became a fan of its low maintenance and overall convenience. One drawback is that cold weather can reduce EV range by up to 50%.

Did you know you can charge your vehicle at home on off-peak rates that are comparable to 50¢ per gallon of gasoline? Another interesting fact is that the state of MN collects additional annual vehicle registration fees from EV owners to account for road taxes normally recovered in fuel purchases.

Every major automaker in the U.S. has committed to expanding their EV offerings. While most of your charging can be done in your own garage (public chargers are mostly for longer road trips), charging infrastructure is being deployed across our service territory.

All technology comes with positives and negatives. While ECE doesn’t take a firm stance on the future of EVs, we are committed to helping members make informed decisions. We’re preparing our business model for the potential growth of EVs and we’re working to provide education and experienced perspectives on evolving transportation options. It’s also important we develop rates and programs to fairly recover costs, while encouraging growth that benefits all members.

At your service we remain,

A handwritten signature of Justin Jahnz.

F-150 LIGHTNING

2022 Lariat model w/towing pkg

All-electric and built Ford tough, the 2022 Ford Lightning Lariat has a max range of up to **320 miles per charge**



Extended range battery puts out **580 hp**



11 power outlets: ten 120V + one 240V



MOST TORQUE OF ANY F-150: 775 lbs
Hits **60 mph in 4.5 seconds**



Fun to drive thanks to Speed Sign Recognition, Power Tailgate, Lane Centering, Hands-free Driving, and 7 LED interior colors



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& EQUIPMENT PROVIDED
Exclusions apply

No data caps & all packages
are symmetrical
(upload/download speeds are the same)

What speed do you need?

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streaming music, photo
uploads, social media

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Why choose ECE Fiber?

East Central Energy has 87+ years of history in providing reliable energy services to members! Just like we did in 1936, your co-op intends to serve rural areas that investor-owned companies won't consider.

ECE serves some of the lowest ranking counties in Minnesota and Wisconsin for home internet access. Our mission is to make sure all members have access to reliable, high-speed internet!



Only 43% of U.S. households have access to fiber internet, which equates to nearly six in ten households unable to purchase a plan.



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The ECE Board of Directors
meets monthly. Please call
Executive Assistant Wendy
Leibel at 763-689-8046 to
confirm meeting information.
Monthly board meeting
highlights and board operating
policies can be found on
SmartHub.

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