



Co-op Advantage

ECE receives pollinator certificate

As winter arrives, we're still thinking about butterflies. ECE was recently named the first electric co-op, and the first applicant from the energy sector, to receive a Certificate of Inclusion into the Monarch Butterfly Candidate Conservation Agreement with Assurances (CCA).

Many species, like the monarch butterfly, rely heavily on voluntary conservation efforts. The CCA provides an incentive to engage in pollinator-friendly activities. To participate, we agreed to implement specific measures that reduce or eliminate threats to the monarch butterfly. This includes targeted herbicide application, which helps control undesirable vegetation and restore native plant communities; conservation mowing that promotes habitat and minimizes impacts on monarch breeding and migration; and clearing the way for the desired ecosystem of compatible plants.

"We decided to pursue the CCA early because our vegetation management style already aligned so perfectly with the terms of the agreement," explains Andy Olson, Forestry Supervisor. "We've been working this way for years and are proud to be part of this first-ever nationwide conservation agreement."

By avoiding the disruption of nectar-bearing plants, we've created a much more diverse ecosystem. This has saved the co-op money, and will continue to benefit our members for years to come. "Partnering with the program has provided more benefits than we originally expected," Andy continues. "Because we are essentially ahead of the curve,



Andy and Alicia in front of the pollinator habitat located at ECE's Braham Headquarters

we're protected against citations from future regulation by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for 'incidental take' of an endangered species."

Alicia Kroll, ECE Member Account Analyst, writes for ECE's Powering our Pollinators blog. She mentions, "This all started with a simple question: 'What more could ECE do for pollinators?'" Since then, we've started transforming areas in Braham and Denham, MN, and Superior, WI, into additional pollinator habitat, greatly reducing maintenance costs. Visit our website to follow our progress.



Year 3 of the pollinator habitat at our Denham, MN substation



Auto Pay
WINNER

Congratulations
Robert Maske,
Superior, WI

Visit our website
to learn more about Auto Pay.

Dispose of electronics safely

When your electronics reach the end of their lives, you may be inclined to throw them in the garbage. However, dangerous chemicals can potentially contaminate the surrounding area, making recycling a much better option.

"I tell my friends to visit earth911.com," notes Ty Houglum, ECE's IT Manager. "You enter in the material you're trying to recycle, along with your ZIP code, to find nearby recycling locations."

Electronics that should be recycled include laptops, cell phones, TVs, video game consoles, printers, computer monitors, keyboards, and even your computer mouse. Ty adds, "Before you recycle, delete your personal information or restore to factory settings."



Be sure to remove batteries to be recycled separately.



Shop local and support your neighbors

Just like you, ECE has deep roots. Those roots are supported by small businesses that boost the local economy. We're owned by our members and are committed to the communities we serve.

Whether you're running errands or shopping for a gift, try to visit your town's main street during Small Business Saturday on November 28. Your money will stay in the area and support your neighbors and friends. This kind of personal investment pays off for generations to come.

Pete Leibel, our Energy Services Supervisor, shares, "As a Pine City native, I've seen the importance of supporting homegrown businesses and the families who operate them. This is a big reason why ECE partnered with local dealers for our STIHL rebates."

Local businesses give your community its personality. The next time you go to spend your hard-earned money, think local and invest in your community!



Give the gift of
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Exclusive offer for ECE members. Call or visit our website for details.

PARTICIPATING DEALERS

Braham Hardware & Rental	Braham, MN
Caswell Cycle	Mora, MN
Duluth Lawn and Sport	Duluth, MN
East End Hardware Hank	Superior, WI
Foley Hardware	Foley, MN
Isanti Rental	Isanti, MN
Main Street Hardware	North Branch, MN
Marv's True Value (AK series only)	Princeton, MN
Mimbach Fleet Supply	Sauk Rapids, MN
Minnesota Equipment	Isanti, MN
Moose Lake Implement	Moose Lake, MN
Power Lodge	Dnamia, MN
Princeton Rental	Princeton, MN
Quality Home Center	Sandstone, MN
Sandstone Ace Hardware	Sandstone, MN
Sausser's Hardware	Pine City, MN
Solon Springs Mercantile	Solon Springs, WI

Offer good through December 31, 2020 or until funds are exhausted.

Consider “rounding up” to help local organizations

About 23% of members “round up” their monthly electric bill to participate in Operation Round Up® (ORU), the charitable trust ECE started in 1997. The ORU Trust Board approves grants to first responders, food distribution programs, educational opportunities for youth, and more. The first three grant cycles of 2020 received \$161,535 in requests. The total awarded to area programs was \$64,641, about 40% of what was requested.

“We want to provide more opportunities for local groups,” mentions ORU Trust Board Member Staci Kuhnke. “We’d love to have more members round up their bill so we could approve more grants.”

This year, a grant was awarded to the Alice Studt Library, located in the Braham Event Center. Thanks to those who participate in ORU, the library was able to purchase two new computers for public use.

“This is a way for members to give back to their communities,” says Staci. “The grants help serve all ages and populations within the ECE service area. Serving on this board has allowed me to see the variety of agencies that provide support and resources to their communities, and it is a pleasure to be able to help return that support through grant funding.”

Cooperatives were founded on the power of people helping people. We believe Operation Round Up demonstrates our commitment to community.



Pictured (L-R): Judy Hegstrom, Sally Olson, Dixie Randall, Gary Skarsten, Dorothy Johnson, and Shirley Moline

Remember, ORU is a program made possible by members who voluntarily round up their monthly electric bill to the next dollar. The maximum yearly contribution from each participant is \$11.88, and contributions are tax deductible.

Start making a difference in your community today! Sign up via SmartHub or call 1-800-254-7944. Find SmartHub on our website or download from your preferred app store.

Your contributions mean the world to local organizations that rely on donations to improve the quality of life in our communities.



How? It's simple!

Activate your SmartHub® account **by December 15, 2020** for a chance to win one of two iPads. ECE members currently using SmartHub are automatically entered.

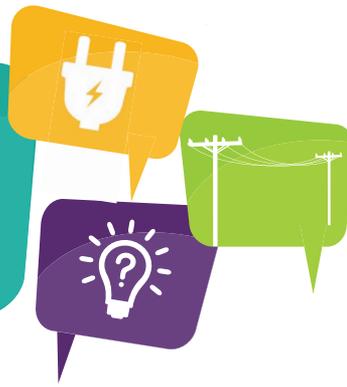
FIRST-TIME USERS

Download the FREE SmartHub app  on your smart device or visit our website and click on “My Account” to activate your account. You will need your ECE account number. Once you have activated your account you are automatically entered in the drawing.

With SmartHub you can quickly and conveniently report an outage, pay your bill, view your energy use, receive alerts, and more.



Q&A with Josh Jorde Geographic Information Systems Analyst



We have two Geographic Information Systems (GIS) Analysts on staff. Together, they provide professional expertise for the necessary coordination, development, implementation, and maintenance of our mapping system. Their primary duties include analyzing spatial data through mapping software and designing digital maps with geographic data and various other data sets. We spoke with Josh Jorde, who's been with us for over 15 years, about his unique job at ECE.

What does a GIS Analyst do?

We work at the intersection of data analysis, programming, and cartography. Simply put, we take data and turn it into maps. Data can be collected in the field, created during the map-making process, or via an available spreadsheet. The data is then analyzed to the specifications needed for the creation of the map.

What is most challenging about your job?

The maps we create are heavily reliant on gathering pertinent information from other departments, which can be a challenge to coordinate, but also gives us the opportunity to collaborate with employees throughout the organization. We enjoy conducting research to support other departments using the GIS system.

How does your work help employees stay safe?

Every co-op structure/facility has been mapped and has a unique tag for identification purposes. This helps employees know the location of each structure and what construction items are there. There are safety notes in the map to remind employees to be prepared for different scenarios. We also take a proactive role in suggesting potential system improvements, and conduct field inspections of our electrical distribution system.

Josh's supervisor, Jason Lande, adds, "Our GIS Analysts play a unique role at the co-op. Members may not know it, but the GIS system helps map and identify the potential source of an outage, which affects restoration time. Josh's work is a visual resource of constantly-changing information."



Many field employees rely on GIS information, including Brad Rooney, one of our Energy Services Specialists.



East Central Energy
P.O. Box 39
Braham, MN 55006

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Braham and Milaca
Monday-Friday
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1.800.254.7944

General business calls are answered from 7:30 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday-Friday.

Emergency and outage calls are answered 24 hours a day.

Email: info@ecemn.com

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

The Co-op Advantage newsletter is published by East Central Energy, your not-for-profit, member-owned, local electric cooperative.

ECE is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

Website:

eastcentralenergy.com



Holiday office closings

November 26 and 27
December 25





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Must be an ECE member.

Current SmartHub users are automatically entered.

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