



By Jesse Singerhouse, General Manager

### THE FUTURE OF ENERGY

ver the past 20 years that I've been in the energy business, I have seen a dramatic shift in the sources of energy that we've provided our members. When I first started, coal was the predominant source of electric energy in the upper Midwest. There was a scattering

of hydroelectric, nuclear, wind, and natural gas power as well, but for the most part coal was the main source. That has dramatically changed, especially in the last five years. We have seen the development of large-scale wind and solar farms, including our own community solar project near Downsville. We have also seen a rise in the amount of member-owned solar generation. Much has changed, and will continue to change, with where and how we source our energy. The bigger questions are: What does the future hold, and how will this all work?

When we look at new electric generation with our power supplier, Dairyland Power Cooperative, we start with reliability. We want to make sure that we have a reliable source of power to supply our members' needs. But there are other things to consider too:

We also look at the peak demand days (the hottest days of summer and coldest days of winter) to determine how much generation capacity we need.

We also look at affordability, keeping in mind all of our members, especially those on a fixed income.

We also look at the environment and the impact production will have today and on future generations.

We also look at transmission, or getting the energy here. Many large-scale wind farms, for example, are located in surrounding states where the wind resources are better. So, making sure we can get the energy here is a huge consideration.

As you can see there's a lot of planning and work that goes into generating, transmitting, and distributing electricity so it's there when you flip a switch. The future of energy on the generation side will definitely be more renewable as we transition away from coal. Solar and wind will continue to expand along with local community solar projects. Battery storage will become more useful in the future as well. The sun doesn't shine all of the time and the wind doesn't blow all of the time. Having a way to store that energy for use in the future is important.

Natural gas will also play a larger role in the future of energy generation. Natural gas is capable of coming on line in short notice. So, if energy demand increases rapidly, or renewable generation decreases quickly, and stored energy is used up, we can utilize natural gas to generate electricity and provide you with the reliability you need.

One great example of this happened in January of 2019. The polar vortex was happening and

2019. The polar vortex was happening and temperatures plummeted to -30 degrees in some areas. As you can imagine our demand for electricity was very high. Then wind generation dropped dramatically, not because the wind wasn't blowing, but because the temperature was too cold for the turbines to operate safely. In moments like those, our future electric grid will require a resource to generate electricity at a moment's notice. Natural gas is a perfect fit for that type of scenario. It is capable of being a 24-7 generating resource if needed, but can also be called upon quickly when solar or wind resources are not generating.

The future of electricity is changing, not just in how we generate it, but also with how you are using it. Things like electric vehicles, time-of-use energy rates, and home automation will be more utilized in the future. If you have questions about your home

energy use, or if renewable energy is right for you or any other energy-related questions, give us a call or visit our website. You'll find information about rebates, programs, and services to help you with your energy needs. We are here to be your trusted energy advisor.

Dunn Energy and our power supplier, Dairyland Power, are committed to generating, transmitting, and distributing safe, reliable, affordable, and environmentally responsible electricity to your home, farm, or business.



n August we emailed a member survey out to nearly 3,000 people, and received responses from approximately 700. We've had some time to comb through the comments and will be answering some of the more common questions and concerns here in the magazine.

**Question:** What exactly is covered by the Fixed Monthly Charge?

First, the Fixed Monthly Charge is a charge every member sees on their electric bill every month. Every utility has this charge. They may call it something different, though. It might be a base rate, facility charge, or fixed charge at other electric companies. However, for every utility, it is calculated the same. It is based on meters per mile of line. Dunn Energy Cooperative averages five (5) electric meters for every mile of powerline we maintain. Now, for what it actually covers...

**Answer:** It provides the funds required to maintain the quality, reliability, and integrity of service that our members count on and have come to expect. These expenses include items such as:

- Substations, wires, poles, transformers, and equipment needed to distribute reliable electricity.
- Trucks, equipment, and tools required to build and maintain the electric distribution system.
- Facilities that house trucks and equipment, including the technology and office supplies needed to operate.
- Payroll for the wages of the professionals who design, build, maintain, and restore the system, as well as the staff needed to operate the business.
- Vegetation management and system inspections to ensure the safety and reliability of the electrical system.
- Liability insurance, interest on long-term debt, and taxes. (10504001)
- New technologies to provide increased reliability and operational efficiencies such as the metering system, outage management system, and investments in renewable energy.

Because all cooperative members benefit from having reliable electric service available when they want it, the fixed monthly charge ensures that everyone pays their fair share of the basic costs—fixed costs that exist whether or not a single kWh is used.

If you wonder why your aunt in town has a much smaller fixed monthly rate than you, you can just look at how many meters there are in one mile of powerline in town. Municipalities and investor-owned utilities have a lot more people to spread that cost across.

Do you have a question for the cooperative? Email it to info@dunnenergy.com. Your question may be highlighted in the magazine!



## **OUR PIECE OF THE ELECTRIC VEHICLE PUZZLE**

ast month you read about the survey results the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) published regarding electric vehicles (EV) and how cooperative members think their cooperative should fit into that conversation.

The most important areas that members expressed interest in having help with were:

- Education. They want their utilities to play a role in expanding the EV community.
- **Discounts.** They want off-peak rates for charging and rebates for installation of chargers.
- Access. They want more chargers in the community, so it's easier to travel without "range anxiety."

Recently, Dunn Energy Cooperative members Crystal Halvorson and Bill Hogseth purchased a Chevy Bolt, and we talked with them about their experience.

"We felt a sense of urgency as the federal tax credits for



Are your electric bills a mess? It's time to clean them up by setting up recurring and stored payments through SmartHub.

While you're there, check out the other great benefits SmartHub has to offer:

- Pay your bill online
- Sign up for paperless billing
  Communicate directly with
- Check your usage
- Manage your account the co-op

Clean up your bills by signing up for SmartHub online. It's Dunn Energy Cooperative's FREE and mobile online payment system. Click on the signup link and follow the prompts to create your user name and password.





Crystal Halvorson, Bill Hogseth, and their son with their new Chevy Bolt.

EVs is falling and when we did the math, we realized that the cost of the car itself is not higher, but the fuel savings are substantive," Halvorson told us. "We love knowing that we are powering our vehicle by buying electricity from our local cooperative as opposed to buying gas from who knows where."

Not only are they purchasing their "fuel" from the cooperative, they are getting it at a reduced rate by putting their charger on the off-peak program. They also got a \$400 rebate for buying their hard-wired EV charger.

"It was a great bonus!" Crystal told us. "We didn't know about the reduced rate until we had purchased the vehicle. The cost of getting another control box installed by an electrician was curtailed by the Dunn Energy rebate."

When asked if the load control has been cumbersome for charging their car, the answer was no. "98% of our charging occurs at night when we are sleeping, so it hasn't been a huge factor that we can't charge from 1–9 p.m. At bedtime, we brush our teeth and plug in the car!"

One of the top concerns for people looking at purchasing electric vehicles is "range anxiety." According to Wikipedia, this is "the fear that a vehicle has insufficient range to reach its destination and would strand the vehicle's occupants."

While public charging stations aren't as plentiful as gas stations, they are starting to pop up in our area. You can see for yourself by visiting the PlugShare website!

What is Crystal and Bill's advice to someone who wants to dip their toe in the EV waters? "Go give one a test drive! We love our Bolt. It is comfortable, quiet, reliable, and it is amazing not having to go to the gas station! An all-electric does require a bit of planning if you have high-mile days, and you have to get over the 'range anxiety' that you can feel at first."

At Dunn Energy, we want you to know we're proud to help members with electric vehicle education and more. When you're ready for your electric vehicle purchase, come have that conversation with us.

# HOW WILL YOU CELEBRATE **EARTH DAY?**

arth Day is considered one of the world's largest civic events, and on April 22, we can all be part of this global movement to help the environment. First, I want to share some things that we're doing right here at Dunn Energy Cooperative to better our own little corner of the world.

Over the past several years, we've launched several green initiatives, including the SunDEC Community Solar array, enabling our consumer-members to access energy from renewable sources. In fact, 30% of our energy mix comes from renewable energy sources. We also have a number of members on our lines who have electric vehicles and have taken advantage of our rebate on chargers as well as the reduced rate. You can read more about them in this issue!

There are many ways we as individuals can help the environment, and some are easier than you'd think. Here are a few simple actions you can take now to reduce your energy use. (9980002)

**Audit your light bulbs.** Swapping out any remaining incandescent bulbs with LED bulbs can make a big difference in home efficiency, and it's one of the easiest ways to reduce your energy bill.

**Maintain your HVAC system.** Replace your home air filters to allow your HVAC system to run more efficiently. Air filters prevent dust and allergens from clogging your HVAC system. Changing the filters makes your unit run more efficiently—keeping your home cooler in the summer and warmer in the winter.

**Examine your smart or programmable thermostat.** Make sure it is programmed for the current season and fam-



ily schedule. This is one of the best tools at your fingertips; however, you can only achieve these efficiencies and savings if it is programmed properly and adjusted periodically to keep pace with changes in household routines.

**Seal window and doors.** Seal leaks with weather stripping and caulk to keep cool air indoors during warm months and prevent cold air from penetrating the indoors during colder months. Sealing gaps around piping, dryer vents, fans, and outlets also helps to seal the envelope and increase efficiency.

While these suggestions may not be glamorous actions worthy of a press release or event, they do make a difference. And we're always here to help if you want more information on how you can save energy. Stop by our office or give us a call.

As we celebrate Earth Day this April, let's continue to work together and make a positive impact on our local community—and our beautiful planet.

### Hidden Account Numbers

The incentive to find your account number has increased! If you find your account number hidden in the pages of this magazine and you call and tell us before the next issue is mailed, we'll put a \$50 credit on your electric bill. Happy hunting!

Last month's winners were Jeff and Kaaren Peterson and Randy Wheeler.

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**Jolene Neisius, Editor** 



"Energy Through Excellence"

