North Star ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE
Your Touchstone Energy® Partner

Enlightener

Baudette, Minnesota

Volume 59 Number 3, March 2014

Meeting the peak

Demand response (load management) helps manage brutal winter

Record-setting cold temperatures this winter have pushed the demand for electricity to all-time highs in the Minnkota Power Cooperative system.

Minnkota provides wholesale electric power to North Star Electric and 10 other electric cooperatives in eastern North Dakota and northwestern Minnesota. Monthly energy sales to the Minnkota cooperatives reached a record high of more than 456.7 million kilowatt-hours (kWh) in January. The cooperative also hit a record demand peak during the month of nearly 1,000 megawatts (MW).

Managing this unprecedented level of demand has turned Minnkota's energy marketing area into a war room of sorts this winter. When the demand for electricity exceeds Minnkota's generation capacity, energy marketers are essentially left with two options: purchase replacement power from the MISO wholesale market or use the demand response program.

Typically, electricity can affordably be purchased from the market at an average price of 2 to 3 cents per kWh. With demand skyrocketing across the Midwest this winter, prices have been up to $2 per kWh.

As they have for decades, Minnkota's energy marketers used the demand response system at certain points to avoid purchasing costly power that would inevitably hit the pocketbooks of retail consumers in the region.

Todd Sailer, senior power supply manager, said purchasing surplus power during high-priced times would have translated into a multimillion-dollar hit to Minnkota and its members.

"If we were to buy a kWh for $2 and it's being sold for about 6 cents, it doesn't take long to figure out that is probably not a good strategy," Sailer said.

Reliable performance

Minnkota is a national leader in demand response with more than 50,000 retail consumers participating in the program. Currently Minnkota can shave up to 350 MW — more than one-third of its peak load in the winter — when reliability is threatened or market prices are simply uneconomical.

"We haven't seen this level of volatility from the market in many years," Sailer said. "Having reliable baseload generation and a reliable demand response system are very crucial for us in managing costs and keeping rates as low as possible for our members."

Sailer said Minnkota's lignite power plants have performed well this winter, delivering low-cost energy 24 hours a day. But during peak demand periods, the cooperative has received minimal production from its contracted wind farms due to low wind speeds and

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e-mail us at nsec@wiktel.com
Visit our website at
www.northstarelectric.coop

Members' corner

We added a section called members' corner. What we would like is for members to send in questions about your electric cooperative, and we will answer them for you. Please give us your name and a phone number in case we need to clarify the question, and send them to North Star Electric, PO Box 719, Baudette, MN, 56623, Attn: Wayne.

North Star Electric Cooperative, Inc.

Mission Statement

To improve the lives of our member-owners and community by responsibly providing electric energy and other beneficial services while maintaining the very highest standards of performance.

This institution is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

Highlights from the BOARDROOM

These are the highlights from the board of directors' Feb. 10 meeting. All board members were in attendance. In addition to routine action, the board voted to restate the board policy on nepotism, to reschedule the March board meeting to Feb. 26, to approve the allocation of the 2013 operating and nonoperating margins (revenue in excess of expenses) to the cooperative members, to approve early, discounted capital credit payments to estates and to approve travel to NRECA's Legislative Conference and meetings with legislators in Washington, D.C., for Assistant Manager Ellis.

Staff reports included the financial report, personnel, improvements to ebill and credit card payment processes, legislative activity, the 245 hours of off-peak load control this winter, the price and availability of propane, energy conservation rebates, high use concerns, Operation Round Up, preparing for the 2014 line construction season and a review of the RUS Form 7 (140-08-028-04, Gary Houska).

Reports were provided from the Minnkota Power Cooperative board meeting.

Detailed minutes are available at the cooperative for member review. Regular board meetings are generally held the first Wednesday of every month. If you wish to speak with the board, or have an item that you would like to have placed on the agenda, please contact Manager Dan Hoskins at least two weeks in advance to be included on the agenda.

DIGGING SOON?

Like us on Facebook

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www.facebook.com/NorthStarElectric

THE VALUE IS ELECTRIC!

One tank of gas for your car
20 gallons at $3.49/gallon = **$69.80**
More than 21 days of electricity for your entire home = **$69.80***

*Based on North Star Electric average residential usage of 875 kWh per month at the residential rate of $.11/kWh + Minnkota surcharge of $.003/kWh
(Does not include the $38 basic service fee)

Meeting the peak (continued from page 1)

equipment issues related to the extreme cold.

"Wind can help limit your exposure to the market and it can help limit your control hours, but there are days when the wind isn't producing in the region and the market responds to that with higher prices," Sailer explained.

Propane shortages change strategy

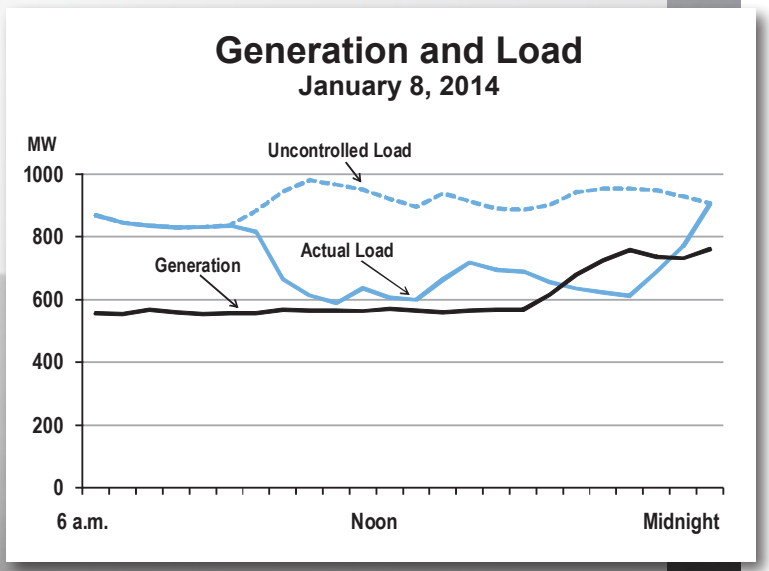
The demand response program is voluntary for retail consumers who allow Minnkota to turn off, by remote control, electric heaters and other interruptible loads in exchange for a discounted retail electric rate.

Most of these are dual-heat systems that use electricity as the main source of heat with backup heat provided by fuel oil or propane when demand response is in effect. A properly installed dual-heat system automatically switches to the alternate fuel source, requiring no additional work from the consumer.

As propane prices continue to skyrocket across the Upper Midwest, Sailer said the low, off-peak electric heating rate remains stable and isn't susceptible to dramatic spikes. Minnkota has adjusted its demand response strategy to accommodate retail consumers who are struggling with fossil fuel prices.

"We recognize that many of our consumers use propane as a backup heating source and that buying fuel has been challenging this winter," Sailer said. "We've raised our market purchasing threshold to try to limit the number of demand response hours."

Minnkota entered the winter with an estimate of 250 hours of dual-heat demand response time. Through March 2, about 262 hours have been issued. Sailer believes that Minnkota will end the winter with about 300 hours of control, assuming normal weather patterns and reliable power plant performance.



Electric or propane: which is the best heating value?

With the price of propane this winter we are receiving several calls about which is cheaper, off-peak electric or propane. The answer this year is the same as last year, off-peak electric is still the best heating value. Of course, if you have a new super-efficient propane furnace the costs are closer, but off-peak electric is still cheaper even with the temporary wind energy surcharge.

The efficiency of a propane furnace varies greatly depending on what type of propane furnace you have. The older style furnace with a standing pilot is only about 60 percent efficient, the mid-range furnace with electronic ignition is about 80 percent efficient and the newer super-efficient furnace is about 90 percent efficient. The efficiency of these furnaces has been tested under ideal lab conditions and generally can't be duplicated after they have been installed in the home. The new super-efficient furnace that has been properly installed in a home does come close to the furnaces that were tested in the lab.

So at what price would you need to buy propane to equal the price of off-peak electric? Once again it depends on what furnace you are using. If you had a furnace with a standing pilot, the price would need to be $1 per gallon. For a furnace with electronic ignition, the price would need to be $1.33 per gallon. For a super-efficient furnace, the price would need to be under $1.50 per gallon. In early February this year the average price of propane in our service area was about $4 per gallon so you can see that off-peak electric heat is still the best heating value for your home or business. You are a member-owner of North Star Electric Cooperative so it only makes sense for you to buy from a company that you already own.

COMMENTARY ARTICLE

Thoughts about solar

With the Minnesota legislative session beginning, we have a concern about possible solar legislation in the coming months.

We hate to keep picking on solar, but some of us paid $24 last month for just the wind energy surcharge. Wind, of course, was added to our energy mix in part because of Minnesota state mandates.

On the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) website one can look at current solar systems the DNR installed at state parks and offices, and it shows when they were installed, cost of install, kilowatt-hour (kWh) production, etc.

As it seems with many government investments into green energy, the paybacks just don't pencil out unless you give a tax credit or require consumers to pay for solar rebates. Remember this is our tax money the state is spending, and it is just the beginning if we allow this to continue (555-30-002-05, Tony Gustafson). Not long ago Gov. Dayton publicly criticized Minnkota Power, our power provider, for entering into expensive wind contracts, but wasn't that a government mandate?

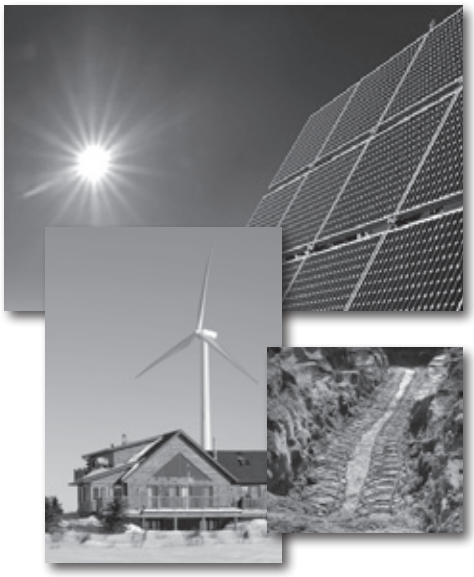
The information below comes from the state's own DNR website and offers a glimpse of how solar works in at least one area. It doesn't indicate a good rate of return on the significant investment made to this point. We should ask our government leaders to take a more common sense approach with renewables and other energy issues.

Decisions by government leaders affect us for years; remember they already have the investor-owned utilities paying a tax to help pay for solar rebates. That means consumers, ultimately, are paying for it. Here are the numbers from the state parks and other DNR solar sites:

Location	Installed Cost	Installed Cost per Watt	Date Installed	Size (in kW)	Total Yearly kWh @ 100% Capacity	kWh Generated & Sold	kWh Generated & Consumed	Total kWh Generated	Photo-voltaic Average Capacity	DNR Estimated Annual Savings @ .10/kWh	Simple Payback (in Years)	2013 Generation Simple Payback (in Years)
Afton State Park (Ground)	$95,543	$6.39	12/10	15.0	130,979	6,481	12,253	18,734	14.3%	$1,700	56.20	51.00
Bear Head State Park (Ground)	$33,200	$6.04	11/12	5.5	48,151	0	5,253	5,253	10.9%	$700	47.43	63.20
Big Bog Visitor Center (Roof)	$47,000	$12.14	6/11	3.9	33,914	0	4,718	4,718	13.9%	$470	100.00	99.63
Blue Mounds State Park (Ground)	$57,748	$5.77	12/12	10.0	87,673	2,491	10,513	13,004	14.8%	$1,350	42.78	44.41
Fort Snelling State Park (Roof)	$23,933	$6.65	12/10	3.6	31,527	0	3,616	3,616	11.5%	$380	62.98	66.19
Glendalough Office (Ground)	$42,630	$9.52	9/10	4.5	39,277	0	6,461	6,461	16.5%	$560	76.13	65.98
Grand Portage Visitor Center (Ground)	$60,330	$8.20	12/10	7.4	64,450	0	8,315	8,315	12.9%	$920	65.58	72.56
Great River Bluffs (Ground)	$35,000	$8.14	9/10	4.3	37,666	0	5,502	5,502	14.6%	$570	61.40	63.61
Iron Range OHV Gilbert Office (Ground)	$77,000	$11.20	8/10	6.9	60,225	2,525	6,591	9,116	15.1%	$970	79.38	84.47
Itasca State Park (Roof)	$119,400	$3.41	1/13	35.0	306,728	333	29,019	29,352	10.5%	$4,200	28.43	40.68
Lacqui Parle State Park (Ground)	$102,550	$6.37	10/10	16.1	141,026	222	21,095	21,317	15.1%	$1,800	56.97	48.11
Lake Carlos State Park (Ground)	$37,500	$6.51	12/11	5.8	50,461	1,770	5,607	7,377	14.6%	$780	48.08	50.83

Location	Installed Cost	Installed Cost per Watt	Date Installed	Size (in kW)	Total Yearly kWh @ 100% Capacity	kWh Generated & Sold	kWh Generated & Consumed	Total kWh Generated	Photo-voltaic Average Capacity	DNR Estimated Annual Savings @ .10/kWh	Simple Payback (in Years)	2013 Generation Simple Payback (in Years)
Lake Shetek State Park (Roof)	$73,143	$5.30	12/10	13.8	120,893	5,675	9,988	15,663	13.0%	$1,900	38.50	46.70
Nerstrand-Big Woods State Park (Ground)	$52,100	$7.24	12/10	7.2	63,038	0	8,754	8,754	13.9%	$950	54.84	59.52
Sibley State Park (Ground)	$31,000	$6.46	12/11	4.8	42,037	0	6,385	6,385	15.2%	$650	47.69	48.55
St. Croix State Park (Roof)	$25,000	N/A	N/A	N/A		N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	$408	61.27	
Wild River State Park (Roof)	$56,000	$5.56	12/12	10.1	88,230	2,339	10,178	12,517	14.2%	$1,750	32.00	44.74
William O'Brien State Park (Ground)	$59,400	$6.00	11/11	9.9	86,724	674	12,499	13,173	15.2%	$1,300	45.69	45.09
Hibbing Land and Minerals (Ground)	$122,500	$7.00	12/13	17.5	153,300	93	564	657	5.0%	$2,188	55.99	N/A
McQuade Small Craft Harbor	$25,000	$12.20	6/9	2.0	17,951	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	$250	100.00	
New Ulm DNR Office (Ground)	$310,000	$3.75	1/13	82.7	724,160	3,970	96,163	100,133	13.8%	$10,000	31.00	30.96
Peterson Hatchery (Ground)	$51,682	$6.42	10/10	8.1	70,519	3,604	5,657	9,261	13.1%	$1,070	48.30	55.81
Tower Area Office (Roof)	$142,950	$3.57	11/12	40.0	350,768	0	32,995	32,995	9.4%	$5,000	28.59	43.32

Is renewable energy right for you?



Do you know someone being green and saving money by using solar, geothermal or wind power? Are you thinking you want to get in on the savings by installing renewable energy at your home or office? If so, make sure you look before you leap. A renewable energy system is an investment that should be carefully considered and thoroughly assessed.

To help do that homework about a renewable energy installation for homes and small businesses, the Energy Education Council has developed a list of questions to answer and resources for answering those questions that will help you evaluate if renewable energy sources can help meet your goals, which type of system would be the most cost-effective and efficient and if a renewable system is even possible for your location.

If saving money is the goal, keep in mind that the cheapest, cleanest and greenest energy is the energy that you do not use. So the first thing to do is make sure that your home or business is as energy efficient as possible. Efficiency should always be the first step in the quest for saving money on energy.

After making sure the home or business is as efficient as possible, head to the renewable energy installation questions at **http://EnergyEdCouncil.org/checklist.pdf**. Answering them will help decide important items such as:

- What is the home or business's energy usage?
- Which type of renewable energy is feasible on the site?
- Will extra insurance be required?

While there are resources to help answer these and similar questions, there is also a section that provides questions that should be asked of possible installers/contractors, like:

- What technology best suits the needs of the home/business?
- Is the service panel adequate?
- What is required by the utility for interconnection and net metering?

A homeowner or small business owner armed with the knowledge gained from answering the renewable energy installation questions will be vastly better informed and ready to tackle the project and attain his or her goals. Download the renewable energy installation questions at **http://EnergyEdCouncil.org/checklist.pdf**, and get more information on energy efficiency and renewable energy at **EnergyEdCouncil.org**.

We need your help!

Comment period for proposed GHG rule for new power plants open

North Star Electric Cooperative is asking its members to help join the fight against onerous proposed carbon regulations.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has launched a public comment period on its proposed emissions standards for carbon from new power plants. The proposal was placed in the Federal Register on Jan. 8.

The scoop: If finalized, the proposed rule would regulate greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, including carbon dioxide, from new power plants under the Clean Air Act's provisions for new source performance standards (NSPS). Once the rule was published on Jan. 8, it began the official comment period (comments due May 9).

What you can do: Go to **action.coop** to sign up with the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA), make a comment and learn more about the new power plants proposal and other EPA proposals that would impact our rates. Though North Star and our wholesale energy provider, Minnkota Power Cooperative, face a more significant battle when the proposed rule for existing power plants comes out later this year, NRECA wants members to sign up and comment at **action.coop** about the rule and also wants to prepare and get infrastructure in place for the proposed existing power plants rule.

WWW.ACTION.COOP

TELL THE EPA TO RECONSIDER ITS "ALL-BUT-ONE" APPROACH

What people are saying about the rule: Jo Ann Emerson, CEO of the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA), recently drew attention to the important role access to all fuels plays in the reliability and affordability of electricity in America. She believes coal plants should remain a vital part of the U.S. energy mix.

"We must be deliberate and purposeful with our energy policy to avoid depriving cost-conscious American families and businesses the affordable, reliable energy they count on as a basic component of everyday life," she said in a NRECA release. "The competitiveness of the U.S. economy depends upon options when it comes to energy and the regional, economic and demographic differences demand flexibility and freedom when deciding which fuels will keep us moving forward."

John Graves, environmental manager for Minnkota, has said "although the administration has said that coal is part of the energy future, this rule if finalized as proposed, will effectively stop coal from being used as a fuel for new power plants."

How would it impact the coal-based Milton R. Young Station, Minnkota's major source of energy? This rule wouldn't directly impact the Young Station. It's only for new power plants. However, regulations for new power plants must be promulgated before proposed regulations for existing power plants can be published and eventually finalized. The proposed existing power plants rule could have a significant impact on electric rates.

Some believe that the purpose of the proposed rule for new power plants is only so EPA can set up for more expansive regulations that will cover the nation's existing fleet of power plants. After all, EPA says very few new coal-based power plants will be built in the future.

Why the proposed new power plants rule isn't feasible for coal-based plants: The rule relies on carbon capture and storage (CCS) technology. There is no commercially viable CCS technology. EPA is betting that the technology will be developed. However, the Clean Air Act requires that the technology be commercially viable at the time the regulations are put in place.

What's next: Comments on the proposed rule for new power plants will be taken until May 9. EPA also is working on those proposed NSPS guidelines for GHG emissions for existing power plants, due by June. That is the proposed rule that could potentially have a significant impact on electric rates.

This is an important issue. For North Star Electric members who do not have Internet access, please fill out the form below and return it to North Star Electric Cooperative before May 2.

---------- *Cut here* ----------

Printed Name: _____ **Phone#** _____

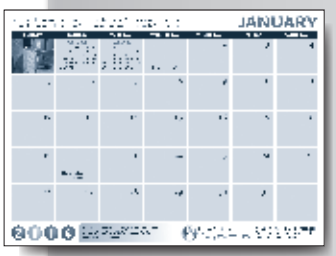
Address: _____ **City/State/Zip:** _____

I authorize America's Electric Cooperative to communicate on my behalf regarding American's Electricity challenges.

Signature: _____

Thank you from North Star Electric Cooperative, PO Box 719, Baudette MN 56623 (or nsec@wiktel.com or fax 218-634-2203)

2015 North Star wall calendar



For several years North Star has given wall calendars to our membership at our annual meeting. Two years ago we went with the Minnkota Power Systems and the 11 co-ops that own Minnkota had pictures in the calendar. For the 2015 calendar we would like to create one with only pictures of the North Star service area. If you have any pictures that you would like to submit for the calendar, please email them to **waynensec@wiktel.com** with a short caption (maximum of four pictures). Any member who sends a picture that we use for our calendar will receive a $50 credit on their energy bill. We would like pictures of the four seasons or members working or playing in our service area. If you have any questions, please give us a call at **888-634-2202** and ask for Wayne.

ATTENTION:
Parents of high school seniors

Are you aware of North Star Electric's Knowledge Scholarship? To qualify, the parent/guardian must be an active member of North Star Electric, and your child must take a test about your cooperative that provides electricity to your home. North Star Electric will be awarding five scholarships, one $1,000 and four $400, plus a chance to win one of eight $50 cash awards, for scoring more than 50 percent on the test. Most of the answers will be in the study material that North Star provides (783-29-039-02, Stephen Briggs). A couple of hours of study time could pay off with a $1,000 scholarship. Last year only 29 students took the test. The information meeting and the test will be given in mid-April. For more information about the scholarships, please call Wayne at North Star Electric or check with the guidance counselor at your school.

North Star Electric Cooperative Political Leaders

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president@whitehouse.gov
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Fax: 202-224-0044

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1-888-224-9043 (Minnesota office)
Fax: 202-228-2186

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888-727-0979
rep.dan.fabian@house.mn

Problems paying your electric bill?

Energy assistance may be available!

If you are receiving a low income or suffering from a temporary financial shortfall, the following agencies may be able to assist you with your electric bill. We urge you to contact them immediately to avoid disconnection if you feel you are eligible for aid.

Lake of the Woods County Social Services
206 8th Ave. SE, Suite 200
Baudette, MN 56623
634-2642

Northwest Community Action Council
P.O. Box 67
Badger, MN 56714-0067
800-568-5329

Koochiching County Community Services
1000 5th St.
International Falls, MN 56649
283-7000

Kootasca Community Action, Inc.
2232 2nd Ave. E.
P.O. Box 44
International Falls, MN 56649
283-9491 or 800-559-9491

Kootasca Community Action, Inc.
Grand Rapids, MN 55744-3984
Toll free 1-877-687-1163
Direct 1-218-999-0800
Fax 218-999-0220

Arrowhead Economic Opportunity Agency
702 3rd Ave. S.
Virginia, MN 55792-2797
800-662-5711

North Star
ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE
Your Touchstone Energy® Partner

2014 power plant tour

June 24-26

We are offering all North Star Electric members an exceptional summer opportunity that's fun for all ages. This year's tour is three days, which will make the trip more relaxing. The tour is scheduled for Tuesday through Thursday, June 24-26.

The first day we will tour Minnkota's control center and print shop at Grand Forks, and then it's off to the beautiful Seven Seas Hotel & Waterpark in Mandan, N.D.

On the second day we will visit the Milton R. Young Station near Center, N.D., where most of our electricity is generated. This will include a tour of the open pit mines where machines strip the coal and reclaim the land so it can once again be used for agriculture. This is where we will see the huge electric dragline, Liberty, with its 300-foot boom and 70-cubic-yard bucket, which is used to remove the overburden soil from the coal. Then, it's off to see the Garrison Dam and the hydroelectric plant. We will end our day by returning to the Seven Seas for supper.

On the third day we will drive by the Ashtabula Wind Energy Center near Valley City, N.D., and then visit the Infinity wind turbine by Petersburg, N.D. Some of our energy is generated at both sites. The wind towers at Ashtabula are 250 feet tall with 120-foot blades. After that, we're off to Grand Forks for lunch and then back home.

The cost to members is just $100 per person or $175 per couple, which covers your cost of the bus, hotels, tours and meals. Members who have not been on this trip in the past are encouraged to go.

Power Plant Tour Registration Form

Names of Participants

_____

_____

_____

_____

Address

_____

_____

_____

_____

Telephone Number _____

Account Number _____

Number Attending_____

Have you enjoyed this trip in the past? N/Y What year?____

Please print names of participants the way you would like them to appear on your name tags. Your deposit will be refunded if the tour is canceled or if you should find that you cannot make the trip. We will send further details prior to departure. Return with check for $100 per person or $175 per couple to: North Star Electric Cooperative, P.O. Box 719, Baudette, MN 56623