

ON A ROLL



BNi draglines transported to new mine

Eight miles of frozen North Dakota ground separated the Liberty dragline from its new home. The question for employees at BNi Coal was how to transport the 9.5-million-pound machine safely and efficiently without shortening its lifespan. The company, based near Center, N.D., opted to use specialized

trailers, a unique method rarely used in the industry.

Normally, when a dragline is moved to a different location, the machine “walks” at 0.1 miles per hour on hydraulically powered shoes. But rather than having the dragline walk the entire distance, BNi hired Mammoet, a Dutch company, to transport the equipment using self-propelled modular transporters.

Liberty and the much smaller Page dragline completed their trek in February as part of BNi's \$100 million expansion of the Center Mine. BNi provides the coal supply needs of the Minnkota-operated Milton R. Young Station, which serves as the primary electric generation resource for more than 128,000 retail consumers in eastern North Dakota and northwestern Minnesota.

Wade Boeshans, BNi president and general manager, likened the project to putting a dragline on roller skates, but it's much

In this issue:

Board highlights/Operation Round Up deadline	2
Manager's Report	3
National Lineman Appreciation Day	4
Have a successful planting season rooted in safety	5
Co-ops bring member voice to Minnesota Capitol	6
Problems paying your electric bill/Political leaders	7
On a roll (continued from front)	8

(article continued on back cover)

To see this dragline in person, sign up for our tour below! (For more information on the tour, please see page 7.)

Power Plant Tour Registration Form

Names of Participants

Telephone Number _____

Number Attending _____

Address

Account Number _____

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

APRIL 2015

The Enlightener (USPS 024959), Vol. 60, No. 4 is published monthly by North Star Electric Cooperative, Inc., 441 St. Hwy 172 N.W., Baudette, MN 56623-0719. Subscription price \$1/year. Periodicals postage paid at Baudette, MN 56623. POSTMASTER: Send address corrections to The Enlightener, North Star Electric Cooperative, Inc., P.O. Box 719, Baudette, MN 56623-0719.

OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS

President Steve Arnesen
Vice President Bruce Polkinghorne
Secretary-Treasurer Michael Hanson
Directors Julian Brzoznowski, Randy Bergan,
Lorraine Nygaard, Mike Trueman
General Manager Dan Hoskins
Editor Wayne Haukaas

Office hours: 7:30 a.m. to 4 p.m.
Monday through Friday

Baudette 218-634-2202 or 888-634-2202
Littlefork 218-278-6658 or 888-258-2008

For credit card payment, call 855-874-5354.

Online billing information available via SmartHub app.

Electrical after-hours emergencies
1-888-6OUTAGE (1-888-668-8243)
or 634-2603

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 clean, affordable, electric energy and other beneficial services while maintaining the very highest standards of performance and member satisfaction.

This institution is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

Highlights from the **BOARDROOM**

These are the highlights from the board of directors' March 2 meeting. All board members were in attendance. In addition to routine motions, the board voted to appoint directors Arnesen and Bergan as North Star's representatives on Minnkota Power Cooperative's and Square Butte Electric Cooperative's board of directors.

Staff reports included the financial report, a possible bylaw change to potentially mitigate exposure in a lawsuit, reduced off-peak load control hours, output from the 5 kW solar demonstration project (<http://egaug8199.egaug.es/>), new service requests, summer work plan projects, moving after-hours outage dispatching to Garden Valley Telephone Co-op (the phone number is not changing and

members should see no change in service), the AMI (automated meter reading information) system, new safety equipment requirements and safety training.

Board reports included an update from Minnkota Power Cooperative's board meeting, the MREA annual meeting, and the Koochiching County Economic Development 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.

Operation Round Up application deadline is May 31



The deadline to submit Operation Round Up grant applications is May 31. Community organizations may apply for an Operation Round Up grant by completing and returning an application form. Forms are available on North Star's website, in the Baudette office, Littlefork office or from a director of the North Star Electric Community Trust Board members. The directors are Gretchen Thompson, Margie Sporlein, Zelpha Crawford, Mary Ellen Lehman, Julie Lepisto, Larry Warrington and Tony Radniecki.

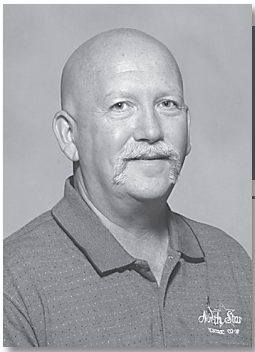
Grants will be awarded to nonprofit or community-based organizations that demonstrate a commitment to enhancing the quality of life in our region.

We would like to say THANK YOU to all the North Star members who are participating in the Operation Round Up program. About 80 percent of the membership is contributing to this great cause to help our local communities.

f "Like us" on
facebook

www.facebook.com/NorthStarElectric





Dan Hoskins
General Manager

MANAGER'S REPORT

Can you believe it has been 75 years since your cooperative started? As you saw in the January and February editions of the *Enlightener*, I started things off with a little bit about North Star Electric and Border Electric,

when they started and who were the main players in that game.

Before long though, it was apparent to both respected boards and memberships that a consolidation of Border Electric and North Star Electric would be in the best interest of both cooperatives. In a vote by written consent, two-thirds of the memberships of both cooperatives had given their approval to the merger on March 15, 1943.

At a meeting held the next day, it was decided that Peter Sorensen, Chris Christensen, Norman Clementson and A.N. Grems would be the representatives for the North Star board, and Melvin Johnson, Adolph Hartje, Einar Johnson and A.W. Palas for the Border board. Emil Ramberg was picked as the ninth member, and the general manager of North Star Electric Cooperative was Charles H. Carl of Bismarck, N.D.

Here is just a little more interesting information for you. During the war, the farm people had to have so many cows, chickens, hogs or sheep to get a power line run to their farm place. This was called having "animal points." One cow, 75 chickens or three hogs would be required to build 100 feet of line. Rumor has it that some of these critters moved around a little so the folks could get the animal points they needed in order to have a power line constructed during the war years.

So anyway, in 1940, a membership fee cost of \$5 was voted on and assessed to each member, along with a monthly minimum of \$3.50 per month for 40 kWh. Now, oddly enough, a minimum of \$3.50 per month for electricity caused many people to postpone becoming members of the electric cooperative (Debora Ruhnke-Lewis, 121-21-006-04). At the time, it seemed like an unreasonably large sum to have to pay for electricity, and most farmers were thinking they were not going to use much of it, let alone even having a thought of owning scores of electrical appliances someday.

So you see how things have changed, and so has your cooperative. We are now in the business of operating your cooperative as not only a cooperative, but as a business that we have to maintain. Costs have to be covered, the books have to be balanced, the TIER has to be maintained, bills have to be sent, the equity has to be viable, and along with many other parts to the business, the membership has to be answered to. All of this years ago was for 400, 600 or 800 members. Today we have more than 5,800 members, but we have a group of professionals in our offices who make sure that these things and many more of your cooperative's business needs are met and run smoothly. Now it is their turn to be my victims, and here they are:

OFFICE STAFF

Patsy Olson, *billing coordinator* – Patsy is a mom and a grandmother and loves every minute of it. She likes to fish and hang out with family and friends, but her favorite pastime is playing cards. I think cribbage is her game, although I heard she is a pretty darn good Texas Hold 'em player also. Patsy headlines our office team with more than 30 years of experience.

Sue Williams, *Littlefork office cashier and receptionist* – Sue likes to spend time at the cabin with family and friends, ride 4-wheeler and snowmobiles, and when she is not doing that, she is a mom and a grandmother and really likes it! Sue not only is the friendly lady who you will find in our Littlefork office, but she also takes care of delinquent accounts, so don't get on her bad side! Sue brings more than 27 years of experience to our team.

Robyn Sonstegard, *bookkeeper and assistant office manager* – Robyn is a mother of three, which keeps her very active in the school system with all sorts of activities and sports. If Robyn isn't at a ballgame or a hockey match, you may find her in a fish house or boat because she likes to fish, and/or in a tree stand because she is also a very good hunter. Robyn has been a great asset to the team since her start at North Star in 2007.

Tessa Strohl, *work order clerk* – Tessa is also a mom, which keeps her very active in the school system with sports and as a homeroom mother for parties or whatever is needed. Tessa is our new work order clerk and if she isn't in her office, she is either at the school or a sporting event. She also loves to ride snowmobiles on the trails or 4-wheelers, and I hear she is a pretty darn good rider. Tessa has been a great addition to our team since 2009.

Brittany Hanson, *administrative assistant and billing clerk* – Brittany is the newest addition to our office staff. A graduate of the University of Minnesota-Duluth, Brittany likes to fish and snowmobile and if she is not hanging out with friends, she is probably working at North Star or part-time at Ballard's resort. We are excited to have Brittany join our team at North Star Electric.

Well, there you have it and I have to say, April 22 is Administrative Professionals Day and these ladies deserve every bit of recognition they receive. They are timely, knowledgeable and very dependable. They have great attitudes and nothing but the best interests of your cooperative in mind whenever they act. I have always said, I have the best customer service people in the entire country and if you don't believe me, just listen to how they answer the phone and visit with you next time you call in or stop in and you will see what I mean. Happy Administrative Professionals Day, ladies, and many more!

God bless you and our troops, Dan

*The National Rural Electric Cooperative Association
has declared April 13 as*

National Lineman Appreciation Day

North Star Electric Cooperative is proud of our linemen and would like for everyone to take this opportunity to shake the hand of one of our linemen, a pat on the back or just extend a nice thank you greeting.

Our Linemen

Tim Pelach	Glen Marcotte
Bruce Petersen	Preston Kennedy
Todd Thydean	Jesse Huot
Todd Higgins	Toby Wahl
Darren Koschak	Nick Horne



“The Lineman”

What are their thoughts, these hardy souls, hanging by a belt on top of poles, doing a job few would do, what are their thoughts, this gallant crew? They risk their lives the whole day through, gaffed to a pole, these men of few, they battle the elements from summer heat to winter snow, fulfilling orders from afar and below?

These men of brawn who hum a song, also joke and swear to get along, knowing their life is probably, only a rubber glove from eternity? At the close of day, as they climb down the pole and put their hooks away? They thank God for their safe ability, to be able to return home to their family.

Then as they walk thru their door to greet their kids and their wife, today they know, they turned darkness into light. And one last thing before we end; God said, “let there be light,” then he created linemen!

For sale by sealed bids

All items are sold as is. North Star Electric Co-op Inc. reserves the right to reject any or all bids. Items may be seen at North Star Electric Cooperative Inc. headquarters in Baudette, Minn. Pictures of the items are available on our website northstarelectric.coop.

1987 Honda try 350d 4-wheeler,
482 hours on unit.

Fiberglass utility body off a 2004
Chevrolet 2500 pickup.

1994 model fsl 1427e Redi-haul
trailer, GVWR 17150, 2-7000
#AXLES, fold-up ramps.

2005 Felling pole trailer.

1971 Model js70, j5 bombardier.

1999 Ford F-250 triton v-8, mile-
age 157,858.

1998 Ford F-250, mileage 205,226.

2002 Ford F-150, mileage 146,185.

2001 Chevrolet ½-ton pickup,
mileage 234,322.

6470 Davco brush cutter sn#6032
fits ASV, Bobcat skid loaders.

**Bids must be in a sealed envelope with item listed on the outside.
Bids will be accepted until May 17, 2015.**

DIGGING SOON?



One free, easy call gets your utility lines marked AND helps protect you from injury and expense. Safe digging is no accident: always call 811 before you dig.

Visit www.call811.com
for more information.

Help keep your lights on

Careless ditch burning can destroy utility poles and junction boxes, leading to unnecessary power outages. Pole damage ranges from surface charring to destruction, and may cost landowners \$2,000 on up, depending on the location of the pole and the severity of the damage.

Please use extreme caution when burning around our electrical equipment, and always tend to a fire once it is lit. Let's all do our part to keep the lights on and costs down.



Have a successful planting season rooted in safety



As farmers make plans to return to their fields for spring planting, Safe Electricity urges farm workers to be particularly alert to the dangers of working near overhead power lines.

- Always be aware of the location of power lines, and designate preplanned routes that avoid hazard areas.
- Be aware of increased height when loading and transporting tractors on trailer beds. Many tractors are equipped with radios and communications systems that have very tall antennas extending from the cab that could make contact with

power lines. Avoid raising the arms of planters or cultivators or raising truck beds near power lines, and never attempt to raise or move a power line to clear a path.

- Simply coming too close to a power line while working is dangerous as electricity can arc or “jump” to conducting material or objects, such as a ladder, pole or truck. Remember, nonmetallic materials such as lumber, tree limbs, tires, ropes and hay will conduct electricity depending on dampness, dust and dirt contamination.

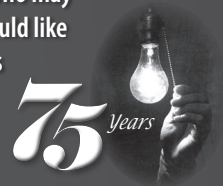
- When guy wires (a grounded wire used to stabilize utility poles) are broken, these normally neutral wires can be anything but harmless. If you hit a guy wire and break it, call the utility to fix it. Do not do it yourself. When dealing with electrical poles and wires, always call the electric utility.
- If your equipment does come into contact with power lines, stay in the cab and call for help. Warn others who may be nearby to stay away and wait until the electric utility arrives.
- If leaving the cab is necessary, as in the case of fire, the proper action is to jump – not step – with both feet hitting the ground at the same time. Hop to safety, keeping both feet together as you leave the area (Steve C. Toman, 556-43-094-04). Once you get away from the equipment, never attempt to get back on or even touch the equipment before the power has been shut off.

Managers should make sure full-time and seasonal workers are educated on these safety precautions, and danger areas need to be thoroughly identified and labeled.

For more electrical safety information, visit www.SafeElectricity.org.

North Star Electric 75th anniversary celebration June 23

Mark your calendars, as North Star Electric will be hosting a 75th anniversary celebration on Tuesday, June 23, at the cooperative headquarters in Baudette. We will serve food and beverages, offer building tours, showcase our equipment, provide activities for the kids and give away prizes. More details of the event will be available in the coming months. We are looking for members who may have old cooperative photos, memorabilia and stories to share for projects we are creating in honor of our 75 years. We would like to hear from any member who can remember when their lights were turned on for the first time or who has unique stories about how electricity changed their life. We plan to use these items/information to create displays and publish articles. Please note that any photo and memorabilia submitted to the cooperative will be returned to their owners as soon as the event is over.



Current electrical inspectors

State law requires that every new electrical installation in any construction, remodeling, replacement or repair shall file a certificate for inspection and be inspected by a Minnesota electrical inspector. For more information go to Minnesota Department of Labor and Industries website (dli.mn.gov) and go to the electrical page.

• Lake of the Woods, St. Louis and Koochiching counties:

Curt Collier (cgcollier67@gmail.com)

Phone: (218) 966-5070

Call to set up an appointment between 7 a.m. - 8:30 a.m. (Mon. thru Fri.)

• Roseau county:

Scott Stenvik

Phone: (218) 689-5406

Call to set up an appointment between 7 a.m. - 8:30 a.m. (Mon. thru Fri.)



Co-ops bring member voice to Minnesota Capitol



Ann Ellis, North Star Electric Cooperative assistant general manager/finance manager; Julian Brzoznowski, North Star Electric Cooperative board member for District 7; and Mike Hanson, North Star Electric Cooperative board member for District 4; participate in the annual Co-op Day in St. Paul, Minn.

ST. PAUL, Minn. (March 4, 2015) – More than 60 cooperative business directors, managers and staff weathered a winter storm to gather in St. Paul for the annual Co-op Day at the Capitol. A proposed wholesale fuel tax, net metering reform, propane infrastructure investment, disaster relief funding for electric co-ops, prize-linked savings accounts at credit unions and concerns about certain proposed fee increases topped the group's legislative agenda. The multi-sector event was organized by Cooperative Network, the statewide trade association for cooperative businesses in Minnesota and Wisconsin.

Seven cross-sector lobbying groups

met with agency commissioners, caucus leaders and more than 40 legislators to share how current proposals would affect their businesses and communities. Co-op sectors including farm credit, farm supply, electric, credit union, dairy, food processing and senior housing were represented at the event.

Ann Ellis, North Star Electric Cooperative assistant general manager/finance manager, participated in the event with two directors from her Baudette-based co-op. She said the organized effort gives them a chance to amplify their members' voice at the Capitol and to cast a wider net when advocating their position on legislative issues.

"If we were to come here on our own, we'd feel like pests, but this gives us the opportunity to get our foot in the door," Ellis said. "I love the cross-sector nature of the day because we're not talking about the exact same issues. You can see cooperation among cooperatives and that co-ops are a truly different business model. We really are all about the members."

Agency commissioners and leaders of the Legislature met with the large group to address co-op priorities, hear concerns and answer questions. Among those on the docket were John Linc Stine, Minnesota Pollution

Control Agency commissioner; Dave Frederickson, Minnesota Department of Agriculture commissioner; Mike Rothman, Department of Commerce commissioner; and Charlie Zelle, Department of Transportation commissioner. Also meeting with the group were Senate Minority Leader David Hann (R-Eden Prairie), Senate Majority Leader Tom Bakk (DFL-Cook), House Speaker Kurt Daudt (R-Crown), and House Deputy Minority Leader Paul Marquart (DFL-Dilworth).

"As the number-one cooperative state in the nation, Minnesota has the most to gain and the most to lose if cooperative businesses are unable to prosper long into the future," said Bill Oemichen, Cooperative Network president and CEO, who also participated in the event. "We recognize what the Legislature does has a direct impact on cooperatives and our member-owners, and that is why we need to continue engaging directly with our elected officials."

Cooperative Network serves more than 400 Wisconsin and Minnesota member cooperatives by providing government relations, education, marketing and technical services for a wide variety of cooperatives including farm supply, health, dairy marketing, consumer, financial, livestock marketing, telecommunications, electric, housing, insurance, worker-owned cooperatives and more. For more information about Cooperative Network, visit www.cooperativenetwork.coop.



Co-op leaders pack into Senate Majority Leader Tom Bakk's office to discuss legislative issues, express concerns and ask questions during Co-op Day in St. Paul, Minn.



Fixing up your home? We can help.



Minnesota Housing partners with Border State Bank to provide loans for repairs, remodeling, installation of electric off-peak heat, and energy saving improvements. The Minnesota Housing Fix Up loan program offers affordable fixed interest rates with loan amounts up to \$50,000.

Go green and save! Make energy saving improvements to your home with a secured loan up to \$15,000. This loan has no income limit and repayment terms go up to 20 years.



Looking for energy savings ideas? Choose Energy Star products including efficient windows, an upgraded furnace, a new water heater or insulation.

Get started on a loan today by contacting your local Border State Bank:



Baudette
Roseann Swenson - NMLS #530659
Amanda Risser - NMLS #530660
218.634.3300
www.borderstatebank.com

International Falls
Molly K. Bragg - NMLS #690519
218.283.5556



2015 power plant tour June 9-11

(continued from registration form on front cover)

We are offering North Star Electric members an exceptional summer opportunity that's fun for all ages. This year's power plant tour is three days, which will make the trip more relaxing. The tour is scheduled for Tuesday through Thursday, June 9-11.

The first day we will tour Minnkota's control center and print shop at Grand Forks, and then it's off to the beautiful Baymont Inn & Suites 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 Baymont Inn & Suites 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, hotel, tours and meals. Members who have not been on this trip are encouraged to go.



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 POLITICAL LEADERS

Federal legislators

President Barack Obama

The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave. NW
Washington, D.C. 20500
www.whitehouse.gov
president@whitehouse.gov
202-456-1111

Senator Al Franken

320 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510
www Franken.senate.gov
202-224-5641
Fax: 202-224-0044

Senator Amy Klobuchar

302 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510
www.klobuchar.senate.gov
202-224-3244
1-888-224-9043 (Minnesota office)
Fax: 202-228-2186

Congressman Rick Nolan

2447 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515
www.nolan.house.gov
202-225-6211
Facebook: US Rep Rick Nolan
Twitter: @USRepRickNolan

Congressman Collin Peterson

2109 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515
www.collinpeterson.house.gov
202-225-2165
Fax: 202-225-1593

State of Minnesota legislators

Governor Mark Dayton

75 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
Capitol Building, Room 130
St. Paul, MN 55155-1606
800-657-3717
mark.dayton@state.mn.us

Senator Tom Bakk

75 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
Capitol Building, Room 226
St. Paul, MN 55155-1606
651-296-8881
sen.tom.bakk@senate.mn

Senator Rod Skoe

75 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
Capitol Building, Room 235
St. Paul, MN 55155-1606
651-296-4196
sen.rod.skoe@senate.mn

Senator LeRoy Stumpf

75 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
Capitol Building, Room 122
St. Paul, MN 55155-1606
651-296-8660
Email: Use mail form

Representative David Dill

571 State Office Building
100 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
St. Paul, MN 55155
651-296-2190
800-339-0466
rep.david.dill@house.mn

Representative Dave Hancock

575 State Office Building
100 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
St. Paul, MN 55155
651-296-4265
rep.dave.hancock@house.mn

Representative Dan Fabian

307 State Office Building
100 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
St. Paul, MN 55155
651-296-9635
888-727-0979
rep.dan.fabian@house.mn

ON A ROLL *(continued from front cover)*

more complicated than that.

“This relocation is more than just moving a dragline from point A to point B. It is a creative solution that required thoughtful planning and significant diligence,” Boeshans said. “Many different teams at BNI – from engineering and environmental to maintenance and safety – worked in concert to pull off this big move.”

On Feb. 5, Mammoet arrived on site and began assembling 60 semi loads of equipment. The Liberty dragline was walked toward a loading pad and lifted six feet off the ground using ironwood jacks, each of which contains wood so dense it won't float.

Seven remote-controlled, self-driving trailers were then positioned under the dragline. Together, the trailers had 197 axles and 708 hydraulically-controlled tires that move in unison to keep the machine level.

Something to see

When fully loaded, the trailer traveled at an average speed of 1 mile per hour. Each of the trailer sections is driven by a 600 horsepower diesel motor.

Trailerage rather than walking the draglines significantly reduced the stress on the machines and eliminated major maintenance efforts that would have been necessary on the walking mechanisms.

It also eliminated the need to widen BNI's haul roads. At 96-feet wide with its shoes, walking Liberty wouldn't have worked on the 80-foot wide haul roads (Jim Janssen, 795-08-025-03). Removing the shoes and trailerage the dragline reduced the required width to 70 feet.

Moving equipment of that size was further complicated by the positioning of nearby power lines. Crews had to de-energize and lower two line sections to ensure proper clearance for Liberty.

Boeshans said that at one point the relocation efforts were stopped in order to escort a school bus across the road.

“You could see all the kids' faces pressed up against the windows watching this massive machine as they went by,” Boeshans said. “You know it's a pretty big deal when the teenagers look up from their phones.”

New mining area

In March, the draglines began operating on 9,000 acres of a newly permitted mine located a few miles south of the Young Station. Upon arrival, the machines began removing dirt and other material covering the coal seams. Liberty digs about 18 million cubic yards per year, enough to fill 5,522 Olympic swimming pools.

BNI will supply coal from this mining area to meet contracts it has with Minnkota and Square Butte Electric Cooperative, owner of Young 2, through 2037. About 4.5 million tons of coal is delivered annually to the Young Station.

As part of the mining transition, BNI also upgraded its coal hauling fleet from eight 180-ton trucks to four 240-ton trucks. The new trucks are an improvement over the 1990s-era models that the mine had previously been using. They have 50 percent higher horsepower and 33 percent higher storage capacity.

Despite being much larger, reports from truck drivers are that the machines are surprisingly nimble, Boeshans said.

While transitioning to the new mining area, BNI will continue to use a single dragline at its current mine for the next few years. As mining activities are completed, the reclamation of land will commence. Every acre mined is restored by BNI to original or better than original condition.

North Dakota has one of the best mined land reclamation programs in the nation, which is administered and enforced by the North Dakota Public Service Commission (PSC). All phases of reclamation are conducted with the approval of the PSC.

BNI is a past winner of the PSC's Excellence in Mining and Reclamation award and the Oliver County Soil Conservation District's Conservation Achievement award.

No matter the project, Boeshans said finding innovative solutions is something that is encouraged of BNI employees.

“The ability to think creatively, navigate the uncertainties, and then execute all the logistics to make it happen exemplifies the culture of BNI,” Boeshans said.

