



HIGH FUEL COSTS RESULT IN PCA

Power cost adjustment charges remain a high probability for the last quarter of 2022

by Craig Buros, CEO & General Manager

After a grim reliability forecast from the regional grid operator this spring, Vernon Electric Cooperative and our wholesale power provider, Dairyland Power Cooperative, have worked hard to keep the lights on and energy costs affordable. Providing safe, reliable electricity at a fair and reasonable price is our top priority, but electricity production has cost more than expected at various times throughout this past year. The forecast through the end of the year is very similar. High electricity demand, delayed coal deliveries, and increased fuel costs (primarily natural gas), combined with higher-than-budgeted purchased power costs in the energy market, caused power costs to hit a threshold that triggers power cost adjustment (PCA) charges from our wholesale power supplier.

Last year, Dairyland’s generation mix was composed of coal (37%), natural gas (38%), wind/solar (22%), and hydro/other renewables (3%). This diverse fuel mix along with power plant ownership and power purchase agreements help reduce dramatic fluctuations in generation costs. Dairyland owns two combustion turbine plants (also called peaking plants)—the RockGen Energy Center and Elk Mound Combustion Turbines. These plants run on natural gas and are only intended to be called upon when the demand for electricity is at its peak. In the last year, however, both RockGen and Elk Mound have set generation records because of the need for reliable, baseload electricity on the grid when all other available resources have been utilized. Having these facilities in Dairyland’s portfolio has supported reliability in our region, and power sales from their operation have helped moderate—but not eliminate—higher-than-budgeted power expenses.

Employees and directors of Vernon Electric Cooperative have been making adjustments to cover rising costs on

nearly everything we purchase and have been successful in keeping rates flat during these times of high inflation. Unfortunately, the regional power market is not immune to rising prices for materials and fuel, which will require the cooperative to pass on a portion of this year’s PCA charges to meet budgeted financial metrics.

The PCA provides a monthly adjustment dependent on fluctuations in the base cost of wholesale power. Having the PCA benefits members by covering power cost fluctuations

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without having to continually restructure electricity rates. The PCA can take the form of an expense or credit. A year ago, we were able to provide members with a PCA credit. Based on current forecasts, the cooperative plans to absorb approximately 50% of this year’s PCA expense and take a levelized approach in

collecting the remaining from members over the last quarter of the year. PCA charges paid by our members directly help pay the increased cost of our wholesale power bill. This money does not pay for anything else locally at our cooperative.

Vernon Electric offers a variety of programs and services to help members save on their energy bills. We are here to help. Visit our website at www.vernonelectric.org or contact us if you have questions about your bill or are looking for ways to save energy.



GET YOUR GEAR HERE

NEW SPORTING GOODS SHOP OPENS IN CASHTON

By Leah Call

Anticipation builds for the 171st nine-day Wisconsin gun deer season, November 19–27. Deer hunting in Wisconsin is not just an activity; it's a tradition. It's a time to get together with family and friends, enjoy the outdoors, and put some meat in the freezer for the long winter ahead. With abundant woodlands and a large deer population, southwest Wisconsin boasts some of the best whitetail deer hunting in the state. This year, hunters in areas served by Vernon Electric Cooperative won't have far to go for their hunting gear.

Triggers n Tackle, on Hwy 27 near Cashton, is a new local one-stop sporting goods store started by hunting buddies Jason Bohnert and Brad Mellen. The store opened its doors on August 6, just in time for bow hunting season. "I think we opened at the right time of the year, with fall fishing and archery season opening up," said Bohnert. "The big focus now is rifles, ammunition, and optics as people get ready for the gun deer season."

Just Do It

Bohnert and Mellen both grew up hunting and fishing in western Wisconsin and are avid outdoorsmen. Last year, during hunting trips together, they threw around the idea of opening a sporting goods store. "We kind of joked about it," said Bohnert. "As the season progressed and throughout the year, we kept talking about it. Then we decided, 'let's do it.'"

The pair leased a building that sat vacant for 13 years and stocked it with fishing gear focused on local lakes and trout streams, along with bows, rifles, handguns, and ammunition.





VERNON ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE WINS ITS FIFTH LEIFER AWARD FOR JOURNALISM

Editor Dave Maxwell Honored a Third Time

Vernon Electric Cooperative has been selected as the 2022 N.F. Leifer Memorial Journalism Award recipient. Presented by the Wisconsin Electric Cooperative Association (WECA), this award is bestowed upon the co-op adjudged to have had the strongest overall local pages in the *Wisconsin Energy Cooperative News (WECN)* over the previous 12 months. During that time, Dave Maxwell, director of member services, served as local editor of Vernon Electric’s pages, and Leah Call contributed feature stories.



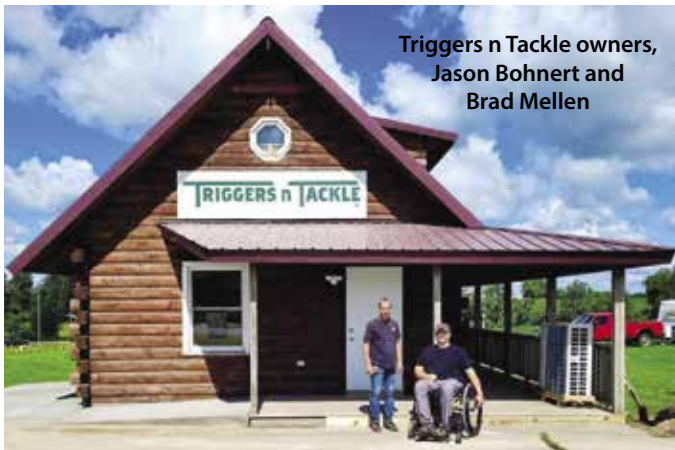
This is the fifth Leifer Award Vernon Electric has won since this publication first began offering awards for excellence in 1966, and it marks the third time Dave has been the editor awarded. He was previously honored in 1998 and 2003, and he will be presented his third award at the 2022 WECA Annual Meeting on November 15.

The Leifer Award recipient is selected by a different independent judge each year who is always a communications professional and usually one with a co-op background. The judge evaluates a sampling of content produced by staff at each of the 19 co-ops who share individualized local sections within the *WECN* magazine.

This year’s judge was Donna Abernathy, a member of the Cooperative Communicators Association. In selecting Vernon Electric as this year’s Leifer Award winner, Abernathy cited the co-op’s “excellent member features” and awarded a bonus point “for going above and beyond on being locally focused and member-centric in content.”

The N.F. Leifer Memorial Journalism Award is named for former Vernon Electric Cooperative manager Norman F. “Lefty” Leifer, who was instrumental in launching what was then known as the *Wisconsin REA News* in 1940.

Congratulations to Dave Maxwell for receiving the Leifer Memorial Journalism Award for a third time.



Triggers n Tackle owners, Jason Bohnert and Brad Mellen

“We are a Mathews Archery dealer, so we carry Mathews bows, cross bows, and accessories. We also carry other lines and do trade-ins and consignments,” said Bohnert, who enjoys helping customers set up and tune their bows.

As a Vortex optics dealer, Triggers n Tackle also carries a full line of Vortex scopes, binoculars, and range finders.

Whether fishing for bass on the Mississippi or trout in the area’s many streams and creeks, fishermen will find what they need at Triggers n Tackle. As winter approaches, the shop is stocking up on ice fishing gear for those cold weather anglers. “We carry everything you’ll need for that,” said Bohnert. “And we carry live bait—night crawlers, red worms, and wax worms. We’re not set up for bait fish yet, but we have had a lot of requests for that.”

News of a local sporting goods shop is spreading fast. Since opening in early August, Triggers n Tackle has had a steady stream of locals and curious passersby. Open seven days a week, beginning at 7 a.m. every day except Sunday, the shop accommodates those sportsmen wanting to get an early start in the woods or on the water.

Running a business focused on their passion, Bohnert and Mellen are happy to share their expertise with customers. “This is everything I’ve had a passion for my whole life—the archery, fishing, and gun hunting,” noted Bohnert, who has hunted throughout the United States and beyond. “This fits right in with everything I enjoy doing.”



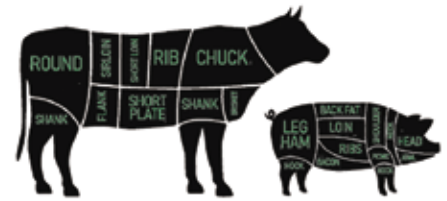
MEAT GIVEAWAY GARNERS \$716 DONATION FOR BETHEL BUTIKK FOOD PANTRY

Visitors at the 2022 Vernon County Fair had a new opportunity thanks to Vernon Electric Cooperative. People passing through the Co-op Association Building at the Vernon County Fair, held September 14-18 in Viroqua, were invited to stop by the Vernon Electric Co-op booth to participate in Vernon Electric's first Meat Giveaway. Booth visitors who made monetary donations to Bethel Butikk Food Pantry were entered into the Meat Giveaway.

Thanks to many generous fairgoers, more than 700 entries were made, and Vernon Electric presented Bethel Butikk Food Pantry a total donation of \$716.

Bethel Butikk, located in Westby, serves families and individuals in need in Vernon, Crawford, and Monroe Counties in Wisconsin. "This donation will be of tremendous benefit to so many people," said Mary Moe, a volunteer at Bethel

VERNON ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE MEAT GIVEAWAY



Butikk. "We cannot thank Vernon Electric enough for hosting this neat project."

Also on the receiving end of Vernon Electric's first annual Meat Giveaway are five random winners of the Giveaway itself. As Vernon Electric's way of giving thanks to those who made donations to Bethel Butikk, Vernon Electric drew five winners to each receive a \$100 gift certificate to a local meat locker to use as they wish. Those winners are Hannah Holten, Amanda Solverson, Bonny Fish, Jayme and Blake

Peterson, and Cathy and Gerard Sis.

The gift certificates were purchased by Vernon Electric in support of the following five local businesses: Foss Fine Meats in Sparta; Solar Meats, LLC in Soldiers Grove; Steve's Country Meats in Genoa; Von Ruden Meat Processing, LLC in Cashton; and Westby Locker & Meats in Westby. Four of these five businesses process meat from the Meat Animal Auction at the Vernon County Fair, so the ripple effect of the Meat Giveaway extends to the many 4-H, FFA, and other youth organization members who work diligently to care for and exhibit their animals at the fair.

"We were delighted to host the Meat Giveaway to support Bethel Butikk Food Pantry's efforts, local businesses, and youth in our area," said Courtney Moser, Vernon Electric Cooperative communications specialist and Meat Giveaway organizer. "Plus, five participants are now able to enjoy \$100 worth of meat simply because they shared the good with others in our community. It goes to show that when you spread the love, the love continues to go around."

With plans to grow the Meat Giveaway program for future years, Vernon Electric will continue spreading love and light throughout Southwest Wisconsin.



Bethel Butikk Food Pantry representatives, Lila Cina and Mary Moe, receive a check from Courtney Moser on behalf of Vernon Electric Cooperative.

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