OCTOBER IS NATIONAL CO-OP MONTH

Co-op enters partnership to develop Luck and Viola solar
by General Manager Steve Stroshane

Ten Wisconsin electric cooperatives are working together to get the best volume pricing on solar energy for their members. We have formed a partnership with OneEnergy Renewables of Madison to develop and construct 13 utility-scale solar arrays across Wisconsin. Over the next two years, the partnership will add 37 megawatts of new solar generation. The arrays will generate enough electricity to power 9,650 homes for rural co-op members.

Here at Polk-Burnett, we are coordinating the timing of two new local solar projects with other cooperatives to get a better price and return on our investment for our members. The arrays on our system will generate 5 MW of peak energy, 2.5 MW in Polk County and 2.5 MW in Burnett County.

Construction is planned in each co-op community during 2025 through 2026. Each array will be developed on property leased from local landowners, with panels that operate on a tracking system to follow the path of the sun for maximum power generation. Polk-Burnett and other Wisconsin co-ops in the partnership will purchase the solar energy at a fixed rate over the long term.

Cooperation among cooperatives is our guiding principle for this project. Wisconsin electric cooperatives are known for our work together to benefit members; for example, you often see co-ops assisting each other with storm recovery. This solar partnership will benefit our local members by providing clean power at a stable, long-term cost.

Restoring native prairie and pollinator habitat
Co-op solar arrays are dual-purpose spaces that provide renewable energy for members, as well as acres of important ecosystems. The ground under all 13 arrays in Wisconsin will be restored with pasture, prairie grasses and wildflowers, providing habitat for pollinators and healthy root systems to prevent soil erosion from wind and rain. Some sites will even be grazed by sheep in partnership with farmers.

OneEnergy Renewables brings experience and expertise
OneEnergy Renewables is a leading solar energy company in Wisconsin that offers expertise in site development, engineering, equipment purchasing, construction and operations. The Madison-based team has developed 31 projects across Wisconsin, and another 11 in adjacent states.

Eric Udelhofen, OneEnergy's VP of development, said, "We are excited to partner with this group of electric cooperatives to help bring affordable, clean energy to rural Wisconsin. We look forward to delivering cost-effective, reliable electricity to serve your local communities."

Wisconsin electric co-ops included in the OneEnergy Renewable partnership:

- Barron Electric Cooperative, Barron, 7.25 MW
- Dunn Energy Cooperative, Menomonie, 2.5 MW
- Jump River Energy Cooperative, Ladysmith, 2.5 MW
- **Polk-Burnett Electric Cooperative, Centuria, 5 MW**
- St. Croix Electric Cooperative, Hammond, 5 MW
- Clark Electric Cooperative, Greenwood, 2.5 MW
- Eau Claire Energy Cooperative, Eau Claire, 2.5 MW
- Oakdale Electric Cooperative, Tomah, 4.5 MW
- Riverland Electric Cooperative, Arcadia, 3 MW
- Vernon Electric Cooperative, Westby, 2.5 MW

Introducing Luck and Viola solar
I'm pleased to introduce two new utility-scale solar projects in our local service area, one in Polk County and one in Burnett County, as part of the Wisconsin electric cooperative partnership with OneEnergy Renewables.

Local solar not only adds clean energy to the grid, it also provides financial and operational benefits for co-op members. Local solar helps us become less reliant on the volatile energy market and aligns with our mission of providing reliable electricity at an affordable cost. Both local projects are planned for 2025.

Luck Solar will be connected to the Luck Substation north of the village in the Town of Luck. The 13-acre site will have 5,200 panels. The 2.5 MW solar array will generate about 5,261,400 kWh of electricity annually, enough to power 635 homes.

Viola Solar will be our first utility-scale solar project in Burnett County. It will be constructed about five miles east of Polk-Burnett's office between Siren and Hertel, near Viola Lake. The 2.5 MW solar array will generate about 4,938,000 kWh of electricity annually, enough to power 595 homes. The 13-acre site will have 5,200 panels and is located next to the Hertel Substation to help relieve high summer demand in the area.

Polk-Burnett also worked with OneEnergy to develop **Georgetown Solar** northeast of Balsam Lake. It was energized in December 2023. The 2 MW array generates about 4.3 million kWh of electricity annually, enough to power 430 homes. The 12-acre site has 4,472 panels and is located next to the Bunyan Substation to help relieve high summer demand in the area. See polkburnett.com to view solar energy output.

Polk-Burnett's first solar array, **SunTuria Solar**, was dedicated in 2017 behind the co-op in Centuria. The 1.25 MW array generates power for about 200 homes. It is owned and operated by ENGIE North America, and the co-op purchases the solar energy output. Visit our website to see energy output and schedule a school or community tour.

Wildflowers bloomed last summer under the Georgetown Solar array near Balsam Lake. Two more utility-scale solar projects are being developed by OneEnergy Renewables and Polk-Burnett Electric Cooperative, one near Luck and one near Viola Lake between Siren and Hertel. Both are expected to be energized in 2025.

Energy scams unmasked

Sadly, there are fraudsters out there who use phone calls, text messages, emails and websites to steal personal information and money from good people. Scammers often disguise themselves as organizations you trust. They claim to represent an organization you do business with and can even make the phone number look real on your caller ID; this is called *spoofing*. Websites and emails can also be disguised to look legit and trick consumers into clicking on harmful links.

The most common utility scam claims your bill is past due and threatens to disconnect your service if payment isn't received immediately. Another claims you've overpaid your bill and will receive a refund. Some misleading websites take you to a third-party payment site and will charge you a fee to make your utility payment for you.

Beware of scams!

► Always verify you are speaking with the co-op. If you are ever in doubt, hang up on scammers, delete the text or email, and call us directly at 800-421-0283.
► When visiting our website, always confirm the URL is polkburnett.com.
► We offer several secure payment options, including Auto Pay and SmartHub. We'd be happy to help you get started!
► The best way to protect our community is to shine a light on scams. Please help spread the word to your neighbors, friends and family. Thank you!

BEWARE OF SCAM CALLS Be Safe!

October is Cybersecurity Awareness Month
Do not provide any information or agree to immediate payment.
Hang up on scammers and delete fraud emails,
then contact Polk-Burnett directly by calling our phone number on your bill.
Better yet, use SmartHub! It's a safe and convenient way to
pay your electric bill, track your energy use and report an outage.

Investing in the next generation:
Co-op to award $1,500 scholarships

► Polk-Burnett will award up to 95 scholarships for $1,500 each.
► For students in the Class of 2025 whose parents are co-op members.
► Students must demonstrate community service.
► Students must be going to an accredited college, tech school or university in fall 2025.
► Candidates are also invited to apply for co-op Youth Tour of Washington, D.C. in June.
► **Apply on polkburnett.com by January 1, 2025.**

Funded with unclaimed Capital Credits that if not used for education would be forfeited to the state.
Would you like to donate your future Capital Credits to support co-op scholarships? Call us to learn how!

October is fire safety month. Keep your home and family safe. Install smoke detectors and check batteries often!

Lower winter rate begins October 1

As a co-op, rates are based on actual costs and when we see winter savings from our wholesale power supplier, we pass the savings on to you!

The winter rate is 10.71¢ per kWh; winter billing dates are October through May. Winter rates are lower because demand and power costs are lower in the winter.

The summer rate is 12.3¢ per kWh; summer billing dates are June through September. Summer rates are higher because demand and power costs are higher in the summer.

Prepare for winter weather to help lower your bill

These simple steps can help save money on your heating bill and keep you cozy this winter:

► Add or replace weather stripping around doors and windows.
► Seal leaks around pipes, wires and chimney with caulk.
► Install storm doors and windows if you have them.
► Vacuum heat vents and replace furnace filters.
► Close chimney damper when not in use.
► Turn off electronics and lights when you leave the room.

For more cost-saving ideas and rebates to help you make energy efficiency upgrades, contact the co-op's member services team, 800-421-0283, ext. 595.

Save energy and money with co-op rebates

Polk-Burnett's EnergySense program offers rebates and incentives to help you improve energy efficiency and comfort in your home, while lowering your electric bill.

► $350 off home performance test, up to $1,000 rebate on subsequent home energy upgrades
► Rebates on geothermal and air source heat pumps
► Rebates on renewable energy systems
► Rebates on appliances and lighting
► Special member price on Marathon water heaters, $850

Together we can.
EnergySense

Visit polkburnett.com or call 800-421-0283, ext. 318, for rebate forms.

Notice: Wisconsin Energy Assistance

Your household may be eligible for the Wisconsin Home Energy Assistance Program, based on income and size.

For help paying your electric bill, contact West CAP, 715-598-4750 or westcap.org.

IF YOU RECEIVE AN EMAIL SURVEY, WE APPRECIATE YOUR FEEDBACK TO HELP US IMPROVE.
All members who submit a survey will be entered in a drawing for a $50 bill credit.
Polk-Burnett is your local Touchstone Energy Cooperative. Reliable power with efficiency and extraordinary service.

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