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**PREPARING FOR AN  
UNCERTAIN FUTURE**





# PREPARING FOR AN UNCERTAIN FUTURE

By Shannon Clark, CEO/General Manager

Last month I wrote about the need to reach out to members about a variety of changes that are going to occur in 2022. There's a lot in store. Every year we experience some significant changes but 2022—and perhaps beyond—seems to me to be extraordinary.

Our goal is to provide safe, reliable, and affordable energy to our members, but beyond that we want to help members understand the many issues that impact them, and our ability to meet that primary goal. Safety, reliability, and affordability all intertwine—often you can't have one without the other. Reliability, for instance, can change affordability and safety. A system that is built to be 100% reliable would impact the ability to be affordable, but an unreliable system will have a detrimental impact on safety due to more exposure during repairs, the risk presented by power outages, and more. Throughout history we have managed these three key factors by paying attention to training of employees, sound engineering, and keeping expenses in check while still meeting members' growing needs.

Today, the future is far more uncertain. More and more, certain elements are impacted by things beyond our local control. As we prepare for a future that includes changes in consumer behavior, legislative initiatives, and major changes in the way electricity is generated and used, we are heading into new, uncharted territory where we are not drivers of change. In the past, we have been proactive but now it seems we are more reactive to the world around us. We must figure out how to remain a proactive cooperative by spotting trends, challenges, and opportunities before they arrive.

For example, electric vehicles are getting more and more attention each day. Some people have positive reactions and will be among the first to own one; others see them as a boondoggle. Some think they will be a key part of reducing carbon emissions as the electricity to charge them can be sourced from renewables, while others disagree. In any event, they are coming and they will have an impact.

We are studying what the impacts to our distribution system would be if 10%, 25%, or 50% of our members add an electric vehicle. It appears that at these levels the upgrades to our system would be manageable. More important is what would these levels mean for Dairyland Power Cooperative, our wholesale power supplier? As they

work to reduce their carbon emissions to meet expected efforts to address climate change, the addition of thousand of electric vehicles upends the typical power plant planning cycle—especially as more intermittent sources such as wind and solar are being added or planned. Too much, too fast, could cause massive capitalization requirements—the money to build new power generation—thereby impacting affordability. Too little, too slow could threaten reliability when consumer demand for vehicle charging outstrips the generating capability.

How and when charging takes place, much like how and when water heaters refill, can be integrated into our load management system, thereby taking advantage of underutilized resources without adding stress to the system.

We must figure out how to remain a proactive cooperative by spotting trends, challenges, and opportunities before they arrive.

In 2022, we will develop and have ready a program that meets members' needs affordably, yet doesn't threaten reliability. We have been fortunate to have a few members enter the electric vehicle market and they are working with us to test a few ideas and participate in trial programs.

In a time when more electricity will be needed, there is a growing effort to minimize, or even eliminate, emission of carbon dioxide, a key element of climate change. Perhaps no single item today is more politicized. As a co-op we are left to read tea leaves to determine what may or may not be coming on the legislative or regulatory side. Even if there was the political will to do "something," agreement on what that "something" is or even when "something" should be done is fleeting. Therefore, we must act on the basic premise that we have always relied upon—if you don't absolutely have to emit something into the environment, don't. It's akin to waste not, want not.

Our members have been pretty clear when speaking with us. They align with the primary goal mentioned earlier—provide safe, reliable, and affordable energy. If sources of generation threaten the safety (expanded to mean well-

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being) of members—deal with it but do so with an eye on reliability and affordability. Adding more renewable generation, both locally and at utility-scale remotely, in a planned and predictable fashion can be balanced with affordability to a certain extent. The extent to which it is done is driven by the need for reliability. Due to intermittency—no sunshine or wind—providing reliable service is challenged. But, there are some potential solutions

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Making sure that members who create a cost are assigned the responsibility to pay that cost, and that members who reduce an expense are rewarded financially for reducing our expense, is fundamental.

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including battery storage, a more robust load management system, and other types of energy storage coming online to help alleviate some of those concerns.

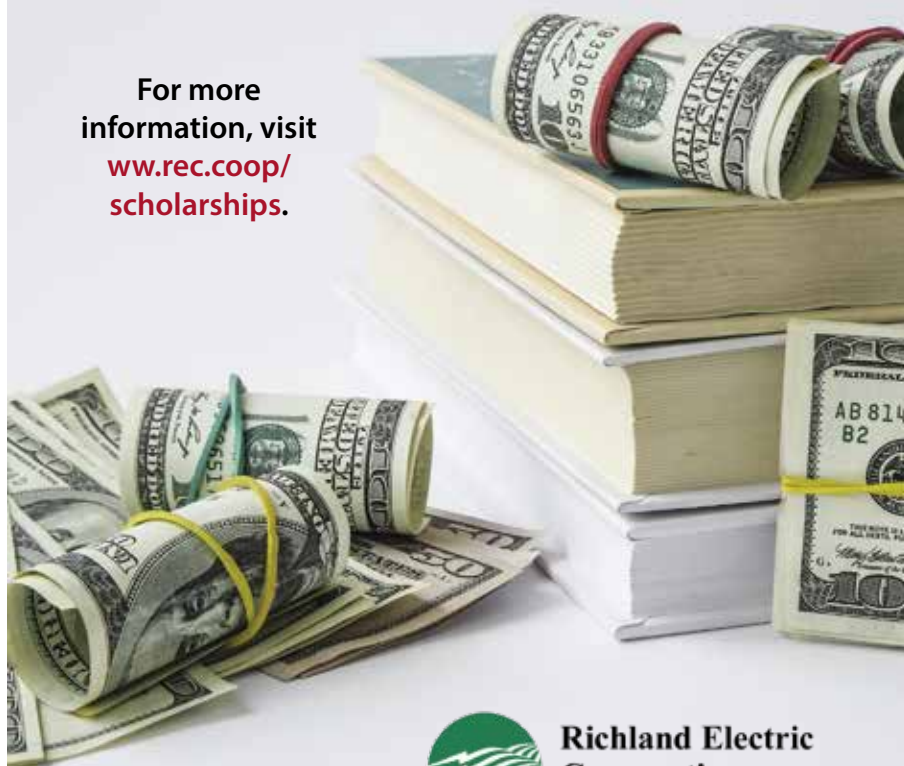
Last year, we took the step of adjusting policy to address how members who have opted to install solar integrate with our rate structure. Making sure that members who create a cost are assigned the responsibility to pay that cost, and that members who reduce an expense are rewarded financially for reducing our expense, is fundamental. If it were only that easy. There are many costs that are not caused directly by any one member—for instance, certain regulatory requirements—so assigning such costs is perhaps more art than science. In 2022, we are taking a deeper dive into our rate design and structure in order to give members more options when deciding what is important to them, all while making sure we are able to continue providing safe, reliable, and affordable energy to all.

# NEED HELP PAYING FOR YOUR EDUCATION?

## Scholarships available from Richland Electric

Richland Electric Cooperative offers scholarships to any graduating high school senior who is a member of REC and is enrolling in a postsecondary degree program or vocational program. Applications are available at the Richland Electric Cooperative office and from area high school guidance counselors. Completed applications should be returned to the office of Richland Electric Cooperative by **March 15**.

For more information, visit [www.rec.coop/scholarships](http://www.rec.coop/scholarships).



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# BALANCE OF POWER

Balance on the power grid rests on the ability of utilities to provide electricity exactly when we need it. What happens if that balance is shifted?

The magic of the electric power grid is the precise balance it must maintain to provide the exact amount of electricity (generation) needed to meet the needs of all consumers connected to the grid (load). Our wholesale power provider, Dairyland Power Cooperative, has employees working 24/7 with the regional system operator (MISO) to ensure this balance. At Richland Electric Cooperative, there are important programs in place to support these efforts.

One such program is load management. Load management is most commonly used to help lower cooperative costs by reducing energy use when the price for electricity is high. Load management can also be used to help maintain balance on the power grid. If there is a severe risk of imbalance, members may be notified of an immediate need to reduce electricity use to help avoid rolling blackouts. This scenario is a Maximum Generation (Max Gen) Event. While these events are rare, it is important to be prepared to act to keep electricity safely and reliably flowing.

## Why does a Maximum Generation Event occur?

Max Gen Events occur due to a shortage of generation resources. In other words, the amount of electricity available on the grid is critical and may not be able to meet the demand for electricity. This could occur for multiple reasons:

- Extreme temperatures
- Severe weather conditions

- Generation resources (power plants, solar/wind facilities, etc.) are unexpectedly offline or unavailable
- Higher-than-projected need for electricity
- Other circumstances

## What Should Members Do?

If notified of a Max Gen Event, Richland Electric Cooperative’s load management program may be activated outside of normal program hours. This could happen with minimal advance notice.

Members who do not participate in a load management program can still help:

- Turn off lights, televisions, electronics, and other appliances
- Cook with a microwave instead of a stovetop or oven
- Adjust your thermostat up or down, depending on the season
- Shift laundry, vacuuming, and running the dishwasher until after the Max Gen Event has ended
- Delay electric vehicle charging until after the Max Gen Event

A Max Gen Event does not mean the load management program will be activated. The Event may be cancelled before MISO reaches that stage. However, if energy prices are high after the Max Gen Event ends, load management may still be used to help control costs. Updates for members will be shared via our Facebook page, website, and WRCO.



# THANKYOU!

As you can see from the photo at left, our first Christmas Light Recycling Program was a huge success! Thanks to all of you, the piles and piles of old holiday light strings shown at left will be safely recycled instead of tossed in a landfill.



## COW, COON, AND FOX DOG

By Al Cornell

He was about 60 pounds and white with brown patches. One eye was situated on the all-white side of his head. The other was encircled by a large brown patch. I don't know what breeds were mixed in, but the genes had sorted out into cow dog.

I'd seen other family members have a dog. Every kid needs a dog. Bing was my dog. I never proclaimed it and others may quibble about it. Some would say he was Dad's dog, but that was primarily business.

Without doubt, the main duty of that business was cow getting. Everyone knew that with pastured woodlots the cows liked to settle at some far corner, especially on hot days. For a time, the command, "Go get the cows" was directed at one or two of us boys. From down in the hollow, you knew that meant climb the north hill and keep looking until you find them near the south line fence. Or that search pattern could be reversed.

As a maturing pup, Bing went along. Then one day someone said, "Go get the cows" and Bing went by himself. He just had it. He would get them started and just make sure they continued the walk home by staying back and keeping them moving. Mom said, "I just loved seeing him just sitting and watching them go and then moving over to nudge the straggler."

Soon after Dad turned the light on in the morning, you could hear the cows walking near the house as they went from the night pasture to the barn with Bing trailing.

That worked for several years, but then something went wrong. For some reason, Dad decided to let a calf accompany its mother in the pasture. The approach of the dog stirred that age-old wolf-ungulate instinct. That cow determined to protect her calf by chasing off the dog. In due time Bing quit his cow dog duties.

To Dad, he was also a fine silent trailer for coon hunting. Dad jumped in the creek once to intervene when it appeared that an old boar coon might succeed in drowning the dog. For

me, it was mostly the daily events that transpired on the farm and involved a boy and his dog.

Then one fall, I was allowed to tote the 22-rifle onto a hill in quest of bushytails. With Bing's help, I got one. Dad had finished the evening chores, and I proudly presented my squirrel. As I'd watched him do dozens of times, he cut most of the way through the tail, stepped on the tail and pulled, and finished skinning that squirrel in a matter of seconds. When he finished cleaning it, I took it to the pump to wash it and then to the house for Mom's part. We ate lots of squirrels.

Then I went hunting again. I wounded a squirrel. Bing grabbed it. Together we dispatched it. I'm sure Dad saw the condition of that one, and he said, "If you're going to hunt, you've got to clean your own kill." I struggled mightily with it and didn't squirrel hunt again for years.

Gray fox were common. They are the only dogs with sharp recurved toenails used for tree climbing. On six nights, Bing went to the woods and treed a gray fox. He would sit and bark for as long as it took for someone to come shoot the fox. Though fur was nearly worthless, Richland County was

the last county in the state to pay a fox bounty. That \$2.25 was incentive enough for a kid to want to pursue fox.

That first one I went to shoot was just up the east draw from the house. I hadn't shot at night using a flashlight, and my 20ga blast didn't result in a good hit. That fox bailed out of the tree, and Bing caught it after a short chase.

The other one that I responded to was up a two-foot diameter red oak. As I approached with a flashlight, it quickly descended headfirst and took off. After a swift chase, Bing was barking tree again. It had scaled a six-inch diameter hickory and was easy to dispatch. Though I didn't sustain an interest in killing fox, at that time both reds and grays were at the heart of my hunter's dilemma of love it and pursue it.

After I moved from home, Bing remained among those I enjoyed going home to visit.

Do you have a knack for writing?  
If you've got an original story  
you'd like to share with your fellow  
members, we'd love to see it! Please  
send it to Trevor Clark via email,  
tclark@rec.coop, or mail it to the  
REC office, 1027 N. Jefferson St.,  
Richland Center, WI 53581.

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