



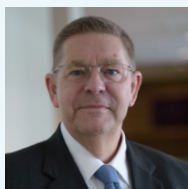
# Powering good

2022 SUSTAINABILITY REPORT



**GREAT  
RIVER  
ENERGY.**





David Saggau  
President and Chief Executive Officer

## A message from Great River Energy president and CEO

Great River Energy continues to focus on what is most important: our membership.

Every decision, every plan and every strategy is guided by our commitment to act in the best interests of our members through the lens of our shared cooperative principles and our triple bottom line. That's why, at Great River Energy, we define sustainability as safely providing our member owners with affordable, reliable energy in harmony with a sustainable environment.

Great River Energy addresses challenges proactively and takes early action. As a result, Great River Energy is rapidly decarbonizing, our transmission system remains reliable and our wholesale electricity rates are well below the regional average.

The past year was marked with periods of uncertainty in the energy markets; however, Great River Energy's resources performed well. In fact, strong financial results allowed Great River Energy to issue \$38 million in bill credits throughout the year. We also returned \$25 million in patronage capital payments to member-owners.

Great River Energy could not be successful without our greatest asset: our employees. We are committed to protecting their health and safety. Safety is a key component of our mission, strategic imperatives, key performance indicators and values.

Our actions, decisions and accomplishments in 2022 demonstrate our ongoing commitment to sustainability and are highlighted in the following pages.

Great River Energy and our members are well positioned to respond to the changes in our industry while continuing to safely provide reliable, affordable and environmentally responsible energy.

David Saggau  
President and Chief Executive Officer  
Great River Energy

## Why sustainability is important

Sustainability activities have potential to save money by reducing resource use. Energy efficiency, water efficiency, waste reduction and other measures can lead to cost savings.

Many of Great River Energy's commercial and industrial customers and member-consumers expect to obtain power from suppliers that can demonstrate their commitment to sustainability.

Credit rating agencies evaluate Great River Energy's environmental, social and governance performance when establishing its credit ratings and investors consider these factors when deciding whether to loan the cooperative money.

A commitment to sustainability helps attract and retain the best employees. Great River Energy employees understand the cooperative provides a critical resource to the communities it serves in a sustainable and responsible manner.

Being thoughtful about Great River Energy's effect on the community and environment improves and supports its reputation with stakeholders, including policy makers and regulators.

Identifying opportunities to support member communities provides benefits to those Great River Energy serves.

**Great River Energy's foundation of cooperative principles and organizational strategy align with sustainability. The cooperative emphasizes the importance of providing reliable, affordable power while supporting environmental stewardship, local communities and employees. These principles are inherent in how Great River Energy does business and provides a critical resource to the communities it serves.**

Sustainability is also important to Great River Energy's member-owner cooperatives and their member-consumers. Thus, the cooperative focuses its sustainability efforts on the topics members value most – safely delivering affordable, reliable electricity in harmony with a sustainable environment.

**This triple bottom line is the lens through which Great River Energy makes decisions and evolves its strategy to meet the needs of its members and the communities it serves.**



## The Cooperative Principles

Cooperatives around the world operate according to the same set of core principles and values:

- 1: **Open and voluntary membership**
- 2: **Democratic member control**
- 3: **Members' economic participation**
- 4: **Autonomy and independence**
- 5: **Education, training and information**
- 6: **Cooperation among cooperatives**
- 7: **Concern for community**



## Open and voluntary membership

Membership in a cooperative is open to all people who can reasonably use its services and stand willing to accept the responsibilities of membership, regardless of race, religion, gender or economic circumstances.

Great River Energy is a not-for-profit electric cooperative. The cooperative is owned and governed by the member-owner cooperatives it serves, not by investors. That means Great River Energy is motivated by member-owner expectations, not by profit. Together with its employees and member-owners Great River Energy works toward its mission: Safely provide member-owners with affordable, reliable energy in harmony with a sustainable environment.





## Democratic member control

Cooperatives are democratic organizations controlled by their members, who actively participate in setting policies and making decisions. Directors who represent districts and members are elected by and accountable to membership.

Part of being a democratically governed electric cooperative involves gathering annually and establishing the structure of the board of directors for the upcoming year. During these annual meetings, cooperatives **elect the directors** to their seats on the board and hold elections for board officers.

Great River Energy routinely seeks feedback from its board of directors, member CEOs and staff to inform the development of upcoming strategic plans. The cooperative's strategic planning is very inclusive — from all-level employees to the board of directors and member-owner cooperatives. Great River Energy adjusts and adapts its strategies based on the feedback it receives.

### Open, honest and transparent

To ensure the cooperative is operating to the highest ethical standards, Great River Energy has an ethics reporting hotline that allows employees to report any ethical concerns confidentially. Everyone encounters ethical dilemmas in life, including personal, social and professional. At Great River Energy, the ethics reporting hotline provides a process to report and work through ethical quandaries with respect and confidentiality. Confidential and anonymous feedback identifies violations of Great River Energy policies that are then addressed through the proper channels.

### Member relations and engagement

One of the most important measures of the cooperative's success is the response from Great River Energy's member-owner cooperatives in the regular member satisfaction survey. In March of 2022, Great River Energy surveyed key staff from its member-owners and maintained the highest score it ever achieved. Great River Energy surpassed its goal of 4.1 and had even higher scores under the categories of personal experience and value for membership.





## Members' economic participation

Members contribute equitably to, and democratically control, the capital of their cooperative. Members allocate surpluses for any or all of the following purposes: developing the cooperative; setting up reserves; benefiting members in proportion to their transactions with the cooperative; and supporting other activities approved by the membership.

### Patronage returns

Financial stability is at the core of the cooperative structure. Cooperatives are not-for-profit organizations that operate at cost, only collecting enough revenue to run the business and meet its financial obligations. When a cooperative enjoys financial success, it returns those dollars to members through patronage capital payments.

The past year was marked with periods of uncertainty in the energy markets; however, Great River Energy's resources performed well. In fact, strong financial results allowed Great River Energy to issue \$38 million in bill credits throughout the year.

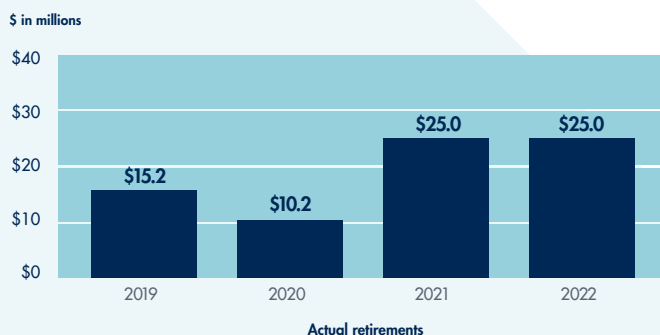
The cooperative also returned \$25 million in patronage capital payments to member-owners.

Great River Energy and its members are well positioned to respond to the changes in the energy industry while continuing to provide reliable, affordable and environmentally responsible energy.

Great River Energy's board of directors sets a target to maintain an equity to capitalization ratio of 20%. Patronage returns are then made in the form of cash payments from equity levels above the set target.

Great River Energy began issuing these payments to member-owners in 2019, after spending over a decade building its equity to capitalization ratio to 20%. Members contribute equitably to, and democratically control, the capital of their cooperative. They allocate surpluses for a variety of reasons, including periodic cash returns.

### Patronage capital retired



The 20% equity/capitalization ratio also leads to better credit ratings for Great River Energy. Strong credit ratings help Great River Energy keep costs competitive for members by providing access to capital at attractive rates.

Great River Energy's credit ratings are A-, A- and A3 for S&P, Fitch and Moody's Investors Service, respectively, all with stable outlooks. Moody's and S&P published credit opinions in 2022 affirming these ratings.

Both credit rating agencies look favorably on Great River Energy's long-term wholesale power contracts with member-owner cooperatives, rate autonomy and stable rate projection. They also view Great River Energy's strategic power supply portfolio changes positively.





## Autonomy and independence

Cooperatives are autonomous organizations controlled by their members. If they enter into agreements with other organizations, including governments, or raise capital from external sources, they do so on terms that ensure democratic control as well as their unique identity.

### Meeting with membership

Great River Energy hosts **regional meetings** and **annual meetings** to provide information to the cooperatives that collectively own and receive wholesale electricity from the company. These events provide the opportunity for Great River Energy directors, member-owner cooperative directors and key staff to hear about Great River Energy's performance and results while learning more about what lies ahead.

### Checks and balances

Before a strategic decision is made by Great River Energy, it undergoes several levels of **analysis and member involvement**. These steps include making a recommendation, member deliberation, risk analysis, board action and member-owner approval.





## Education, training and information

Education and training for members, elected representatives, CEOs and employees help them effectively contribute to the development of their cooperatives. Great River Energy facilitates more than a dozen groups of electric cooperative employees who collaborate on common challenges facing their members and their cooperatives.

### Sparking interest in energy careers

Great River Energy helps to spark interest in energy careers through education and internships. The cooperative knows that navigating the current energy transition sustainably will require the very best and brightest to pursue careers in energy, which is not always intuitive for job seekers and youth. That is why Great River Energy is making efforts to recruit and retain a skilled and diverse workforce.

Great River Energy recognizes the importance of early exposure to energy careers to give students the chance to imagine what is possible. Representatives from Great River Energy participate in middle and high school education through classroom presentations, mock interviews and panel discussions to introduce younger students to the energy industry, demonstrating how they can align energy careers with their interests and skills.

At the collegiate level, representatives connect with students through career fairs to promote the energy industry and current internship and job opportunities at Great River Energy. To ensure the cooperative casts a wider net, enrollment diversity is considered when identifying partnership opportunities with colleges and universities to reach a more diverse applicant pool.

### Internships

Great River Energy's **internship program** welcomed 18 students from local universities and technical colleges in 2022. The internship program is intended to provide a well-rounded experience for interns by providing exposure to the business world, the utility industry and Great River Energy. Interns come to Great River Energy with unique backgrounds, experiences and education and bring fresh perspectives.

Over the past six years, Great River Energy has broadened its intern program and now partners with more than 24 colleges and universities, ultimately helping attain diverse applicant pools. In fact, the program is now attracting more women, veterans and individuals from marginalized communities than ever before. In 2022, half of the interns were women.

Overall, these collective outreach efforts better position Great River Energy to attract a talented workforce that will serve its member-owners for years to come.

### Scholarships

In 2022, Great River Energy awarded 10 scholarships to students attending high school in Maple Grove and Elk River who will pursue a four-year or vocational-technical degree in a variety of fields of study, including mechanical engineering and environmental studies.

Cooperatives invest in the overall well-being of the communities they serve in ways that go well beyond their business. Providing scholarships is an important part of that investment.



## Cooperation among cooperatives

Cooperation among cooperatives is integrated into Great River Energy's cooperative structure. The generation and transmission cooperative's member-owners banded together to form, own and govern Great River Energy to supply their wholesale power and transmission services more effectively. Great River Energy's business improvement culture is a prime example of leveraging economies of scale to better service its members.

### Business improvement

One of the unique aspects of Great River Energy's culture is the encouragement and acceptance of new ideas from every employee. This continuous search for better methods is known across the company as business improvement.

Great River Energy introduced business improvement in 2002 to inspire operational efficiencies and document cost savings. Since then, employees have saved \$393.67 million for Great River Energy's member-owners.

Despite continuing challenges across the organization — including a pandemic and employees working remotely — our culture of innovation remains strong. Employees are involved and achieved improvements resulting in savings of over \$10.1 million from 186 submissions through 2022.

While there are a variety of business improvements over the course of a year, each one amounts to better service to Great River Energy's member cooperatives and their member-consumers.

In addition to calculating total dollars saved through business improvements, the type of improvement and its impact on the budget is also tracked.

### 2022 business improvement by the numbers:

\$10,102,038



Total dollars saved

186



Approved submissions

434

(60% of employees)



Participants

### Breakdown

#### Environmental



7 approved submissions for nearly \$2.2 M saved

#### Safety



38 approved submissions for \$250K saved

(most safety improvements do not have a recordable monetary savings however, every improvement made for employees to work safer is priceless.)

#### DEI



4 approved submissions

that do not have a recordable monetary savings but help Great River Energy become a better organization.





## Concern for community

Cooperatives work for the sustainable development of their communities through policies supported by the membership.

Concern for community takes many forms: Great River Energy's founding principles emphasize the importance of environmental stewardship, supporting its local communities and its employees, while providing reliable and affordable power.

### Environmental impact

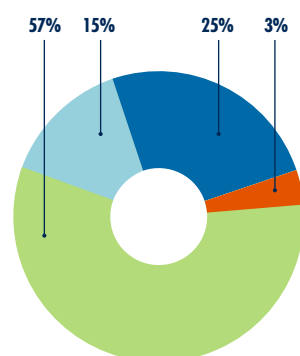
Great River Energy's power supply evolution is the result of business decisions that were driven by economics and strategy. Great River Energy took a significant step in 2022 as the cooperative sold its largest coal-based power plant and the high-voltage, direct-current (HVDC) transmission system that delivered the plant's electricity to Minnesota.

As part of the sale, Great River Energy secured rights to interconnect a large, 400-megawatt renewable energy project to the HVDC system. The Discovery Wind project, expected to reach commercial operation in 2025, will deliver renewable energy just west of the Twin Cities area.

**Read more about Great River Energy's renewable energy resources.**

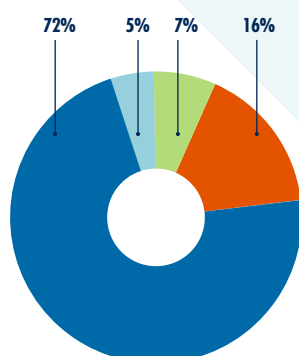
These measures have Great River Energy well positioned as a new state law requires electric utilities to serve 100% of retail electric sales with technology that does not emit carbon dioxide by 2040.

**2021**



COAL WIND  
MARKET NATURAL GAS

**2032**



RENEWABLE NATURAL GAS/FUEL OIL  
HYDRO MARKET

### A storage break-through

Great River Energy is also partnering with Form Energy on the Cambridge Energy Storage Project. The primary component of Form Energy's first-of-its-kind, multi-day battery is also a cornerstone of Minnesota's economy: iron. Iron is one of the safest, cheapest and most abundant minerals on Earth. The project will be the first commercial deployment of Form Energy's proprietary multi-day energy storage technology. **Learn more about the battery project.**

Great River Energy's power supply portfolio is a balanced and cost-effective mix with three main components: wind power purchase agreements, peaking generation resources, and a capacity and energy hedge contract. Great River Energy's portfolio depends on ready access to the electricity market, which plays the essential roles of allowing the free flow of energy across state lines and providing the ability to purchase capacity as needed.

Approximately 1,200 MW of Great River Energy's capacity is "dual fuel capable," meaning the plants can operate on fuel oil at times when natural gas supply is constrained, generally during the winter when natural gas is used to heat many homes. Great River Energy is currently pursuing the necessary approvals to add dual-fuel capabilities to its Cambridge Peaking Station power plant.

## Transmission

As the Great River Energy portfolio evolves, expanded transmission is necessary for the expansion of renewables. Regardless of where or how energy is generated, a strong and reliable transmission grid is needed to carry the electricity from where it is generated to where it is used. Proactive investments to maintain a reliable and resilient regional power grid are necessary as more low-cost renewable energy is brought online, existing power plants are retired, electrification continues to grow and extreme weather events become more frequent.

In July, Minnesota Power and Great River Energy announced their intent to build an approximately 150-mile, double-circuit 345 kilovolt transmission line from northern Minnesota to central Minnesota near Becker that will support grid reliability in the Upper Midwest. **Learn more about the project.** Planning for the approximately \$970 million transmission line is in its early stages. Subject to regulatory approvals, the transmission line is estimated to be in service by 2030.

The electric system in northern Minnesota is stronger thanks to a new Great River Energy transmission project that was completed in 2022 near Bigfork. The project was designed to be a long-term solution to improve electric delivery and meet new demand and growth for North Itasca Electric Cooperative members. The **Bigfork project** connects the new North Itasca Electric Cooperative substation to the electric grid.

## Powering the future through beneficial electrification – using electricity wisely

Electric cooperatives across the state are increasingly incorporating clean energy into their energy mix and creating programs to electrify end-uses that traditionally use fossil fuels, a strategy known as “beneficial electrification.” Beneficial electrification increases energy efficiency, saves consumers money and reduces pollution as the electric sector continues to decarbonize.

Minnesota is a recognized leader in energy efficiency, and electric co-ops have successful, long-standing demand response programs that help reduce energy use and save members money. Decades of reducing load under Minnesota’s Conservation Improvement Program can now be transformed under the Energy Conservation and Optimization Act, resulting in increases in electricity use while reducing total energy and carbon emissions.

## Indoor agriculture

Great River Energy was recognized for its **‘Sota Grown project** which is looking at how using efficient electricity, technology, plant sciences and control solutions to create microclimates can produce ideal conditions for plant growth, yield, quality and consistency. This collaborative project to sustainably grow leafy greens year-round for Minnesota residents by using a hydroponic growing system inside a shipping container. ‘Sota Grown was selected to receive the Environmental Initiative’s 2022 Rural Vitality honorable mention award.







## Electric vehicles

Great River Energy plays an intrinsic role in the evolution of transportation. The cooperative is focused on being not only ready, but a leader in this transition.

Awareness and education about electric vehicles is a top priority for Great River Energy. Through regular electric vehicle (EV) education events, Great River Energy and its members raise awareness of the many benefits of EVs. These events, hosted by Great River Energy and several of its member-owners allow attendees to talk with EV owners about their experiences and test drive some of the latest EV models. Learn more about Great River Energy's **EV education events**.

The first-of-its-kind **Revolt program** was developed by Great River Energy in 2015 to allow EV owners to power their car with 100% wind energy, at no additional cost, for the vehicle's lifetime. There are more than 880 electric vehicles currently enrolled in the program.

Great River Energy partnered with member-owner cooperative Dakota Electric Association and Schmitt & Sons to bring an **electric school bus** into service at a Minnesota school district in 2017. The pilot project was a huge success and now more and more electric school buses are entering the fleet. This year, dozens of school districts applied for grants for electric school buses, and pilots are already underway.

Electrification is growing beyond cars, trucks and school buses. Great River Energy hosted an event in Elk River in August that featured the state's largest collection of **electric utility fleet-specific vehicles** to showcase how safe and reliable electricity is being applied to transportation options within the utility industry.

Vehicles ranging from a cargo van to a mini excavator and even a hybrid bucket truck— all powered by electricity — were on display, with some available for test drives. Dozens of employees from Great River Energy's member-owner cooperatives attended the event, including fleet managers and field supervisors.



## Air source heat pumps

Considering that water and space heating and cooling are the biggest consumers of energy in a home, Great River Energy is also doing its part to contribute to the advancements of heat pump technology. The cooperative works with its member-owner cooperatives to offer rebates to end-use consumers.

Great River Energy and its member-owner cooperatives work with installers across Minnesota and have developed a “Quality Installation Certification” that ensures equipment is installed properly for maximum energy efficiency.

## Demand response

Great River Energy has the largest demand response program for a utility of its size in the country according to data collected by the Energy Information Administration. Great River Energy and its member-owners help people use energy wisely through **demand response programs**. Electric cooperatives have long understood they can use the grid efficiently and economically by reducing demand at certain times and shifting energy consumption to off-peak times. This strategy, known as demand response, allows Great River Energy to reduce demand on the electric system during periods of stress with the flip of a switch. Better yet, these programs save members money.

Approximately 370,000 residential appliances, irrigation systems or commercial and industrial facilities participated in a demand response program offered by Great River Energy’s 27 member-owner cooperatives in 2022.

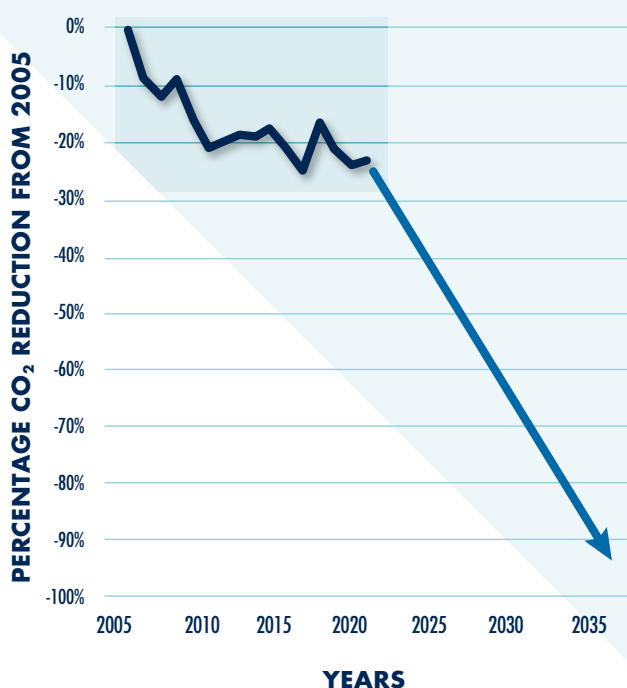


# Measuring our environmental performance

Great River Energy's numerous environmental efforts are leading to measurable outcomes, several of which are outlined in the following graphs and tables.

## Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions

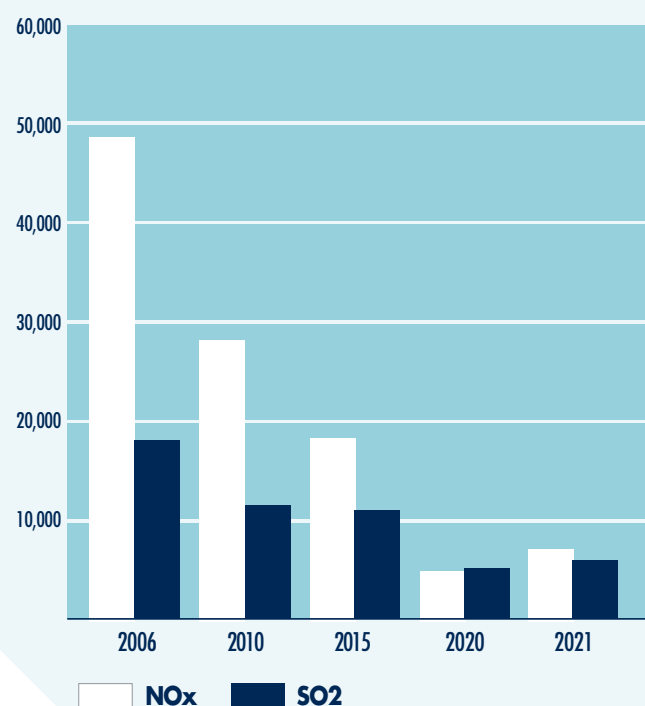
By reducing coal-based energy and more than doubling renewable energy, Great River Energy anticipates that by 2035 its retail electric sales will be provided by a 90% carbon-free power supply in alignment with the Minnesota carbon-free standard, and its power supply will be 90% decarbonized from 2005 levels.



## Air emissions

Great River Energy's emissions of sulfur dioxide (SO<sub>2</sub>) and nitrogen oxides (NO<sub>x</sub>) from its power plants have dropped significantly since 2005.

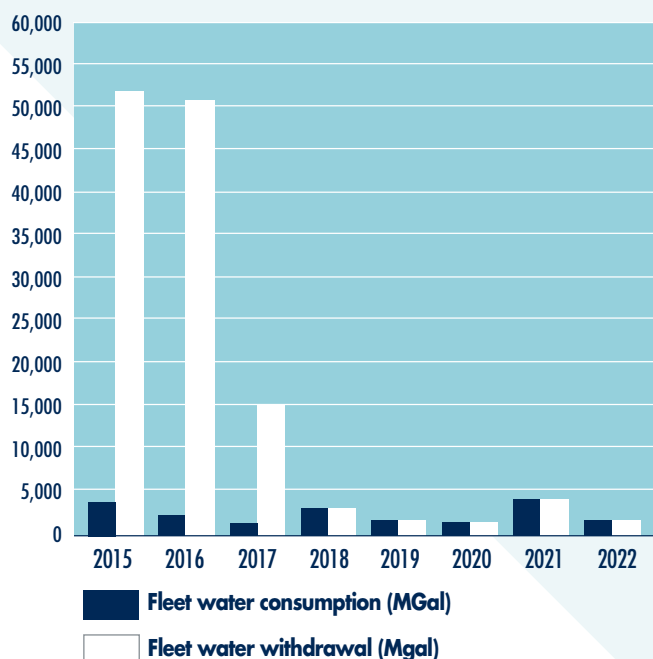
These reductions are attributable to changes in Great River Energy's portfolio and the installation of state-of-the-art emissions control systems at its facilities. Great River Energy's commitment to expanding its use of renewable energy will lead to continued reductions in these values going forward.





## Water

Great River Energy's water withdrawal for power plants has dropped by more than 90% since 2015. The cooperative's facilities primarily utilize closed-cycle cooling systems that recirculate and reuse cooling water – reducing water use for cooling by more than 90% relative to systems that use once through cooling. The end result is a fleet that uses water in a highly efficient manner, reducing the impacts on surface water bodies and aquifers. Great River Energy's greater reliance on renewables will continue to reduce the water use associated with its power supply portfolio in future years.



## Habitat

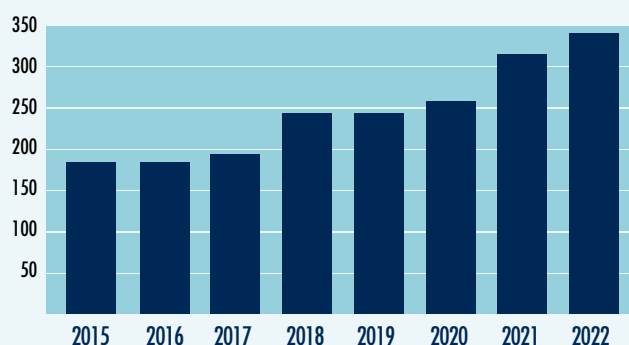
Great River Energy takes great pride in the way it does business with respect for the environment. The cooperative is committed to conserving resources through environmental stewardship, pollution prevention, waste minimization, recycling and reuse.

Great River Energy and other electric cooperatives are among the many organizations focusing on the plight of bumble bees, butterflies and the many other bugs that pollinate more than 70% of the world's crops. Over the

years, Great River Energy has restored approximately 300 acres to **native or pollinator-friendly habitat**. This includes plantings at its Maple Grove headquarters site and 9 acres of native pollinator habitat on its Elk River campus. In 2022, Great River Energy continued to expand and enhance our pollinator habitat. In the fall, an additional 11-acre pollinator planting was installed at Lakefield Junction Station near Trimont, Minnesota.

In addition to these areas, Great River Energy manages a very large area in transmission line rights of way using practices that foster the establishment of habitat that supports pollinators. Great River Energy utilizes integrated vegetation management on thousands of acres of right-of-way. This approach to managing vegetation aims to promote species that are low growing and require less frequent cutting or removal than the traditional approach of indiscriminate mowing or herbicide use.

## Acres of pollinator habitat planted



In addition, Great River Energy hosts a peregrine falcon nesting box on its Elk River, Minnesota, campus. This is a perfect site for a nesting box because it is located in the migratory flyway. The site, beside the Mississippi River, is also a draw because the birds prefer to nest in high locations near water.

Great River Energy, with the help of an Eagle Scout and the Raptor Resource Project, first installed the nesting box in 2006. Since then, 50 young falcons have fledged from the Elk River location. A few of those falcons have been spotted around Minnesota. **Check out the cooperative's bird cam**, which is live every spring.





## Resiliency

Affordable and reliable power are the most important things Great River Energy provides to support communities.

Great River Energy's transmission employees have specific, organized efforts in place to continually address resilience. This ensures they are prepared for and can recover as quickly as possible from major events and ensure continued reliable electric service to our members.

Great River Energy is actively planning to ensure we are resilient in the face of increasing weather-related events. We are identifying which existing facilities are most susceptible to increasingly common and severe weather events. Great River Energy's focus has been on three specific weather-related areas – ice and wind, wildfires and flash flooding. Employees are working to develop Great River Energy's definition of acceptable risk and mitigate all assets that fall below the acceptable risk level.

Great River Energy is also studying historical weather data and maps to determine which areas of its territory are most at risk for severe weather events in the future.

The cooperative has installed additional motor-operated switches on our system, allowing system operators in the control center to remotely open and close transmission switches quickly to separate damaged line sections. During a series of severe storms in May 2022, these switches were used to quickly restore power in west central Minnesota. In certain areas, power was restored in as little as four minutes. In addition, Great River Energy methodically designs, plans and operates a system of transmission lines that **can handle high heat** and elevated electricity demand.

### Buy local

Working with local and diverse suppliers allows Great River Energy to ensure the communities it serves are economically sustainable. When looking for suppliers of goods and services, sometimes there is little choice because items are needed quickly and inexpensively. Other times, the cooperative can be more flexible with who it buys from. In those situations, Great River Energy seeks opportunities to buy local whenever possible.

In 2022, the organization spent more than \$110.6 million on goods and services from local businesses in Minnesota, North Dakota and Wisconsin. This is 65% of the organization's total, annual spending amount.

Great River Energy is also consciously trying to increase its opportunities to work with diverse suppliers – whether the companies are owned by women, minorities, veterans, disabled individuals or those in the LGBTQ+ community.



## We're better together

Great River Energy puts a strong focus on supporting its communities and employees. Its social priorities include helping employees and their loved ones live the best lives possible. Great River Energy accomplishes this through safety programs, inclusion efforts, volunteering and charitable giving in alignment with the seventh cooperative principle: Concern for community.

### Charitable contributions

Great River Energy is a corporate citizen that believes in supporting the communities it serves. Donations from Great River Energy happen throughout the year – and they add up. In fact, Great River Energy routinely donates more than 2% of its earnings to charitable causes between in-kind and monetary contributions. In 2022, these donations amounted to \$916,779.

Through Great River Energy's annual Community Giving Campaign, employees can make charitable contributions through recurring or one-time payroll deductions. The 2022 Community Giving Campaign was a success as employees again demonstrated their generosity and compassion for their local communities. Donations and payroll deductions raised \$42,040 and Great River Energy's match was \$40,000, which brought the total to \$82,040.

Great River Energy also has an **Employee Contributions Team**, which meets quarterly to review funding requests from nonprofits and community groups in communities where the cooperative has member-owners and employees.

Cooperatives believe that a group of people united for a common cause is a powerful force. This is especially true when a cooperative must recover from a natural disaster. In 2022, Great River Energy's board of directors **pledged \$25,000** to the Florida Electric Cooperatives Association to aid in the relief effort for co-op employees and their families facing considerable damage following Hurricane Ian in October.

### Volunteering

Great River Energy encourages employees to give back to the community by allotting them 16 paid volunteer hours each to put toward causes that personally interest them. Eligible employees used 1,054 paid volunteer hours in 2022.

In an organized effort, approximately 45 Great River Energy employees rolled up their sleeves to support the **Habitat for Humanity** organization for five days in June. The Twin Cities Habitat for Humanity is committed to building quality of life, health and economic prosperity of the seven-county metro region by producing, preserving and advocating for affordable homeownership.

### Sponsorships

Great River Energy is committed to building strong relationships with the communities served by its 27 member-owner cooperatives. This summer, more than 3,400 young Minnesota Twins fans were able to learn the fundamentals of baseball and softball for free through a long-standing partnership between the Major League Baseball club and Great River Energy. Clinicians traveled to 44 different locations, including all corners of Minnesota, and saw a 56% increase in participation from 2021.

The Great River Energy Mesabi Trail Tour was another event that Great River Energy sponsored in 2022. The recreational bike ride offered four different routes ranging from 16 to 64 miles starting and ending at the Minnesota Discovery Center in Chisholm, Minnesota.





## Economic development

Electric cooperatives serve their members with the electric power necessary for community businesses and residents to operate and thrive. The economic development services cooperatives provide are also some of the most critical resources that local projects and communities need.

In 2022, Great River Energy's economic development team assisted Mille Lacs Energy Cooperative (MLEC) and the City of McGregor in successfully preparing an application for a \$300,000 grant for a **new fire hall** through the USDA Rural Economic Development Loan & Grant program.

MLEC matched the loan at 20%, with the full \$360,000 passed on as a zero-interest loan to the city. Bids were recently awarded on a \$2 million project for a new 8,400-square-foot fire hall.

A loan to Lake Country Power member-owner Midstate Plastics allowed the company to replace outdated equipment. The manufacturer is now more competitive in a global market due to its ability to fulfill large orders efficiently while developing new products and remaining responsive to customer needs.

Learn more about how investments made by Great River Energy's member-owners **give back to their communities**.

## Education for first responders

Access to, and demand for, EVs continues to increase as more states implement transportation standards to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions and with growing consumer interest in driving electric.

Great River Energy partnered with Safety and Security Consultation Specialists (SASCS), a first responder training company based in southern Minnesota, to conduct **EV training sessions** in their cooperatives' service territories. Each session focuses on educating attendees on the types of EVs they could encounter while on duty, how to shut down/disable an EV, EV-specific crash and fire response, as well as dispelling myths surrounding EV batteries.

Great River Energy created the First Responder EV Safety Training Program to sponsor training events for its member owner utilities. Since December 2021, Great River Energy has funded 27 training events across 22 different cooperatives. A total of 1,319 first responders have completed the EV Safety Training Program.



## Employees

Great River Energy would not be as successful as it is today without its amazing employees. Surveys of member-owner cooperatives and employees ask: What is the best part of the organization? The results always have the same answer: Employees.

Great River Energy was proud to be **Certified™ by Great Place to Work®** for the third time in 2022. The prestigious award is based entirely on what current employees say about their experience working at Great River Energy. In 2022, 88% of employees said it is a great place to work – that’s 31 points higher than the average U.S. company.

## Safety

The Enterprise Safety Council has a main goal of ensuring leadership is accountable for setting safety policy and setting Great River Energy’s safety culture. Strategic planning sessions were held in 2022 to create an updated plan in support of the Enterprise Safety Council’s vision, which is “Safety is deeply ingrained in every person through leading, learning and caring.” Safety is a core value at Great River Energy and the work plan identifies specific actions to strengthen the safety culture.

Over the past two years, Great River Energy has made significant **air quality safety upgrades** at its buildings to limit the spread of disease. The HVAC filters were upgraded to MERV 15 rating, bipolar ionization systems were installed and air purifiers were tested and added to conference rooms in Maple Grove and Elk River. All together, these upgrades create a hospital-grade air filtration system.

Great River Energy earned the designation as a Healthiest Employer each of the past six years. The Healthiest Employers awards program honors the best and brightest in workplace wellness each year, putting Great River Energy amongst a distinct group of high-performing organizations. Award applicants were evaluated across six key categories: Culture and Leadership; Foundational; Strategic Planning; Communication and Marketing; Programming and Interventions; and Reporting and Analytics.

Great River Energy’s focus on safety doesn’t just stop at physical – the organization recognizes the importance of mental health and well-being as well. In 2022, Great River Energy’s mental health and well-being employee resource group offered monthly meetings and regular awareness campaigns to help raise awareness of this important issue.

## Diversity, equity and inclusion

Great River Energy is committed to advancing diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) and fostering a culture of belonging — a place where every employee can come to work as their authentic self and feel like they belong. This type of culture can drive innovation, engagement, performance and more. DEI starts with awareness and education. With a corporate value of inclusion, Great River Energy offers regular opportunities to deepen and broaden related knowledge for employees. In 2022, 464 employees participated in a “Beyond Diversity” training, which included topics like importance of DEI, implicit bias, leadership and belonging. Additional DEI mini certificates were offered, as well as several listen and learn opportunities ranging on topics from personal pronouns to hybrid and remote inclusion best practices.

Great River Energy received a perfect score of 100 on the Human Rights Campaign Foundation’s **2022 Corporate Equality Index**, the nation’s foremost benchmarking survey and report measuring corporate policies and practices related to LGBTQ+ workplace equality. The cooperative joins more than 840 major U.S. businesses that earned top marks this year.

This is the second year in a row that Great River Energy has earned the title of “best places to work for LGBTQ+ equality.” The effort was led by the Pride Alliance Employee Resource Group (ERG). Great River Energy believes its success depends on the diverse skills, experience and backgrounds that employees bring to work, and ERGs are one way to achieve that success. These groups create spaces for employees who share a common interest to support one another and raise awareness. There are currently six ERGs, the other five being: Veterans, Women’s, Today’s Family, BIPOC + Allies, and Mental Health and Well-being.

The Veterans ERG works to discover new and better ways to support military employees and is successful because it is employee driven. Great River Energy hosted Minnesota’s **Beyond the Yellow Ribbon Company Spring Conference** in April, an event dedicated to sharing best practices and collaborating on challenges facing organizations and military employees.

In addition to supporting military employees, Great River Energy has prepared care packages for deployed service members, volunteered at military residences and adopted military families during the holidays.





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