

MEEKER COOPERATIVE PIONEER

The official publication of
Meeker
Cooperative
Light and Power Association
Meeker Co-op is an Equal Opportunity
Provider and Employer

MARCH/APRIL 2021

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"ENERGIZING AND CONNECTING...ENHANCING YOUR LIFE."



CAN IT HAPPEN HERE?

BY TIM MERGEN, MEEKER COOPERATIVE, CEO/GENERAL MANAGER

Many Meeker Co-op members either asked that question or at least thought about it concerning the electric blackouts that hit Texas hard

and reached into neighboring states.

Before I get into that let's take a look at what happened and the structure of transmission grid.

GREAT River Energy (GRE) supplies us with 100 percent of our transmission service. It is their responsibility to ensure all the electricity Meeker Cooperative needs is delivered to our 14 substations throughout the Co-op's service territory.

GRE is a member of the Midcontinent Independent System Operator (MISO). As you can see it extends from Canada to the Gulf of Mexico primarily running through the heart of our country.

An Independent System Operator (ISO) is an organization that coordinates, controls, and monitors the operation of the electrical power system. The transfer of electricity between states is considered interstate commerce, and electric grids spanning multiple states are therefore regulated by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC). These ISOs were established to promote economic efficiency, reliability, and non-discriminatory practices while reducing government oversight. ISOs do not build, own or maintain any generation facilities or transmission lines.

There are several regional transmission grids throughout the United States. As you can see in the map not all regions of the country belong or are part of a regional transmission grid. This is often due to no transmission interconnection ties between the various transmission utilities.

Within MISO there are approximately 2,400 generating units (many power plants have more than one turbine or generating unit). Those generating units include everything from coal, nuclear, natural gas, garbage burning, fuel oil, solar, hydro, storage and wind. Basically, every form of electric generation that is operated. They are large

base load plants that virtually run at full capacity most of the time. Peaking plants only run when a peak for electricity is occurring or for emergencies and renewables that generate electricity when their resources allow.

Those units are capable of generating 184,287 megawatts (MW) of electricity. Each MW is one million watts of electricity or the equivalent of 1,000 kilo watts. If you have 1,000 homes each using 1,000 watts for one hour, each home would only use one Kilowatt Hour (kWh) of electricity but together they would use one megawatt or one million watts in that one hour.

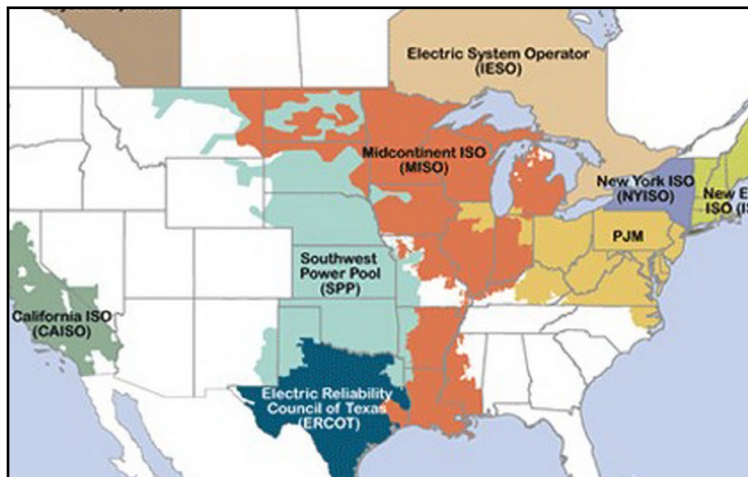
There are 471 participating entities in MISO that serve approximately 42 million people across 65,800 miles of transmission line.

MISO's all time summer peak occurred in July 2011 with a a MW demand of 127,125. Its winter peak was in January 2014 at 109,336 MW. During this latest cold snap or as the weather experts refer to it as a Polar Vortex MISO's peak was on February 15th with just about 103,000 MW. As you can see MISO peaks higher in summer versus winter.

As an aside Meeker Co-op peaks in the winter. Meeker's winter peak for this winter occurred on February 15, and was 47.9 MW. The Co-op's peak last summer was 36.9 MWs and occurred on July 17, 2020. Meeker's all time high peak occurred on December 10, 2019 and was 51.8 MWs.

MISO has transmission interconnection agreements in place to help ensure the flow of electricity continues should one area of MISO experience high demand, a generating station goes off line or a transmission line goes out of service unexpectedly.

MISO mandates each participating utility



maintain a generating reserve of 8.9% of their load. This is to ensure excess capacity is available should demand rise above what is forecasted, if a generating unit suddenly needs to shut down or renewable resources are not available

Now take the large footprint of MISO and its many power generators in relation to the Electric Reliability Counsel of Texas (ERCOT). ERCOT only incorporates power suppliers within the State of Texas. While this has worked well for Texas in the past, the recent cold spell changed all that by it encompassing such a large swath of the United States (See Map) including all of Texas and its almost two-week duration.

ERCOT does not have generating reserve requirement like MISO. It instead has an annual reserve generating target. Under ERCOT's system they do not have the authority to force electricity generators to have adequate resources to meet all their demand or cover unexpected emergencies.

The long and bitter cold increased demand for electricity that ERCOT simply could not handle because of its limited size and scope of electricity providers. Couple that with many failures of equipment due to design and lack of building to ensure they would function under minus zero temperatures. Many of the system failures included other suppliers such as natural gas lines that supplied electric generating units but were unable to because they too froze up. The electric generators within ERCOT do not design, build or maintain

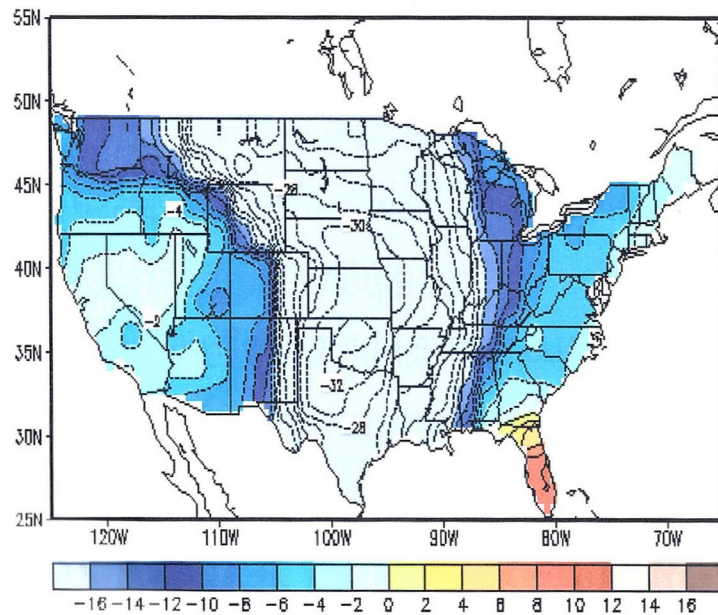
their systems to operate in minus zero temperatures, which during the Polar Vortex they now had to do. Unfortunately, this lack of preparedness for cold weather resulted in electric outages for approximately 4.5 million Texans.

In contrast, GRE's wind resources in Minnesota and North Dakota are built with cold weather packages designed to operate down to minus 22 degrees. Typical wind units without the cold weather features cut-out at around 5 degrees F. In addition, GRE's generating plants, including its peaking plants and transmission system, are built and maintained to operate safely to minus 40 degrees F.

Let's take a closer look at what caused the outages in Texas vs GRE's cold weather preparedness.

As you hear in the news, there is a lot of finger pointing going on. From blame it on the natural gas industry, the renewable industry, poor infrastructure system design to poor management. Regardless of where the finger pointing will lead, unfortunately the buck stopped with the people who sat for hours and days without electricity and now, they are caught with crazy high bills to boot.

So, can the outages that occurred in Texas happen here? Maybe one needs to ask the question a bit more specifically. Can the cold weather cause large scale outages here as have happened in Texas? While in business and life one is often reminded to never say never, I'm confident that the designing of equipment, the maintenance, operation and preparedness that GRE and the other northern utilities put into their systems to ensure operation during cold weather events makes such a wide and long outage here unlikely.



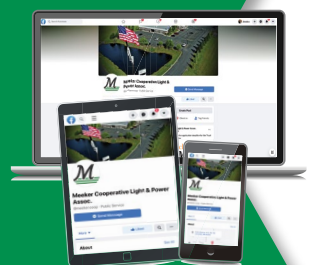
Average temperature 30 degrees lower than historic normal for large portion of the Central U.S.

Texas winter outages causes	Upper Midwest preparedness
Lack of fuel for generators due to frozen natural gas pipelines	Pipelines buried and/or insulated to prevent freezing
Conventional generation physically failed to operate in cold weather	Generators enclosed and insulated for cold weather operations vs. Texas which are optimized to expel heat
Wind generation failed due to ambient temperature operating limits	Turbines have cold weather packages which allow reliable operation to -22°
Inability to import power from neighbors	Minnesota has firm import capability of over 5,000 MW (>30% of peak demand) vs. 800 MW for ERCOT (<1% of demand)
Cold weather caused isolated transmission system failures	Transmission system designed for operations down to -40°

MORE ARTICLES AVAILABLE ONLINE!

We are posting more articles on our website in between issues of the *Pioneer*.

Go to www.meeker.coop/news to stay up to date!



DID YOU KNOW?

During the February cold weather Dallas, Texas had 140, Austin, Texas had 162 and Houston, Texas had 44 consecutive hours of below freezing temperatures.

UPDATE YOUR INFORMATION!

Please take a moment to update your information. Go to www.meeker.coop/update-my-info or call us at 320-693-3231.



APPLICATIONS AVAILABLE FOR CO-OP BOARD OF DIRECTOR CANDIDATES IN DISTRICTS 4, 7 AND 9

Meeker Cooperative, as a member-owned organization, has a board of directors elected by its membership. Directors are elected from each of Meeker's nine districts. In 2021, director elections are scheduled in Districts 4, 7 and 9.

The following townships are included:

DISTRICT 4

Greenleaf and Litchfield Townships in Meeker County.

DISTRICT 7

Acoma and Hutchinson Township in McLeod County; Cedar Mills and Collinwood Townships in Meeker County; Stockholm Township in Wright County.

DISTRICT 9

Forest City, Kingston, and North Kingston Townships in Meeker County.

Any member in these districts that is interested in being placed on the ballot and meets the qualifications identified in the bylaws must submit a completed Meeker Cooperative Application for Director Form by the close of business on May 14.

All potential candidates must declare their intention to be placed on the ballot by submitting a completed application form as described and be declared qualified for placement on the ballot by the Qualifications and Election Committee (Q&E Committee). No write-in candidates shall be deemed valid. #15-36-305

The bylaws direct the Board of Directors to appoint a Qualifications and

Election Committee consisting of one Member from each of the Director Districts which is not up for election. It shall be the responsibility of the Q&E Committee to review all of the applications submitted and to determine that all candidates meet the stated qualifications.

The Committee will notify any potential candidate that does not meet the qualifications and allow seven days for the candidate to comply with said requirements. The decisions of the Q&E Committee will be final.

The Committee will have the authority to place qualified candidates on the ballot for election, and for any district in which there is only one candidate, waive the ballot process and declare the candidate elected.

The Qualifications & Election Committee shall prepare and post at the principal office of the Cooperative at least 75 days before the meeting the list of qualified candidates for director elections. If no Member from a district up for election is placed on the ballot, said position shall be deemed vacant following the annual meeting and the Board of Directors may appoint a Member from said district to fill said position until the next annual meeting and election of directors.

For complete director election information, qualifications and requirements, please visit www.meeker.coop. Under the Member Services tab on the left at the top of the home page, select downloadable forms to find the packet or contact Mary Alice Holm at 320-693-3231 to request one be mailed to you.

SAVE THE DATE!



MEMBER APPRECIATION DAY

WHEN:

Wednesday,
August 11, 2021

HOSTED AT:

A maze'n Farmyard,
west of Eden Valley
on Highway 55

*Watch for more details
to follow on our website,
Facebook page, and the
next issue of the Pioneer!*

FIND YOUR LOCATION NUMBER

Four location numbers have been hidden within this *Pioneer* and four more will be found in articles published on our website between now and the next *Pioneer* mailing. If you find your number and claim it by calling Meeker Cooperative before May 28, you will have \$10 credited to your account! If you find your number and your information is correct in our system, you'll receive a bill credit equal to one month's output from a Member Solar panel. **Good luck!**



VIBRANT BROADBAND HELPS TRI-COUNTY NEWS STAY CONNECTED

Jean Matua, owner and editor of Tri-County News, needed fast and reliable Internet. She decided to get VIBRANT Broadband installed, not only at the newspaper office, but also at her home.

She, her husband Anton and son George, like to stream shows, play games, listen to music, and have multiple devices connected to the Internet. This alone is important to their lifestyle. It wasn't until COVID hit that Jean realized how important it was to have reliable and fast Internet for her business.

"The COVID-19 pandemic affected us from the start in two ways: much of our ad revenue went away, at least temporarily as there were no ads for bars and restaurants, for town and church festivals, and other businesses closed or slowed by public health limitations," Jean says. "Much of what we cover went away such as school news and sports, and a summer usually filled with festivals and fairs. Because we were no longer out and about and catching leads on stories, our communities stepped up providing us their stories and photos of events we couldn't attend. We are very grateful for this support."

VIBRANT Broadband helped connect the Tri-County News office to Jean's home office. "Having VIBRANT at the office, especially with the direct and closed



network, has been critical to us being able to continue our operations safely and efficiently. For numerous health reasons, I shifted to working from home back in February, 2020. We rely on using shared files stored on a server in the office and keeping those files up-to-date with changes. Before VIBRANT it was necessary for me to work in the office to have consistent access to the files." #24-07-325

Jean does the layout of the newspaper from home and having access to the most up-to-date copy of the files at the office is key. She drove to the office uploading and downloading files until the private network could be installed with the help of a VIBRANT Broadband connection.

"That was the game changer for me and prior to VIBRANT Broadband this was never an option for us!"

"One additional advantage of having VIBRANT Broadband's robust internet service is being able to watch and participate in webinars, conferences and meetings online without disrupting the rest of the household and their online activities."

Through all of this, Jean has remained creative, optimistic and is driven by doing what's best for her family and community.

Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

Some manufacturers set water heater thermostats at 140 degrees, but most households usually only require them to be set at 120 degrees.

Consider lowering your water heater's temperature to save energy and slow mineral buildup in the heater and pipes.

Source: www.energy.gov



**Heartland
Security**
888.264.6380
heartlandss.com

The Power to Protect Your Favorite Chill Spot

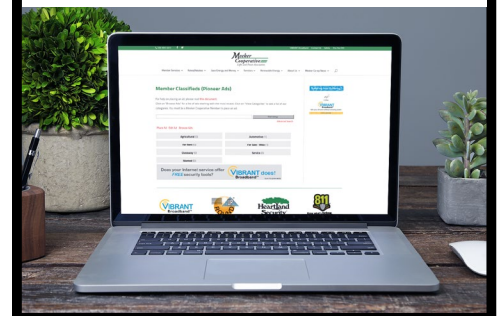
We're offering **3 months free monitoring** with the purchase of a new security system. Protect your home and loved ones from fire, intruders, carbon monoxide, and other threats for less than you'd think.



Looking to buy, sell, or give away something?

Check out our
online classified section.

Go to:
www.meeke.coop/classifieds
and list your item FREE!



VIBRANT Reviews

We give VIBRANT a 5-star rating! AMAZING customer service. We had the other "local" company in the past and we definitely never received the personalized care that we do with VIBRANT. We recently moved out in the country in Paynesville and wanted to continue with VIBRANT. Our only option was to have their Fixed Wireless broadband. We were nervous about what our coverage would be and although we have not had it long enough to give a full review on it, we are getting what we were promised at this point.

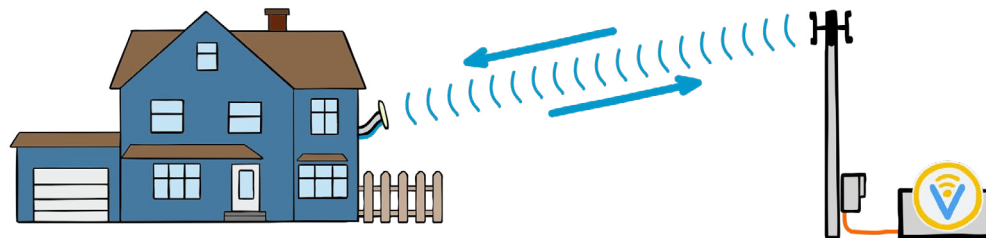
We want to thank VIBRANT for working with us to get us up and running. With a daughter in distance learning, internet was a must! Our driveway is steep and VIBRANT still found a way to get our internet up and working, even though their truck could not get up our driveway.

We appreciate everyone that helped us along the way at VIBRANT! You can count on us to spread the word of your awesome service because you will not get that from the other provider in the area. Thanks again!

Jason & Susan L - Paynesville



WHAT MAKES VIBRANT'S FIXED WIRELESS DIFFERENT



Most of the early fixed wireless technology uses a method of communicating from radio tower to radio tower until it connects directly to a wired Internet connection, often times using off-the-shelf equipment. This equipment would be placed on a silo at one farm, a grain bin on another, and an old windmill on another. Your Internet signal would hop from one "tower" to another several times before it made it to the Internet backbone, resulting in signal delays or latency.

VIBRANT Broadband's fixed wireless is different. In fact, Meeker Cooperative is the second cooperative in the U.S. to use this type of fixed wireless technology. VIBRANT's Fixed Wireless uses business-grade radio transceivers mounted to several monopoles throughout our service area. Each monopole is fed by fiber-optic cables that are connected directly to the Internet. From the monopole transceiver, there is only one "hop" from the monopole to your home. This means that VIBRANT's fixed wireless system has fiber-fast speeds with low latency. The result is a reliable and Rip Snort'n FAST Internet connection to you.

Featured Recipe

Spring Garden Salad

Congratulations to Rosalea Hoeft for submitting this month's winning recipe for **Spring Salad Recipe**.

INGREDIENTS

- 4 c. rhubarb
- 1/2 c. water
- 2 c. fresh strawberries, sliced
- 1 c. whipping cream, whipped OR 2 c. Cool Whip
- 2 c. sugar
- 2-(3 oz.) pkgs. strawberry Jello

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Combine rhubarb, sugar, water. Cook until tender.
2. Add Jello, stir until dissolved.
3. Chill until mixture begins to thicken.
4. Fold in strawberries and cream.
5. Pour in mold or bowl. Chill until completely set.



Submit your favorite **FISH RECIPE** for our next issue! Please include a photo if you are able.

The chosen winner will receive a \$10 credit to their account. **DEADLINE:** May 21, 2021

E-mail to: szeppelin@meeker.coop | **Mail to:** Meeker Coop, ATTN: Shane, 1725 US Hwy 12, Ste. 100, Litchfield, MN 55355

KNOW WHAT'S BELOW: STEPS FOR SAFE DIGGING

Spring is just around the corner, and there's never been a better time to get outside and enjoy the fresh air. Perhaps you're making plans for a new garden or a lawn makeover. However you're planning to revamp your backyard oasis, remember to keep safety in mind for all projects—especially those that require digging near underground utility lines.

Most of us never think about the electric, gas, water and other utility lines buried below the ground, but hitting one of these lines while digging is not the reminder you'll want—trust us! #15-17-101

Meeker Cooperative reminds all members who are planning a digging project to call 811 at least three business days before you start. Or you can submit a request online by visiting www.call811.com/811-In-Your-State. Here's how the process works:

After you call 811 or submit your request online, all affected utilities will be notified of your intent to dig. It may take the utilities a few days to get to your request, so please be patient. The affected utilities will send someone out to mark the buried lines with paint or flags. Before you break ground, confirm that all the utilities have responded to your request. If you placed your request by phone, use the process explained by your 811 call center representative. If you submitted your request online, refer to your 811 center ticket to confirm everything.

5 STEPS FOR SAFE DIGGING

Working on an outdoor project? Careless digging poses a threat to people, pipelines and underground facilities. Always call 8-1-1 first. Here are five easy steps for safe digging:



1. NOTIFY

Call 8-1-1 or make a request online two to three days before your work begins. The operator will notify the utilities affected by your project.

2. WAIT

Wait two to three days for affected utilities to respond to your request. They will send a locator to mark any underground utility lines.

2-3

3. CONFIRM

Confirm that all affected utilities have responded to your request by comparing the marks to the list of utilities the 8-1-1 call center notified.



4. RESPECT

Respect the markers provided by the affected utilities. The markers are your guide for the duration of your project.



5. DIG CAREFULLY

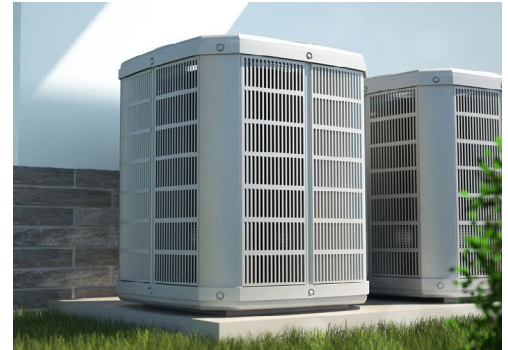
If you can't avoid digging near the markers (within 18-24 inches on all sides, depending on state laws), consider moving your project location.



Source: call811.com

By taking this important step before you break ground on your project, you can help protect not only yourself but our community. Disrupting an underground utility line can interrupt service, cause injuries and cost money to repair, so remember to call 811 first and know what's below.

AN AIR SOURCE HEAT PUMP FOR WINTER AND SUMMER



Did you know an air source heat pump can use up to 72 percent less electricity than a furnace? Make the upgrade to a qualifying model and you can receive up to \$1,200 from your electric cooperative!

Heating and cooling account for some of the largest expenses for homeowners. It makes sense for your home to be equipped with one high-efficiency appliance to keep those costs as low as possible.

An air source heat pump (ASHP) can handle both your heating and cooling needs. It works in the summer by extracting the existing heat from inside your home and moving it outside, often outperforming standard central air conditioners. In the winter, the cycle is reversed for heating. It extracts warmth from the outdoor air and pumps it into your home. Your furnace will run less and often times in Spring and Fall, not even at all.

Earlier generations of ASHPs were limited in terms of their effectiveness in states with colder climates like Minnesota's, but technology has advanced to where they can now operate down to 0 degrees Fahrenheit. #10-16-205

Beyond cost savings, ASHPs provide additional benefits such as higher-quality warmth compared to conventional furnaces as the ASHP distributes heat more evenly and holds moisture better which results in a natural, comfortable warmth.

Meeker Cooperative offers rebates of up to \$1,200 based on your SEER rating and financing as low as 0 percent on new ASHP systems. For more information on what we can do to provide you with an energy efficient ASHP, visit www.meeker.coop or call 320-693-3231.

WILLIE WIREDHAND'S ELECTRICITY FUN FACT

Did you know....?

For the cost of \$1 of electricity, you can get about 25 loads of use from your dishwasher.



BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Kevin Issendorf, President — District 4
Litchfield, Greenleaf in Meeker

Brad Donnay, Vice President — District 3
Luxemburg, Maine Prairie,
South Maine Prairie in Stearns;
Forest Prairie in Meeker

Karl Lundin, Secretary — District 9
North Kingston, Kingston,
Forest City in Meeker

Mark Larson, Treasurer — District 6
Harrison, Kandiyohi, Genessee, Fahlun,
Lake Elizabeth, E. Lake Lillian in Kandiyohi;
Cosmos, Acton, Danielson, Swede Grove
in Meeker; Brookfield, Boon Lake in Renville

Paul Bugbee — District 1
Roseville, Irving in Kandiyohi;
Paynesville in Stearns;
Union Grove in Meeker

Karen Becker — District 2
Eden Lake in Stearns;
Harvey, Manannah in Meeker

Stephen Plaisance — District 5
Fairhaven in Stearns;
Cokato, Southside, French Lake in Wright;
Dassel in Meeker

K. Bruce Krueger — District 7
Collinwood, Cedar Mills in Meeker;
Stockholm in Wright;
Acoma, Hutchinson in McLeod

Larry Huhn — District 8
Darwin, Ellsworth in Meeker

Chad Felstul, Attorney



YOUR OPERATION ROUND UP® DOLLARS AT WORK

The Meeker Cooperative Electric Trust met on March 4 and awarded the following grants to organizations applying for funds and made its annual food shelf donations.

Community Service

Eden Valley Food Shelf	\$900
Fire Department, Cosmos.....	\$3,400
Historical Society, Atwater Area	\$225
Kandiyohi County Food Shelf	\$300
Kimball Food Shelf	\$900
Litchfield Watercade, Inc.....	\$500
Lutheran Social Services	\$1,500
McLeod Emergency Food Shelf.....	\$250
Meeker County Food Shelf	\$2,900*
*Dassel Food Shelf	\$500
*Litchfield Food Shelf	\$2400
Paynesville Community Services.....	\$900
The Link of Northern Kandiyohi County.....	\$150

Education and Youth

Legion Jr. Auxiliary, Johnson-Kelly....	\$1,000
Litchfield Student Anglers	\$1,000
Post Prom, ACGC.....	\$350

March is also the meeting to review all applications received for the Trust's Non-Traditional Scholarship. This scholarship is for students who have been out of high school at least 5 years and have decided to pursue a degree or vocational training.

Non-Traditional Scholarship Recipient

Erin Donnay, Kimball \$1,000

How Your Group Can Apply: The Trust meets three times per year to review applications and award grants. Remaining application deadlines for 2021 are July 1 and November 4. The application and guidelines can be found on Meeker Cooperative's website at www.meeker.coop Scroll to the bottom of the home page and click on the Round Up logo to download the materials and guidelines to apply.

How to Contribute: Funds are generated by members/subscribers choosing to round their billing statement up to the nearest dollar and by employees choosing to round down their paychecks. On average, contributions from any individual members are about \$6 per year, but added together, they can make a big impact. If you are not currently an Operation Round Up participant, please contact the Cooperative to get signed up.

OFFICE HOURS

Monday - Friday 8 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

CONTACT US

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www.meeker.coop | www.vibrantbroadband.com

meeker.coop vibrantbb.net

CEO/General Manager: Tim Mergen | **Editor:** Shane Zeppelin | **Contributors:** Lynn Mergen

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The Meeker Pioneer is the official member publication of Meeker Cooperative and focuses on our members, programs and events. All member story ideas and comments are welcome. Send Attention: Editor at the address above.