

The cost of global warming legislation . . .

Are you ready for an 85 percent higher electric bill?

By Ann Ellis, Finance Manager

Recent polls measuring public opinions show a nation concerned about the economy, the war in Iraq, health care, immigration and terrorism. Less than 5 percent of the public listed global climate change as a worry, but take note of legislation that will be before the U.S. Senate sometime this year that would, on its own, raise household electric rates an estimated 38 percent nationally.

The legislation is estimated to raise wholesale rates to North Star by 144 percent, which would increase your retail rates by about 85 percent. We would be hit harder because our electricity is produced by low-cost lignite coal in North Dakota.

The measure, S.2191, was introduced by Senator Lieberman (Connecticut) and John Warner (Virginia) and co-sponsored by Minnesota Senators Coleman and Klobuchar. This legisla-

tion would require all electric utilities and other manufacturers to dramatically reduce carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions. Dr. Anne Smith, a nationally known expert in environmental policy assessment, testified that S.2191, when completely implemented in 2050, would cost the American consumers more than \$500 billion annually. That amount would include all products relating to CO₂ – gasoline, diesel, automobile production, electricity, household goods, etc. As a comparison, the cost of the social security outlay is approximately \$600 billion annually. Do you realize how expensive this kind of legislation can get? Have the people that we have entrusted to make our laws understood these economic ramifications?

2050 is a ways off. 2015 is not. If S.2191 passes, it is projected that in 2015, the average American household will pay an additional \$1,500 per year,

because nearly all goods produced would be affected by this proposed legislation. This includes your coal-fired electricity generated by Minnkota Power Cooperative in North Dakota. Because our electricity is generated with lignite coal, the cost to you would be much higher than \$1,500. To make this even tougher to swallow, North Star members' income, on average, is 25 percent less than the average income in Minnesota. We can ill-afford the rate

(Continued on page 4)

Member Appreciation Days

On Monday, April 14, please join us at the Littlefork office from 11 a.m. until 4 p.m. and on Tuesday, April 15, at the Baudette office from 11 a.m. until 4 p.m. There will be refreshments with brats, chips, popcorn and cotton candy. Register for prizes, as there will be drawings for both adults and children. Pick up balloons for the kids and watch an electrical safety demonstration.

*North Star Electric
will be closed Friday, March 21,
in observance of Good Friday.*

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OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS

President Steve Arnesen
Vice President Bruce Polkinghorne
Secretary-Treasurer Michael Hanson
Directors L.J. Anderson,
Julian Brzoznowski, Randy Bergan,
Lorraine Nygaard, Mike Trueman

General Manager Dan Hoskins
Editor Wayne Haukaas

Office hours: 7:30 a.m. to 4 p.m.
Monday through Friday

Baudette 218-634-2202 or 888-634-2202
Littlefork 218-278-6658 or 888-258-2008

Electrical after-hours emergencies

1-888-6OUTAGE (1-888-668-8243)
or 634-2603

e-mail us at nsec@wiktel.com

Visit our Web site at

www.northstarelectric.coop

North Star Electric Cooperative, Inc.

Mission Statement

To improve the lives of our member-owners and community by responsibly providing electric energy and other beneficial services while maintaining the very highest standards of performance.

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Notification Center

1-800-252-1166

Highlights from the BOARDROOM

These are the highlights from the board of directors meeting held on Feb. 6, 2008.

The board acted upon usual, routine business. In addition, they voted to move margins (revenue in excess of expenses) from 2007 to members' capital credit accounts, to authorize the payment of discounted estate capital credits in 2008, to support local scholarships using unclaimed capital credits, to update the check signing authority, to approve the inventory adjustment, and to change two future meeting dates: April 4, 2008, and May 12, 2008.

Reports from staff included a detailed presentation of the 2007 sales and financials and that the membership has been very helpful in adding efficiencies to the co-op with regards to signing up for the ACH automated bill payment option resulting in \$175,000 of electric bill payments for the month being electronically posted to accounts nearly effortlessly. This is being encouraged as a time-saving measure, which aids in the reduction of staff coincidental with the retirement of two office employees. Also shared with the board were updates on the computer conversion, the AMR (automated meter reading) project, load management, the need to change out several off-peak AMR meters, the use of the infrared camera to identify heat loss at two homes, the AMR system identifying off-peak loads showing usage during control times, the elimination of the ETS report due to the co-op exiting that line of business, an update of the Operation Round Up program, inquiries regarding wind generators, high use calls, the use of small plug-in electric space heaters, the student and member trips planned to the power plant, the cooperative knowledge scholarship competition that will be offered in the spring, Minnkota's plans to add additional wind generation in 2008, the load forecast study, projected wholesale rate increases, legislative issues, renewable energy, Northern

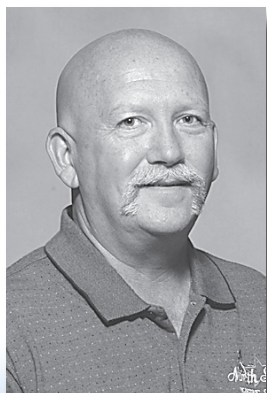
Excellence Seeds' plans for generation, donations, plans for the upcoming construction season, equipment, safety training, the MPCA (Minnesota Pollution Control Agency) site inspection, and electronic board communications.

MREA Delegate Arnesen reported that their meeting was primarily for strategic planning purposes.

As the Minnkota delegate, he continued with the Minnkota report, including a financial report, generation performance, the 2007 operating loss being moved to 2008, the 64-day scheduled outage last fall that turned into an 82-day outage, the cost of coal, load management, billing peak measurements taken on January 18 and 23, the elimination of the option of the three-year averaging of billing peaks, and the 3 percent wholesale rate increase to become effective March 20, 2008.

Reports were heard from the Minnkota and MREA board meetings, which included discussions on strategic planning, legislative issues, the fate of Minnkota's planned Young 3 coal-fired generating plant, and renewable fuel. There is a need for fossil fuel generators to back up wind power, which is reliable just 36 percent of the time. Comparatively, Minnkota's coal-fired plants are normally more than 90 percent reliable. The alternative to installing backup for the wind power is to purchase energy on the market, and although there is no capital investment with market purchased power, it is financially riskier, especially now with adequate electricity resources dwindling.

Detailed minutes are available at the Cooperative for member review. Regular board meetings are generally held the first Wednesday of every month. If you wish to speak with the board, or have an item that you would like to have placed on the agenda, please contact Manager Dan Hoskins at least one week in advance to be included on the agenda.



Dan Hoskins, General Manager

"We feel that this fixed charge shares the cost of our system equally to all members of our Cooperative, and it allows you to get some of the lowest-cost energy in the nation."

Monthly fixed charges

Ladies and gentlemen, every month it gets harder and harder to write about our electric industry and all the changes that we are going through and all the proposed legislation that could affect more changes to our industry.

Before I get into this month's article, I hope you all had a chance to read "The cost of global warming legislation," the article written by Ann Ellis, North Star's Finance Manager. This article talks about the possibility of the Carbon Tax legislation and the possible costs to you and all electric users. Please take the time to read this article, if you have not already done so, and call, write or e-mail your elected officials to let them know your views on the Carbon Tax.

During the last few months, we have been talking about a 7 percent rate increase that you will receive starting March 20 of this year. This rate increase will be spread over all areas of our rates, which includes our monthly fixed charge. The fixed charge amount is a result of the Cost of Service Study that your Cooperative has done every three to five years by an independent consulting firm. It is based and figured from costs associated with operation of your Cooperative, and that is the topic I would like to address at this time, the monthly fixed charge.

Let's start by looking at what goes into the fixed charge. It covers expenses to purchase material, equipment, labor and other associated costs, which include fuel, contractors and insurance, used in maintenance and new construction of our power lines and our infrastructure that ensures the availability of reliable, dependable low-cost power to you. It also includes maintenance of power line electrical equipment and a portion of interoffice administration, which includes, but is

not limited to, bookkeeping, billing and recording.

These costs are then spread equally among our General Single-Phase accounts as the fixed electric charge; everyone pays this charge regardless of energy used. And speaking of energy, a portion of the kWh energy charge also covers a portion of these costs plus the wholesale cost of electricity you use, including its generation and transmission from Minnkota's power plants as well as their substation charge.

Here's an important fact for you; because we are a rural electric Cooperative, and we chose to serve the rural areas because no other utility would, our density, or number of consumers per mile of power line, differs greatly with that of an investor-owned utility or a municipal utility. A municipal or investor-owned

utility usually serves inside the larger city limits and has a much denser ratio of consumers per mile as opposed to your Cooperative's 4.6 member-owners per mile. Therefore, based on their density, their fixed charge portion of their bill usually is smaller, because they have a lot less infrastructure in place to serve a greater number of consumers.

Although not all member-owners agree with this approach, we feel that this fixed charge shares the cost of our system equally to all members of our Cooperative, and it allows you to get some of the lowest-cost energy in the nation.

Well, folks, that's all for now. If we can be of any service to you or answer any questions, please call or send them in.

God Bless you and our Troops,
Dan

Statement of Nondiscrimination

North Star Electric Cooperative, Incorporated is the recipient of Federal financial assistance from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). The USDA prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, and where applicable, sex, marital status, familial status, parental status, religion, sexual orientation, genetic information, political beliefs, reprisal, or because all or part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.) Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) should contact USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TDD).

The person responsible for coordinating this organization's nondiscrimination compliance efforts is Ann Ellis, Finance Manager. Any individual, or specific class of individuals, who feels that this organization has subjected them to discrimination may obtain further information about the statutes and regulations listed above from and/or file a written complaint with this organization; or write to USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20250-9410, or call toll-free (866) 632-9992 (voice) or (800) 877-8339 (TDD) or (866) 377-8642 (relay voice users). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer. Complaints must be filed within 180 days after the discrimination. Confidentiality will be maintained to the extent possible.

(Continued from page 1)

impact that would be caused by this proposed legislation.

We are not disputing the science of global climate change. It has been happening since the beginning of time. However, legislation that would see our members pay in excess of \$1,500 more each year for products is a major concern, particularly with those costs projected to continue to climb each year.

Another poll, attempting to measure how much Americans would pay to address global climate change, saw two-thirds of the respondents say they'd pay 10 percent more on their electric bill, but when asked if global warming legislation would cause their electric bill to double, 61 percent said they'd tell their legislator to oppose that measure. If you share our concerns, or are like those responding to the survey, you might want to ask Congressman Peterson and Senators Coleman and Klobuchar to be clear on the cost of S.2191 and similar legislation. (673-35-001-50 Leanne Crompton) They need to know the impact on North Star members and how they expect our depressed economy to absorb those costs, which will also chase away jobs. They won't know how you feel unless you tell them.

How do North Star rates compare right now?

In 2007, North Star sold 113,256,403 kWh and collected \$9,103,148. This makes our average retail rate 8.04 cents/kWh. If we look strictly at the residential sales, our average retail rate was 7.88 cents/kWh. The Energy Information Administration showed that the average residential rate in 2006 for all of Minnesota was 8.7 cents, and for the nation, it was 10.4 cents. This includes densely populated metropolitan areas, as well as sparsely populated rural areas that are more expensive to serve. We are lucky to have reasonably priced power generated from coal in North Dakota. Legislation could change all that. Let's work together to help our legislators understand that the bandwagon comes with a very high cost to our country. Striking the right balance between environmental stewardship and the health of our economy is our goal.

The contact information for your federal legislators is printed below for your reference. There is still time for you to help your elected officials understand your concerns. Every voice makes a difference, and we applaud you for making yours heard.

Senator Norm Coleman

320 Senate Hart Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510
www.coleman.senate.gov
1-800-642-6041

Senator Amy Klobuchar

302 Senate Hart Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510
www.klobuchar.senate.gov
202-224-3244

Congressman Collin Peterson

2211 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515
www.collinpeterson.house.gov
202-225-2165

If you're not sure what to say to your legislators, here is some wording to help you.

Dear _____ :

RE: S.2191

I would like you to oppose S.2191 and other carbon-reduction legislation like it. I care about our environment, but I am unsure if carbon taxes will make any difference other than severely burden the people of Minnesota and cripple our American economy. I think that you will be surprised at the true cost of carbon dioxide reduction legislation. The American people cannot afford a program with a cost that could come close to the cost of Social Security.

Thank you,
(your name)

Global cooling?

According to a news report on the Feb. 28, 2008, morning broadcast of "Paul Harvey News & Commentary," the nation's preoccupation with global warming may be unsupported by facts.

Harvey alerted listeners to a scientific report from the Hadley Center for Climate Prediction and Research, which recently announced that global temperatures have dropped significantly during the past year. The report highlights a 12-month-long drop in worldwide temperatures during 2007, citing North American snow cover at the highest recorded level in 50 years. Some states like Wisconsin have experienced the most snow cover since record keeping began. Record-breaking cold temperatures were also reported in Minnesota, Texas and Florida.

All four of the world's temperature tracking outlets, including NASA, are now releasing updated climate data. The amount of cooling ranges from 65-hundredths to 75-hundredths of a degree Centigrade, wiping out any global warming temperature increases for the past 100 years.

This is the single fastest temperature change ever recorded, either up or down, according to the agencies. Some scientists contend the cooling is the result of reduced solar activity, which they say is a larger driver of climate change than man-made greenhouse gases.

Climate change legislation

How much are you willing to pay?

How much becomes too much? Will electric co-op consumers support a 50 percent increase in their power bills to help mitigate global climate change? How about 100 percent?

Across the nation, electric co-op directors take decisions on raising rates – increasing the bottom line of electric bills paid by their friends, neighbors and themselves – very seriously. As democratically elected utility regulators, co-op board members serve as the tether that directly links consumers with their electricity provider, helping define the electric co-op difference.

Now, that bond could be in danger. State, federal and local policy initiatives on climate change promise to dramatically impact electric rates, doubling or even tripling them under most scenarios. Even worse, these increases will not be subject to review or debate at the co-op board level; instead, they will be mandated by the government and passed directly to co-op consumer-members. As a result, the success of electric co-op directors and chief executives in addressing the climate change issue will, to great measure, determine if co-op self-regulation remains a viable concept in coming years.

To preserve basic institutions that have guided electric cooperative governance for the past 70 years, co-op leaders have a responsibility to inform members what to expect, cost-wise, from efforts to curb greenhouse gas emissions blamed for causing global warming. Straight talk on this topic becomes imperative. And our 40 million-plus electric co-op consumers nationwide need to participate in this debate now before it's too late.

Consumers served by electric co-ops across America must understand that poorly conceived climate change legislation or regulation could enormously impact their monthly electric bills and

"Consumers served by electric co-ops across America must understand that poorly conceived climate change legislation or regulation could enormously impact their monthly electric bills and have a disastrous effect on the economy."

have a disastrous effect on the economy. (243-19-001-03 Dale T Larson) Unfortunately, many governmental officials, policy pundits and opinion leaders believe that ambitious schemes to reduce greenhouse gases – particularly carbon dioxide emissions from coal-fired power plants – can be enacted without inflicting economic pain. In fact, most of these folks believe that doubling electric bills may be an acceptable price to pay for a reduced carbon footprint. As consumer-owned and controlled electric co-ops, we completely reject that thought.



by Glenn English, CEO
National Rural Electric
Cooperative Association

Successfully addressing climate change and reducing greenhouse gas emissions will require long-term commitments by all American industries, as well as international partners. The guiding principle on climate change should be: "first, do no harm."

To that end, the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) will ask candidates seeking public office to pledge not to double consumer electric bills, as well as advocate a technology-based approach to meet the nation's climate change policy goals. We believe a long-term, sustained effort to address global climate change can succeed only if the nation's existing standard of living does not suffer. Therefore, bottom-line costs to consumers must be a part of the discussion.

Although the effects of climate change legislation on the environment will not be known for decades, the cost of dealing with it will show up right away in consumer electric bills. Electric co-ops will work closely with those in leadership roles to strike a reasonable balance. Candidates for public office need to do the same – or give voters fair warning before next year's election.

Members' corner

We are adding a section called the members' corner. What we would like is for members to send in questions about your electric Cooperative, and we will answer them for you. Please give us your name and a phone number in case we need to clarify the question, and send them to North Star Electric, PO Box 719, Baudette, MN, 56623, Attn: Wayne.



Parents, caregivers urged to help protect the smallest among us



New electrical code standards address electrical outlet safety

Inquisitive youngsters with little fingers are constantly exploring the world around them. Sometimes their curiosity can connect them with danger.

Each year, 2,400 children – an average of seven children per day – are treated in emergency rooms for injuries caused by inserting objects into electrical outlets, according to the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission. Eighty-nine percent are under the age of six, with the highest risk group being boys age 2 to 3. (665-10-001-07 Douglas/Ann King) Most often, these accidents happen at home with everyday household items such as hairpins, keys and paper clips. Injuries vary from minor to serious burns, and some contacts prove fatal.

As part of the new “Teach Learn Care” TLC campaign, Safe Electricity urges parents and other caregivers to protect young children by using tamper-resistant electrical outlets. A new change in the National Electrical Code (NEC) for 2008 also addresses the issue of outlet safety. Tamper-resistant receptacles have been used in hospital pediatric wards for more than 20 years and the new NEC Code requires their installation in all new construction of single- and multi-family homes.

“While plastic outlet caps offer an inexpensive form of protection, some toddlers and pre-school age children can manage to remove them,” says Molly Hall, executive director of Safe Electricity, “and adults often forget to replace the caps after using an outlet, leaving it open for young fingers to explore. The new tamper-resistant outlets offer constant protection.”

Tamper-resistant receptacles have built-in shutter systems that prevent single-pronged objects like hairpins from being inserted. Unlike plastic outlet caps, the new receptacles are permanent, automatic and reliable. They install just like standard outlets and are only slightly more expensive to purchase.

The new receptacles do not replace ground fault circuit interrupters (GFCIs) and should be used in conjunction with them. GFCIs sense the leakage of current to ground and immediately shut off power, preventing electrocution. Devices with both components are available and should be used in any areas where moisture is an issue, such as bathrooms, kitchens and basements. A qualified electrician should be consulted if you have any questions about the new regulation.

TLC “Teach Learn Care” is a public service campaign of Safe Electricity, an electrical safety public awareness program created and supported by a coalition of hundreds of organizations, including electric utilities, educators and other entities committed to promoting electrical safety. For more information on electrical safety visit www.SafeElectricity.org.

In the average home, 40 percent of the electricity used to power home electronics is consumed while the products are turned off. Enhance your energy conservation efforts by unplugging appliances when not in use. Or simply plug them into a power strip and use the switch to eliminate wasteful standby power consumption.

Source – U.S. Department of Energy

Energy saving tip of the month



Check your filter every month, especially during heavy use months (winter and summer). At a minimum, change the filter every three months. A dirty filter will slow down air flow and make the system work harder – wasting energy. A clean filter also prevents dust and dirt from building up in the system.

Source: ENERGY STAR®



Who can wire what and where

Electrical inspections are a must

Before you begin a wiring project, be sure you look into Minnesota Law. The law states that all electrical wiring shall be done by qualified licensed electrical contractors.

However, the "owner" is exempt from electrical contracting license requirements. This only applies to electrical work performed by the owner on single

family residences and associated structures. Both primary and secondary residences, such as lake homes are included. However, the exemption does not apply to condominiums, rental properties and wiring not used for residential purposes (business including farming).

An associated structure could be a detached garage, gazebo, or small lawn and garden shed, but does not include the 50 x 100-foot machine shed for the combine.

Minnesota Statutes, Section 326.01 defines an "owner" as "a natural person who physically performs electrical work on premises the person owns and actually occupies as a residence or owns and will occupy as a residence upon completion of construction."

Safety is always our biggest concern so before you start any type of the above wiring, play it safe and call your state electrical inspector. This phone call will accomplish a lot because the "owner exemption" does not exempt the owner from getting electrical wiring inspected. In this case, the owner is no different than the licensed electrical contractor who must get their workmanship looked at as well.

Advance contact with the electrical inspector will save you headaches later. North Star Electric will not energize any new service until we receive a signed copy of the wiring inspection certificate (affidavit).

Inspection certificates (affidavits) and information on wiring requirements are available at: www.electricity.state.mn.us.

CURRENT ELECTRICAL INSPECTORS

State law requires that every new electrical installation in any construction, remodeling, replacement or repair shall file a certificate for inspection with the State Board of Electricity and be inspected by a Minnesota electrical inspector.

- *St. Louis and Koochiching counties:*
Bob Orgon
10111 Roosevelt Rd. S.E.
Bemidji, MN 56601
Phone: (218) 556-3829
Fax: (218) 333-0451
7:00 a.m. - 8:30 a.m. (Mon. thru Fri.)
- *Roseau and Lake of the Woods counties:*
Scott Stenvik
16409 State Hwy 1 N.W.
Thief River Falls, MN 56701
Phone: (218) 689-5406
7:00 a.m. - 8:30 a.m. (Mon. thru Fri.)

NOTICE TO COGENERATORS

In compliance with Minnesota Adopted Rules Relating to Cogeneration and small Power Production, chapter 7835, North Star Electric Cooperative is required to interconnect with and purchase electricity from cogenerators and small power producers that satisfy the conditions of a Qualifying Facility.

North Star Electric has available and will provide free information to all interested members regarding rates and interconnection requirements. An application for interconnection is required for a Qualifying Facility to interconnect and operate in parallel with the cooperative's distribution system and is subject to approval by the cooperative.

Any disputes over interconnections, sales and purchases are subject to resolution by the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission. For more information, please call Wayne Haukaas at 218-634-2202.



Problems paying your electric bill?

Energy assistance may be available!

If you are receiving a low income or suffering from a temporary financial shortfall, the following agencies may be able to assist you with your electric bill. We urge you to contact them immediately to avoid disconnection if you feel you are eligible for aid.

Lake of the Woods County Social Services

206 8th Ave. SE, Suite 200
Baudette, MN 56623-2867
634-2642

Northwest Community Action Council

P.O. Box 67
Badger, MN 56714-0067
800-568-5329

Koochiching County Community Services

1000 5th St.
International Falls, MN 56649-2243
283-7000

Kootasca Community Action, Inc.

2232 2nd Ave. E.
P.O. Box 44
International Falls, MN 56649-0044
283-9491 or 800-559-9491

Kootasca Community Action, Inc.

1213 SE 2nd Ave.
Grand Rapids, MN 55744-3982
800-422-0312

Arrowhead Economic Opportunity Agency

702 3rd Ave. S.
Virginia, MN 55792-2775
800-662-5711



Parents of high school seniors

Are you aware of North Star Electric's Knowledge Scholarships? To qualify, the parent/guardian must be a member of North Star Electric, and your child must take a test about your cooperative that provides electricity to your home. North Star Electric will be awarding five scholarships, one \$1,000 and four \$400, plus a chance to win one of eight \$50 cash awards for scoring more than 50 percent on the test.

Most of the test answers will be in the study material that North Star provides. A couple hours of study time could pay off with a \$1,000 scholarship. Last year, only 39 students took the test. The information meeting and test will be given in mid-April.

For more information about the scholarships, please call Wayne at North Star Electric or check with the guidance counselor at your school.

Lignite Energy Council's teacher seminar

The Lignite Energy Council will again be offering a lignite education seminar for teachers in a four-state region this summer. To date, more than 2,300 teachers have attended the three-day seminar, which includes tours of North Dakota's power plants and lignite mines.

The 2008 seminar is titled, "Lignite - Our Regional Resource: Energy, Economics and Environment." This year's seminar is scheduled for June 17-19 at the University of Mary in Bismarck, N.D.

The seminar provides teachers with a broader understanding of the lignite industry and the important role it plays in providing electricity to homes, farms and businesses. It also provides teachers with the information and educational materials they need to teach students how lignite is mined and converted into electricity and synthetic natural gas.

Teachers who attend the seminar and complete a lesson plan receive one semester graduate credit in economics from the University of North Dakota.

Minnkota Power Cooperative is sponsoring 10 teachers from its Minnesota service area to attend this seminar by paying the full teacher registration fee of \$60 plus round-trip mileage.

Rooms are provided at the University of Mary dormitory at no charge.

The seminar includes a visit to a lignite mine, a tour of a power plant fueled by lignite, and a visit to the Great Plains Synfuels Plant. A tour of the visitor's center at Fort Mandan, which was constructed with the use of coal combustion by-products, is also included. Fort Mandan near Washburn, N.D., is the location where the Lewis & Clark Expedition spent its first winter.

Teachers from all grade levels are encouraged to attend. Earth Science, Social Studies and Energy Education instructors find the program beneficial in their classroom activities. For more detailed information, visit www.lignite.com/teachers or www.minnkota.com.



**"Lignite - Our Regional Resource:
Energy, Economics and Environment"**

June 17-19

University of Mary, Bismarck, N.D.

