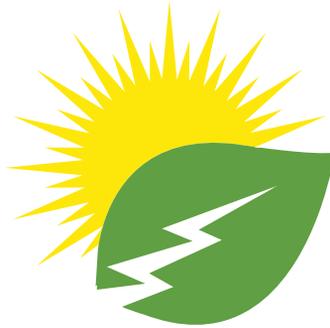




# 2017 Richland Electric Cooperative

## From the Manager... Lesson's Learned

A bit over two years ago Richland Electric Cooperative committed to a project without knowing the finer details of what it would take to complete. We did so knowingly but expecting that none of the finer details would become major issues. We knew we would need to learn a lot but the value of that learning would be beneficial in the future. That project, a significant solar generating station which is part of our Transition Energy program, is now fully operational and closing in on being fully completed.



## Transition Energy

As expected we learned some valuable lessons and are now looking to the future with new knowledge and understanding of not only solar generation but renewable energy in general.

Our first lessons were centered around the extremely intricate details of developing contracts with developers that rely on third-party tax equity investors. For us to extract the tax credit value and use that value to drive down the purchase price for our members, very detailed contracts must be developed for those tax-equity investors to achieve their goal—a tax credit. The market is still very young and there was no standard form of contract which meant there was a lot of work before the deal was even struck. This took more time than we expected but not because of the work itself but because of the schedules of all involved. These contracts were reviewed

*(continued on page 2...)*

## CALENDAR of events

### June

- 14 – Boaz Fun Daze
- 22 – Churning Dirt National Truck & Tractor Pulls
- 26-28 – Youth Leadership Congress

### August

### September

- 4 – Labor Day, REC and Genuine Offices Closed
- 6-10 – Richland County Fair



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## From the Manager... Lesson's Learned

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by banks, tax attorneys, contract attorneys, developers, investors and ourselves and our attorneys. If one entity made one change the whole review started over and that took time.

The actual days of construction time came in right as we expected, but the construction project-as a whole - took almost three months longer than expected. Of course, record flooding and the rain associated with that event ate up an entire month when no work got done. Then early frost and considerable snow put us in a holding pattern for an extra month as well.

Despite all the planning, engineering and field testing, we still found ourselves with some issues nobody expected. The tracking system would work for several days and then some would fail. Panels would be pointed west when the sun was in the east. Originally it was felt that tracking failures were just the result of a few defective parts in one batch of supplies, but we learned otherwise. After several site visits and the installation of a very specific failure analysis process we learned that the

conditions at our site were excellent for lightning damage. After installing equipment to mitigate lightning issues things went well for a month or so. Then, we lost the entire array that serves Dairyland when the panels went into a mode known as 'snow stow' on the hottest day so far this year! Snow stow is the mode the trackers take when heavy snow falls. The panels will position themselves to nearly vertical so the snow will fall off instead of being table-top flat and bearing the weight. It seems the grass and weeds growing near the panels makes them think they are in a snowy condition. This is now being rectified as final field work is being done.

And then there were the weeds. Pollinator plants were fall seeded but apparently, some of what we used to call weeds are now actually welcome sights at our array -per the pollinator experts. The problem is they are outpacing the others we had planted so we're not sure if they are going to take over and crowd out what we expected, or if nature will take its course and in a year it will be what we expected. For now, we are

trying to balance pollinator plants, invasive weeds and aesthetics and that's a lesson we are still learning.

One of the most difficult lessons was how to tell members that participated what was going on when at times we didn't know. We like to have the answers for people when they ask and sometimes it's difficult to tell someone we don't know without them thinking we are stupid. That's why I always tried to make it clear that this was a learning process for us and that was not only o.k., but part of the plan. We recognized we had to address our own ignorance related to these types of projects and this technology and that goal has been met without question.

Thanks for staying abreast of our efforts and for exercising patience as we worked through what has become a national example of a small local electric cooperative that can make things happen from the ground up.

As always, feel free to call or email any comments or questions to [sclark@rec.coop](mailto:sclark@rec.coop).

# Tree and Brush Maintenance

You may notice throughout the summer Asplundh tree services or Richland Electric Cooperative linemen working in your area for tree clearing/trimming and vegetation management. You will receive a notice in the mail if they will be working in your area in the coming weeks. This is a free service that is provided to maintain safe and reliable electric service for you and your neighbors.

## Please keep in mind

- Our line clearance crews are trained to recognize hazardous conditions. They know different tree species and understand how their growth patterns can cause line clearance problems in the future.
- On Residential Trees – Trimming clearance is typically 10 feet underneath and to the side of the line, while all offending branches are removed above the line. Brush will be chipped and the wood will be left for the homeowner. A representative will contact you, prior the work, if the tree is a good candidate for removal.
- On Rural Rights-of Way- In general, all tall-growing species will be cut to a width 20 feet either side of the line. Dead or dying trees that are located beyond the R/W edge may be removed if they are deemed a hazard. Trees with severe lean toward the line, and beyond the R/W edge, may also be removed.

The brush and wood will be piled along the side of the rights-of-way. Trees along the side of the line will be trimmed, if they will contact the line within the next five years. You will be contacted if it is necessary to remove danger trees (of merchantable value) that are located beyond the normal clearing zone.

- Crews may need to access the work by driving on your property. Vehicles will utilize the utility right-of-way or other established roads or lanes which may exist.

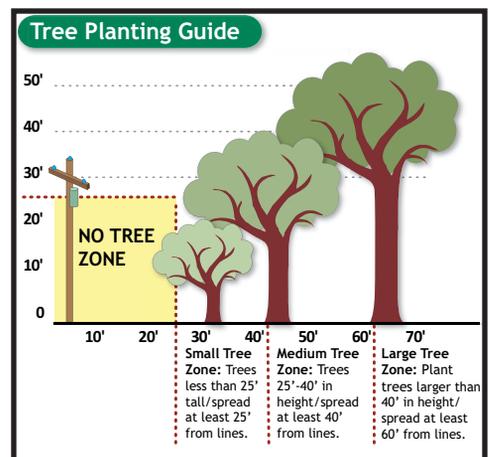
## When it comes to vegetation management here is what you should keep in mind

- Our crews are trained to recognize undesirable brush stems versus desirable wood vegetation. They know different tree species and understand how their growth patterns can cause line clearance problems in the future. Generally, we do not treat low-growing brush such as hazelnut, dogwoods, plum, etc.
- The herbicides are classified as “general-use” by the EPA.
- Crews may need to access the work by driving on your property. Vehicles will utilize the utility right-of-way or other established roads or lanes which may exist.
- The application will be made during the months of June, July, or August

- A tank mix of Garlon 3a and Escort herbicide will be used. The mixture controls broadleaf weeds and brush, but does not kill grass. There is no pasture or grazing restriction for either of these products for all livestock except lactating dairy animals. For lactating dairy animals, do not graze or harvest green forage for 14 days following application. If the powerline right-of-way that crosses your property supports brush and is accessible to lactating dairy animals, **please notify our office in advance.**

If you notice a tree that you think may cause problems please notify the office so that we may take a look.

Trees are the leading cause of lengthy service interruptions to our members. Maintaining trees and brush at regular intervals is vital if we are to supply reliable electric service to you. Your cooperative is essential and very much appreciated.



# WELCOME SUMMER

## 2017 Richland Electric Cooperative

1027 N. Jefferson Street  
P.O. Box 439; Richland Center, WI 53581

[www.rec.coop](http://www.rec.coop)

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Monday–Friday; 8 a.m.–4:30 p.m.

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Call (608) 647-3173; 24 Hours

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**Richland Electric  
Cooperative**

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