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New Outreach Staff intros

Hello! My name is Peter Ripka. My wife Stacy and I have been married for 33 years. We have four children, two who are married, and we have two beautiful grandchildren. I have been dairy farming and crop farming on my family farm in Ogilvie for the past 34 years, as well as being involved on many state and local boards. Previously, I was the Vice President of Kanabec County Farmers Union and participated in as many Farmers Union activities as I could.

I am very excited to start this new chapter my life working for Minnesota Farmers Union as a Membership and Outreach team member. I will be serving northeast and east central Minnesota.

Hello! My name is Diana Rico. I’m very excited to be joining the Farmers Union outreach staff and working with the 11 counties in the Metro area. I raise a small herd of dairy goats near Hampton, Minn., in Dakota County. My family has been raising goats since the 1970’s, but I just started my own project in 2015. I graduated from the University of Minnesota in 2017. Prior to starting with MFU, I worked for AFSCME Local 3937 (U of M Tech Workers) as their organizer. I also worked part time at the Rosemount Marcus Theater which was my job through college.

Some things I am looking forward to over the next few months are the Minnesota Dairy Goat Association State Dairy Goat Show Memorial Day weekend, the MFU Women’s Conference on June 30, and some of the awesome movies coming out this summer.

Meet MFU Intern Brianna Opdahl

Hello! My name is Brianna Opdahl, and I grew up on a pig farm just outside of Alden. This fall, I will be entering my last semester at the University of Minnesota, studying Agricultural Communication and Marketing. I will have finished up classes by December, with hopes to go on a three-week study abroad trip to Norway in the spring. This past summer, I interned at CHS Inc. in Inver Grove Heights as their Stewardship Intern. The Stewardship department consists of a mixture of the CHS Foundation and Corporate, and as the intern, I published news articles for their employee intranet and quarterly newsletter, worked within their grant database, coordinated volunteer events and assisted in the process of designing graphics/communications materials. I loved the work that I did, and I hope to do similar work in the future.

During the summer of 2016, I was a camp counselor for Minnesota Farmers Union. I enjoyed making connections with the camp youth and it was overall a great experience. I am excited to return and explore the other opportunities MFU has to offer.

After I graduate, it is my hope to work with an agricultural organization doing communications work. I enjoy being an advocate for farmers and helping give them a voice to tell their story, and I know that it would be my chance to do so.

When I’m not in school or working, I enjoy reading and spending time outside. I am hoping to do more of both now that the spring semester is over, and I have more time on my hands.
Rural Dairy Discussions
Following up on our successful Rural Voices Discussions, MFU will hold two Rural Dairy Discussions on June 12 and 13 in Paynesville and Mazeppa. These will be a similar format to the Rural Voices Discussions but focus on dairy issues. Please bring any ideas you have for how to resolve the dairy price crisis – we want to hear them. Both discussions will be followed by lunch.

Along with me, representatives from the Minnesota Department of Agriculture and National Farmers Union will serve on the listening panel. All MFU members are invited. We will serve milk, of course.

Rural Voices report
Our report from the 2018 Rural Voices Discussions is open for public viewing. We released the report at a news conference in early May. I was joined by Minnesota Deputy Commissioner of Agriculture Matthew Wohlman; Minnesota Assistant Commissioner of Human Services for Health Care Nathan Moracco; and Minnesota Executive Director of the Office of Broadband Development Danna Mackenzie in speaking to reporters. We sent the report to statewide media, the Governor’s office and legislative leaders from both parties. You can find the full report on the home page of our website, www.mfu.org.

The main issues we highlighted in the report were the need for better health care, better rural infrastructure and better rural internet service. Thank you again to all who attended and spoke up. Your stories make an impact.

House Farm Bill fails
The U.S. House of Representatives voted down H.R. 2 on May 18, which MFU opposed because it did not go far enough to help farmers affected by the agricultural economic crisis. After the bill was voted down, the House voted to reconsider the bill at a later date. Currently they plan to reconsider it on June 22, once members have had a chance to discuss immigration issues further.

We urge the House Agriculture Committee to remove political ideology from the bill and instead focus on what’s needed for family farmers and rural residents, working in a bipartisan manner. MFU thanks Rep. Collin Peterson, D-Minn. and Ranking Member of the House Ag Committee, for his leadership in calling for a better bill. The U.S. Senate has not yet released its version of the Farm Bill.

So far, the Senate Agriculture Committee’s process has remained bipartisan. We hope it continues that way.

State legislative recap
The Minnesota Legislature adjourned late on May 20. The ending of session was a rocky one, coming down to the wire on some major omnibus bills. Gov. Mark Dayton vetoed the omnibus agriculture policy bill, the tax bill and the budget bill. He had strong disagreements with several parts of these bills unrelated to agriculture, but the bills do contain provisions for increases in farmer mental health advocates and $15 million for rural broadband. He is expected to sign the bonding bill, which contains $35 million in funding for the Rural Finance Authority, which was a major priority of MFU. He has already signed a bill instating a moratorium on requiring ditch mowing permits in state rights-of-way.

Thank you to all members who came to the Capitol this year for Lobby Day and who spent time contacting legislators on rural issues. Read more about the legislative session from MFU Government Relations Director Thom Petersen on pages 5-6.

RFS update
In May, the Trump administration met for the final time with lawmakers and stakeholders from the oil and biofuel industries, after months of discussion on tweaking the Renewable Fuels Standard (RFS). Farmers Union and many other agriculture groups were disturbed about the RFS “hardship waivers” given to large oil companies and wanted to see action to stop them.

We were pleased that the group agreed year-round E15 sales should be allowed and

(continued on page 4)
that there will be no cap on Renewable Identification Number (RIN) prices. However, we were disappointed at the announced idea to attach RINs to exported ethanol and the lack of a plan to offset the waivers. These have waived up to 1.6 billion gallons in RFS volume requirements. They take away a market for our surplus corn.

Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Administrator Scott Pruitt and Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue are expected to finalize details of the plan soon. Farmers Union urges the administration not to institute RIN credits on ethanol exports, as this could provoke retaliation from trading partners and take away domestic demand for biofuels. We also urge them to come up with a plan to offset the hardship waivers and expand use of higher blends of ethanol.

Regarding E15, EPA has been working on allowing year-round use of it since October 2017, and President Trump has said that he supports a waiver for E15 use in the summer months, overriding the arbitrary restriction on E15 use in summer months. But EPA has provided no timetable on when they will issue the waiver. Further delays will upend any potential benefits of a waiver in summer 2018. We call on Pruitt and the EPA to issue the waiver and provide economic opportunity for family farmers.

**NAFTA negotiations**

It is unlikely we will have a new North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) deal anytime soon. Speaker of the House Paul Ryan, R-Wis., declared that Congress would need to vote on the deal May 17 for the current Congress to have a chance to approve it. However, officials from both Canada and Mexico indicated they were not close enough to finalizing the deal to meet this deadline and have not met with U.S. officials again. The vote did not take place. However, the Trump administration has indicated it will continue working on a new deal, whenever it can be completed. We urge the administration to handle the renegotiation of our trade agreements carefully.

**MFU Women’s Conference: Overcome. Plan. Lead.**

I am delighted to invite MFU members to our fifth Women’s Conference, on Saturday, June 30, at the New Ulm Country Club. We have three brilliant speakers scheduled, as well as time to network and gather resources for women farmers, and local food to eat. The conference, Overcome. Plan. Lead., is sure to inspire you. Register today at [www.mfuwomensconference.eventbrite.com](http://www.mfuwomensconference.eventbrite.com).

More details are available on page 14.

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**Sweet Pea Risotto**

*From Vivo Kitchen & Donnay Dairy*

**For sweet pea risotto:**

- 2 t extra virgin olive oil
- 1/2 T garlic, minced
- 1/2 T shallots, minced
- 2 oz. sweet peas
- 5 oz. wt. risotto rice
- 1/2 oz. Pinot Grigio
- 2 oz. pea/mint stock (recipe follows)
- 1-2 oz. vegetable stock
- kosher salt, to season
- black pepper, to season
- 2 t Reggiano
- 2 t butter, room temperature
- 1-1/2 oz. goat cheese
- 1/2 oz. crispy prosciutto*, crumbled
- 1/2 oz. pea shoots and arugula
- 1/4 oz. basil, chiffonade
- 1 oz. merlot gastrique (recipe follows)

**For pea/mint stock:**

- 1-1/2 cups vegetable stock
- 4 oz. peas
- 1/2 oz. mint leaves

**For merlot gastrique:**

- 3 cups merlot wine
- 1 cup red wine vinegar
- 1 cup sugar

Sauté garlic and shallots in olive oil until soft. Add peas and sauté 30 seconds.

Add risotto rice and Pinot Grigio. Season with salt and pepper, to taste.

Add pea/mint stock and some vegetable stock, then simmer on low heat, adding more vegetable stock if needed to finish cooking the rice and obtaining the creamy risotto texture.

Add 1 ounce of goat cheese. Add Reggiano. Remove from heat and stir in butter.

Mound in the center of a large pasta bowl. Top with remaining goat cheese. Garnish with crispy prosciutto, pea shoots/arugula, basil and merlot gastrique.

*Note: To make crispy prosciutto, heat oil in a saucepan over medium heat, add prosciutto and fry until crispy.
Annual Minnesota Solar Congress. It is a free public conference that brings together solar supporters from across the state for an opportunity to learn, share stories and celebrate solar energy in Minnesota. The first annual event will focus on solar opportunities in rural communities for farms, businesses and homes. The day will include a series of presentations about solar technology and policy topics.

Topics will include solar 101, the economics of solar for farmers, the state of solar in Minnesota and much more.

Lunch is provided and the event will conclude with a tour of the innovative clean energy projects at the WCROC. MFU is proud to partner with Solar United Neighbors for this event and we hope that you will join us!

For more information and to register, visit www.SolarUnitedNeighbors.org.

### Renewable Energy Working Sessions

It’s almost time again for Renewable Energy Working Sessions! MFU will host five regional sessions in July. These events are to provide more information for our members about wind and solar and talk about the issues in renewable energy.

All are open to the public.

The format for each working session will be as follows:

- 8:30–9 a.m.: Registration – coffee and snacks available
- 9–10:25 a.m.: Programming
- 10:25–10:35 a.m.: Break
- 10:35 a.m.–noon: Programming
- Noon–1 p.m.: Lunch
- 1 p.m.–2:30 p.m.: Site tours – wind and solar

Dates for the first three working sessions are:
- **Mon., July 16**: Common Sense Development, 412 W Broadway, Plainview
- **Tues., July 17**: Falk’s Seed Farm, Inc., 1170 Hwy. 9 NE, Murdock
- **Wed., July 18**: River City Eatery, 344 10th St., Windom

The fourth and fifth sessions are tentatively planned for:
- **Monday, July 23** in NE MN
- **Tuesday, July 24** in NW MN

I’m excited to travel around the state connecting more farmers to renewable energy and providing information on energy efficiency and renewable energy options for your homes and farms. If you have questions about these events, please contact me at (651) 288-4096 or michelle@mfu.org.
Session ends, bonding bill passes
With a little bit of a bumpy finish the Legislature wrapped up their business just before midnight on Sunday night May 20.

After a failed vote on one bill, with less than a half hour to go, the Legislature attached and passed an updated bonding bill and Environmental Trust Fund bill to S.F. 4425 authored by Sen. Rich Draheim that had been a stand-alone Rural Finance Authority bill. Of interest for MFU members in this bill are authorization of $35 million for the RFA, funding for the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP), funding for Second Harvest Heartland and Trust Fund money for fighting Palmer Amaranth. The bill, which passed the House 113-17 and the Senate 42-25, awaits action by Gov. Mark Dayton at the time of this writing.

Governor vetoes Ag Policy bill
Gov. Dayton has vetoed the omnibus Agriculture Policy bill authored by Rep. Paul Anderson and Sen. Bill Weber. MFU supported the legislation that passed the Senate 49-13 and the House 85-37. Included in the bill were provisions for the RFA, updates to the beginning farmer tax credit, language from the Drainage Work Group and a controversial piece that would return control over soil loss back to counties. Members who have questions on this bill should feel free to contact me.

Rule 14.126
The vetoed Ag Policy bill was more notable for what wasn’t in it than what was. Original versions of the bill and the Ag Finance bills included language that Gov. Dayton’s administration objected to that would require legislative approval of the Nitrogen Fertilizer Rule, a.k.a. the Ground Water Protection Act. GOP members had removed that provision and had inserted the Soil Loss provision as a compromise, but the administration also objected to that. In the end, the GOP Chairs of the House and Senate Ag Policy Committees called a hearing and adopted a resolution using rule 14.126, which has been in place for 17 years but never used until now.

The rule says that if the standing committees of the House of Representatives and the Senate with jurisdiction over the subject matter of a proposed rule both vote to advise an agency that a proposed rule should not be adopted as proposed, the agency may not adopt the rule until the Legislature adjourns the annual legislative session that began after the vote of the committees. The Speaker of the House and the President of the Senate shall determine if a standing committee has jurisdiction over a rule before a committee may act under this section.

In the end the committees both passed the resolution adopting use of that rule and most likely will delay implementation of the Nitrogen Fertilizer Rule until next year, pending publishing of the rule in the State General Register. The Minnesota Department of Agriculture does plan to move forward with its comment period on the Groundwater Protection Act as planned.

Tax bill passes, Governor vetoes
Gov. Dayton has vetoed a bill the Legislature had passed that became second omnibus tax bill after he vetoed the first one they sent him. H.F. 947 became the omnibus tax bill and passed the House by an 85-42 vote and the Senate by a 34-33 vote. The bill contains a provision that MFU gets a lot of questions about – conformity to $1 million dollars for Section 179 (accelerated depreciation) from the current $25,000; and language to create a school property tax working group with the goals being to develop one or more legislative proposals for reform of Minnesota’s property tax system that would:

1. evaluate the farmland tax burden from the costs of school capital investments;
2. simplify the tax system used for school district levies;
3. coordinate interactions with the state general levy.

Omnibus Prime budget bill
With the Legislature setting the budget last year, this year’s budget items were all put into one large bill. S.F. 3656 nicknamed Omnibus Prime for its size clocking in at 990 pages passed both bodies on May 19 and was presented to Gov. Dayton. The bill, which contains spending and some policy provisions, has been vetoed. Of interest for MFU in the bill is $15 million for rural broadband, additional dollars for Farm Advocates and farmer mental health. The bill also took money from Farm to School grants, which had worried some MFU members, to pay for the previously mentioned items. The bill also contains legislation MFU has worked on for many years that would allow those with farm permits to drive 40 miles up from the current 20 miles.

Governor signs Ditch Mowing bill
Gov. Dayton has signed S.F. 3569 authored by Sen. Gary Dahms and Rep. Chris Swedzinski that extends a temporary moratorium until April 30, 2019, on Minnesota Department of Transportation authority to issue or require permits to mow and hay in trunk highway ditches. The moratorium does not apply to...
right of way that is adjacent to public lands. An equivalent moratorium enacted by the 2017 Legislature expired April 30, 2018.

**Governor signs Hours of Service bill**

Gov. Dayton has signed HF 3548 authored by Rep. Tim Miller and Sen. Andrew Lang that modifies exemptions from motor carrier hours of service requirements for agricultural transportation. “Hours of service” refers to carrier requirements in federal regulations (incorporated into state statutes with exceptions) on amounts of driving time, periods of rest and logging of on duty and rest times. It further broadens the harvest season to be year-round for an hours of service exemption in intrastate transportation of agricultural commodities and farm supplies within a 150-air mile radius. It also clarifies that the exemption covers all hours of service regulations, including electronic logging device rules. Finally, the bill incorporates a federal exemption into state statute and establishes a year-round harvest season, which has the effect of applying a federal exemption from federal hours of service regulations in Minnesota for interstate transportation throughout the year.

### Buffer Credit

A proposal to provide a $50 per acre buffer credit was ultimately not included in final legislation in either body. The credit would have applied to buffers not enrolled in a federal or state program such as CRP or CREP or land that has been through a redetermination of benefits. Rep. Paul Anderson and Sen. Bill Weber introduced the legislation which had a lot of bipartisan support, but concerns were where the money would come from, either the general fund or the Legacy or Clean Water funds.

### Biodiesel update

Gov. Dayton announced that Commissioner of Commerce Jessica Looman had signed an “Order of the Commissioner” suspending the state B20 mandate until June 30 due to concerns of capacity. Commissioner Looman cited issues with the Brewster biodiesel plant, which produces 47 percent of capacity, not currently having the capacity to produce enough to meet the mandate. Earlier in May, Gov. Dayton signed H.F. 3596 authored by Rep. Paul Anderson and Sen. Bill Weber which made clarifying changes to mandate. MFU will continue to monitor this issue.

### Grant money available to Minnesota livestock owners for prevention of wolf attacks

**Applications due June 29**

New money is available to Minnesota livestock producers to help prevent wolf attacks. The Wolf-Livestock Conflict Prevention Grants provide $120,000 for the upcoming fiscal year (July 1, 2018 – June 30, 2019). Applications are due June 29 to the Minnesota Department of Agriculture.

The grants provide reimbursement for costs of approved practices to prevent wolf-livestock conflicts. Eligible expenses for the grant program will include any or all of the following items:

- Purchase of guard animals
- Veterinary costs for guard animals
- Installation of wolf-barriers which may include pens, fladry and fencing
- Installation of wolf-deterring lights and alarms
- Calving or lambing shelters
- Other measures demonstrated to effectively reduce wolf-livestock conflicts

**“This grant program provides Minnesota livestock owners with additional resources to protect their animals and livelihood,” said Assistant Agriculture Commissioner Andrea Vaubel. “I encourage producers to examine ways they can decrease the chances of wolf attacks and apply for this state funding.”**

Producers must live within Minnesota’s wolf range, as designated by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, or on property determined by the Commissioner of Agriculture to be affected by wolf-livestock conflicts. Any animal species produced for profit and documented to have been killed by wolves in Minnesota in the past is eligible. This includes bison, cattle, chicken, deer, donkey, duck, geese, goat, horse, llama, mule, sheep, swine and turkey.

The grant application must be emailed or postmarked by 5 p.m. on June 29. Work for this grant cycle must be done and expenses reported by June 30, 2019. The application and more information can be found at [www.mda.state.mn.us/grants/disaster/wolf/wolfconflictprevent.aspx](http://www.mda.state.mn.us/grants/disaster/wolf/wolfconflictprevent.aspx).

This is the second round of grants available to the state’s livestock owners after the Minnesota Legislature provided funding to the Minnesota Department of Agriculture in 2017. The first round awarded $120,000 to 25 producers in 12 counties of the state. Grantees are using the money for items like fencing, guard animals and motion lights – all deterrents to wolves.

**Farm Bill vote**

Still catching up on House Farm bill action, the Farm bill was defeated in the House 198-213 on May 18th, with Minnesota Reps. Peterson, McCollum, Nolan and Ellison voting no and Emmer, Paulsen and Lewis voting yes. Rep. Tim Walz did not cast a vote. The House is hoping to re-vote on a modified version on June 22. We will provide updates as they come out.

**Rep. Peterson Statement on Farm Bill**

House Agriculture Committee Ranking Member Rep. Collin Peterson, D-Minn., issued the following statement on the Farm Bill:

“It’s unfortunate the Republicans chose to take this path, and it’s clear from their inability to get the necessary votes from within their own caucus that there are internal fractures they have to contend with. But this is a good opportunity for us to return to the table and fix this bill before we move forward. As I said in my remarks Wednesday, this job is too big for one party. Let’s come together and figure out a bill that works for everyone. We don’t have to let the extremes of our parties. We can and should take the time to get the farm bill right.”

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**Legislative Notes**

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www.mda.state.mn.us/grants/disaster/wolf/wolfconflictprevent.aspx

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Producers encouraged to report prevented planting and failed acres

The cold, wet spring has left many producers significantly behind the average planting period. This is sure to delay acreage reporting for many, and we anticipate busy times ahead at the Gaylord USDA Service Center. USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) reminds producers to report prevented planting and failed acres to establish or retain FSA program eligibility for some programs within 15 days of the final planting date for each crop.

Producers should report crop acreage they intended to plant but were prevented from planting because of natural disasters. Prevented planting acreage must be reported on form CCC-576, Notice of Loss, no later than 15 calendar days after the final planting date as established by FSA and Risk Management Agency (RMA).

The final planting date for corn is May 31, and for soybeans, June 10, in southern Minnesota.

If a producer is unable to report the prevented planting acreage within the 15 calendar days following the final planting date, a late-filed report can be submitted.

Late-filed reports will only be accepted if FSA conducts a farm visit to assess the eligible disaster condition that prevented the crop from being planted. A measurement service fee will be charged.

Additionally, producers with failed acres should also use form CCC-576 to report failed acres. Producers of hand-harvested crops must notify FSA of damage or loss through the administrative County Office within 72 hours of the date of damage or loss first becomes apparent. This notification can be provided by filing a CCC-576 via email, fax or phone. Producers who notify the County Office by any method other than by filing the CCC-576 are still required to file one within the required 15 calendar days.

For losses on crops covered by the Non-Insured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP), producers must file a Notice of Loss within 15 days of the occurrence of the disaster or when losses become apparent. Producers must file a Notice of Loss for failed acres on all crops including grasses.

The CCC-576 is used to report failed acreage and prevented planting and may be completed by any producer with an interest in the crop. Timely filing of a Notice of Loss is required for all crops including grasses. For losses on crops covered by the NAP, you must file a CCC-576 in the FSA County Office within 15 days of the occurrence of the disaster or when losses become apparent or 15 calendar days after the normal harvest date.

If filing for prevented planting, an acreage report and CCC-576 must be filed within 15 calendar days of the final planting date for the crop.

Please contact your local FSA Office to schedule an appointment to file a Notice of Loss. To find your local FSA office, visit http://offices.usda.gov.

DAN MAHONEY, CED
SIBLEY COUNTY FSA
daniel.mahoney@mn.usda.gov

USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer and lender. To file a complaint of discrimination, write: USDA, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, Office of Adjudication, 1400 Independence Ave., SW, Washington, DC 20250-9410 or call (866) 632-9992 (Toll-free Customer Service), (800) 877-8339 (Local or Federal relay), (866) 377-8642 (Relay voice users).
How to comment on the Groundwater Protection Rule

The Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) has released its proposed Groundwater Protection Rule. The purpose of the rule is to minimize potential fertilizer sources of nitrate pollution to the state's groundwater and protect our drinking water. This proposed rule reflects a revision of the draft Nitrogen Fertilizer Rule that was released in June 2017.

The rule may affect the use of nitrogen fertilizer in some areas where soils are more prone to leaching and drinking water supplies are threatened. The rule is published in the State Register and is open to receive public comment until July 26. MFU strongly encourages members to look at the rule and submit comments. During this time period, MDA will hold informational sessions about the rule. The dates and locations are as follows:

Pipestone
Mon., June 18 • 7–8:30 p.m.
Minnesota West Community and Technical College
1314 N Hiawatha Ave., Pipestone

Hutchinson
Tue., June 19 • 8:00–9:30 a.m.
Ridgewater College
2 Century Ave. SE, Hutchinson

St. Paul
Thu., June 28 • 8:00–9:30 a.m.
Orville L. Freeman Building
625 Robert St. N, St. Paul

In the meantime, submit comments on the Office of Administrative Hearings website at https://mn.gov/oah/.

If you’d prefer to comment to an Administrative Law Judge, those public hearings have been scheduled:

Mon., July 16 • 1–6 p.m.
Robert Boeckman Middle School
800 Denmark Ave., Farmington

Wed., July 18 • 10 a.m.–4 p.m.
Stewartville Civic Center
105 First St. E, Stewartville

Thu., July 19 • 10 a.m.–4 p.m.
Minnesota West Community and Technical College, 1450 College Way, Worthington

Read the full rule and other informational pieces with it at www.mda.state.mn.us/nfr.
You may also contact us with your comments.

USDA enrollment period for safety net coverage in 2018

Farmers and ranchers with base acres in the Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) or Price Loss Coverage (PLC) safety net program may enroll for the 2018 crop year. The enrollment period will end on Aug. 1, 2018. Farmers and ranchers are encouraged to enroll now to reduce longer wait times later this summer.

Since shares and ownership of a farm can change year-to-year, producers must enroll by signing a contract each program year. The producers on a farm that are not enrolled for the 2018 enrollment period will not be eligible for financial assistance from the ARC or PLC programs for the 2018 crop should crop prices or farm revenues fall below the historical price or revenue benchmarks established by the program. Producers who made their elections in previous years must still enroll during the 2018 enrollment period.

The ARC and PLC programs were authorized by the 2014 Farm Bill and offer a safety net to agricultural producers when there is a substantial drop in prices or revenues for covered commodities. For more details regarding these programs, go to www.fsa.usda.gov/arc-plc.
Rural America deserves a stronger Farm Bill

By Gary Wertish, President of Minnesota Farmers Union

It’s interesting what can happen in four years. At the time of the last Farm Bill’s writing in 2014, agriculture in the United States was, on the whole, doing fairly well.

When commodity prices began taking a downturn in 2016, it became clear that the farm safety net wasn’t enough to help farmers make ends meet or help new ones get started. Farm income is now less than half of its total in 2014, and it’s projected to reach -$1,316 on average for 2018. Many family farmers are at risk of going out of business. They face uncertainty of what’s going to become of the Renewable Fuels Standard, as well our trade agreements and possible trade wars. Agriculture is a strong part of our nation’s economy and deserves an investment that helps family farmers. Despite this, the partisan first draft of the Farm Bill published by the House Agriculture Committee, H.R. 2, lacked any significant changes to the farm safety net portion of the bill from the previous one. Farmers Union supports increasing reference prices for the Price Loss Coverage (PLC) program, as well as stronger price supports for dairy and a mechanism that manages our country’s oversupply of milk. The programs should be implemented responsibly with payments directed solely to family farmers.

We also must ensure crop insurance remains part of the Farm Bill. Various organizations have spoken out against crop insurance in H.R. 2, but it’s critical in an industry that relies on good weather for success. Crop insurance helps ensure family farmers will be able to remain in business, even if they have a weather-related crop failure.

Another part of the Farm Bill safety net is access to credit. Beginning farmers can access loans through the Farm Service Agency (FSA) to help them get started, and so can farmers who have fallen on difficult times.

Unfortunately, H.R. 2 does not increase loan authority for FSA’s overall loan portfolio or increase the direct loan program, the second of which often provides necessary credit to beginning farmers. As access to credit is one of the most frequently cited difficulties for beginning farmers, behind access to land and health insurance, it makes sense to improve that in the Farm Bill if we want to keep farmers on the land.

Conservation programs are the Farm Bill’s environmental safety net. Farmers turn to the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) and Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) for assistance in developing conservation plans and implementing practices on their land. However, H.R. 2 eliminates CSP completely, making it part of EQIP. This is a mistake. Farmers should have more options for the environmental safety net, not fewer.

The bill also removes mandatory funding for the Rural Energy for America Program (REAP), which incentivizes farmers and rural businesses to improve energy efficiency and install clean energy on their operations. This part of the environmental safety net must remain funded as well.

The last safety net is the biggest part of the Farm Bill’s funding and has had the most partisan debate – the Supplemental Nutrition Access Program (SNAP). It’s a safety net not just for farmers, but for consumers, too. Those who fall on hard times can turn to SNAP to ensure they can get enough to eat while they get back on their feet. Most who use it are working already. Yet H.R. 2 makes these work requirements even stricter, which has cost bipartisan support of the bill. Both rural and urban people turn to SNAP for support; in fact, according to a recent study from the Food Research and Action Center, SNAP participation is higher in rural areas at 16 percent than metro areas at 13 percent. We must not create another government bureaucracy and add more red tape to administering the program. Additionally, we support incentivizing direct farmer-to-consumer sales in SNAP, similar to the Minnesota Market Bucks program. This could provide an added benefit to family farmers.

The Farm Bill is the most important piece of legislation for rural America. It affects not just farmers, but consumers and rural communities, and is best when constructed in a bipartisan fashion. Our elected officials must work together to construct a safety net that can help farmers get through this time of low prices. Rep. Collin Peterson, D-Minn. and Ranking Member of the House Agriculture Committee, opposes the bill because it doesn’t do enough for agriculture. Farmers Union agrees. We thank Rep. Peterson for his leadership in calling for a stronger Farm Bill.

We also thank Sens. Amy Klobuchar and Tina Smith, Minnesota Democrats on the Senate Agriculture Committee, for their time listening to rural Minnesotans over the past couple months, and we know they’ll take what they heard into account as they work on the Senate’s version of the Farm Bill.
Since 1993, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Economic Research Service (ERS) has reported on the farmer’s share of the American food dollar. This is the portion of every dollar that American consumers spend on food that is allotted to food producers. The rest of the dollar goes to marketing, processing, wholesaling, distribution and retailing.

In April, ERS reported that the 2016 farmer’s share hit a record low, bottoming out at 14.8 cents. That number marks a 5 percent decline over the previous year, and the lowest mark for the Farmer’s Share since USDA ERS began reporting on the numbers 15 years ago. The rapid drop shadows the larger agricultural economic picture, which has been grim for some time.

The difference is particularly stark for some specific products. For instance, in 2014, beef cattle farmers were earning $0.44 for every dollar Americans spent on steak. This year, they are only earning $0.22. Similarly, dairy producers, who have been hit especially hard by economic difficulties, have seen a drastically decreased return on investment. Four years ago, milk farmers were claiming more than half of the milk dollar, whereas today, that value stands at just $0.30.

National Farmers Union (NFU) President Roger Johnson noted that new low speaks to the state of the farm economy, corporate control of the food system, and the importance of prioritizing family farm agriculture in national policymaking.

“This figure strikes a chord with family farmers and ranchers who are dealing with the sharpest decline in net farm income since the Great Depression,” said Johnson. “The prices that farmers have been receiving for their products aren’t paying the bills, and too many are being forced to give up farming.

Our nation needs a dramatic, progressive movement towards ensuring family farmers can receive a fair price from the marketplace. Otherwise, we’re going to continue to lose too many of the family farmers and ranchers who feed, fuel and clothe our country, steward our nation’s land and power our rural communities and economies.”

Looking for more information about the Farmer’s Share? Learn about it at https://nfu.org/farmers-share/.

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Did you know that farmers and ranchers receive only 14.8 cents of every food dollar that consumers spend? According to the USDA, off farm costs including marketing, processing, wholesaling, distribution and retailing account for more than 80 cents of every food dollar spent in the United States.

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MFU Offers FREE Agritourism Sign to Members

Thinking of inviting the public onto your farm this summer for a farm tour, breakfast, U-pick, etc.? MFU worked to pass the state agritourism bill in 2015. To be protected, the provider of the agritourism activity must post signs warning attendees of the inherent risks of visiting a farm. These signs should be posted at the entrance to the property and be clearly visible to all visitors. Upon request, Minnesota Farmers Union will provide interested members one FREE sign that meets the specific guidelines in accordance to the Limited Liability Law. With the sign, you’ll also receive a two-page guide to the law that was put together by Farmers Legal Action Group (FLAG). Additional signs for members can be purchased for $7. Signs for non-members cost $10.

To get your sign, contact MFU Operations Director Laura Sherar at laura@mfu.org or 651-639-1223.
Biel Family, Fillmore County
Just a couple miles north of the Iowa border is a family dairy farm, Biel Dairy, which supports three generations of Biels. Including one princess.
The Biel farm family members, consisting of grandparents Eunice and Bob; son Kevin and daughter-in-law Kelly; and grandchildren Kayla, Kelsey, Krissy, Kenny, Kora and Klara, all pitch in to make the 200-cow milking process run smoothly. Kayla is the princess, the Fillmore County Dairy Princess, to be exact. Eunice, who goes by Eunie, is a longtime leader in Minnesota Farmers Union, too.

Always been members
The farmland, which is about 10 miles west of Harmony in southeast Minnesota, was purchased by Bob’s grandparents in 1936, during the Great Depression. Bob grew up there, and Eunie on her family’s dairy farm three miles away. Neither can remember when their families weren’t involved with MFU.

“My dad was Fillmore County Farmers Union President, and my mom attended one of the first Ladies’ Fly-ins back in the 1960s,” Eunie said.

Now she follows in his footsteps as county president and a frequent participant in National Farmers Union Legislative Fly-ins. She’s also Chair of the MFU Executive Committee.

“I love the grassroots involvement of Farmers Union, how we work for better Farm Bill policies and things like that,” Eunie said.

The family cited health insurance costs as one of the most important MFU policy topics to them, as well as the need to simplify the process for transitioning farms to the next generation.

As far as dairy policy goes, they know well the struggles that many Minnesota family dairies are facing. Kevin said he thought a quota system could help with the price crisis.

“A lot of people don’t like it, though,” he said with a chuckle.

Eunie said that a quota system would provide some assurance to farmers so they can know what they’re getting for a price.

“The problem is with the way we have volatility, the prices are low longer than they’re high. You’ll have six months of high prices and two years of low prices, so you’re always playing catch-up,” she said.

While it remains to be seen how the dairy crisis will be solved, know that MFU is always open to hearing from members on how we can help.

Royalty
In Kayla’s words, she’s not the only regal one on the Biel farm.

“Our animals are treated like royalty,” she said. “We care for our animals and make sure they’re content.”

It’s pretty commonly known among agriculturalists that dairy farming is incredibly hard work. As Fillmore County Dairy Princess, Kayla wants to make that truth known to more people and share the goodness of dairy products.

“So far I’ve gone on a few classroom visits and I’ve gotten to read to first graders,” she said.

“I’ve also attended the Minnesota May Event with other county dairy princesses from Minnesota, where they chose the finalists for Princess Kay of the Milky Way. Coming up I have a few parades and malt stand events, and I’ll visit some care centers. Plus, Fillmore County Dairy Night on the Farm on June 16 in Preston.”

Kayla is the oldest of the seven grandchildren. She’s graduating from Fillmore Central High School, where she’s been chapter president of the school’s FFA, and will head to South Dakota State University to study dairy production and pre-veterinary.

Sister Kelsey is this year’s chapter president and will soon become an officer for Region VIII, and sister Krissy is the Junior Vice President for the chapter. All of the children are in 4-H, showing dairy cattle, and help on the farm as they can.

The operation
One thing the Biels consider unique about their farm is that they raise all of their young stock on their land, including steers.

Some people sell their bull calves when they’re born,” Eunie said. “We keep them and raise them up as fat steers, so that’s a little extra income for us.”

The family sells milk to Associated Milk Producers, Inc.’s Rochester plant, where it mostly goes to cheese production. Some of AMPI’s milk is sent to the Kemps plant to be sold as fluid milk, so consumers who purchase it are for sure getting milk from Midwest dairy farmers.

The Biels plant about 1,400 acres of crops, a mixture of land they own and rent, all within a 5-mile radius over three townships.

“We’ve got 300 acres of hay, 700 of corn and the rest is soybeans,” said Kevin. Like many Minnesota farmers, he got slightly delayed in planting because of the late winter and rains, but said he was done with corn.

The farm is in a unique place geographically, on the edge of the hilly Driftless Area, but near the prairie of south central Minnesota.

“It’s kind of the glacier edge here, just go west a ways and it’s flat,” Kevin said.

They are close enough to Rochester, Austin, La Crosse, Wis., and Decorah, Iowa to drive there reasonably quickly.

“It’s a good rural community,” Kevin said.

Celebrate Dairy Month
What’s the best way to commemorate June Dairy Month, according to Kelsey?

“Drink as much milk as possible, eat a lot of ice cream and enjoy string cheese!”

Eunice added, “We need to support our Midwest Dairy Association, too. They do a service by promoting dairy products.”

The family did their part by having a malt stand at Kayla’s graduation party. Kevin and Kelly are members of the American Dairy Association as well as MFU, and Eunie submits resolutions to the AMPI board. She said the resolutions AMPI gets are similar to those presented at MFU state conventions.

The Biel family is just one of our many family dairy farmers in our organization. We thank all dairy farmers for their hard work and will continue to fight for them.
Farm Advocates provide one-on-one assistance for Minnesota farmers who face crisis caused by either a natural disaster or financial problems. They understand the needs of agricultural families and communities. They are trained and experienced in agricultural lending practices, mediation, lender negotiation, farm programs, crisis counseling, disaster programs and recognize the need for legal and/or social services. Plus, most of the Farm Advocates are MFU members.

The Farm Advocate Program has been supported by the Minnesota Department of Agriculture since 1984.

There is no charge or fee for Farm Advocate assistance.

**Farm Advocates:**

- **Jan Boll**  Trail  (218) 268-4472
- **Bruce Lubitz**  Perham  (218) 346-4866
- **Connie Dykes**  Lake City  (651) 345-5149
- **David Elliott**  Isle  (320) 676-3559
- **David Hesse**  Comfrey  (507) 877-3012
- **Dean Hetland**  Eagle Bend  (218) 639-9302
- **Dan Hunz**  Monticello  (320) 743-5660
- **Ruth Ann Karty**  Clarkfield  (320) 669-7135
- **George Bosselman**  Fosston  (218) 200-9432
- **Steve Zenk**  Danube  (320) 894-2517

www.mda.state.mn.us/about/commissionersoffice/farmadvocates

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**Order MFU County Fair Kits!**

Want to share the message of Minnesota Farmers Union at your county fair this year? We can help you!

Each year, MFU compiles county fair kits consisting of MFU logo items you can easily distribute at the fair, at no cost to you. You can either order a full kit, or individual items.

Some examples of items included in the kits:

- Chip clips
- Pens
- Jar openers
- MFU Brochures
- Carpenter pencils
- Copies of *Minnesota Agriculture*

County fairs bring together rural Minnesotans each year. Make it an opportunity to help people in your county learn more about MFU!

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*Please allow 2 weeks to receive your items.*

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**Extension Farm Financial Counseling**

Low prices the past five years have increased financial stress on family farms. University of Minnesota Extension offers free, one-on-one financial counseling to farmers experiencing financial stress.

Here’s what a recent program participant said:

“We called the U of M Extension Farm Financial Counseling program and are so glad that we did. We were assigned an analyst. His knowledge and compassion for our situation helped us understand the options available and allowed us to see a clear direction for our farm. We are grateful for this free, confidential service, and we encourage others to make the call.”

Contact the Farm Information Line at (800) 232-9077 or visit [https://z.umn.edu/FinanceHelp](https://z.umn.edu/FinanceHelp) to schedule an appointment.

---

**Farm & Rural Helpline**

The Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) has extended its “Crisis Connection” telephone hotline service for another year.

The program has renamed the service Farm & Rural Helpline, with the toll-free number (833) 600-2670. You are encouraged to call this line if you need any kind of assistance. It’s available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

If you or any farmers you know would like to speak with Ted Matthews, the state rural mental health specialist based out of MnSCU, his number is (320) 266-2390. He meets with farmers one-on-one and free of charge. No insurance card, paperwork or referral is necessary.

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Minnesota Farmers Union Women’s Conference June 30

Women have made invaluable contributions towards the success of Minnesota agriculture. Yet, they often aren’t recognized for it. That’s why Farmers Union continues to hold Women’s Conferences, both at the national and state levels. We want to bring together our women members to inspire and connect them.

Come to the New Ulm Country Club on June 30 for a day of conversation, education and networking.

We have three talented speakers:

Sarah Lloyd, Wisconsin Farmers Union Special Projects Coordinator and previous candidate for Congress. Sarah will speak about how women can find more leadership opportunities within Farmers Union and the agriculture community.

Meg Moynihan, Minnesota Department of Agriculture State Programs Administrator Principal. Meg will speak on overcoming crises, as she did on her Le Sueur County dairy farm two years ago.

Barbara Heen, Attorney at Law and MFU member. Barb will speak about estate planning basics… and make it fun!

Attendees will have plenty of time to get to know one another in between these insightful talks, with a hearty local foods lunch and snacks available. You’ll enjoy the stunning summer scenery of the club as well.

You’ll conclude your day feeling empowered and ready to make a difference for women in Farmers Union and all of agriculture.

After the sessions, stay and enjoy socializing with your fellow MFU women.

There are plenty of tourist attractions in the New Ulm area, so feel free to explore the area.

The cost for the Women’s Conference is $20; however, if you bring a friend, you can register them for free using the discount code “FRIEND.” Register at www.mfuwomensconference.eventbrite.com.

If you have any questions, please contact MFU Public Relations Director Brita Moore at brita@mfu.org or (651) 288-4068; or MFU Renewable Energy Director Michelle Medina at michelle@mfu.org or (651) 288-4096.

Child care will be available for children ages 5 and up. Contact MFU Education Director Glen Schmidt at glen@mfu.org for options for younger children.

If you need to stay overnight, hotel options include Best Western Plus, Microtel, Econo Lodge and the Colonial Inn.

What: MFU Women’s Conference
When: Sat., June 30 • 9 a.m.–4 p.m.
Where: New Ulm Country Club, 1 Golf Drive, New Ulm, MN 56073
Who: All are welcome!

Why is working with Farmers Union Insurance Agency and MFU important to you? Working with FUIA is a point of pride for me not only because it is a company made of people who genuinely care for their clients, but because I can take pride in the products we offer. I feel confident offering our insurance products to clients knowing they are getting great coverage that is tailored to their specific needs.

What community organizations are you passionate about?
I have been a member of the Randall Fire Department since October of 2015. I have also volunteered for organizations such as Faith in Action where I got to be an on-call volunteer to help with everything from jump-starting cars to helping people move.

Please tell us a little bit about your family life.
I grew up in Clear Lake, MN, and graduated from Becker High School. Currently I live in Cushing, MN, with my wife, Kayla, and my two rescue dogs, Shiva and Bentley (Bentley is pictured below right).

What is your number one concern when reviewing and selling farm insurance?
My main concern reviewing and selling farm coverage has been noticing licensed for road use trailers listed on farm blankets instead of on a farm auto policy. The danger here is, although the liability follows the vehicle the trailer is hooked up to, there may not be any coverage for physical damage to the trailer in the case of an accident or theft while away from the farm premises. It is important that if you use the trailer on the road, and not just around the farm property, that it be listed on a farm auto policy.

Andy Norgaard is our newest Agent, who took over the Little Falls Agency effective April 1, 2018, and has quickly become a rising star in his community. He has been active in the MN Army National Guard for the past eight years as an Abrams Systems Maintainer, and served in both Kuwait and Iraq. Follow the Norgaard Agency on Facebook at @mnfuia.andrew.

Visit our website at www.mnfuia.com and click on “Find an Agent” to find a local FUIA agent in your area.
UPCOMING EVENTS

Breakfasts on the Farm

Fri., June 15 • Goodhue County
7–11 a.m. • Perkins Family Farms, 30301 210th Ave, Red Wing
FFI: Contact Dori Klein, 507-993-1658

Sat., June 16 • Olmsted County
6:30–11:30 a.m. • Behounek Dairy, 21042 710th St., Hayfield

Sat., June 23 • Carlton County
8 a.m.–12 p.m. • Laveau’s Farm, 508 Cemetery Road, Wrenshall
FFI: Contact: Carlton County Farmers Union President Mark Thell, (218) 851-7718; Terri Thell (218) 384-3878 or 4quartersholding@gmail.com

Sat., June 30 • Clearwater County
10 a.m.–1:30 p.m. • Lesley Olson Farm, 19704 240th St., Bagley

Dairy Discussions

Tues., June 12 • Mike & Krista Osendorf’s farm, 22879 Co. Rd. 10, Paynesville

Wed., June 13 • Mazeppa Community Center, 278 First Ave. N, Mazeppa
The discussion will run from 10:30 a.m. to 12 p.m. with meal to follow. There will be a panel consisting of President Wertish, MN Department of Agriculture Assistant Commissioner, Andrea Vaubel and a representative from NFU.

Day Camps

June 11 • 10 a.m.–3 p.m. • Kandiyohi Day Camp • Robbins Island Park Shelter #1, Willmar
RSVP to Helen Hennes, (320) 382-6359

June 13 • 9 a.m.–1 p.m. • Bloomington Day Camp • Izaak Walton League, 6601 Auto Club Road, Bloomington
RSVP to Ted Suss, (507) 828-3377

June 14 • 3:30–7 p.m. • Dairy Day Camp • Fjel-Mar Dairy, 38693 568th St., Zumbro Falls
RSVP to Dori Klein, (507) 993-1658

July 9 • 10 a.m.–2 p.m. • Morrison County Day Camp • Lions Park, Fourth St. SE and Ninth Ave. SE, Little Falls
RSVP to Carol Schmidt, (320) 632-9432

July 10 • 9 a.m.–12 p.m. • Morton Day Camp • Charles Eastman Canoe Landing Park (south of Morton on First St.), Morton
RSVP to Glen Schmidt, (651) 288-4066

July 11 • times TBD • Farmer for a Day • Wilts Family Farm, 505 150th Ave. SE, Kerkhoven
RSVP to Amanda Rosendahl, (320) 815-8670

July 12 • 9:30 a.m.–1 p.m. • Lac Qui Parle County Day Camp • Dawson Swimming Pool (off Hwy. 212), Dawson
RSVP to Deb Breberg, (320) 769-2088

July 13 • 9 a.m.–1 p.m. • Klabunde Farm Day Camp • Bryan Klabunde’s Farm, 2843 140th Ave., Waubun
RSVP to Glen Schmidt, (651) 288-4066

July 15 • 1 p.m. • Dairy Discussion • Berglund Park, Palisade
Contact Aitkin County President Markell Vogt at (218) 670-0056 or vogtfarm@gmail.com

MFU Leadership Camps

There’s still time to sign up for our 2018 MFU Leadership Camps! Go to www.mfu.org/camp to register.

June 18–22 • Northern Elementary Camp (ages 8-11) • Farmers Union Lake Sarah Campground (near Erskine)

June 25–29 • Northern Junior Camp (ages 11-14) • Farmers Union Lake Sarah Campground

July 17–21 • Southern Elementary Camp (ages 8-11) • Sibley State Park (near New London)

July 23–27 • Southern Junior Camp (ages 11-14) • Sibley State Park

July 29–Aug. 3 • Senior High Camp (ages 14-17) • Sibley State Park

FFI: Contact MFU Education Director Glen Schmidt at glen@mfu.org.
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>City</th>
<th>Contact Person</th>
<th>Phone Number</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ADA</td>
<td>Rodney Mathsen</td>
<td>(218) 784-4813</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ALEXANDRIA</td>
<td>Daylon Faber</td>
<td>(320) 763-9455</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BEMIDJI</td>
<td>Ben Caron</td>
<td>(218) 751-7761</td>
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<tr>
<td>BENSON</td>
<td>Tom Hollingsworth</td>
<td>(320) 843-2422</td>
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<tr>
<td>CANBY</td>
<td>Mike Panka</td>
<td>(507) 223-5527</td>
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<tr>
<td>CROOKSTON</td>
<td>Chris Swanson</td>
<td>(218) 281-6724</td>
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<tr>
<td>DAWSON</td>
<td>Deborah Breberg</td>
<td>(320) 769-2088</td>
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<tr>
<td>DETROIT LAKES</td>
<td>Joe McCollum</td>
<td>(218) 844-5970</td>
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<tr>
<td>DUPLICATE</td>
<td>Brad Anderson</td>
<td>(218) 481-0812</td>
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<tr>
<td>ELK RIVER</td>
<td>Rob Pampusch</td>
<td>(763) 441-4250</td>
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<tr>
<td>FARIBAULT</td>
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<td>(507) 726-2961</td>
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<td>Mark Sagvold</td>
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<td>Jake Lund</td>
<td>(218) 564-5300</td>
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<td>Paul Johannes</td>
<td>(320) 523-1150</td>
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<td>ROSEAU</td>
<td>Steve Dostal</td>
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