

RPU Plugged In



Arbor Day
Celebration
2014!

rpu
we pledge, we deliver

12th Annual RPU Arbor Day Celebration Recap

This year's RPU Arbor Day Celebration turned out to be another great event! It's estimated that over 3,000 people turned out to learn about and celebrate the joy of trees!

The day started with RPU line workers and Rochester Park & Recreation workers joining together to plant new boulevard trees along 19th Street NW. A mix of Eastern Redbud, China Snow Lilac, and Korean Sun Pear trees were planted.

As the trees were being planted along 19th Street NW, the setup at the new Silver Lake Park location was well underway. Dozens of picnic tables were set in the middle of the open parking lot with each activity or game spread around the outside. There was certainly something for everybody at this year's Arbor Day Celebration. Activities ranged from an acorn toss game, leaf printing greeting cards, and a scavenger hunt to a bean bag toss game, clowns, tattoos, and a football toss game. As in past years, the line was constant to get a free tree provided by RPU, Maier Tree & Lawn, Rochester Park & Recreation, and Sargent's Gardens.

In addition, there was an awards ceremony held to recognize Rochester elementary school students who were selected as finalists of the 2014 Arbor Day poster contest, as well as this year's overall winner, Annie Orvis, a fifth grader at Washington Elementary. Annie received a \$100 Barnes & Noble gift card, her winning poster will be featured in future RPU advertising, and a tree was planted in her honor at Washington Elementary School (see photos on this page).

If kicking back and relaxing was more your thing, there was plenty of free food and music to enjoy. Smokey Bear even dropped by again this year to take part in the fun with everyone!

Thank you to everyone for coming to this year's RPU Arbor Day Celebration!



RPU and Rochester Park & Rec employees plant boulevard trees as part of the Arbor Day Foundation's The Right Tree in the Right Place program.



Group photo of RPU and Rochester Park & Rec workers who planted trees.



Photos by Josh Banks.



Rochester, MN

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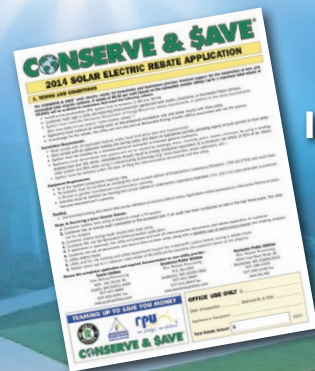
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New General Manager Named

At a special meeting on April 22, the Utility Board of the Rochester Public Utilities (RPU) unanimously appointed Mark Kotschevar as its next General Manager, replacing the retiring Larry Koshire.

Kotschevar is a 32-year employee of RPU and most recently served as the Director of Core Services. Previously, Kotschevar served as Manager of Maintenance and Construction, Senior Electrical Engineer, Project Electrical Engineer, and Electrical Engineer. These positions have given him experiences in electric transmission and its distribution, water supply and its distribution, system operations, and engineering.

Kotschevar has a Bachelor of Science in Electrical Engineering and Electronics from North Dakota State University and a master's degree in Business Administration from Winona State University. He is a registered Professional Engineer and a licensed "Class A" Master Electrician in the state of Minnesota.

Jerry Williams, President of the Utility Board, calls Kotschevar a "great fit for the organization, now and moving it forward into the future." Williams went on to say that "Kotschevar's experiences with both sides of the business, electricity and water, are emblematic of his work at RPU and critical as we look at the many challenges and opportunities that are part of a changing business. He has the foresight and determination to continue to make RPU, the largest municipal in the state, a pre-eminent utility that exists to serve the needs of its customers – the citizens of Rochester."



Left to right: Larry Koshire, former General Manager; Mark Kotschevar, new General Manager; and Jerry Williams, Board President.

Mark Kotschevar began his career with Rochester Public Utilities (RPU) in 1981 as a staff Electrical Engineer. While working as an engineer, he performed distribution, transmission, and substation engineering/construction management. In 1998, Kotschevar became the Manager of Maintenance and Construction, responsible for water operations, along with both the water and electric field crews. In 2008, Kotschevar became the Director of Core Services with overall responsibility for Safety, Infrastructure Planning & Design, System Operations, and Construction, Maintenance & Field Operations of both Transmission & Distribution (T & D) and Water Distribution.

During his employment at RPU, Kotschevar has been an active member of the Emergency Preparedness Team with the City of Rochester and the Minnesota Municipal Utilities Association (MMUA).

Kotschevar became the new General Manager, effective May 1.

When told of his selection, Kotschevar said he was humbled and pledged to do whatever is necessary to continue RPU's positive momentum into the future. "The

utility's core values of safety, integrity, service, stewardship, accountability, and skill will continue to guide us, as they have so successfully done in the past."

The Public Power Formula



Public Power systems, deeply rooted in the history of the United States, are an expression of the American ideal of neighbor helping neighbor – local people working together to meet their local needs. More than 2,000 cities and towns throughout the United States own and operate electric distribution systems and provide many benefits to the 47 million Americans they serve, including:

- **Local control/local decisions** – citizen-owners have direct say in how their utility is managed
- **Cost consciousness** – Public Power is not-for-profit, and spending decisions are made with the community in mind
- **Economic development** – because Public Power is reliable and low-cost, commercial and industrial companies like to locate and operate in these communities
- **Funding for community projects and services** – Public Power revenues stay in the community and provide additional funding for city initiatives and operations

First-Quarter 2014 Customer Satisfaction Survey Results

Each quarter, RPU has a third-party company send out surveys to a random sampling of residential customers for their feedback. When we receive the survey results and comments we try to address all of the concerns and issues that we can. Here are some of the comments that we received along with our answers.

(Note: 24% of all respondents of the first-quarter survey for 2014 had questions about rates or fees on the RPU bill.)

Q. Why do I have to pay a customer charge?

A. The customer charge is for the administration of providing electricity and water to you, as well as for the infrastructure costs to get the service to all customers in Rochester. Whether you use minimal electricity and water or a lot, it still requires the same infrastructure and services, which fall under the customer charge.

Q. My bill has gone up and I haven't changed how I use electricity and water. Why am I paying more?

A. RPU did raise rates this year, which was the first time in a number of years for both utilities. Prior to 2014, electric rates hadn't changed in four years and water rates stayed flat for six years. RPU had a modest increase of 3% in electric rates and 1.5% in water rates for 2014.

RPU also collects the storm water and waste water fees for the City of Rochester even though they are NOT RPU fees. These fees did go up in 2014. Contact Rochester Public Works to get more information on the fees at www.rochestermn.gov or **507.328.2400**.

Q. How can I lower my bill?

A. In order to lower your bill, first you should take a look at your usage. Can you do more to reduce the time your electrical items are drawing power? Use a power strip to ensure that everything is shut down when not in use. Turn your air conditioning off and just use fans intermittently. Lighting is a big electrical user, so reduce the amount of lighting you need or use more efficient lighting options such as LEDs (light emitting diodes). Remember RPU offers rebates on energy-efficient equipment and lighting. Consider having an energy audit done of your home to identify other areas to increase efficiency. Refer to the RPU Conserve & Save® rebate web page for full details.

If you have received and taken a customer satisfaction survey from RPU, thank you for your time. We appreciate hearing that many of our customers are very satisfied with their services from RPU and we are working diligently to answer and address all of the concerns that you shared with us as well.



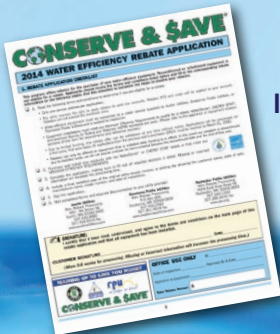
RPU employees who helped pick up garbage for Litter Bit Better.

RPU Employees Help with *Litter Bit Better* Campaign

A team of Rochester Public Utilities employees volunteered to pick up garbage at Foster Arends Park and around the RPU service center as part of the *Litter Bit Better* campaign. Many bags of garbage were collected in both locations, beautifying the park and the grounds for visitors to enjoy and appreciate this summer!

IT'S NOT JUST A DROP IN THE BUCKET...

Since the program's inception in 2006, WaterSense has helped consumers save 487 billion gallons of water and over \$8.9 billion in water and energy bills when they retrofit with WaterSense labeled fixtures and ENERGY STAR® qualified appliances.



Install water-efficient products such as clothes washers, high efficiency toilets, rain barrels, and weather-based irrigation controllers and apply for a rebate on your purchase. Visit www.rpu.org to download a rebate application with complete terms and conditions.



CONSERVE & \$AVE®

Utility Payment Arrangements Available for Military Service Personnel

When a household member has been ordered to active duty, for deployment or for a change of duty station, some customers may find it hard to pay their utility bills. Minnesota law protects military personnel from shut-off if they cannot pay their bill in full. To qualify for this protection, you must enter into and keep reasonably current with one of the payment plans described below.

1. If your household income is below the state median household income, pay 10% of your household's gross monthly income toward your RPU bill.
2. If your household income is above the state median household income, make and keep a payment plan.

3. If you receive energy assistance, pay 10% of your household's gross monthly income toward your RPU bill.

The full statute description for Minnesota Statute 325E.028 can be found on the state of Minnesota website <https://www.revisor.mn.gov/pubs/>.

If you would like to sign up for payment arrangements or have questions regarding the "Military Service Personnel Disconnection Law," please contact RPU customer service at **507.280.1500**.



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RPU Service Center Holiday Hours

The RPU Service Center will be
closed on:

**Friday, July 4, in observance
of Independence Day**

Work Resumes at the 4th Street and 10th Avenue SW Reservoir

Work crews are back on-site at the 4th Street and 10th Avenue SW reservoir to complete the outside finish detail and site plantings. This work is highly dependent on weather conditions. The work is estimated to be completed by the end of June, but significant amounts of wind and rain could push the work schedule out further.

The reservoir is in service and providing an additional 3.3 million gallons of water storage to the Rochester water system. View a time lapse video of the reservoir being constructed on the RPU website, www.rpu.org.



Photo by Josh Banks.