

RPU Plugged In

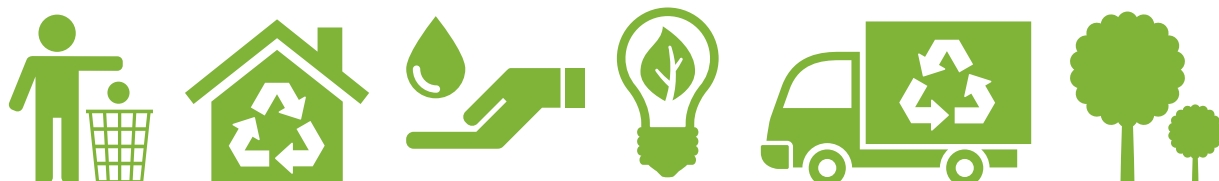


Photo by Josh Banks



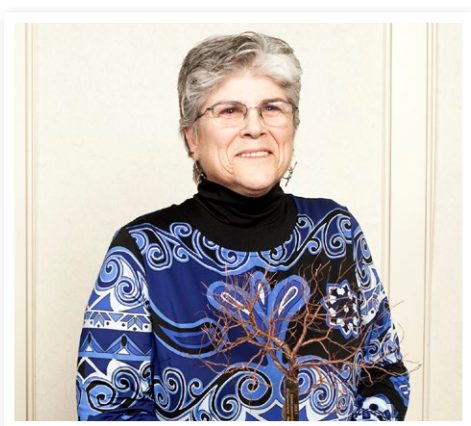
2013 Environmental Achievement Award Recipients and Nominators





2013 Environmental Achievement Award Recipients

This year's recipients represent a wide range of environmental efforts and projects. From businesses and groups to teachers and students, each positively impacted the city of Rochester and Olmsted County in 2013.



Sue Jansen

Sue Jansen



Sue Jansen leads by example in conserving, reusing, repurposing, and recycling. Her residence is maintained as a working example of living lightly on the earth. Water is conserved through strategically placed rain gardens, rain barrels, permeable pavers, and water-smart grasses. Mulch provides most of the nutrients for garden and orchard food production, and native plantings are interspersed throughout the property. She is also working to transform her neighborhood association's 11-acre common space into a native refuge for plants, pollinators, and wildlife.

Nominator: Self-nominated



Pictured left to right: Sister Claren Sellner and Sister Joy Barth

Sister Joy Barth



Promoting water conservation is a passion for Sister Joy. "Without water there is no life," is a quote Sister Joy lives by. To conserve water and decrease waste and runoff, she and the Sisters of Assisi Heights have planted five acres of prairie grass, constructed permeable paver parking lots, installed rain barrels, and retrofitted water-conserving plumbing fixtures. She regularly speaks in schools and to community groups about the benefits of conserving water and reducing waste.

Nominator: Sister Claren Sellner



Pictured left to right: Bob Mapel and Jill Daniels

Bob Mapel



Bob Mapel is a retired teacher who volunteers at Quarry Hill Nature Center and at the Olmsted County Waste-to-Energy Facility. Bob has chosen to continue his work helping people learn about nature and thus connect with it through the many programs he assists with at Quarry Hill Nature Center. He has the ability to draw students and visitors into conversation, sharing his knowledge and passion for the environment, and answering countless questions about the many facets of our natural world.

Nominator: Jill Daniels



Pictured left to right: Kelly Leibold, Anika Hooyer, and Megan Schimek

Kelly Leibold and Anika Hooyer



These two Pine Island High School students have developed a booklet and guided trail map titled, "The Pine Trail: An Environmental Discovery of Pine Island." The booklet highlights three main areas of focus for participants: education, opportunity, and activity. The guided trail map takes travelers around the city to learn about the area's environmental treasures and resources.

Nominator: Megan Schimek



Pictured left to right: Sandy Redalen, Nate Redalen, and Charlie Fried

Nate and Sandy Redalen



The Redalens are long-time environmentally active owners and operators of a beef cattle farm along the Root River in Pleasant Grove Township. They work with federal, state, and local agencies on erosion control, rotational grazing, and livestock watering. They have adapted practices to protect steep slopes, shoreline, and water quality of the river, as well as a large spring and other riparian features. They are instrumental in encouraging and cooperating with research on runoff management and other environmental practices.

Nominator: Charlie Fried



Pictured left to right: Irv Plitzuwert, John Koenigs, Ken Mueller, Merl Winter, and Gene Ohnstad

Mechanical History Round Table



The Mechanical History Round Table members provide the community with an exhibit of how farming was done during the period when there were few chemical inputs in agriculture. The farmland owned by the Olmsted County Historical Society lies within one of the city of Rochester's Wellhead Protection Areas, and the Round Table members farm the land using practices that help assure ground water protection.

Nominator: Irv Plitzuwert



Pictured left to right: Barb Huberty, Kay Erwin, and Jessica Crane

Master Gardeners of Olmsted County



The Master Gardeners provide education on the value of native plants, practices to reduce storm water runoff, proper lawn care, and other topics that help minimize pollutant-laden storm water runoff from reaching our waterways. Gardeners teach classes and workshops on wise lawn-chemical use, planting native plants and rain gardens, and avoiding invasive species.

Nominator: Barb Huberty



Pictured left to right: Barb Depman and Dave Edmonson

Kutzky Park Neighborhood Association



Every year on the third Saturday in April and October, this neighborhood association rallies together to clean up their neighborhood including Kutzky Park, which runs along Cascade Creek. During each event, neighbors on foot, in waders, and in kayaks focus on cleaning the open green space, the bike path system, and Cascade Creek. On average, they collect 20 to 25 garbage bags full of litter including miscellaneous items such as a shopping cart, a sink, and old tires.

Nominator: Rene Lafflam (not pictured)



Pictured left to right: Dan Litwiller, Michelle Schry, and Ray Schmitz

People's Food Co-op



The newly opened People's Food Co-op integrates many green building features including natural day lighting, high efficiency lighting, conserving water fixtures, and an integrated heating, ventilating, air conditioning, and refrigeration system. Additionally, construction materials, appliances, and display cases were chosen based on their environmental footprint.

Nominator: Ray Schmitz



Pictured left to right: Dave Jaeger and Barth Crane

IBM



As part of their focus on conservation, IBM's Rochester facility undertook the "Chilled Water Optimization Project." The results are an annual reduction in electricity use of 10 million kilowatt-hours, water use of 2.4 million gallons, and carbon dioxide emissions of 22 million pounds.

Nominator: Paul O'Sullivan (not pictured)

FREE ENERGY WORKSHOP

**NEXT
CLASS
DATES!**

Tuesday 03.11.2014
Bamber Valley Elementary • 6:30pm

Monday 04.14.2014
Kellogg Middle School • 6:30pm

Attendees are eligible for a
\$50 home energy audit! (\$400 value)



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Learn more at www.rpu.org

Mark Your Calendar!

RPU's 12th Annual

ARBOR DAY CELEBRATION

**Friday,
April 25, 2014
11am-1pm**

Mayo Park
Downtown Rochester



FREE ADMISSION!

- Live Music
- Tasty Food*
- Family Activities
- Giveaways*
- Free Trees*
- Tree Experts On Hand
- Presentation of Poster Contest Winners

*while supplies last



**Minnesota Municipal
Utilities Association**

Tom Bovitz Memorial Scholarships for High School Seniors

Entries Due March 28, 2014



ESSAY SCHOLARSHIP CONTEST:

- * First Place **\$2000**
- * Second Place **\$1500**
- * Third Place **\$1000**
- * Fourth Place **\$500**



Visit www.rpu.org for essay guidelines and to
download a scholarship entry form. Good luck!

A Balancing Act

Controlling Levels of Salt in Our Water Supply

Minnesota's 10,000 lakes and 92,000 miles of rivers and streams provide more than recreational opportunities and pretty vistas; they are responsible for replenishing our drinking water supply. These surface waters have low levels of naturally occurring salts, or chlorides, which are essential to the aquatic organisms that live there. The old adage "too much of a good thing" holds true in this case: high concentrations of salts are harmful to aquatic plants and animals. Unfortunately, our everyday activities have the potential to increase the levels of salt in one of our most valuable resources.



In Rochester, the chemistry of groundwater and surface water is dominated by the widespread presence of carbonate bedrock, like limestone and sandstone. As water

flows through the underground layers, it dissolves rock and minerals that enter our water supply aquifer and wells. Common dissolved minerals are calcium and magnesium. The amount of dissolved minerals determines how hard your water is.

A Salty Situation

To combat Rochester's hard water, residents and businesses use water softeners. Softeners use salt to remove the hardness from the water, which then increases the concentration of salts that go down the drain. This wastewater is delivered to the Water Reclamation Plant to remove pollutants; however, their current processes cannot remove the chlorides in a cost-effective way before it is discharged to area waterways. Instead, it is up to people using softeners to help reduce the amount of salt going down the drain and prevent it from entering our lakes, streams, and groundwater by:

- Properly calibrating your softener to 17 grains per gallon, which is the hardness of Rochester's water supply.
- Reducing the frequency of regeneration cycles to once a week on a timed softener.
- Considering replacement of your old water softener with a newer, more efficient model that regenerates based on a sensor or flow meter.

If you need help with any of the above recommendations, contact your water softener dealer or manufacturer.

In a Pinch: Salty Surfaces Lead to Environmental Impacts



In addition to wastewater contribution, our winter habits also contribute to the amount of salt entering surface waters.

When winter rolls in, residents rely on de-icing products to make travel safe. When the snow and ice melt, whatever products we have spread on our paved surfaces will wash into the nearest storm drain, through the storm sewer, and into our lakes and rivers. Unlike many other types of pollutants, dissolved pollutants like salt cannot be treated by the City's storm water ponds. According to the University of Minnesota and the Minnesota Department of Transportation, research indicates that 78% of salts applied to pavements are retained in area water bodies.

The majority of these products are coming from the treatment of roads and highways and our City, county, and state roadway maintenance staff is shifting to using calibrated equipment and anti-icing techniques to reduce the amount of salt applied to roads. Residential practices also contribute to the problem; individuals can help keep surfaces and waterways safe by:

- Using muscle power! The more snow you remove manually, the less salt you will need to apply.
- Matching the right product to the conditions; deicing salts stop working at certain temperatures. Use sand for traction when it is too cold for salt.
- Applying salt sparingly and using a spreader to assist in dispersing the proper amount of product. Sweep up extra salt and sand.

What about My Drinking Water?

Chlorides in Rochester's drinking water are very low today. However, we must remember that our groundwater is replenished by surface water and the actions we make on the land surface could have drastic effects on groundwater quality in the future. Make an effort today to reduce salt introduced into the environment to help keep Rochester's drinking water salt-free for future generations!



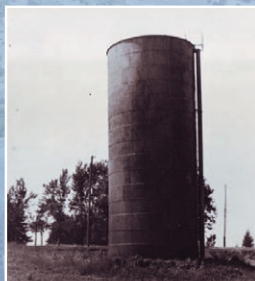
Sisters of Saint Francis at Assisi Heights Receive Solar Rebate from RPU

Pictured left to right: Dirk Bierbaum (RPU), Dick Hines (Mayo), Sister Marlene Pinzka and Sister Marilyn Geiger

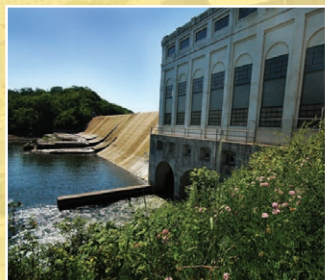
Celebrating 120 Years of Serving the Rochester Community

* March 14, 1894-2014 *

THEN



NOW





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Cold Weather Rule Window Ending Soon

The Minnesota Cold Weather Rule window is coming to an end on April 15. If you are behind on paying your RPU bill, please contact RPU customer service to make arrangements to bring your account current by April 15.

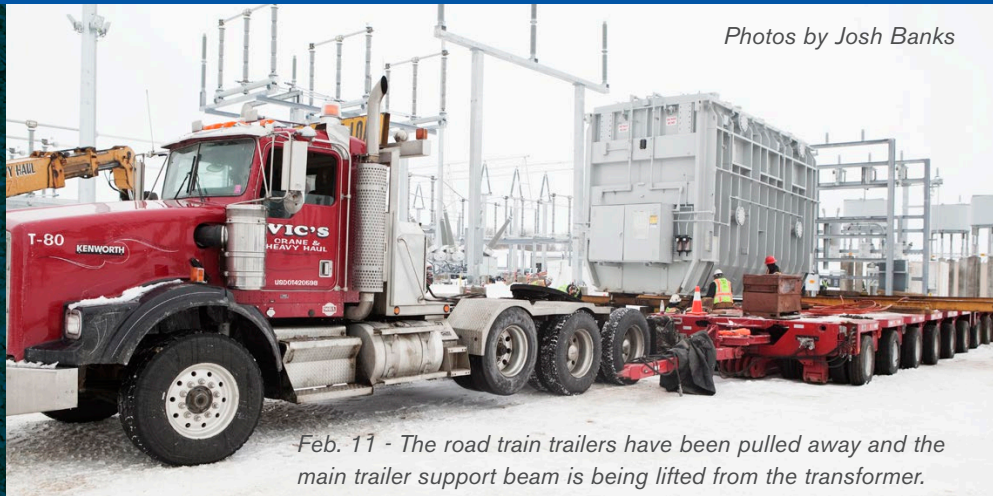
If no arrangement has been made and your account is not current as of April 15, your electric service may be shut off for non-payment. RPU customer service is available from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Friday to assist you.

Visit the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission website for full details on the Minnesota Cold Weather Rule:
www.puc.state.mn.us/puc/consumers.

Water Testing Reminder

Continue to test the temperature of your water. If it measures below 40 degrees Fahrenheit, start running a pencil-width stream of water from a faucet. See the real-time frost level for Rochester on the RPU website, www.rpu.org.

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Photos by Josh Banks

Feb. 11 - The road train trailers have been pulled away and the main trailer support beam is being lifted from the transformer.

Transformer Delivered to the North Rochester Substation

Did you know? Part of the CapX2020 transmission project to increase electric reliability to Rochester and the region includes some interesting facts:

- Took over four hours to move it from Randolph, MN, to the substation near Pine Island, MN.
- Transformer weighs approximately 584,000 pounds.
- It took over a year and a half to build.
- The truck was 385 feet long.



Feb. 11 - Two giant cranes dismantle the road train in preparation for the final move into the substation.



Feb. 13 - The crew from Vic's Crane Service & Heavy Haul have successfully placed the transformer on a permanent base in the new North Rochester Substation.