

## Butler Logistics Park continues to grow with new soy facility

**A** new soybean crushing plant is set to propel value-added agriculture forward in Iowa and is now under construction at the Butler Logistics Park northwest of Shell Rock.

Mid-Iowa Cooperative, a farmer-owned cooperative based in east-central Iowa, and Mike Kinley, Mid-Iowa's CEO, are leading the effort to create Shell Rock Soy Processing (SRSP), LLC. When operational in 2022, this plant will crush 38.5 million bushels of soybeans annually, or 110,000 bushels daily and will create 50 to 60 high-quality jobs.

"We're positioned to extract all the value possible from locally-grown soybeans," Kinley said. "This plant can supply both food and fuel needs, and it will bring Butler County and surrounding areas into the center of the global ag economy."

Mid-Iowa will own a portion of SRSP, which will cost approximately \$270 million, and is currently seeking investors for the project. Mid-Iowa will also help originate soybeans for the plant, where a groundbreaking took place mid October 2020.

### Butler County REC to see benefit

Craig Codner, CEO/general manager, Butler County REC, says attracting plants like this is great for the cooperative.

"Butler County REC's board of directors and employees have a vision for the future and this includes development of our six industrial parks," he said. "The soy processing plant in particular means job opportunities for our members, revenue for local businesses, an increased tax base for the county, and load growth for us. We are excited for the potential for businesses currently in the park and businesses that



### New load

**Above** | Tyler Baxter (right), engineer III, Corn Belt Power Cooperative, looks at potential infrastructure plans at the Butler Logistics Park with the cooperative's new operations engineer Neil Smith. Butler County REC will serve the new Mid-Iowa Cooperative soy processing plant.

may be considering Butler Logistics Park."

Codner says bringing the plant to the Butler Logistics Park was a team effort.

"With any project such as this, there are many parts that have to come together as a whole," he said. "Rick Whalen, who was our economic development director, put in many hours toward this project. Katie LaBree, our new business development manager, is picking up where Rick left off when he retired. We have a tremendous working relationship with the Butler-Grundy Development Alliance headed by Jeff Kolb. Jeff was instrumental in attracting the plant to the park. In addition, we worked with Iowa Northern Railroad, specifically Dan Sabin and his people, and numerous other entities to bring this to fruition. I cannot say enough about Jeff and about Dan and his team. This was a true partnership with everyone's goal the same—bring the plant to Butler Logistics Park."

### SRSP, by the numbers

The facility will produce 847,000 tons of soybean meal per year (2,420 tons per day) for livestock feed markets, 462 million pounds of crude soybean oil per year (1.32 million pounds per day), and 77,000 tons of pelleted soybean hulls per year (220 tons per day). The soybean meal and soy hulls (which contain highly digestible fiber) will be used in livestock feed rations.

"SRSP will add tremendous value to soybeans in the eastern part of Iowa," said Mike Knobbe, an SRSP developing partner with Kinley. "This plant will also benefit the livestock sector by providing high-quality, 48 percent protein soybean meal."

Codner says attracting business like SRSP is critical to Iowa's rural economy, specifically the success of the Butler Logistics Park.

"Our partners' vision for the park is the same as ours — *Continued on back cover*



**Above** | Tom Hanrahan, system operator, monitors system interconnections in the control center late November.

## What it takes to be a system operator:

### Corn Belt Power's newest operator explains

**T**hink being behind the controls of a generation and transmission company's control center is easy? Think again.

Jake McCullough, system operator, passed the North America Electric Reliability Corporation Reliability (NERC) Coordinator test in July. The test isn't just any run-of-the-mill test. Since he's the most recent to pass, we asked him what it takes to pass the test and be a system operator.

In May, McCullough started his new position, training as a system operator. In order to become a full-fledged system operator, McCullough and all system operators must maintain a Reliability Coordinator or a Transmission Operator certification through NERC.



**Jake McCullough**

It takes months of training and studying to earn the certification.

"I started with an online course called SOS," said McCullough. "It basically touches on all four certifications through NERC. It's filled with narrative led modules and practice tests designed to help me through to the actual NERC test. I probably went through SOS three times over the course of my two months of study."

McCullough says in training he relied on the help of his coworkers to get up to speed.

"We had practice tests in here made up from previous, present, and exterior operators," he said.

"I also chose to stay out on the desk while I studied, so I could ask questions and learn things from each operator in here. When I needed quiet, I would put on my noise cancelling headphones, threw on some music or SOS on my laptop, and studied away."

The test is designed to ensure only those that are capable are behind the controls.

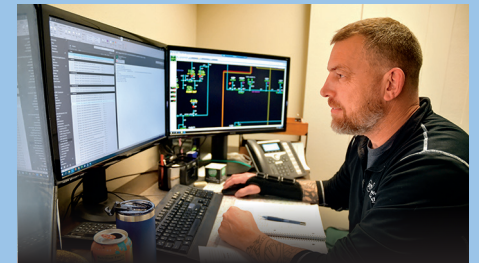
"It is a brutal test, full of multiple choice questions designed to make you think twice," said McCullough. "It has 140 questions, 20 of which are experimental questions that aren't scored and are impossible to tell apart. You have to take the test at a designated testing center and you only have three hours to complete it. You also have to get a 92 out of 120 to pass."

Just passing the test doesn't mean McCullough gets his own shift.

"It was a long two months, spent a lot of time at home studying as well, but it paid off," he said. "I learned a lot and now I'm just ready to learn everything I can from the operators in here that is pertinent to Corn Belt. I had an additional two to three months of training in here before I took my own shift."

McCullough began his own shift in late November.

System operators supervise the Corn Belt Power control center 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year. NERC certified operators include: Chris Bruening, Tom Hanrahan, Joel Harklau, Jeff Lindaman, Mitch Thompson, Jon Behounek and McCullough. ■



**Above** | Chris Bruening, outage coordinator, runs a next-day analysis for system contingencies.

## Touchstone Energy virtual tour hits Iowa

**T**ouchstone Energy national staff "traveled" to Iowa on a virtual road trip on Thursday, Nov. 12.

Iowa's generation and transmission cooperatives with help from Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives organized the statewide virtual event.

Those in attendance met Jana Adams, Touchstone Energy Cooperative's new

executive director.

Among other highlights, attendees also learned about the Best In Class Model, discovered resources to increase member engagement, got a sneak peek at the National Survey on the Cooperative Difference and learned about the latest features in Co-op Web Builder from Touchstone Energy staff. ■



# News in brief

## Dickey elected secretary-treasurer of NREDA board

The National Rural Economic Developers Association (NREDA) has unanimously elected Brittany Dickey to the role of Secretary-Treasurer of the Board of Directors. Dickey will assume her role on January 1, 2021.

Dickey, a certified Economic Development Finance Professional (EDFP), is the Development Finance Director for Corn Belt Power Cooperative, a wholesale power supplier to nine-member electric cooperatives in northern Iowa. She oversees the Corn Belt Power Cooperative Revolving Loan Fund that totals \$7.5 million and assists member cooperatives with their respective revolving loan funds that total over \$12 million. In addition to being a part of the Loan Review Committee for Corn Belt Power, she also is on the Loan Review Committees for several of their member cooperatives.



Brittany Dickey

“NREDA has been very important to me during my career as I have been a member since 2009,” said Dickey. “I have been on the board for almost two years and serve as the co-chair of the Professional Development committee. I look forward to serving in a leadership role and staying involved in the organization.”

Prior to serving on the board, Dickey was one of the NREDA Financial Analysis 101 workshop presenters and received the NREDA President’s award in 2018.

“We are very pleased to have Brittany join the Executive Committee as Secretary-Treasurer and continue through the chairs of leadership to serve the members and advance NREDA’s mission,” said NREDA President Nikki Pfannenstiel.

NREDA is an organization of economic development professionals focused upon the issues and opportunities of rural America. It is dedicated to meeting the unique needs of its membership through ongoing education and networking programs, while serving as an information source and conduit for developers, site selectors and prospective businesses to NREDA members and the areas they serve. For more information about NREDA visit [www.nreda.org](http://www.nreda.org).

## Turn in your volunteer hours for a chance to win \$500

It’s not too late to turn in volunteer hours for this year if you’re a member-cooperative employee or a Corn Belt Power Cooperative employee.

Turn in your hours in online by Jan. 10, 2021 and you’ll be entered into the monthly drawing for \$100 to be donated to a charity or cause of your choice.

<http://bit.ly/TSEChallenge2020>

If you have not logged volunteer time this year and have volunteered more than 50 hours, we invite you to log those hours and you’ll be entered into the \$500 grand prize drawing.

Contact Marena Fritzier or Ryan Cornelius at Corn Belt Power with questions.



Enter for a chance to win \$500 toward your charity or cause of choice. Log your Touchstone Energy Volunteer Challenge hours online by Jan. 10, 2021.

<http://bit.ly/TSEChallenge2020>



## Momentum is Building 2021 canceled

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, out of an abundance of caution, in November Iowa’s generation and transmission (G&T) cooperatives made the difficult decision to cancel the 2021 Momentum is Building conference. Momentum is Building is an energy efficiency conference attended by Iowa contractors, tradesmen and builders who have the opportunity to earn CEUs at the event.

“This was a difficult decision to make,” said Ryan Cornelius, vice president corporate relations, Corn Belt Power. “It became clear that logistically a conference scheduled for early 2021 would be difficult, if not impossible to pull off. As electric cooperatives, safety is paramount to all of our missions. We want to err on the side of caution.”

The planning group considered options for a socially distanced in-person event along with options to hold virtual sessions in 2021, but the alternatives were not feasible and would not provide the collaborative environment attendees and exhibitors have come to expect.

Through the annual Momentum is Building conference, the Touchstone Energy Cooperatives of Iowa aim to provide attendees with continuing education credits, networking opportunities, presentations by recognized industry energy efficiency and building trades experts, along with exhibits on state-of-the-art technologies. The goal is to promote energy efficiency and beneficial electrification through education, training and collaboration for industry professionals and influencers.

The organizers are looking forward to hosting an in-person MIB conference in February 2022 at the Prairie Meadows Conference Center in Altoona. ■



**November Touchstone Energy Volunteer Challenge winner | Norb Boyle**, director, Grundy County REC donated his \$100 prize drawing to Ackley Food Pantry.

# Merry Christmas and Happy New Year



Corn Belt Power offices will be closed Dec. 24, 25 and Jan. 1.

## Soy processing (continued from cover)

...to help our citizens and communities," Codner said. "There has to be a high-level of trust between all entities. The organizations we work with know they can trust us. In addition, having Iowa Northern in the park is a huge asset for us. We have also always been able to rely on the Butler County board of supervisors to support the park, and Corn Belt Power Cooperative is always willing to build infrastructure for us. Everyone involved knows the importance of rural vitality in Iowa."

\*\*A portion of this story was taken from a Mid Iowa Cooperative press release.

## Corn Belt Power Cooperative **Watts Watt**

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