



**For Immediate Release**

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**Partnership Brings Benefits of Community Solar to Vernon Electric Cooperative Members**

Vernon Electric Cooperative, Couleecap, and the Public Service Commission’s Office of Energy Innovation are partnering to bring the benefits of community solar to our area. Vernon Electric’s completion of the Bluff Prairie Community Solar Array, situated in the Town of Wheatland near Red Mound, brings a new source of local solar generation to the region. The 1.5 MW (megawatt) array houses 3,276 bifacial panels on single-axis trackers to allow for maximum power generation. 1,966 panels will be available to members for community solar subscriptions, including the Energize Wisconsin program. [Click here for complete news release](#)

Electric Cooperatives throughout the country have a common goal of providing safe, affordable, and reliable electricity to the members they serve. Development of the Bluff Prairie Solar project was coordinated with nine other electric cooperatives and OneEnergy to get a better price and return on investment for the members. In total, 22 MW of new solar generation is coming on-line at electric cooperatives across the state over the next few months.

A significant portion of the Bluff Prairie Solar array, approximately 60%, is designed for community solar. “The primary goal of this project was to provide economical solar opportunities to as many members as possible, as we work to diversify our energy portfolio.” stated Craig Buros, CEO/General Manager at Vernon Electric. This objective aligned perfectly with Couleecap Inc., the local community action agency that provides weatherization services and aims to bring community solar to those facing the highest energy burdens.

The result is the creation of the Energize Wisconsin program, which was made possible through a \$250,000 grant from the Wisconsin Office of Energy Innovation. The program’s mission is simple: to reduce electricity costs for households with high energy burden by offering free access to community solar benefits. Households may be auto-enrolled in the program if they qualify for state energy assistance benefits and have a high energy burden, or their energy costs are a significant amount of their income.

Couleecap and partners held interviews and focus groups with Vernon Electric members who would qualify for the program to gather valuable insights which helped lay the foundation of the program.

Under the Energize Wisconsin program, Couleecap will act as a subscriber on behalf of eligible households for a portion of Vernon Electric’s Bluff Prairie community solar array. The grant will be distributed over ten years, amounting to \$25,000 per year, with an additional \$2,500 per year from Vernon Electric. The combined grant and Vernon Electric contributions are estimated to generate 528,000 kWh per year, resulting in annual bill credits of more than \$30,000 for income-eligible members.

Hetti Brown, Executive Director for Couleecap Inc. stated, “We are excited to bring solar access to utility customers who have the highest cost burden. Cost is a steep barrier for many households interested in solar participation. With the program Energize Wisconsin, we are removing that barrier. Couleecap appreciates our



partners at Vernon Electric Cooperative and the WI Office of Energy Innovation for funding and collaborating with us on this project.”

“From the state’s first-ever clean energy plan to the Office of Energy Innovation, our Administration is working to remove barriers to clean energy to protect our environment, bolster our workforce, and invest in sustainable industries that will support the well-being of Wisconsinites for years to come,” said Gov. Evers. “So, I am thrilled to see the Bluff Prairie Solar array project and the Energize Wisconsin program come to fruition, and I thank Vernon Electric Cooperative and Couleecap for their leadership to ensure folks see the full benefits of community solar.”

For more information on:

Bluff Prairie Solar, please visit [www.vernonelectric.org](http://www.vernonelectric.org)

Energize Wisconsin, please visit [www.couleecap.org/solar.html](http://www.couleecap.org/solar.html)

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