



**You Asked, We Answered:
“Why is RPU allowing
invasive plants like wild
parsnip and thistle to grow
in its pollinator project?”**

Details on page 3

SEP / OCT
2026

Planning Today for Rochester's Water Future

For more than 110 years, Rochester has relied on a safe and reliable water system to serve our community. As Rochester continues to grow, RPU is looking ahead to ensure that same level of service continues for generations to come.

Rochester currently uses groundwater as its drinking water source, but growing demand, evolving water quality standards and state requirements mean we need to carefully evaluate how we will meet the community's long-term water needs. Annual water demand is projected to grow from approximately 4.8 billion gallons today to 8.1 billion gallons by 2065.

To prepare for these changing needs, RPU is taking a comprehensive look at Rochester's water system and how we can best meet the community's needs for decades to come. This work includes extensive groundwater modeling and evaluating potential groundwater

and surface water sources. The goal is to better understand our options and determine a responsible, sustainable path forward that protects our natural resources while providing the water our growing community needs.

Results from the current study are expected this fall and will help guide future planning for water supply, treatment and distribution. At the same time, we will continue making strategic investments in our existing water infrastructure to maintain the safe, reliable service our customers depend on every day.

Planning for our water future is a long-term effort, but the goal is simple: make thoughtful decisions today to ensure Rochester has safe, reliable and sustainable water for the next generation and beyond.

In this issue of Plugged In, you'll also find an update on a major milestone for the Adams Wind project, important Cold Weather Rule information, Public Power Week goodie bags and a coloring contest for kids, upcoming Neighborhood Energy Challenge workshops, and the latest on RPU's advanced metering project.



Tim McCollough
General Manager,
Rochester Public Utilities



Free Halloween Goodie Bags & Coloring Contest for Public Power Week

National Public Power Week is Oct. 4-10, 2026, and RPU is celebrating by highlighting the benefits of community-owned public power.

Kids can stop by the RPU Service Center throughout September and October to

pick up a free Halloween goodie bag and a Wally Watt coloring sheet while supplies last.

Coloring sheets must be returned by Oct. 31 to be entered into the coloring contest. The winner will be selected in

early November and receive prizes!

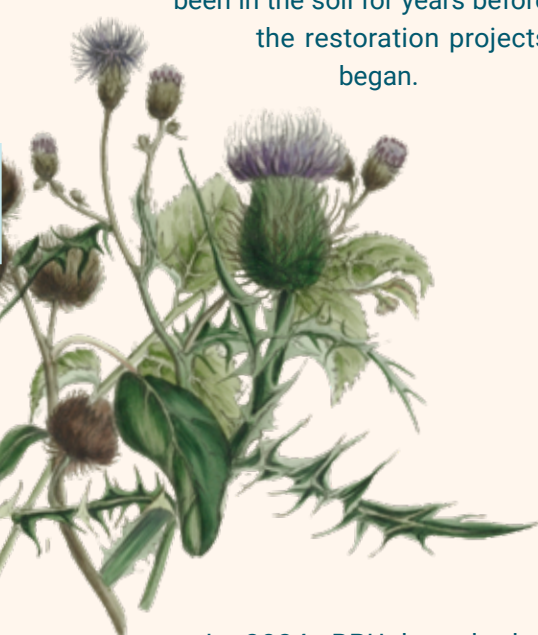
We look forward to celebrating Public Power Week with the community and seeing all the colorful entries!





You Asked, We Answered:

“Why is RPU allowing invasive plants like wild parsnip and thistle to grow in its pollinator project?”



We appreciate hearing from customers who care about our community's natural spaces. Creating healthy pollinator habitats doesn't happen overnight. While RPU's pollinator corridors are planted with native grasses and wildflowers, it is common for invasive plants to appear during the first few growing seasons. Many of these plants grow from seeds that have been in the soil for years before the restoration projects began.

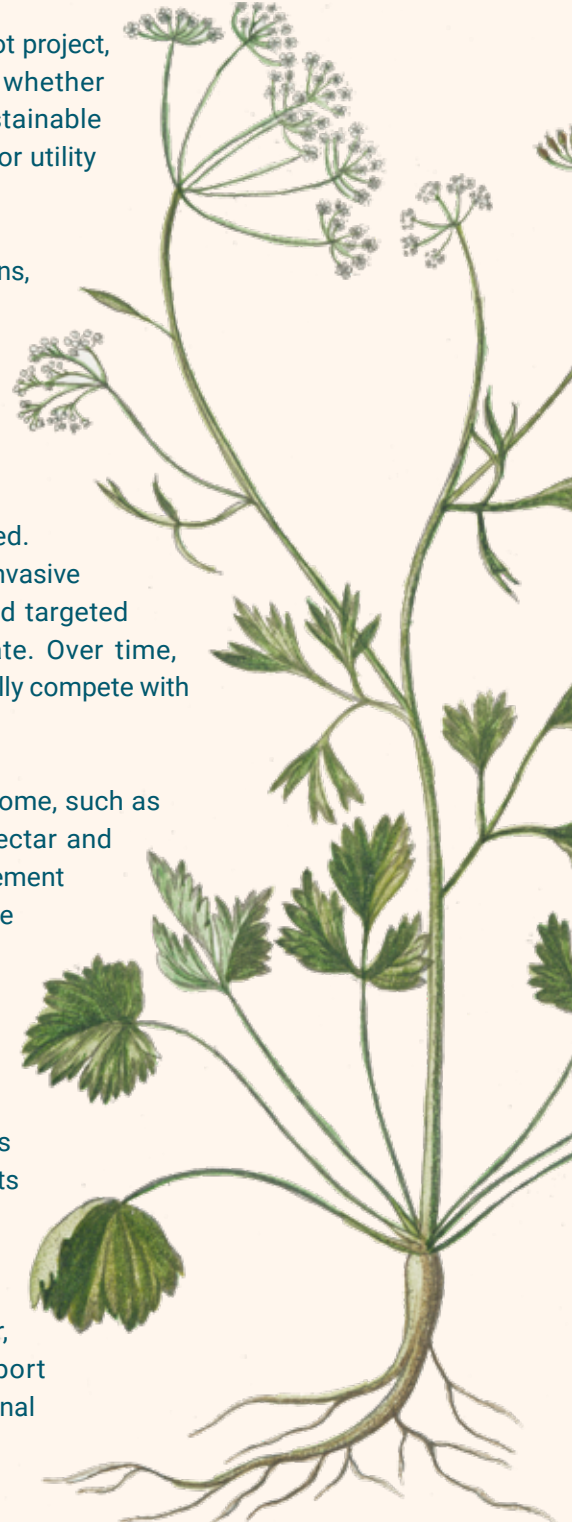
In 2024, RPU launched a three-year project in partnership with the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) to transform two electric transmission corridors into pollinator-friendly habitats. These corridors are being restored with native vegetation that supports bees, butterflies, and other beneficial insects while also reducing soil erosion, improving water quality, and maintaining safe and reliable access

to RPU's electric infrastructure. As a pilot project, one of its objectives is to evaluate whether this approach is an effective and sustainable long-term land management practice for utility corridors.

RPU works closely with Prairie Restorations, Inc., a company specializing in native habitat establishment and management, to monitor the sites and manage invasive species. Restoration is a gradual process, and invasive plants are expected during the early years as native vegetation becomes established. The sites are routinely evaluated, with invasive species managed through mowing and targeted herbicide treatments when appropriate. Over time, healthy native plant communities naturally compete with and suppress many invasive species.

Fun fact, not all thistles are invasive. Some, such as native field thistle, provide valuable nectar and habitat for pollinators. Effective management requires distinguishing between invasive species that should be controlled and native plants that contribute to a healthy ecosystem.

Because these corridors are only in the early stages of restoration, customers may continue to see some invasive plants during the establishment period. As the pilot project progresses, the native grasses and wildflowers will become more established, resulting in healthier, more diverse landscapes that support pollinators while meeting RPU's operational and environmental goals.





Understanding the Minnesota Cold Weather Rule

The Minnesota Cold Weather Rule helps protect eligible residential customers from utility service disconnection during the winter months. The program applies from Oct. 1 through Apr. 30 and follows the requirements of Minnesota Statute 216B.097.

♦ Who is eligible?

Residential customers may qualify for Cold Weather Rule protection if:

- Their household income is at or below 50 percent of the state median income. RPU may verify income directly or through the local energy assistance provider.
- They receive public assistance, including energy assistance, that uses the same income eligibility guidelines.
- They enter into a payment agreement based on their household's financial resources and make payments by the agreed upon due date.
- They receive referrals to energy assistance, weatherization, conservation or other programs that may help lower energy bills.

If these conditions are not met, utility service may be disconnected for nonpayment during the Cold Weather Rule period.



♦ How to receive protection

Customers must complete a Cold Weather Rule application to receive protection from service disconnection during the cold weather period.

Before disconnecting residential service between Oct. 1 and Apr. 30, RPU will provide:

- A notice of proposed disconnection.
- An explanation of the customer's rights and responsibilities.
- Information about local energy assistance providers.
- A form to declare an inability to pay.
- Information about payment plans and other options to help maintain utility service.

RPU is also required to notify the local energy assistance provider before a residential service disconnection.



◆ Local Energy Assistance

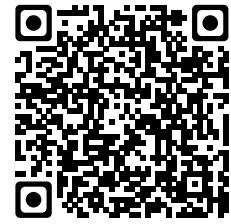
Three Rivers Community Action provides energy assistance for eligible households.

Phone: **800-277-8418**

Website: **threeiverscap.org**

◆ Applications and Forms

Scan the QR code to access the Cold Weather Rule Application and Third-Party Notification Request Form or contact RPU Customer Care at **507-280-1500** for assistance.



◆ Third Party Notification

Customers who are elderly, have an illness, plan to be away during the winter or have limited English proficiency may designate a trusted third party, such as a family member, friend or community organization, to receive notice if a disconnection notice is issued.



◆ Important Reminder

Customers with a past-due balance who do not have an active payment arrangement and a Cold Weather Rule application on file may still be at risk of service disconnection, even during the Cold Weather Rule period from Oct. 1 through Apr. 30.

Adams Wind Project Reaches Major Milestone

RPU recently reached a major milestone in the Adams Wind Project, with both wind generation sites now producing electricity and delivering power to the electric grid.

This marks an important step in RPU's long-term plan to diversify our power

supply and support our 2030 energy goals. By adding more renewable energy to our portfolio, we're helping build a reliable, balanced energy system that can serve our community for years to come.

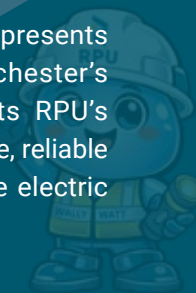
Bringing the Adams Wind Project online required months of planning, testing and coordination between RPU and our project partners. From engineering and construction to technology integration and system testing, teams worked together to ensure the wind facilities were safely connected and ready to provide power.

The project includes two wind generation sites in southern Minnesota that are now helping supply electricity to RPU customers. While wind energy is

only one part of our overall power mix, it plays an important role in reducing emissions and strengthening our long-term energy strategy.

Although the project has reached this significant milestone, work continues behind the scenes to integrate the wind facilities into RPU's operating systems and optimize their performance. These final steps will help ensure the new generation assets operate efficiently and reliably as part of our electric system.

The Adams Wind Project represents another investment in Rochester's energy future and supports RPU's commitment to providing safe, reliable and increasingly sustainable electric service for our customers.





WATER METER UPGRADES UNDERWAY IN NORTHWEST ROCHESTER

Water meter installations are now underway in Northwest Rochester as part of RPU's Advanced Metering Project. Advanced metering technology will provide more accurate and timely water usage information, improve service reliability, and help RPU respond more quickly to outages and leaks.

If your home or business is located in the current installation area and you've received a notification from RPU, please schedule your mandatory water meter upgrade as soon as possible. Water meter installations require an appointment because a technician needs access inside your home or business. When scheduling, you'll need the scheduling code included on your notification.

If you have not received a notification from RPU, your property is not yet in the current installation area. Please wait until you receive your notice before attempting to schedule an appointment.

Not sure if you're in the current installation area? Visit rpu.org/advancedmetering and enter your address into the interactive map to see if your property is included. You can also scan the QR code below to learn more about the project.

Scheduling your appointment is easy:

Call WESCO/Midwest Testing,
RPU's installation contractor,
at **651-229-3504**.

Schedule online at <http://bit.ly/BookRPU> or scan the QR code.



If possible, have your unique scheduling code ready, which can be found in a previous RPU notice mailed to your home.

Thank you for your prompt attention and for partnering with us as we modernize Rochester's utility infrastructure. We appreciate your cooperation as we make these important improvements to better serve our community.



FREE Solar Energy Class

Learn more: www.rpu.org > Education Opportunities



SOLAR ENERGY FOR YOUR HOME OR BUSINESS

Date: Saturday, October 10, 2026

Time: 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Cost: FREE (registration required)

Register: Scan the QR code above or
visit www.rpu.org to learn how



Have You Updated Your Contact Information?

Have you recently moved or changed your phone number or email address? Keeping your contact information up to date helps us reach you with important account updates, appointment scheduling, and other information about your utility services.

If your contact information has changed, please update your information using RPU Connect or by contacting RPU Customer Care at **507-280-1500**. Thank you for helping us stay connected.

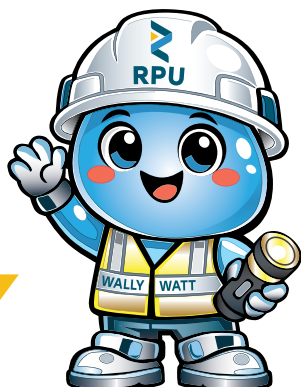


Find Wally Watt!

Can you spot Wally Watt hiding somewhere in this issue of Plugged In? He may appear in different colors, so keep your eyes peeled!

Wally's Energy Saving Tip

When you leave a room, flip the switch! Turning off lights when they're not needed helps save energy.



Did you find Wally Watt?

Scan to enter and view official contest rules

Find Wally Watt and Win!

Wally Watt is hiding somewhere... Can you spot him?

1. Find Wally
2. Scan the QR code
3. Tell us the page number and what he's hiding next to.

One correct entry will be randomly selected to win a prize.

Congratulations to Our Last Winner

Congratulations to 6-year-old Theo, our July-August Plugged In Find Wally Watt winner! After successfully spotting Wally, Theo took home some fun prizes.



Official rules summary

Eligibility: Open to children 17 and under who live in an RPU customer household.

How to enter: Find Wally Watt in the current issue and submit the entry form.

Deadline: Entries must be received by 11:59 p.m. on September 30.

Winner selection: One winner will be selected at random from all correct entries received by the deadline and will receive a prize.

Notification: Winner will be contacted using the email or phone provided. If the winner does not respond within five business days, another winner may be selected.

Privacy: Information collected is used only for contest administration and prize delivery.

Payment Protection for Military Service Members

You may qualify for protection from utility service disconnection under Minnesota law.

If someone in your household has been called to active duty, deployed or received a permanent change of station, you may qualify for protection from utility service disconnection under Minnesota law.

To stay protected, customers must set up and stay current with a payment plan:

- If your income is below the state median or you receive energy assistance: pay 10% of your gross monthly income toward your RPU bill.
- If your income is above the state median: set up and follow a payment plan with RPU.

This protection is provided under Minnesota Statute 325E.028, available at revisor.mn.gov/pubs.

To enroll in a payment plan or learn more, contact RPU Customer Care at 507-280-1500.





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Neighborly

RPU Plugged In is designed
and printed locally in Rochester.



RPU will be closed **Monday, Sept. 7** in observance of Labor Day.

Our crews are available 24/7 if an outage occurs.
If you experience an outage, call 507-280-9191.

Social Media:



@rochesterpublicutilities



Rochester Public Utilities



blog.rpu.org



RPU TV



Rochester Public Utilities

Mobile App:

RPU Connect



RPU Service Center Hours:

Monday - Friday
(8 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.)

Customer Care By Phone:

Monday - Friday (8 a.m. - 5 p.m.)
507-280-1500

Electric Emergency:

507-280-9191 (24 hrs)

Water Emergency:

507-280-1500 (8 a.m. - 5 p.m.)
507-280-9191 (5 p.m. - 8 a.m.)

Save Energy. Save Money. Improve Home Comfort.

Want to make your home more comfortable while lowering your energy bills? RPU and Minnesota Energy Resources have partnered with the Center for Energy and Environment (CEE) to offer the Neighborhood Energy Challenge, a residential energy audit program designed to help homeowners identify opportunities to save energy and money.



The program begins with a FREE one-hour workshop covering practical, low- and no-cost ways to reduce energy use at home. Participants may then schedule an in-home energy visit, where an experienced energy auditor will evaluate your home's energy performance, install select energy-saving materials and recommend additional improvements that may qualify for rebates or financing options.

The Neighborhood Energy Challenge audit is available for a one-time cost of \$75 (\$365 value).

Upcoming Workshops Include:

Thursday

SEPTEMBER 17, 2026

🕒 6-7 p.m.

Northrop Community Education Center, Room 308

Saturday

NOVEMBER 14, 2026

🕒 10-11 a.m.

Northrop Community Education Center, Room 308



Scan the
QR code
to learn
more and
register.