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NEWS

Yellow Ribbon Forest pairs Minnesota Power's commitments to environment, military-connected employees

Duluth, Minn. – Minnesota Power's Rajala Woods initiative and the company's commitment to military families will come together this year with creation of the Yellow Ribbon Forest near Camp Ripley in central Minnesota.

Al Hodnik, ALLETE chairman, president and CEO, announced the first-of-its-kind forest during an Earth Day event at Camp Ripley on May 16.

The forest, located on 60 acres of Minnesota Power land along the Gull River northeast of Camp Ripley near Baxter, will be planted with red and white pines this spring and formally dedicated this fall as a Yellow Ribbon Forest, in recognition of the nation's service members and ALLETE/Minnesota Power's designation as a Yellow Ribbon company for its support of military-connected employees and their families. Hodnik and a group of Minnesota Power employees were on hand Wednesday to plant trees and pick up litter at various sites around the base as part of Camp Ripley's Earth Day celebration.

"Like Camp Ripley and the Minnesota National Guard, ALLETE and Minnesota Power believe in being active stewards of the lands where we operate," Hodnik said. "The Yellow Ribbon Forest demonstrates our shared commitment to the environment while also acknowledging the sacrifices made by those who serve and the families who support them."

This summer, Minnesota Power, the ALLETE Yellow Ribbon campaign and local military organizations will develop a trail system, memorial benches and an informational kiosk at the site. The forest will be open to the public and be a special place of rest and reflection for those serving in the military and their families.

Minnesota Power, an ALLETE company, launched the Rajala Woods initiative in 2015 to ensure sustainable use of forests, improve biodiversity and enhance wildlife habitat and recreation by planting up to 3 million white pine, jack pine and spruce tree seedlings in central and northeastern Minnesota. The initiative to restore the iconic white pine in a working forest setting was named in honor of the late Jack Rajala, a Minnesota conservationist and forest products businessman who served on the ALLETE board of directors from 1985-2010.

The Beyond the Yellow Ribbon program, overseen by the Minnesota Department of Military Affairs, supports service members, veterans and their families by connecting them with career counseling, professional development and employment resources. ALLETE/Minnesota Power was named a Yellow Ribbon Company in 2016. To earn the designation, companies must build relationships with local military leaders, identify which employees have military connections and commit to hiring and retaining veterans and supporting an environment where military-connected employees can thrive.

The Yellow Ribbon Forest is not the first time ALLETE/Minnesota Power and the Minnesota Power National Guard have partnered. In 2016, Minnesota Power built a 10-megawatt solar array at Camp Ripley. The energy generated by the facility is enough to power about 2,000 homes a year. The array also is designed to allow Camp Ripley to use the solar energy if normal service is disrupted, providing enhanced energy security for the military site.

“The trees we plant this year in the Yellow Ribbon Forest represent our belief in thoughtfully managing resources for current and future generations,” Hodnik said. “Like our Little Falls, Pillager and Sylvan hydroelectric facilities built nearly a century or more ago, the best visions, projects and partnerships endure. One hundred years from now, this forest will provide a welcome retreat for military-connected families and others to enjoy and serve as a reminder of the partnership between Minnesota Power and the Minnesota National Guard that is rooted in sustainability and energy security.”

PHOTO CAPTIONS:

Al Hodnik, ALLETE chairman, president and CEO, plants a tree seedling at Camp Ripley on May 16.

Employees of Minnesota Power and ALLETE join other volunteers in planting seedlings at Camp Ripley during the base’s Earth Day activities on May 16.

Al Hodnik, ALLETE chairman, president and CEO, and Brig. Gen. Lowell Kruse, Camp Ripley senior commander, prepare to plant tree seedlings at the training facility and deepen the relationship between ALLETE and the Minnesota National Guard.

Minnesota Power provides electric service within a 26,000-square-mile area in Northeastern Minnesota, supporting comfort, security and quality of life for 145,000 customers, 16 municipalities and some of the largest industrial customers in the United States. More information can be found by visiting www.mnpower.com.

The statements contained in this release, and statements that ALLETE may make orally in connection with this release that are not historical facts, are forward-looking statements. Actual results may differ materially from those projected in the forward-looking statements. These forward-looking statements involve risks and uncertainties and investors are directed to the risks discussed in documents filed by ALLETE with the Securities and Exchange Commission.

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