

Local co-ops donate trees & time to Eau Galle Recreation Area **2008**

St. Croix Electric Cooperative and Pierce Pepin Cooperative Services teamed up to co-sponsor an Arbor Day tree-planting event at the Eau Galle Recreation Area on May 9. Fourth grade students from Spring Valley Elementary were invited to “dig in” and help plant 12 trees within the picnic area at the Main Day Use site. The event was originally set for April 25, National Arbor Day, but was rescheduled because of cold, rainy weather.

Bill McMahon, Pierce Pepin vegetation management supervisor, kicked off the event, noting that this is Pierce Pepin’s fourth annual Arbor Day community-tree planting event. He thanked St. Croix Electric for participating as a co-sponsor, explaining that St. Croix provides electricity to the park area, but both co-ops supply electricity to the surrounding countryside and other rural communities. Park Ranger Corrine Hodapp welcomed the students and thanked Pierce Pepin and St. Croix for their time and donating the trees to the park. She pointed out that the new trees are much needed, since several in the picnic area were lost

during an August storm last year. Hodapp encouraged guests to visit the park again to take advantage of the many outdoor activities the park has to offer.

The program continued with McMahon pointing out that it’s the co-op’s job to make sure its members have electricity when they need it, which means that trees touching power lines have to be trimmed or sometimes cut down.

“One way to help protect trees is to make sure that the right tree is planted in the right place to begin with. Always look up and down to make sure that the tree you are planting will not make contact with power lines when it is full grown, either above or below ground,” said McMahon. Proper planting techniques are just as important, according to McMahon. Before you dig, make sure you contact Digger’s Hotline to locate all underground electric, gas and telephone lines. With this free service, you can avoid coming in contact with buried utility lines, which could save you money and possibly your life.

These concepts were echoed by Harry Gilby of Rush River

Arborists as he quizzed the students about the importance of trees to humans and animals. Gilby displayed some of the basic equipment an arborist needs for his job, which often includes climbing trees to prune and shape them. He stressed that safety and the right equipment are most important and climbing should only be done by professionals.

All eyes were on Gilby as he, complete with climbing gear, scaled a large tree on the park grounds to demonstrate the correct climbing technique, making the climb and decent look easy.

Special Arbor Day t-shirts were handed out to the students who were split into twelve teams for tree planting. Under the supervision of adult team leaders that included McMahon, Gilby, Park Ranger Hodapp and employees from both Pierce Pepin and St. Croix, the students’ “assignment” was to finish planting the trees by covering their roots with dirt and adding water and mulch.

With their jobs complete, the kids enjoyed treats and playtime before heading back to school.



Arborist Harry Gilby demonstrated safe tree climbing techniques.



SCEC employee Tracy Constant (far right) supervised Spring Valley Elementary School fourth graders while they planted a tree.