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Contact: Mike Lynch, Cooperative Communications Manager

Company Name: East River Electric Power Cooperative

Telephone Number: 605-256-8016

Fax Number: 605-256-8057

Email Address: mlynch@eastriver.coop

Herseth Sandlin Presented East River Electric's Eminent Service Award

East River Electric Power Cooperative presented Stephanie Herseth Sandlin with its Eminent Service Award, the cooperative's highest commendation, during its 61st annual meeting on September 7, 2011.

"It's with our state's history and my family's history in mind, that I'm honored and proud to accept this award that you've bestowed to me today," Herseth Sandlin said. "I accept this award today, but want to assure you that my service to cooperative values is in no way at an end."

The award recognizes individuals or organizations who have made significant and lasting contributions to East River. "Stephanie has been a strong supporter of East River Electric, its members and the rural electric cooperative model as a whole and we appreciate her vision to advance programs important to rural America," said East River General Manager Jeff Nelson.

In 2004, Herseth Sandlin was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives, where she advanced public policy important to agriculture, rural economic development, renewable energy and ethanol.

During her terms in Congress, she fought tirelessly for adequate funding of critical rural electric programs such as the Rural Utilities Service and was a strong voice for preserving hydro power as a vital energy source for rural electric cooperatives.

Helping to author the 2008 Farm Bill, she was instrumental in the formation of innovative farm energy initiatives, including the Rural Energy for America Program, or REAP, which has provided farmers and small business owners assistance with feasibility studies, energy audits and technical advice for energy projects.

Herseth Sandlin also provided essential support to secure a \$1.2 million grant from the U.S. Economic Development Administration for Mitchell Technical Institute to purchase one of the wind towers at the Crow Lake Wind Project site for use in its wind technician degree program.

“Her efforts to preserve the federal hydropower system for cooperatives and municipals were instrumental in keeping electric power affordable. We also applaud her promotion of clean energy programs and finding solutions to energy needs in rural areas,” Nelson said.

East River Electric Power Cooperative is a wholesale electric power supply cooperative serving 24 rural electric cooperatives and one municipally-owned electric system, which in turn serve more than 92,000 homes and businesses and over 250,000 consumers.

Our 41,000 square mile service area covers the rural areas of 41 counties in eastern South Dakota and nine counties in western Minnesota.

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