

Two Projects, Two Locations

PRAIRIE CENTRAL COMPLETES UPGRADES THAT BOOST EFFICIENCY



Prairie Central Cooperative
Weston, IL • 815-945-7866

Founded: 1982
Storage capacity: 30 million bushels at 10 locations
Annual revenue: \$150 million
Number of members: 1,200
Number of employees: 32
Crops handled: Corn, soybeans, soft red winter wheat
Services: Grain handling and merchandising

Key personnel:

- Mark Heil, general manager
- Matt Hinshaw, operations manager
- Karen White, marketing manager
- Lisa Herr, accounting manager
- Les Meister, Pontiac elevator manager

Supplier List

Bucket elevators..... The GSI Group, Union Iron Works
Cleaner Intersystems
Contractor Koehl Bros. Inc.
Conveyors The GSI Group
Elevator buckets Maxi-Lift Inc.
Engineering SKS Engineers Inc.
Grain dryer Zimmerman Grain Dryers
Leg belting..... All State Belting
Millwright..... Koehl Bros. Inc.
Motion sensors 4B Components Ltd.
Motors U.S. Motors
Speed reducers Dodge
Tower support system LeMar Industries Corp.



Prairie Central Cooperative's headquarters elevator at Weston, IL. Top of a new leg is visible behind a large jumpform concrete tank near the center of the facility. Aerial photos by Steve Huey, Pekin, IL.



Prairie Central's rail terminal north of Pontiac, IL. New 10,000-bph Zimmerman dryer is visible near the center of the photo.

There are the big multimillion-dollar projects like greenfield elevators and gigantic tanks that attract visitors from several states.

But more often, when you run a multi-location cooperative and are looking for ways to boost day-to-day efficiency, there are smaller projects that don't cost as much but are just as appreciated by employees and farmer-members.

That was the case at Prairie Central Cooperative, which in 2010 spent \$650,000 to put in a new receiving pit and leg at its Weston, IL headquarters elevator and another \$1.6

million at its Pontiac, IL rail terminal to add a new grain dryer, a new gravity screener, and upgraded spouting.

"We're just trying to move more trucks through faster at harvest," says Operations Manager Matt Hinshaw, who came to Prairie Central 2-1/2 years ago from Cargill. "We're also anticipating future growth."

Helping make the upgrades a reality was Prairie Central's long-time construction partner, Koehl Bros. Inc., Fairbury, IL (815-692-2326), which is headquartered just a few miles from Weston and has been doing a large portion of the contracting and millwright

work for Prairie Central for more than a decade. “They’re high up on our speed dial,” Hinshaw comments.

Weston, IL

Back in 2009, Koehl Bros. had constructed a new 750,000-bushel Brock corrugated steel tank at the west end of the quarter-mile-long, 3-million-bushel country elevator at Weston. That resulted in enough increased volume that an upgrade in receiving capacity was in order for 2010.

This was accomplished with the addition of a fourth enclosed mechanical receiving pit holding about a semi-truckload of grain. The pit feeds a new Union Iron 20,000-bph leg equipped with a single row of 22x8 Maxi-Lift Tiger-Tuff buckets on a 23-inch All-State belt, powered by a 125-hp unit from U.S. Motors.

At the top, the leg deposits grain onto the network of drag conveyors that take it to storage throughout the facility.

“So far, it’s made the truck lines faster,” Hinshaw says. “We had four or five record days during the 2010 harvest.”



Operations Manager Matt Hinshaw (left) and General Manager Mark Heil.

Pontiac, IL

Much of the work at the cooperative’s main rail terminal here revolved around the installation of a new natural gas-fired, 10,000-bph Zimmerman tower dryer. The new unit replaced a 5,000-bph dryer that was more than 30 years old.

Another 4,000-bph Zimmerman dryer remains in operation.

“The higher capacity helps keep the harvest moving,” says Hinshaw. “GSI (which manufactures the Zimmerman brand) is an easy company

to work with, and their machinery works very well. We’ve talked with other grain handlers in the area, and they like it, too.”

With 14,000-bph in drying capacity at Pontiac, upgraded legs were required, as well. Koehl Bros. installed a pair of 20,000-bph GSI legs, one for wet grain headed for the dryer and one for dry grain coming out. These legs are equipped with Maxi-Lift 20x8 CC-Max **Low-Profile** buckets on a 22-inch All State belt, powered by a 150-hp engine from U.S. Motors.

In addition to the dryer installation, the cooperative replaced much of the spouting coming off of existing distributors to increase capacity and reworked the grain flow through the facility so that grain from any receiving pit can reach any point in the terminal.

Prairie Central also installed a new 25,000-bph Intersystems gravity screener that can take grain from existing receiving legs.

Ed Zdrojewski, editor

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