

COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS



Sica Hollow State Park near Sisseton is one of several hidden gems in the park system that are waiting to be discovered

Spotlight on State Parks

Hidden treasures
for you to discover
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REED Fund fills
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South Dakota's electric cooperatives work to stay connected with legislators in the Capitol



Ben Dunsmoor
Editor

South Dakota's 97th Legislative Session will be rounding the corner for the home stretch by the time you read this column. The last full day of the session is March 10 and the final day of the session will be March 28 when legislators consider any vetoes from Gov. Kristi Noem. Lawmakers will work a total of 38 days during this year's session and your local electric cooperatives have been working throughout that time to connect with legislators.

Electric co-ops work hard to stay connected in the Capitol before, during and after South Dakota's legislative session.

It is important to build relationships with our local legislators because many of the bills that are crafted in Pierre have a direct impact on your local co-op and the members of our communities. South Dakota's electric cooperatives start building those relationships with state legislators long before the gavel is dropped in Pierre. Northern Electric teams up with our neighboring cooperatives in November to host a legislative dinner. We share the electric cooperative story with legislators during this dinner and talk about any legislative priorities co-ops have for the upcoming session. In turn, lawmakers can talk about any bills they are working on. This free-flowing forum is a great opportunity to begin building relationships with our representatives when they are away from the Capitol, and they are not facing the pressures of committee meetings and debating bills.

Electric cooperatives are also in Pierre to greet legislators when they arrive at the Capitol in January. Our statewide association, the South Dakota Rural Electric Association (SDREA), organizes a dinner for lawmakers during SDREA's Annual Meeting which falls during the first week of the legislative session. It provides another opportunity for electric co-op board members, managers and staff to build relationships with our elected representatives.

"It's always a productive time for us to get together and reconnect with one another and learn more about an industry that is rapidly changing. There are important issues such as cybersecurity, renewable power, and the emergence of electric vehicles that can have a direct impact on our members," SDREA General Manager Trevor Jones said about this year's gathering with lawmakers that was held on Jan. 13.

Co-op Day at the Capitol is held as the session passes the halfway point in Pierre. Electric cooperative board members, managers, and staff fill the Capitol in February. Electric co-op representatives sit in on committee meetings and are recognized in both the House and the Senate during the daily floor sessions. Co-op Day at the Capitol was started in 2007 to continue to keep the electric cooperative story in front of legislators as they are making decisions.

These events play an important role in establishing electric cooperatives as a known and trusted source for lawmakers in Pierre. As electric cooperatives, our mission is to provide safe, reliable, and affordable electricity, but we also exist to make our communities better places to live. It is the reason we work hard to stay connected in the Capitol before, during, and after South Dakota's legislative session.

COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS

NORTHERN ELECTRIC

(USPS 396-040)

Board President: Donna Sharp

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Manager of Member Services: Russel Ulmer

Manager of Information Technology: Derek Gorecki

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Executive Secretary: Kay Albrecht

Northern Electric Cooperative Connections is the monthly publication for the members of Northern Electric Cooperative, PO Box 457, Bath, SD 57427. Families subscribe to Cooperative Connections as part of their electric cooperative membership. The purpose of Northern Electric Cooperative Connections is to provide reliable, helpful information to electric cooperative members on electric cooperative matters and better rural living.

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Northern Electric Cooperative's regular board meeting was held January 20, 2022, at the headquarters in Bath with all directors present. As the first order of business, the board approved the December 23, 2021, minutes and December expenditures. The board then reviewed and accepted monthly reports by management. Directors viewed the East River Electric Power Cooperative video report. East River Director Kirk Schaunaman reported on the East River Board meeting held January 6, 2022. General Manager Char Hager reported on the East River MAC Meeting held January 4, 2022. South Dakota Rural Electric Association Director Nolan Wipf reported on the SDREA Board Meeting and Annual Meeting held January 12-14, 2022, in Pierre. Directors Michael Traxinger, Kirk Schaunaman, Donna Sharp, Nolan Wipf, General Manager Char Hager and Communications Director Ben Dunsmoor reported on the SDREA Annual Meeting which was held January 13-14, 2022, in Pierre.

MANAGER'S REPORT

General Manager Char Hager's report to the board included the following items:

- Update on development projects.
- Reminder that the 2022 East River Energize Forum will be February 2-3, in Sioux Falls.
- Reminder that the 2022 National Rural Electric Cooperative Association PowerXchange/TechAdvantage Experience will be March 4-9, in Nashville, TN.
- Informed the board of the 2022 New Directors Orientation, May 10-13, in Arlington, VA.

- Informed the board of the 2022 CFC Forum, June 20-22, Boston, MA.

BOARD REPORT

The board considered and/or acted upon the following:

1. Approved the date and time of the next regular board meeting for 8:30 A.M. on Thursday, February 24, 2022.
2. Approved payment of legal fees for Harvey Oliver in the amount of \$3,105.01.
3. Approved Work Order Inventories #21-12 for \$295,953.45 and #21-12MC for \$23,396.22 to be submitted to Rural Utilities Service (RUS) for reimbursement from loan funds for electric plant construction already completed.
4. Authorized attendance to Co-op Day at the Capitol, February 22, 2022, Pierre.
5. Authorized attendance to the 2022 NRECA Directors Conference, April 2-5, in Austin, TX.
6. Authorized attendance to the 2022 NRECA Legislative Conference, May 1-3, in Washington, DC.
7. Approved management recommendations to Electric Tariffs.
8. Approved management recommendation to Policy GP-5 Public Use of Auditorium.
9. Tabled Marketing Program 27.5 Electric Vehicle (EV) Incentives.
10. Approved proposal from CO-OP Architecture for facility assessment and master plan.
11. Approved the 2022 Operating Budget.
12. Held Executive Session.

Please direct questions to your cooperative director, manager, or co-op staff member.

FINANCIAL REPORT

	Dec-21	Dec-20
kWh Sales	32,618,109 kWh	30,480,283 kWh
Electric Revenues	\$2,852,084	\$2,652,709
Total Cost of Service	\$2,614,015	\$2,585,738
Operating Margins.....	\$238,069	\$66,971
Year to Date Margins	\$672,690	\$1,988,275

RESIDENTIAL AVERAGE MONTHLY USAGE AND BILL

DEC-2021	3,372 kWh	\$285.36	0.0846 per kWh
DEC-2020	2,960 kWh	\$262.86	0.0888 per kWh

Wholesale power cost, taxes, interest, and depreciation account for 86.5% of NEC's total cost of service.

Four shocking electrical dangers in your home

Contact with electricity can result in something as innocuous (but still painful) as a mild shock to severe injuries like nerve damage and burns. In some cases, it can even cause cardiac arrest and death. Here's a list of some of the most common shock risks inside a home.

1. Appliances. Most shocks from household appliances occur during repairs. It's not enough to turn off an appliance before working on it - you need to unplug it to reduce risk. Large appliances are responsible for 18 percent of household electrical accidents; small appliances account for 12 percent.

There's also danger if your appliance comes into contact with water. Many of these hazards can be avoided by using a ground-fault circuit interrupter. A GFCI is a protective device installed on electrical outlets, primarily used where water is present. When the device detects an imbalance in the electric current, it turns off the power to minimize the potential for an electric shock.

2. Ladders. Typically, ladders present a falling hazard, but 8 percent of household shocks are also related to ladders. Electrocutation typically happens when the ladder makes contact with electrical wires. Before you use a ladder, make sure you can clearly see all power lines in the area - including those that may be hidden by tree branches. Ensure that the ladder is 10 feet away and won't contact a power line if it falls in any direction.

3. Power tools. Power tools account for 9 percent of consumer product-related shocks. According to OSHA, when you use power tools that are not double-insulated, are damaged or have damaged cords, you increase your chances of being injured. The chance of danger also increases when you use incompatible cords, use power tools incorrectly or use them in wet conditions. This is another situation in which GFCIs can help.

4. Electrical outlets and extension cords. Inserting anything that doesn't belong - screwdrivers, knives, fingers or toy cars, to name a few - into an electrical outlet can result in a dangerous electrical contact.

Use cover plates that fit properly and safety covers on all outlets. By installing tamper-resistant receptacles, outlets will have permanent security against foreign objects being inserted into the slots.

Any broken, loose or worn-out plugs, switches and light fixtures should be replaced immediately.

WE'VE GOT CO-OP COUNTRY COVERED



We know you love to read your local edition of Cooperative Connections magazine, but you'll get more great content when you visit our video companion, Cooperative Connections Plus. Scan the QR code or search YouTube for Cooperative Connections Plus and you'll be treating yourself to an intriguing repository of videos on interesting events going on around our state. There's walleye fishing, rodeos, electric vehicles, curling, Christmas at the Capitol, the State Fair and much more. Visit us today!



Call 811 before digging

Amelia Swift Hawk

Amelia Swift Hawk knows that it's wise to call 811 before digging into the ground. Amelia and her parents, Michael and Alyssa Swift Hawk, are members of Moreau-Grand Electric based in Timber Lake.

Kids, send your drawing with an electrical safety tip to your local electric cooperative (address found on Page 3). If your poster is published, you'll receive a prize. All entries must include your name, age, mailing address and the names of your parents. Colored drawings are encouraged.

SAVORY SEAFOOD

OYSTER STEW

Ingredients:
 1 onion, chopped
 6 T. butter
 2 tsp. minced garlic
 6 cup whole milk
 1 pint (2 cans) oysters - do not drain
 1/4 tsp. red pepper flakes
 1/4 tsp. paprika
 1 tsp. parsley
 1/4 tsp. Tabasco sauce

METHOD

Sauté onion and garlic in butter. Stir in undrained oysters. Cook at medium heat about 5 minutes until oysters curl at the edges. Stir in milk, red pepper flakes, paprika, parsley, and Tabasco sauce. Heat to serving temperature. Serve with oyster crackers.

Jane Ham, Rapid City

GRILLED SALMON

Ingredients:
 1 1/2 lbs. salmon fillet cut into 6 slices
 2 tbsp. olive oil extra virgin
 1 lemon or lime (juice of)
 1 tsp. smoked paprika
 1 tsp. garlic powder
 1 tsp. onion powder
 1 tsp. salt
 Ground black pepper to taste

METHOD

In a small bowl, add olive oil, lemon juice, smoked paprika, garlic and onion powders, salt, pepper. Whisk to combine. In a shallow flat dish with edges, lay salmon slices and brush with marinade. Marinate from 10 minutes to 24 hours. Longer marinating time, more flavorful salmon. Preheat grill to 450-500. Clean grill and oil grates with oil-soaked paper towel to avoid salmon sticking to the grill. Place salmon on the grill skin side up, close the lid and grill for 4-5 minutes. Check with spatula – if salmon has grill marks and comes off easy, flip it. Cook uncovered for another 3-4 minutes or until thermometer reads 125 degrees for medium rare or 140 for medium. Serve hot or cold on top of salad, mango salsa, guacamole, brown rice or quinoa. ifoodreal.com

SHRIMP AND SAUSAGE JAMBALAYA

Ingredients:
 12 ozs. fully cooked andouille sausage, cut to 1/2-inch slices
 12 ozs. uncooked shrimp (31-40 per lb.), peeled and deveined
 1 med. green pepper, chopped
 1 med. onion, chopped
 2 celery ribs, chopped
 3 garlic cloves, minced
 2 tsps. Creole or Cajun seasoning (paprika, with cayenne pepper, oregano, dried sweet basil)
 1 can (14-1/2 ozs.) fire-roasted diced tomatoes, drained
 1 cup uncooked "instant" rice
 1 can (8 ozs.) tomato sauce
 1/2 cup chicken broth
 3 green onion sprigs chopped

METHOD

Preheat oven to 425°. In a large bowl, combine all ingredients. Divide mixture among six greased 18x12-inch pieces of heavy-duty foil. Fold foil around mixture and crimp edges to seal, forming packets; place on a baking sheet. Bake until shrimp turn pink and rice is tender, 20-25 minutes. Use caution when opening packets as they will be steamy. Consider adding jalapenos to taste and/or some chopped pineapple to cool the palate. Try serving for breakfast or brunch with sumptuous eggs and biscuits.

Shannon Collins/Taste of Home

Please send your favorite beverage recipes to your local electric cooperative (address found on Page 3). Each recipe printed will be entered into a drawing for a prize in December 2022. All entries must include your name, mailing address, phone number and cooperative name.



STAY WARM & SAVE COLD CASH

There are several simple steps homeowners can take to conserve energy in the winter

Looking for ways to cut your energy costs this winter?

There are some simple solutions that can help you stay warm while saving some cold cash. One example is turning down the thermostat a few degrees and using extra blankets on your bed. But, there are also some winter energy-efficiency tips that may not be as common but can have a big impact on your bill.

DO NOT HEAT AN EMPTY HOME: Programmable or smart thermostats can help you set the appropriate temperature for your living space whether you are at home or away.

According to the Department of Energy, every degree you reduce your thermostat in the winter can save you 1% on your heating bill. Program your thermostat to reduce the temperature in your home by a few degrees when nobody is home during the day, and then warm it back up in the evening.

USE THE POWER OF THE SUN: Let the sun shine in your home during sunny days to warm it up and close your window coverings after dusk to reduce heat loss.

SWITCH YOUR CEILING FAN TO WINTER MODE:

Running your ceiling fans in a clockwise direction during the winter will redistribute warm air that may be trapped up by the ceiling. There is typically a small black switch on the housing of the fan above the blades that will change the direction of the fan. Flip the switch back in the summer so the blades rotate in a counter-clockwise direction and cool the room.

BRING IN MOISTURE:

Keeping your home at the proper humidity through the use of humidifiers can make you feel warmer. Dry air feels colder and increasing the moisture in the air can make the air retain more heat.



Replacing the filter on a heating and cooling system every month will keep it running at peak efficiency.

KEEP YOUR HEATING SYSTEM REGULARLY MAINTAINED:

Changing the filter on your heating system every month and having the system regularly maintained by a HVAC professional will keep it running at peak efficiency so you can save every penny.

DO NOT USE SPACE HEATERS FOR AN EXTENDED PERIOD OF TIME:

Space and portable room heaters are okay to use for short amounts of time but using them on a regular basis to heat large spaces can cause major spikes in your monthly electric bill. Northern Electric has a special electric heat rate for heating systems that are metered with a separate submeter. Space heaters cannot be submetered so usage from a portable space heater is calculated at the regular rate and can become very expensive. Try some of the tips on these pages to keep your home warm and cozy during the winter before turning to space heaters. If you have more questions call a Northern Electric member services representative at 605-225-0310.

STAY TOASTY AND WARM WHILE TURNING DOWN THE THERMOSTAT



When the winter winds blow, it is tempting to adjust the thermostat up a few degrees to stay toasty and warm. However, turning to other (FREE!) ways to help keep you warm could help reduce your energy bills.



Each degree you reduce your thermostat saves 1% on your heating bill. No one home during the day? Adjust your thermostat 7 to 10 degrees from its normal setting to save up to 10% annually.

Source: Department of Energy

HERE ARE WAYS TO HELP YOU STAY WARM WHEN IT IS COLD OUTSIDE:



Bundle up by wearing layers and heavy socks

Get your body moving and stay active

Use blankets while sitting still

Caulk windows and door frames that leak air



Replace or update old or ineffective door seals



Make sure your home's heating system is working properly

Keep your furnace clean and change the filter monthly



Let the sun shine in during the day and close window coverings at night



Reduce how long you use ventilation fans (they transfer warm air outside)



Keep a fireplace damper closed when not in use

Humidify your home to make the air feel warmer



If you use a portable space heater, use it safely and for short amounts of time. Using one for extended periods can cause your energy bill to spike since it draws a lot of power.

Learn more at: 

HIDDEN TREASURES

Despite its legacy as the site of an epic battle over good and evil, Sica Hollow State Park near Sisseton is a source of family fun for those who want to get away and enjoy the great outdoors. *Photos by SD Tourism.*

The State Park system has seen visitation increase with new programs in place to serve the public

Billy Gibson

billy.gibson@sdrea.coop

At first blush, Sica Hollow State Park might seem like someplace you'd want to avoid.

The area was named after a Dakota Sioux word used to describe something sinister and features a winding pathway called the Trail of the Spirits. There are maroon-colored bogs, sangria-tinged streams and brown foliage that reminded early tribes of the blood and flesh of their ancestors.

The undulating terrain is said to be the site of an ancient spiritual battle in which the land and the people were overcome by a malevolent force. Local legend has it that the restless souls of the dead manifest themselves as unexplained bursts of fire and light in the night, disturbing sounds of agonized wailing and the ominous beat of war drums in the distance.

Apart from the spooky stories and eerie lore, Sica Hollow turns out to be one of many "hidden gems" in the

State Park system that are found off the beaten paths.

Sica Hollow is located in the northeast corner of the state near Sisseton where you'll find rustic bridges, winding creeks, scenic waterfalls and seasonal wildflowers festooning the eight miles of hiking trails. The Trail of Spirits, which today is a self-guided interpretive foot trail, was designated as a National Recreation Trail in 1971. The park also contains the Old River Warren and Coteau des Prairies, which have been named National Natural Landmarks.

With more than 60 facilities in its fold, the State Park system has lots to offer and includes several lesser-known destinations for families to discover such as Sica Hollow, Spirit Mound and Adams Homestead in the eastern part of the state and Shadehill, Rocky Point and Llewellyn Johns out west.

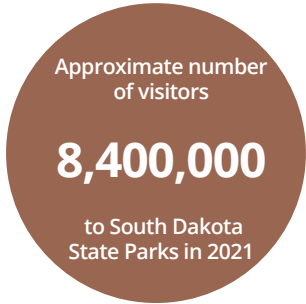
The Shadehill Recreation Area near Lemmon is situated on the shores of Shadehill Reservoir, which is one of western South Dakota's few large lakes.



At Llewellyn Johns Recreation Area, visitors will find a monument to Hugh Glass, a hunter who survived a vicious attack by a grizzly bear in 1823.

There are 85 campsites with seven camping cabins, a group lodge, and facilities for boating, fishing, canoeing, biking, archery and more.

Nearby is the much smaller Llewellyn Johns Recreation Area with just 10 campsites and an opportunity to enjoy



a quieter and more secluded camping experience. There are points of historical interest close by as many historic figures have traveled through the area, including George Custer’s 1874 Expedition and Hugh Glass. According to first-hand accounts, in 1823 Glass was attacked by a grizzly bear, an event documented in the novel *Lord Grizzly* and recounted in the movie, *The Revenant*.

Nick Harrington, communications manager for Game, Fish and Parks, reports that the system is stronger and more popular than ever. Last year more than 8.4 million visitors passed through the parks, representing a 25 percent increase in visitation over the nine-year average. Custer State Park, the system’s most popular spot, saw a 3 percent increase in attendance with more than 2.3 million visitors.

Seventy-seven percent of visitors rated their camping experience as an A with 43 out of the 48 areas surveyed receiving the top rating.

To keep the momentum moving along, the State Park system has added 15 new facilities from a new Bison Center at Custer State Park to an improved boat ramp at West Whitlock Recreation Area.

And just in time for the spring and summer camping season there is a new and improved way of helping campers navigate the parks and outdoor facilities. Through www.gooutdoorsouthdakota.com, customers can secure a camping reservation or buy an annual park



Sica Hollow is one of the “hidden gems” in the state park system where visitors can commune with nature while learning about local lore.

entrance license while also purchasing hunting and fishing licenses all from the same transaction. A new mobile app provides 360 degree views of the more than 4,000 campsites in the system.

The Department of Tourism has also launched a free mobile pass called South Dakota Great Finds that helps users explore the state’s many attractions, including hidden treasures like Sica Hollow. The pass can be accessed at travelsouthdakota.com, and there is no app to download.

According to Department of Tourism Secretary Jim Hagen, “This mobile experience allows us to better highlight what truly makes up the great state of South Dakota. It showcases rural America, unexpected businesses and parks, and gets people off the beaten path to discover something new.”

Search for “Go Outdoors South Dakota” to find GFP’s official mobile app for iOS and Android.

Top 10 most visited state parks in 2021

1. Custer State Park
2. Lewis & Clark Recreation Area
3. Spring Creek Recreation Area
4. Oahe Downstream Recreation Area
5. Cow Creek Recreation Area
6. Angostura Recreation Area
7. Roy Lake State Park
8. Farm Island Recreation Area
9. Springfield Recreation Area
10. Newton Hills State Park



The new 'Who Powers You' contest is seeking nominations for local members doing great things in Brown and Spink counties.

Want to recognize someone doing great things in the local community?

Nominations are now open for 'Who Powers You,' a contest being hosted by Northern Electric Cooperative and the region's other Touchstone Energy® Cooperatives. This is the first year of the 'Who Powers You' contest which seeks to highlight local figures who are making a difference in their communities.

"No one succeeds alone, and that is especially true in rural areas, where friends and neighbors support, encourage and inspire each other," said Northern Electric Cooperative Communications Director Ben Dunsmoor.

"Those people don't do it for the

recognition, but they deserve to be recognized, and we'd like to help make that happen."

Member-owners and employees of Northern Electric Cooperative and the region's Touchstone Energy® Cooperatives are eligible to be nominated. Nominations are currently being accepted through April 1, 2022. Three final winners will be selected by a panel of judges based on the impact that they have on the community. Weekly finalists will be announced and featured on Keloland Living starting March 2, 2022, and the three contest winners will be announced on Keloland Living on May 11, 2022.

The 'Who Powers You' contest grand prize winner will receive a

\$3,000 prize. A second-place winner will receive \$1,500 and the contest's third place winner will receive \$500.

"As an electric cooperative, our services extend beyond delivering safe, affordable and reliable power to our member-owners," Dunsmoor said. "The 'Who Powers You' contest highlights the commitment of our co-op to the communities and member-owners that we serve. We know that our co-op community is filled with people making a difference. We want to celebrate them!"

To learn more about the 'Who Powers You' contest and to nominate someone in your community, visit WhoPowersYouContest.com.

TELL US WHO POWERS YOU!

We know our co-op community is filled with people making a difference. Let's celebrate them! Nominate a member or employee of your local Touchstone Energy® Cooperative who goes above and beyond.

They could win up to \$3,000!

Nominate your local hero at
WHOPOWERSYOUCONTEST.COM





REED FILLS THE NEED

Pictured at right, Renville-Sibley Co-op Power CEO DeeAnne Newville (left), presents a check to the local Community Center and Cougar Club daycare facility in Franklin, MN, through the electric cooperative REED Fund.

Electric cooperative REED Fund helps meet many needs for communities in South Dakota and western Minnesota

Billy Gibson

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Leaders of the Garretson community northeast of Sioux Falls had the vision for a much-needed expansion of the small town's non-profit daycare center. Since cobbling together two older structures in 2019 and taking in more tykes, it was apparent that the current white-hot demand for childcare was going to necessitate yet another expansion.

So they set their jaws, put together a plan and mustered up the will to make it happen for the sake of local families and the greater good of the community.

Now, all they needed was a miracle.

That miracle came in the form of a random conversation that took place between Blue Dragon Academy Board Member Kris Frerk and Sioux Metro Growth Alliance CEO Jesse Fonkert.

Frerk was in full fret mode over a lack of funding for the project, but it turned

out Fonkert had a fail-safe solution.

Through his contacts Angie Neises at East River Electric and Jay Buchholz at Sioux Valley Energy, Fonkert was aware of the Rural Electric Economic Development Fund, or REED Fund. He knew it was a valuable financial resource made available by electric co-ops in South Dakota and western Minnesota just for this kind of project.

Bottom line: Blue Dragon Academy will begin work in April with plans to complete the 3,500-sq. ft. project in November. Best of all, nearly 40 more families in and around the town of Garretson will have access to quality child care services.

While Frerk doesn't recall any trumpets blaring or harps playing in the background, she contends that her off-hand discussion with Fonkert was delivered by divine intervention.

"It's a pure miracle," she said. "We had been putting feelers out for funding because we have a big need in this area.

When I got that information from Jesse, it was just like a miracle. We jumped on it, we got accepted by the REED Fund Board and now we're ready to get the work done."

Blue Dragon secured a low-interest REED loan for nearly \$700,000. The non-profit organization is required to match \$239,000. Now Frerk and her crew are heavy on the fund-raising trail and have already received tremendous support from many donors in the community, she said. The Blue Dragon Board hopes to pay the debt off early with plans to hire five or six more workers once the project is complete.

For East River Electric Economic Development Director Eric Fosheim, it was another day at the office. His job is to match the money with the need, and he says many recipients respond with the enthusiasm and gratitude Frerk expresses when they receive funds.

He does fall just short of uttering the "M" word, however.

“It’s extremely satisfying to be in a position to help people solve problems and overcome challenges in their communities,” Fosheim said. “We try to work together with folks to cut through the red tape and bureaucratic impediments and come up with clever ways to get projects across the finish line. This is all made possible through the electric cooperatives and the fact that they take their responsibilities and obligations to their communities very seriously.”

The REED Fund has backed scores of projects and loaned out more than \$100 million since it was established in 1996. Fosheim sees it as the perfect tool for promoting local economic growth, improving infrastructure, enhancing community facilities and contributing to job, business and wealth creation.

Funds have gone to retail and service businesses, industrial parks and office facilities, fire protection projects, manufacturing firms, housing projects, health care facilities and more.

Approximate amount of money
\$100 million
 loaned through the electric cooperative REED Fund

Chris Larson, general manager at Clay-Union Electric in Vermillion, and his board tapped REED funds to support the Wakonda Heritage Manor assisted living facility. They also worked with the business to secure a zero-interest loan through the USDA’s Rural Economic Development Loan and Grant Program.

“It’s truly an honor for us to have this tremendous resource available to help improve the lives of our members and the community at-large,” Larson said.

The real meaning of the REED program came to light when he and the board visited the place.

“We viewed the improvements they’d made, and heard from the people there about how it enhanced their quality of life. It really warms your heart to know you’re part of a co-op system that can have a positive impact on families and businesses. It just shows how much of a difference we can make when we all work together, pool our resources and get things done.”

East River cooperatives serving western Minnesota have also participated in the program. As with the Garretson community, parents in Franklin, MN, also had a need for a daycare center.

www.reedfund.coop

RURAL ELECTRIC ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT FUND

REED FUND



The Cougar Cub Child Care Center was launched with the help of REED funds obtained through Renville-Sibley Co-op Power after two of the town’s three daycare facilities closed.

Renville-Sibley CEO DeeAnne Neville said, “We were happy to help fill the gap. Concern for community is one of the seven cooperative principles. It’s an example of the city, school and economic development coming together for the good of the people in our rural communities.”

For more information about the REED Loan program, visit www.reedfund.coop.

CUTTING CARBON, SAVING CASH



Owned by H-D Electric Cooperative based in Clear Lake, this Tesla Model 3 has been used during the legislative session to educate lawmakers about the emergence of EV technology and beneficial electrification. *Photo by Billy Gibson*

Cooperatives promote the concept of beneficial electrification to help members cut carbon and save money

Billy Gibson

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Lather. Rinse. Repeat.

When that short snappy algorithm started appearing on the sides of shampoo bottles back in the 1950s, some said it simply encouraged people to practice good hygiene and do a more thorough job of scrubbing their tresses right down to the scalp.

More cynical observers took it as a thinly-veiled scam devised by some devious marketing firm to sell more shampoo and spin bathers into an endless cycle of washing their hair, breaking only long enough to go out and purchase more Prell.

Rare is the business that encourages customers to use less of its product. But that's the very approach that lies at the

heart of electric cooperatives and their guiding principles. Electric co-ops exist exclusively to deliver the power their members need, but they also go above and beyond by working to make sure their members don't pay a penny more than the cost of providing the service while helping them to better manage their consumption.

That basic formula has remained the same since the rural electric cooperative movement began back in the 1930s, even as new methods of generating, distributing and using electricity have evolved over the decades. Every step along the way, co-ops have stood at the forefront to help members make the best and most efficient use of whatever new development comes down the pike.

Enter the emergence of a concept

called beneficial electrification. This is a relatively new term that describes the pursuit of solutions that allow cooperatives to meet rising service demands while helping their consumers save money over time, lowering greenhouse gas emissions, fostering a more resilient electrical grid, protecting the environment and improving the quality of life for all.

Across the country, electric cooperatives are launching and embracing beneficial electrification programs and blazing pathways that lead to providing more value to members, their local communities and the environment.

Some of what falls under the heading "beneficial electrification" has been adopted by co-ops and their consumers for years, such as replacing older and inefficient gas furnaces and water heaters with more efficient electric heat pumps. More recently, cooperatives have implemented load management programs that enable the co-op to control devices in the home and help balance power supply and demand, resulting in more efficient consumption and potential savings for

the member. Or as it's known in more colloquial terms, a "double back scratch."

And even more recently, cooperatives have accelerated their adoption of renewable power and have gotten involved in programs to incentivize the use of electric vehicles and help build out a system of fast-charging stations across the state, region and nation.

All of these types of initiatives are called "beneficial" because they help members save money and also help protect the environment.

In his role as Manager of Beneficial Electrification at Sioux Valley Energy in Colman, Ben Pierson often works with members to give them what they've indicated through surveys that they want: more information about how they can use technology to reduce their energy consumption while saving money.

"As we get out in the community, we hear from our members all the time, especially as we discuss the benefit of EVs in particular," Pierson said. "We try to make it easier to integrate this emissions-reducing and money-saving technology by offering incentives for installing home chargers and a time-of-use plan that allows members to charge their cars overnight at a much lower cost."


Pierson said some members are taking advantage of the home-charger incentive even though they aren't yet among the nearly 500 South Dakotans who own an EV.

"They're just excited that we've made these programs available," he said. "They realize EVs are going to be a substantial part of our transportation future and they want to be ready to ease the transition for them and their families."

Robert Raker is manager of communications and public relations at West River Electric and works out of the co-op's Rapid City office. Raker sees a fertile field for promoting beneficial electrification as the Rapid City area experiences accelerated growth. Like Sioux Valley Energy and other co-ops around the state, West River Electric offers load management programs, rate structures and incentives


SAVE MONEY

Electricity is becoming cleaner every day and can save consumers money on their energy costs over time.




Did you know...

Replacing your HVAC system with an electric heat pump can **save you nearly \$1,000 per year** on your heating and cooling bills.¹



Did you know...

The average cost of **charging an electric car** is equivalent to **\$1.20 per gallon of gasoline.**²



Did you know...

Owning an electric vehicle can **save you over \$800** in annual maintenance.³

for electric appliances like water heaters and heat pumps.

He uses the cooperative's Nissan Leaf EV to demonstrate the advantages of this emerging technology and is also part of the effort to leverage government and private funds to build a reliable EV charging network.

As neighborhoods grow and businesses expand in his area, Raker collaborates with developers to promote beneficial electrification. He also sees value in encouraging residential members to make more beneficial use of electricity by converting lawn implements from gas to electric.

"We've seen a real shift in mentality toward carbon-free growth," he said. "Our job is to educate and inform our members about how they can continue to integrate technology into their everyday lives on any scale."

As spring and summer are just around the corner, he said, one way most residential members can help in the goal to curb carbon emissions is to convert lawn and garden equipment from gasoline to

electric/battery-powered.

Electric lawn care equipment options are becoming more popular than ever, offering consumers faster charging times, longer battery life and quieter, greener products.

There are several electric lawn mower brands that operate without a cord, unlike the first generation of electric mowers. Typically priced in the \$200-\$500 range, electric mowers are powerful, low maintenance, and work well for lawns that are a half-acre or less.

Electric trimmers and leaf blowers are also catching up to their gas-powered competitors in performance and reliability.

Raker encourages members to do their research before investing in electric lawn equipment, citing consumerreports.org as a trust source of information.

He and Pierson agree that beneficial electrification is the way of the future and there's no better time for members to engage in this environmentally-friendly approach than the present.



March 12
28 Below Fatbike Race, Ride and Tour
 Spearfish Canyon Lodge, Lead, SD

Photo by Travel South Dakota

To have your event listed on this page, send complete information, including date, event, place and contact to your local electric cooperative. Include your name, address and daytime telephone number. Information must be submitted at least eight weeks prior to your event. Please call ahead to confirm date, time and location of event.

To view the publication's master event calendar, scan the QR code below:



Or visit <https://sdrea.coop/cooperative-connections-event-calendar> to view more upcoming events.

FEBRUARY 25-26
Mardi Gras Weekend
 Main Street, Deadwood, SD,
 605-578-1876

FEBRUARY 25-27,
MARCH 3-5
Making God Laugh
 Grand Opera House, Pierre,
 SD, 605-224-7826

FEBRUARY 26
Bellator Titans Casino Night
 Elks Lodge, Aberdeen, SD
 605-228-4848

MARCH 3-5
Pro Snocross Races
 Days of '76 Rodeo Grounds,
 Deadwood, SD, 800-344-8826

MARCH 4-5, 10-13
The 39 Steps
 Orpheum Theater Center,
 Sioux Falls, SD, 605-367-6000

MARCH 4-6
Home & Garden Show
 Brown County Fairgrounds,
 Aberdeen, SD, 605-225-2055

MARCH 5
I Hate Winter Cornhole
Tournament
 Scherr Howe Arena,
 Mobridge, SD, www.mobridge.org/Corn-Hole-Tournament

MARCH 5
Mountain West® Whiskey
Festival
 Rushmore Hotel, Rapid City, SD,
www.mountainwestwhiskeyfestival.com

MARCH 5
Road 2 Destruction Tour
 The Monument Summit Arena,
 Rapid City, SD, 605-394-4115

MARCH 5-8
2022 Summit League Men's
and Women's Basketball
Championships
 Denny Sanford Premier Center,
 Sioux Falls, SD, www.thesummitleague.org/tickets

MARCH 10
Singing in the Rain: Dinner
& A Movie
 Goss Opera House, Watertown,
 SD, 605-753-0200

MARCH 10
TobyMac Hits Deep Tour
 The Monument Summit Arena,
 Rapid City, SD, 605-394-4115

MARCH 10-13
Annual Sioux Empire
Sportsmen's Show
 Denny Sanford Premier Center,
 Sioux Falls, SD, www.siouxfalls.sportshow.com

MARCH 12
28 Below Fatbike Race, Ride
& Tour
 Spearfish Canyon Lodge, Lead,
 SD, www.28below.com

MARCH 12
Meraki Dance Competition
& Convention
 Washington Pavilion, Sioux
 Falls, SD, 605-367-6000

MARCH 12-13
Hill City's Antique and
Railroad Show & Sale
 440 Main Street, Hill City, SD,
 605-574-2821 or 605-877-6629

MARCH 14
Harlem Globetrotters
 The Monument, Rapid City,
 SD, 605-394-4115

MARCH 18-19
St. Patrick's Day Weekend
 Main Street, Deadwood, SD,
 605-578-1876

MARCH 18-19
Sioux Empire Arts & Crafts
Show
 W.H. Lyon Fairgrounds, Sioux
 Falls, SD, 605-332-6000

MARCH 18-19, 25-26
Schmeckfest
 748 S Main Street, Freeman,
 SD, 605-925-4237

MARCH 19
Dakota Coffee Festival
 Denny Sanford Premier Center,
 Sioux Falls, SD, 605-367-7288

MARCH 19
St. Patrick's Day Celebration
 Various Locations, Watertown,
 SD, 605-886-5814

MARCH 26
Annual Ag Day
 Washington Pavilion, Sioux
 Falls, SD, 605-367-6000

MARCH 30
Elton John Tribute Concert
 Performing Arts Center,
 Mitchell, SD, 605-770-7813
Note: Please make sure to
call ahead to verify the event
is still being held.