

# COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS



## **ATVs in SD**

**Summer fun on the  
off-road trails**

Page 8

**Sensible solar  
solutions**

Page 12

# New *Cooperative Connections* features modern design and information about your cooperative



**Ben Dunsmoor**  
Editor

This issue of *Cooperative Connections* is different.

It is different because the publication has been undergoing a behind-the-scenes makeover for the past several months and this is the first issue the new design is being unveiled to you - our readers. We hope the simple design brings a more modern look to the magazine and incorporates design elements that make the pictures pop and the articles effortless to read.

***Cooperative Connections* is currently one of the largest publications in South Dakota with more than 120,000 copies mailed every month.**

The entire goal of *Cooperative Connections* is to inform, educate, and entertain electric cooperative members across South Dakota. *Cooperative Connections* was first published in the year 2000 when the 31 electric cooperatives across the state joined together to print one unified publication which included statewide content from the South Dakota Rural Electric Association (SDREA) and local content from each individual co-op. Before that time, co-op members in South Dakota received a statewide publication and a separate local co-op publication in their mailboxes every month. Some members received even more reading material because wholesale generation and transmission cooperatives also sent out magazines. *Cooperative Connections* was developed more than 20 years ago to

be a one-stop shop for electric cooperative information. This is only the fourth time during the past two decades that the design has been changed.

*Cooperative Connections* is currently one of the largest publications in the state of South Dakota with more than 120,000 copies mailed every month. It is important to keep co-op members across the state informed about the operation of their cooperative because every member who buys electricity from the co-op is a partial owner of the cooperative. The monthly publication not only informs members about the finances of the co-op but it also provides notices about running for the board of directors and details about the cooperative's annual meeting. It is important information for members who would like to become more engaged in their local co-op.

The last redesign of this publication was about four years ago. We thought it was time for another refresh because the world continues to change at a rapid pace. We want to keep our communication channels clear, concise, and up to the modern-day design standards that our members expect.

Education is one of the seven core principles on which all strong cooperatives are built. Informed members are the cornerstone of strong co-ops. And, in the age of digital communication, *Cooperative Connections* still remains the most reliable way to reach all of our members every single month. So, even though this issue looks different, we hope that this publication continues to provide important updates and interesting articles.

Thank you for reading and enjoy the new design.

## COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS

### NORTHERN ELECTRIC

(USPS 396-040)

**Board President:** Donna Sharp

**Board of Directors**

Nolan Wipf - Vice President  
 Ron Kaaz - Secretary  
 Josh Larson - Treasurer  
 Fran Esser  
 Todd Hettich  
 Kirk Schaunaman  
 Mark Sumption  
 Jeff Vander Wal

**CEO/General Manager:** Char Hager  
 info@northernelectric.coop

**Chief Financial Officer:** Cathi Podoll

**Operations Manager:** Jerry Weber

**Manager of Member Services:** Russel Ulmer

**Manager of Information Technology:** Derek Gorecki

**Communications Director:** Ben Dunsmoor  
 bdunsmoor@northernelectric.coop

**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.

**Subscription information:** Northern Electric Cooperative members devote 50 cents from their monthly electric payments for a subscription. Non-member subscriptions are available for \$12 annually. Periodicals Postage Paid at Bath, SD 57427.

Postmaster: Please send address changes to Northern Electric Cooperative Connections, PO Box 457, Bath, SD 57427; telephone (605) 225-0310; fax (605) 225-1684

This institution is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

[www.northernelectric.coop](http://www.northernelectric.coop)



Northern Electric Cooperative's regular board meeting was held May 20, 2021, at the headquarters in Bath with all directors present. As the first order of business, the board approved the April 22, 2021, minutes and April expenditures. The Board reviewed and accepted monthly reports by management. Directors viewed the East River Electric Power Cooperative video report. East River Director Mark Sumption reported on actions taken by the East River Board at the May 6, 2021, board meeting. General Manager Char Hager reported on the East River MAC meeting held May 4, 2021. South Dakota Rural Electric Association Director Nolan Wipf reported on the Bylaw Committee meeting held May 17-19, 2021, in Pierre. The next South Dakota Rural Electric Association board meeting will be June 24-25, 2021. Director Ronald Kaaz reported on the South Dakota Wind Energy Association meeting held April 22, 2021.

### MANAGER'S REPORT

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

- Update on development projects.
- Update on Rural Electric Economic Development (REED) revolving loan fund.
- Legal and Legislative report.
- Informed the board of the 34th American Coalition for Ethanol Conference, August 18-20, 2021, in Minneapolis, MN.
- Reminded the board of the

in-person SDREA Co-op Board Leadership Summit, July 25-26, 2021, Pierre.

- Reminded the board of the 2021 NRECA Summer School for Directors, online courses for directors throughout the summer.
- Calendar review of upcoming meetings and events.

### 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 Monday, June 21, 2021.
2. Approved payment of legal fees for Harvey Oliver in the amount of \$1,891.97.
3. Approved Work Order Inventory #21-04 for \$71,985.33 to be submitted to the Rural Utilities Service for reimbursement from loan funds for electric plant construction already completed.
4. Authorized retirement of Basin Electric capital credits in the amount of \$207,679.02 based on first in, first out, methodology.
5. Authorized a donation request for the Boys and Girls Club of Aberdeen in the amount of \$500.
6. Approved revision to existing Electric Tariff.
7. Held Executive Session.

Talk to your director or co-op manager if you have questions on these matters.

### FINANCIAL REPORT

	April-21	April-20
kWh Sales .....	24,103,444 kWh	24,125,729 kWh
Electric Revenues .....	\$2,282,245	\$2,175,619
Total Cost of Service .....	\$2,232,493	\$2,189,367
Operating Margins.....	\$49,752	(-\$13,748)
Year to Date Margins .....	\$139,973	\$239,966

### RESIDENTIAL AVERAGE MONTHLY USAGE AND BILL

APRIL-2021.....	1,719 kWh.....	\$200.77 .....	0.1168 per kWh
APRIL-2020.....	2,471 kWh.....	\$235.94 .....	0.0955 per kWh

Wholesale power cost, taxes, interest, and depreciation account for 85.9% of NEC's total cost of service.

# Handling food safely when grilling outdoors

One of America's favorite summer pastimes is grilling, and safe grilling starts with proper food handling. Here are a few simple guidelines for grilling food safely:

- Wash away harmful bacteria. Avoid providing a hotbed for bacteria. Unwashed hands are a prime cause of foodborne illness, also known as food poisoning, as are unwashed perishable foods such as meat, seafood, and peeled or cut fruits and vegetables.

- Keep perishable foods cold. If you'll be meeting up with friends away from your backyard grill, it's best to transport all perishables in an insulated cooler kept cold with ice or frozen gel packs.

- Throw away any perishable leftovers that have been out of a refrigerator or cooler for more than two hours—one hour if the temperature is above 90 degrees.

- Keep coolers out of direct sunlight and avoid opening them frequently, to keep the cold air inside.

- Marinate safely. Marinated meats should be stored immediately in a refrigerator or cooler, not on the kitchen counter or outside next to the grill. As long as a marinade is stored in a cool environment, it can remain there safely for several hours or days.

- Do not use marinade from a raw meat/marinade mixture as a sauce on cooked meat, unless you first cook the

sauce to a boil for at least three minutes to kill harmful bacteria.

- Use grilling shortcuts.

Pre-cooking food partially indoors before putting it on a preheated grill will give you quick results when your friends are hungry or your grill is slow or small. Conversely, flame-grill meat for a smoky, charbroiled flavor, then bake in an oven until it's cooked properly.

- Cook thoroughly and use a meat thermometer. It's best to cook food to the safe minimum internal temperature to destroy harmful bacteria. On the grill, meat and poultry will brown quickly, but the inside might only be cooked partially. To be sure the food has reached a safe internal temperature, use a meat thermometer.

Here are some safe minimum internal temperatures:

- Chicken: 165 degrees
- Beef hamburgers: 160 degrees
- Beef, veal and lamb (steaks, roasts and chops): medium-rare 145 degrees, medium 160 degrees
- Pork: 165 degrees

With proper refrigeration and thorough cooking, your backyard barbecue will be a tasty success.

**AVOID UTILITY SCAMS**

Scammers will threaten you with everything from shutting off power to your home to legal action. Don't fall victim to these types of scams.

- Our employees will never show up at your door to demand payment.
- Never give personal information to an unknown caller or visitor. Our representatives have access

- to the details they need to service your account.
- Demands for immediate payment by wire transfer, cryptocurrency, gift cards or cash reload cards should immediately raise red flags.



## Don't fly kites near trees and power lines

**Annette Tschetter, 7 years old**

Annette is the daughter of Elaine and Ryan Tschetter of Revillo. They are members of Whetstone Valley Electric based in Milbank.

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.

# SUMMERTIME DESSERTS

## WHOOPIE PIES

Ingredients:

- 1 box spice cake mix
- 1 1/2 cups apple butter
- 1/2 cup canola oil
- 2 eggs
- 8 ounces cream cheese
- 4 tablespoons butter
- 3 cups powdered sugar
- 2 tablespoons milk
- 1 teaspoon vanilla

### METHOD

Heat oven to 350 F. Line baking sheet with parchment paper. In large bowl, whisk spice cake mix, apple butter, oil and eggs. With ice cream scoop or large tablespoon, spoon batter into rounded heaps, about 2-3 inches in diameter, onto parchment paper. Space spooned batter 2 inches apart. Bake 14 minutes. Let cool. In large bowl, beat cream cheese, butter and powdered sugar until smooth. Add milk and vanilla; beat until blended. Frost flat sides of pie halves and place halves together. Refrigerate and store in sealed container.

Culinary.net

## ROCKY ROAD ICE CREAM

Ingredients:

- 1/2 cup cocoa powder
- 1 -14 oz. can sweetened condensed milk
- 2 cup heavy cream
- 1 cup half & half
- 1 TBS vanilla
- 1/2 cup chopped pecans
- 1 cup miniature marshmallows

### METHOD

In a small saucepan put in cocoa and whisk in sweetened condensed milk until smooth. Cook over low heat, whisking constantly until slightly thickened, about 5 minutes. Remove from heat. Transfer to a bowl and stir in both creams and vanilla. Pour mixture into ice cream maker and freeze. Stir in pecans and marshmallows halfway through freezing process. Transfer to airtight container and put in freezer to harden, about an hour. Makes 2 quarts.

Joan Antonen, Arlington, SD

## PRALINE PECAN CRUNCH

Ingredients:

- 1 21 oz. box Quaker Oat Squares cereal (about 8 cups)
- 2 cups pecans
- 1/2 cup packed brown sugar
- 1 tsp. vanilla
- 1/2 cup light corn syrup
- 1/4 cup margarine
- 1/2 tsps baking soda

### METHOD

Heat oven to 250 degrees. Mix cereal and pecans in 9"x13" pan. Set aside. Mix corn syrup, brown sugar and margarine in glass bowl. Microwave on high 1-1/2 minutes. Stir, microwave 1 to 1-1/2 minutes more or until boiling. Stir in vanilla and baking soda and pour over cereal mixture. Stir to coat evenly. Bake 1 hour, stirring every 20 minutes. Spread on baking sheet to cool. Break into pieces and store in air tight container.

NANCY STENSON, FORT PIERRE

## MAMA'S CARAMEL PUDDING

Ingredients:

- 1 cup sugar - melt in skillet until golden brown
- 2 cups milk - stir until sugar is dissolved
- 4 tsps. corn starch stirred into a little milk

### METHOD

Cook until thickened. Serve with whipped cream.

Elaine Rowett, Sturgis, SD

Please send your favorite dairy 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 2021. All entries must include your name, mailing address, phone number and cooperative name.



# STOKING SAFETY

**Follow these simple tips to ensure a safe and fun summer around the fire pit**

**Ben Dunsmoor**

[bdunsmoor@northernelectric.coop](mailto:bdunsmoor@northernelectric.coop)

Bright flames and crackling logs are the sights and sounds of many summer nights throughout South Dakota. Starting a fire at home or at the campsite is a relaxing way to spend time with family and friends. However, there are several precautions to follow to ensure a safe and fun night around the fire.

Recreational fires are allowed in the city limits of Aberdeen and throughout Brown and Spink counties. Recreational fires are

considered three feet in diameter or less and should be contained by steel, concrete, or other nonflammable material such as rocks. Metal fire pits purchased at local stores are also allowed. In Spink County the fire should be covered.

“Can a person have a backyard fire? The answer is yes but the pit must have a protective screen cover of some sort,” Spink County Emergency Manager Larry Tebben said.

Here are a few more tips from local fire officials to consider before building a backyard fire.

## **WATCH THE WEATHER**

It is important to check the weather before starting a fire to make sure the flames can be contained.

“If it has been dry for an extended period, or if the wind is blowing hard, it is best to reconsider having a fire,” Aberdeen Fire Marshal Chad Nilson said.

Officials recommend checking the Aberdeen National Weather Service website or other news sources for weather conditions. If there is a burn ban in effect in the county it is also important to check if the ban includes recreational fires. In most cases the burn ban likely includes backyard fire pits.

## **BURN ONLY SEASONED WOOD**

Seasoned wood is dry and does not produce as much smoke as wet wood. Fire officials say wet wood



Backyard fires should be contained by non-flammable materials such as metal or concrete.

## **FIRE PITS SHOULD BE KEPT A MINIMUM OF 15 FEET AWAY FROM ANY STRUCTURES OR ANY OTHER FLAMMABLE MATERIALS SUCH AS DECKS OR SHEDS.**

should not be used in a fire pit. It is also prohibited to burn tires, rubber, oil, plastics, landscape waste, leaves or grass in a backyard fire pit.

“When the conditions are right to have your fire, be a good neighbor and make sure your campfire smoke isn’t blowing into your neighbor’s house,” Nilson said.

### **LEAVE ENOUGH SPACE**

Fire officials say it is extremely important to keep the area around a fire pit clear of any flammable material. This includes anything that could start on fire above the flames such as tree branches or wooden pergolas. Fire pits should be kept a minimum of 15 feet away from any structures or any other flammable materials such as decks or sheds. Homeowners should also make sure a 15-foot distance is maintained above the fire and from the lot line of a neighboring property.

### **MONITOR THE FIRE**

Once the fire is started it should be monitored. Adult supervision is important. Unattended children should never be left around the fire pit.

“The fire must be attended by an adult at all times. Fires must be extinguished before the adult attending the fire leaves the area,” Brown County Emergency Manager Scott Meints said.

Suppression materials such as sand or water from a garden hose should be kept nearby and should be ready to use if the fire gets out of control.

### **EXTINGUISH THE FIRE**

Use sand or water to fully extinguish the fire at the end of the night. The fire should be monitored until all the coals are out.

“After you pour your water or sand over the fire, you will want to monitor the fire for a period of time to be sure that all the embers have been extinguished,” Nilson said. “Often by taking a shovel and gently stirring the fire it can help your water or sand mix with embers lower in the fuel area.”

Following a few of these simple tips will make backyard fires safe, enjoyable, and fun all summer long.



Only dry wood should be used to build a backyard fire. Dry wood reduces the amount of smoke when it is burning.



# Summer fun awaits off the beaten path

Off-road enthusiasts from far and wide come to ride the Black Hills. Photos by Billy Gibson

## From the Black Hills to Avon, off-road ATV trails attract outdoor enthusiasts

**Billy Gibson**  
billy.gibson@sdrea.coop

Generations ago, folks flocked to the tiny hamlet of Nemo to search for gold buried deep in the nooks and crannies of the Black Hills region.

Today they come in search of family outdoor fun and adventure along the hundreds of miles of nature trails that course throughout the craggy terrain.

During most months of the year, Nemo is a quiet outpost with a

smattering of permanent residents who spend their days in unhurried leisure. But the warm summer months bring thousands of visitors seeking to explore the undulating wooded landscape on foot or on horseback, but most of all nestled in the seat of a side-by-side.

The Black Hills area is widely regarded as the state's top draw for all-terrain adventurers, and Nemo stands smack dab at the center of the action.

One of the town's busiest denizens during the summer crush is Dane Hilger, who runs D&K ATV

Rentals in Nemo. Hilger does a brisk business pairing up riders with fully licensed and permitted machines that allow visitors to free-range along the trails and take in the breathtaking vistas. His fleet of more than a dozen two-seaters and four-seaters gets snapped up quickly as the town is completely transformed during the summer season, which typically kicks off with the annual Black Hills ATV/UTV Rally held in mid-June.

"There are so many people in town it seems like it's hard to get around sometimes, but it's very family-oriented and everybody gets along and has a good time getting out and enjoying the great outdoors."

Vacationers and even day-trippers have access to everything they need during a visit to Nemo with the Brandin’ Iron restaurant, camping sites, a general store and lodging.

Adam Rice, a native of Rapid City, owns and operates the Brandin’ Iron in addition to another restaurant in Arizona. Soon after high school, he headed to Arizona for culinary school and later opened his business there. But two years ago, Rice was lured back to South Dakota and decided to resettle in Nemo.

“The town just has an aura about it. It’s pristine and gorgeous. There’s no better way to see the Black Hills. You can get to a lot of cool places through the trail system that goes literally thousands of miles and you never have to get on the road. You can get to Deadwood, you can get to Mount Rushmore, you can get to Sturgis. I go out into the woods just about every day. There’s always something interesting to see.”

Larry Kaiser owns the Nemo Merchantile store where visitors will find fuel, snacks, beverages, clothing and an assortment of dry goods.

He laments that during the summer he is often too busy to ride the trails, but he enjoys supplying the provisions visitors need.

“It’s just a lot of fun. You meet the most interesting people and everybody’s having a good time.”

“It’s just a lot of fun. You meet the most interesting people and everybody’s having a good time.”



## TOP ATV TRAILS IN SD

1. **Centennial Trail**  
West of Rapid City
2. **Northern Black Hills**  
West of Rapid City
3. **Southern Black Hills**  
Southwest of Rapid City
4. **Buffalo Gap National Grassland**  
Southeast of Farmingdale
5. **Bear Lodge Mountains**  
North of Sundance
6. **Oahe Downstream OHV Area**  
North of Pierre
7. **Talsmas ATV Trail Park**  
South of Avon
8. **Reveheim Bay OHV Area**  
Southeast of Mobridge

They bring their kids, the grand parents and the dog and they just relax, unwind and have fun.”

While Nemo may be considered the mecca of ATV riders, there are several other prime spots in South Dakota open to the public.

In the southeastern region of the state near Avon, Jerry and Tina Talsma welcome ATV riders to their Trails End Ranch situated alongside the Missouri River.

The third-generation land owners opened Talsma’s Trail Park in 2005 with several hundred acres open to the public and trails that range from novice to extreme.

There are climbing hills, creek crossings, deep brush, open prairie land, river bottom terrain and expansive scenic bluffs overlooking the Missouri. There are also several play areas for riders to kick up some mud.

There are different fees to enter the park depending on the mode of transportation and special discounts for groups of 10 or more machines

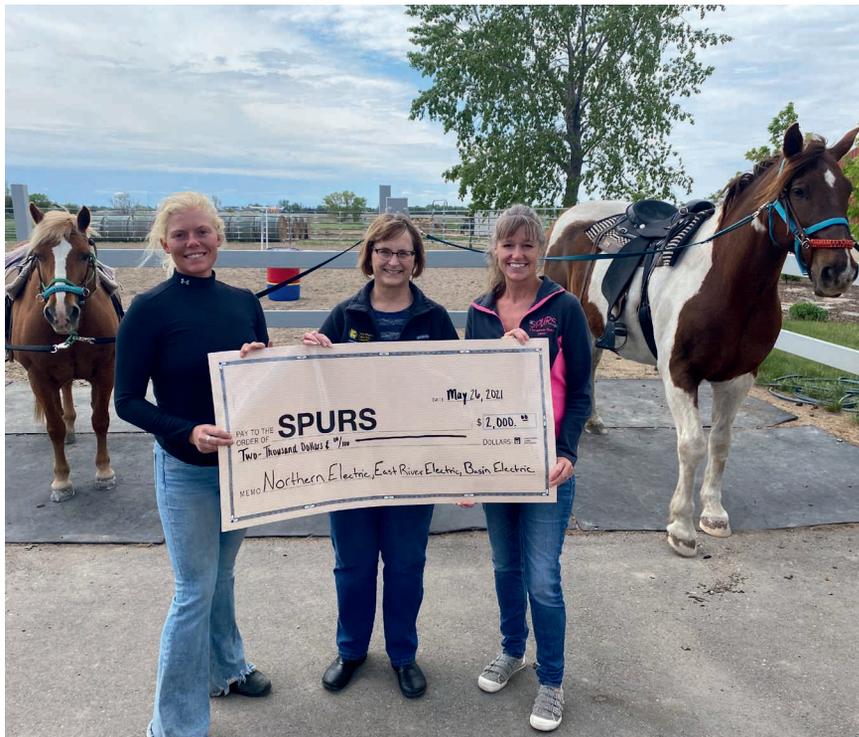


Many ATV trails across the state have access to fishing, scenic vistas and places to pull over for refreshments such as the Merchantile store in Nemo shown above.

as well as multi-day and seasonal passes. Camp sites are available at a rate of \$20 per night with electricity and \$10 without.

The Talsmas have big plans for the summer with a Customer Appreciation Day on Aug. 14, a fundraising event for Horse Haven on Sept. 11 and a Halloween Scare Ride on Oct. 9.

For more information on the private park, visit [talsmastrailpark.com](http://talsmastrailpark.com). For more information about riding in the Black Hills, visit [blackhillsatvally.com](http://blackhillsatvally.com) and [custersd.com](http://custersd.com) where you’ll find details about ATV activities in the Custer area.



SPURS Therapeutic Riding Center Program Director Dani Karlen (left) and executive director Becky Fischbach (right) accept a \$2,000 donation from Northern Electric Cooperative CEO/General Manager Char Hager (middle).

## GIVING BACK

### Electric cooperatives donate \$2,000 to SPURS for summer Special Olympics event

Ben Dunsmoor

[bdunsmoor@northernelectric.coop](mailto:bdunsmoor@northernelectric.coop)

The riders at SPURS Therapeutic Riding Center are ready to get back in the saddle.

The state Special Olympics equestrian event in Huron was canceled in 2020 because of the COVID-19 pandemic. It is the biggest event the riders at SPURS participate in every year. And while there was disappointment last year over the cancellation, there

is excitement this year because the event is moving forward as scheduled in July.

“It is the big event and they work really really hard,” SPURS Executive Director Becky Fischbach said.

SPURS is a nonprofit organization with the mission of improving the lives of people with disabilities through therapeutic horseback riding. The two-day Special Olympics equestrian event provides a goal and a getaway for the riders every summer.

“It is a huge event,” SPURS

Program Director Dani Karlen said. “To go overnight is a huge event for them.”

Special Olympics also becomes a large undertaking for the SPURS organization. SPURS plans to take 25 riders, 12 horses, and several dozen volunteers to Huron in July. It takes a lot of time, resources, and money to pull everything together. Northern Electric Cooperative, East River Electric Power Cooperative, and Basin Electric Power Cooperative teamed up to ease the burden by donating \$2,000 to SPURS in May to help pay for hotels, food, and travel expenses so the riders can compete at Special Olympics this year.

“We know how much it means to the riders to participate in Special Olympics and our local co-ops are proud to contribute to SPURS and make this event possible,” Northern Electric CEO/General Manager Char Hager said.

And the organizers at SPURS say the donations are appreciated by the riders and the staff as they look forward to showing off their skills in Huron.

“It is a much bigger level of excitement (for the riders),” Karlen said.

The Special Olympics equestrian event will be held at the state fairgrounds in Huron on July 12-13.

## Co-op hires two temporary linemen



Riley Whitley



Chase Snedeker

Northern Electric Cooperative has hired two Mitchell Technical College graduates to fill two temporary linemen positions. Riley Whitley of Frankfort and Chase Snedeker of Mitchell were both hired in May shortly after graduation.

Riley Whitley attended Redfield High School and graduated in 2020. He attended Mitchell Tech following his high school graduation and completed the Power Line Construction and Maintenance program in May 2021. Whitley will be working with the line crews based out of the Bath headquarters office.

“I am looking forward to getting to know the guys and learning as much as I can,” Whitley said about his new position.

Chase Snedeker grew up in Mitchell and graduated from Mitchell High School in 2019. Snedeker also completed the Power Line Construction and Maintenance program at Mitchell Tech in May 2021. Snedeker will work with the Redfield crew at the co-op’s location in Spink County.

Snedeker said he is looking forward to beginning his temporary position at Northern Electric and working in a career field which is ‘something that not everybody does.’

Both Whitley and Snedeker will finish their temporary positions after completing 1,000 hours of work with the co-op throughout the summer and fall construction season.

## Kyle Miller completes lineworker apprenticeship program



Northern Electric Cooperative Operations Manager Jerry Weber (left) presents lineman Kyle Miller (right) with his journeyman certification from the Northwest Lineman College.

Northern Electric Cooperative lineman Kyle Miller has completed the Lineworker Certification Program through the Northwest Lineman College. Miller is now certified as a journeyman lineman.

Miller logged 8,000 hours of on-the-job training to complete the program. The program also requires lineworkers to pass a series of 40 different tests which cover a variety of topics including safety, transformer connections, mapping, and several other topics relating to the construction and maintenance of power lines.

Miller said it feels ‘great’ to complete the program and receive his journeyman certification. He said the program was time consuming but he learned a lot and the knowledge he has gained will benefit him on the job site.

Miller began working at Northern Electric Cooperative as a 1,000-hour temporary lineman in May 2018. He was hired as a full-time apprentice in February 2019. Miller is from Groton and attended Groton High School. He completed the Power Line Construction and Maintenance program at Mitchell Technical College in 2017. Miller worked for a construction crew in Nebraska building new transmission lines before he was hired by Northern Electric.



# SENSIBLE SOLAR

## South Dakota's electric cooperatives promote fair, sensible solar policies

**Billy Gibson**

[billy.gibson@sdrea.coop](mailto:billy.gibson@sdrea.coop)

With summer in full swing, the sun is bearing down on South Dakotans. But that wasn't the case just five months ago when an unexpected polar vortex covered much of the country in a blanket of snow and ice.

As co-op members now reach for the sunscreen and a cold beverage, it's easy to forget that back in February the same solar panels that are streaming torrents of ions today were reduced to a trickle when a convergence of circumstances caused a series of rolling blackouts.

That historic event alerted policymakers from Texas to the Canadian border to hit the pause button and take another look at how renewable power fits into the national grid-based energy picture.

Across the country, the solar market is facing what can be described as growing pains. Those pains stem from the fact that the nascent stages of solar energy were heavily subsidized through taxpayer dollars, as early adopters benefited from an array of state, federal and municipal government tax credits, exemptions, incentives, rebates and subsidies designed to get the industry off the ground. Tapping into these programs, owners of solar installations have been able to deduct up to half of their costs.

But as more homeowners and businesses opt for solar and as the cost of solar has dropped 80 percent since 2010, those subsidies are shrinking and the industry is in the process of having to eventually stand on its own feet. At the federal level, for instance, the Investment Tax Credit (ITC) established in 2005

has allowed new residential and commercial solar owners to deduct 26 percent of their installation costs from their federal taxes. The ITC is set to be reduced to 23 percent in 2023 and eliminated for homeowners by 2024. The Biden Administration has proposed extending the program for another two years.

According to the Energy Information Administration, direct federal government subsidies for solar alone totaled \$34.4 billion between 2010 and 2019.

As solar subsidies decline, the true costs for ratepayers to have 24-hour access to both intermittent renewable power and more reliable traditional power at the same time are coming to bear.

In Nevada, for example, incentives for homeowners were phased out in 2016 after the state's largest energy company argued that its costs of creating and delivering power weren't being fully covered and the expenses of serving every home and business in the system were being shifted to those exercising their right not to have rooftop panels placed on their homes.

Predictably, once the incentives

*Sensible Solutions for Our Energy Future*



South Dakota's electric cooperatives support reasonable strategies for our energy future that make sense for our members:

- Renewable energy solutions that are both productive and practical
- Rate structures that take affordability into account
- Balanced strategies centered on the best interests of co-op consumers
- Technology-based policies that promote economic development

## **“WE RELY ON INTERMITTENT RENEWABLE SOURCES TO CURB EMISSIONS AND MORE RELIABLE FOSSIL FUELS TO DELIVER THE BASELOAD POWER OUR MEMBERS NEED.”**

ROBERT RAKER

West River Electric, characterized the state's electric cooperatives as being neither pro-renewable energy nor anti-renewable energy.

“We're pro-reliability and pro-affordability for our members,” he explained. “We rely on intermittent renewable sources to curb emissions and more reliable fossil fuels to deliver the baseload power our members

to communicate with one another as each cooperative in the state has its own set of interconnection requirements and policies determined by their management.

“If one of our members wants to get involved in renewable energy, we need to know about it so we can work with the member to make sure the process goes as smoothly as possible,” Raker said.

Chris Studer, chief member and public relations officer at East River Electric, echoed Raker's comments and emphasized another important factor in open member-to-cooperative communication: safety.

“Just make sure to call your co-op. It's a safety issue. Improperly installed equipment could put the homeowner's property and co-op employees who work on the infrastructure at risk and that's what we want to prevent.”

Studer said the state's cooperatives will continue to play an active role as the renewable market evolves.

“At this stage in the emergence of the distributed generation market, the fixed costs that electric utilities have invested in their infrastructure needs to be taken under consideration as more members bring localized solar installations into the system,” he said.

“Other states have addressed this issue by establishing fixed charges for distributed generation owners in a way that was fair for everyone, while also setting up a system to streamline the resolution of any disputes that may arise. We'll continue to serve as an advocate for all co-op consumers.”

were sun-setted and solar owners had to pay for maintaining the same grid that they depend on when their panels aren't producing power, demand decreased.

In South Dakota, where there are no state government subsidies, investor-owned Black Hills Energy has followed Nevada's lead by proposing that the South Dakota Public Utilities Commission institute tariffs on homeowners to compensate the power company for those fixed costs required to keep the system functioning for all ratepayers who use it.

Opponents argue that the tariffs could potentially obliterate the state's growing solar market, which saw 462 MW installed through the first quarter of 2021.

As for South Dakota's electric cooperatives, the system's leaders paid close attention to the polar vortex event and the lessons learned in the aftermath. Robert Raker, public relations manager at

need. It's like a parent trying to determine which is their favorite kid. We favor both of them because we need to help protect the planet but we also need to fulfill our obligation to serve our members whether it's day or night, hot or cold, sunny or cloudy, windy or calm.”

Raker noted that co-ops have embraced the integration of renewable power into the state's fuel mix. Electric co-ops were leaders in introducing wind power, which now makes up roughly 25 percent of the supply while 17 percent comes from hydroelectric dams along the Missouri River. Co-ops are also involved in the construction of Wild Springs solar farm, which is expected to go on-line next year as the largest solar array in the western part of the state.

Without a clear and complete set of rules in place for distributed generation, Raker said it's paramount that members and their cooperatives work together

# Petitions are now available for 2021 board of directors seats

## Nominating Petitions Due By July 23

During Northern Electric Cooperative's 2021 Annual Meeting (Tuesday, September 21, 2021) members will elect Directors for Districts 1, 3, and 8.

Incumbent directors Ronald Kaaz, Aberdeen (Dist. 3) and Francis Esser, Redfield (Dist. 8) are eligible to run again and are up for re-election. The District 1 seat will be vacant because director Mark Sumption of Frederick has reached his term limit.

Northern Electric Cooperative uses a petition process to nominate directors. The procedure requires all candidates to circulate a petition. Candidates must be cooperative members and reside in the district they wish to represent. Each petition must be signed by at least ten (10) cooperative member-consumers residing in that candidate's specific district.

For a joint membership, either the husband or wife may sign a petition but NOT both.

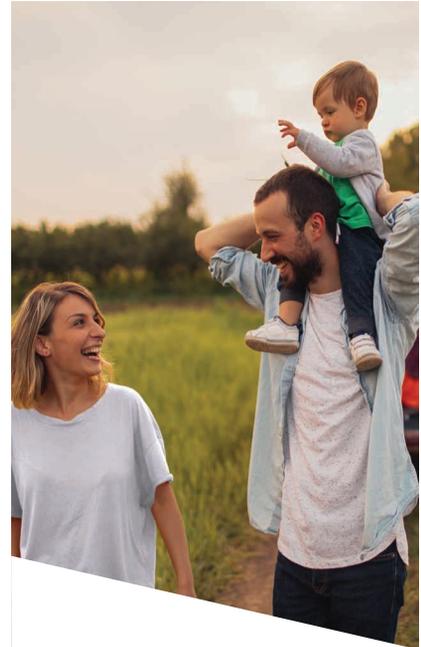
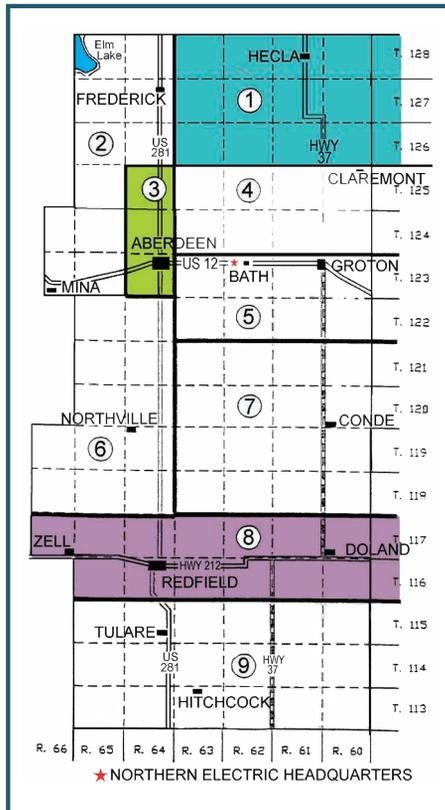
Petitions are available at the Northern Electric offices in Bath and Redfield. Director petitions must be submitted at least sixty (60) days before the Annual Meeting to have names placed on the official ballot and the Notice of the Meeting. No petitions filed later than sixty (60) days prior to the meeting shall be considered valid.

Petitions must be filed at a Northern Electric Cooperative office by close of business (4:30 p.m.) Friday, July 23, 2021.

Nominations are not permitted from the floor during the meeting.

Members may only sign ONE nominating petition for a director candidate from their district of record.

**For a complete copy of the Northern Electric Cooperative Bylaws contact Northern Electric at 605-225-0310 or stop by one of the offices in Bath or Redfield. The bylaws are also available online at [www.northernelectric.coop/cooperative-bylaws](http://www.northernelectric.coop/cooperative-bylaws)**



**RE-ENERGIZING CO-OP MEMBERSHIP**

**YOUR VOICE. YOUR POWER. YOUR CO-OP.**

The best part about being a member of your local Touchstone Energy® Cooperative is just that ... it's YOUR cooperative. That means:

- One member = One vote
- You have a say
- Your co-op answers to you
- Invested in community
- Capital credits (get money back!)



Learn more about the power of membership at [YourCoopPower.com](http://YourCoopPower.com)



## DIRECTOR QUALIFICATIONS

Northern Electric Cooperative Bylaws  
Article IV Section 3

No person shall be eligible to become or remain a director who:

1. Is an employee of Northern Electric Cooperative.
2. Is not a member and bona fide resident of the service area served by the Cooperative located within the particular District up for election;
3. Is in any way employed by or financially interested in a competing enterprise or business selling electric energy or supplies to the Cooperative or a business primarily engaged in selling electrical or plumbing appliances, fixtures or supplies to the members of the Cooperative;
4. Has been previously removed as a Director of the Cooperative in accordance with the procedures provided for removal in these Bylaws;
5. Has failed to attend at least 2/3 of all regular board meetings during any consecutive twelve (12) month period.
6. Has been employed by the Cooperative in the past five years.
7. Has pled guilty or has been convicted of:
  - A felony,
  - Any crime involving dishonesty, or
  - Any crime involving moral turpitude

## DIRECTOR NOMINATION AND ELECTION PROCESS

### 2021 Annual Meeting Scheduled For Tuesday, September 21

#### NORTHERN ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE BYLAWS ARTICLE IV SECTION 5

Section 5. Nomination of Directors. The nominating process shall be premised on a nine (9) District - nine (9) Director Cooperative. Any ten (10) or more members residing in such District may file a nominating petition with the Secretary placing in nomination any qualified member from such District. Each signatory shall place the date of signing and his address on said petition. No member may sign a petition to nominate more than one candidate, and to do so shall invalidate the member's signature on the petition signed on the latest date.

This procedure shall be followed in each Director District in which the Director terms shall expire. Upon receipt of such petition and having found the same to be in order, the Secretary shall post such nomination in the principal office of the Cooperative. Candidates so nominated shall be identified in the Notice of the Meeting and shall also be named on the official ballot.

No petition filed later than sixty (60) days prior to the annual meeting shall be considered valid.

The order in which the nominees

shall appear on the printed ballot shall be determined by lot under the supervision of the Secretary. If any nominee should refuse to become a candidate or is not qualified, in accordance with the requirements of the Bylaws, the Secretary of the Cooperative is authorized and directed to remove the name or names from the list of posted nominees and/or from the ballot.

The Secretary shall be responsible for mailing with the Notice of the Meeting, or separately, but at least ten (10) days before the date of the meeting, a statement of the number of Board Members to be elected and the names and addresses of the candidates nominated. No nominations shall be permitted from the floor. Each member of the Cooperative present at the meeting shall be entitled to vote for one candidate from their specific District from which a director is to be elected. Voting may occur two hours before or during the official meeting in accordance with the procedure established by the board of directors. The candidate from each District receiving the highest number of votes at the meeting shall be considered elected as a Board member.

## REGISTER TO WIN!

Bring this coupon and mailing label to the Touchstone Energy® Cooperatives booth at Dakotafest, Farmfest or the South Dakota State Fair to win a prize!

Your Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Your E-mail Address: \_\_\_\_\_



**July 4**  
Independence Day

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.

**JUNE 19-20**  
**Aberdeen Arts in the Park**  
Melgaard Park, Aberdeen,  
SD, 605-226-1557

**JUNE 25-27**  
**Annual Main Street Arts  
and Crafts Festival**  
N River Street, Hot Springs,  
SD, 605-440-2738

**JUNE 30-JULY 4**  
**Annual Black Hills Roundup**  
300 Roundup Street, Belle  
Fourche, SD, 605-723-2010

**JULY 2-4**  
**Custer's Old Time Country  
Fourth of July**  
Various Locations, Custer,  
SD, 605-673-2244

**JULY 2-4**  
**Gold Camp Jubilee Days**  
Various Locations, Lead,  
SD, 605-584-1100

**JULY 2-4**  
**Sitting Bull Stampede Rodeo**  
Rodeo Grounds, Mobridge,  
SD, 605-845-2387

**JULY 4**  
**Fall River Fourth of July**  
Various Locations, Hot Springs,  
SD, 605-745-4140

**JULY 4**  
**Fourth of July Celebration**  
703 Main Street, Deadwood,  
SD, 800-344-8826

**JULY 4**  
**Fourth of July Parade**  
Kemp Avenue, Watertown,  
SD, 605-886-5814

**JULY 9-11, 16-18, 23-25**  
**Laura Ingalls Wilder Pageant**  
43379 Rose Lane, De Smet,  
SD, 605-983-5251

**JULY 10**  
**Auto Value Annual Car Show**  
Hav-A-Rest Campground, Red-  
field, SD, 605-450-0332

**JULY 11**  
**Lions Club Summer Fest/  
Car Show**  
City Park, Groton, SD,  
605-846-7607

**JULY 16-17**  
**Aberdeen Senior Games**  
Aberdeen Parks and Rec,  
Aberdeen, SD, 605-216-2822

**JULY 16-17**  
**Storybook Land Festival**  
Wylie Park, Aberdeen,  
SD, 605-626-7015

**JULY 16-24**  
**Senior Summer Tournaments**  
Rapid City, SD, Contact Lindsey  
Meyers at 605-394-4175

**JULY 24**  
**Make-A-Wish 18th Annual  
'On the Road to Wishes'  
Poker Run**  
Biegler's C&S Motorsports,  
Aberdeen, SD, 605-225-7262

**JULY 23-25**  
**Arlington Days**  
Various Locations, Arlington,  
SD, 605-983-5251

**JULY 27-31**  
**Days of '76 Rodeo & Parades**  
Various Locations, Deadwood,  
SD, 605-578-1876

**JULY 31**  
**Chislic Festival**  
Freeman's Prairie Arboretum,  
Freeman, SD, 605-496-9946

**AUGUST 5-14**  
**Sioux Empire Fair**  
W.H. Lyon Fairgrounds, Sioux  
Falls, SD, 605-367-7178

**AUGUST 17-19**  
**Dakotafest**  
2300 E Spruce Street, Mitchell,  
SD, 877-611-8161

**Note: Please make sure to  
call ahead to verify the event  
is still being held.**