A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

BLACK HILLS ELECTRIC
JANUARY 2025 VOL. 25 NO. 9

COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS

Forecasting the Future

Celebrating the Season:
Gratitude & Good Wishes from Your Cooperative Employees

As the year draws to a close and the holiday season approaches, we at Black Hills Electric Cooperative find ourselves reflecting on what we're most thankful for. Christmas and New Year's bring a time of joy, togetherness, and gratitude. It's a perfect opportunity to express how fortunate we feel to serve our members and our community.

Thankful for Our Members

First and foremost, we are incredibly grateful for our members. Your continued trust and partnership make our cooperative strong and enable us to deliver reliable, affordable, and sustainable power. Whether you're a long-time member or new to our cooperative, your support drives us to do our best every day.

Thankful for Our Community

We are privileged to be a part of the community—a community that comes together in times of need, celebrates successes, and values connection. Throughout the year, we've seen countless examples of neighbors helping neighbors, from volunteering at local events to supporting each other through obstacles and unexpected challenges. These acts of kindness remind us that the holiday spirit isn't limited to a few weeks each year; it's alive all year long.

Thankful for Our Team

Behind every light switch, every powered appliance, and every warm home is a team of dedicated professionals working to keep electricity flowing smoothly. Our linemen, office staff, and everyone in between are committed to providing exceptional service, often going above and beyond during storms and maintenance projects. We are thankful for their hard work, expertise, and commitment to safety.

Thankful for Our Directors

The employees of Black Hills Electric Cooperative are deeply grateful for the guidance and dedication of their board of directors. The board's leadership plays a crucial role in shaping the cooperative's direction, ensuring that the needs of the members are met with care and foresight. Their commitment to the cooperative's mission and the community drives us to provide reliable and efficient service every day. We appreciate their steady support and the strategic vision they bring, which inspires our team to maintain the highest standards in everything we do.

Reflecting on the Year

This year, our cooperative has made significant strides. We've celebrated achievements, faced challenges, and continued to adapt to the evolving needs of our members. Looking back, we are proud of what we've accomplished together and excited for what the future holds.

Wishing You a Wonderful Holiday Season

As we enter this special season, we want to extend our warmest holiday wishes to you and your family. May your Christmas be filled with joy, peace, and warmth, and may the New Year bring hope, good health, and success. We look forward to another year of serving you and working together to make our cooperative and community the best it can be.

From all of us at Black Hills Electric Cooperative, Merry Christmas and Happy New Year! Thank you for being a part of our cooperative family—we are grateful for each and every one of you.

COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS

BLACK HILLS ELECTRIC

(ISSN No. 1531-104X)

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BLACK HILLS ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS is the monthly publication for the members of Black Hills Electric Cooperative, 25191 Cooperative Way, P.O. Box 792, Custer, S.D. 57730-0792. Black Hills Electric Cooperative Connections' purpose is to provide reliable, helpful information to electric cooperative members on matters pertaining to their cooperative and living better with electricity. Also available at www.bhec.coop.

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CAPITAL CREDIT RETIREMENT ON DECEMBER BILL

Black Hills Electric Cooperative belongs to you and other members/owners who receive electric service from the cooperative.

At Black Hills Electric, the cost of services and energy is based on actual expenses and is kept as low as possible while providing safe and reliable electric service. Because we are owned by the members we serve and operate as a not-for-profit, any profits, known as margins in the co-op world, are returned to members in the form of capital credits.

When you pay your monthly electric bill, you are contributing the capital necessary for the cooperative to cover its operating expenses. Each year, any remaining margins are allocated to members based on the amount they paid for electricity that year. Active members receive a notice in their May billing statement detailing the capital credits they have accumulated. Each November, the board of directors reviews the cooperative's financial health to determine what portion of capital credits can be returned to members. This year, the board approved the retirement of $2,400,000 in capital credits, and your share appeared in the upper right corner of your December bill.

Account Number XXXXXXX	
BILLING SUMMARY AS OF	
Previous Balance	$$$.$$
No Payment Received	$$$.$$
Balance	$$$.$$
Current Charges	$$$.$$
Capital Credit Retirement	$$$.$$
Past Due on 01/05/2025	$$$.$$

To continue receiving capital credit retirements, please ensure that you keep the cooperative updated with any address changes. One of the unique benefits of being a Black Hills Electric Cooperative member is that you are not just a customer, you are an owner.

If you have questions about capital credits or need to update your contact information, please reach out to us.

Snow Safety

There is no end to the terms for "really big snowstorm," and those terms come in handy, particularly in America's snowiest cities. Just check out these average annual snowfall totals in towns of at least 10,000 residents, according to the Farmer's Almanac:

Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan. – 119.3 inches
Syracuse, New York – 114.3 inches
Juneau, Alaska – 93.6 inches
Flagstaff, Arizona – 87.6 inches
Duluth, Minnesota – 83.5 inches
Erie, Pennsylvania – 80.9 inches
Burlington, Vermont – 80.2 inches
Muskegon, Michigan – 79.3 inches
Casper, Wyoming – 77 inches
Portland, Maine – 70 inches

But with really big snow storms – and even everyday, run-of-the-mill snowfalls – comes a risk of death by shoveling. Nationwide, snow shoveling is responsible for thousands of injuries and as many as 100 deaths each year.

So, why so many deaths? Shoveling snow is just another household chore, right?

Not really, says the American Heart Association. While most people won't have a problem, shoveling snow can put some people at risk of heart attack. Sudden exertion, like moving hundreds of pounds of snow after being sedentary for several months, can put a big strain on the heart. Pushing a heavy snow blower also can cause injury.

And, there's the cold factor. Cold weather can increase heart rate and blood pressure. It can make blood clot more easily and constrict arteries, which decreases blood supply. This is true even in healthy people. Individuals over the age of 40 or who are relatively inactive should be particularly careful.

National Safety Council recommends the following tips to shovel safely:

- Do not shovel after eating or while smoking.
- Take it slow and stretch out before you begin.
- Shovel only fresh, powdery snow; it's lighter.
- Push the snow rather than lifting it.
- If you do lift it, use a small shovel or only partially fill the shovel.
- Lift with your legs, not your back.
- Do not work to the point of exhaustion.
- Know the signs of a heart attack, stop immediately and call 911 if you're experiencing any of them; every minute counts.

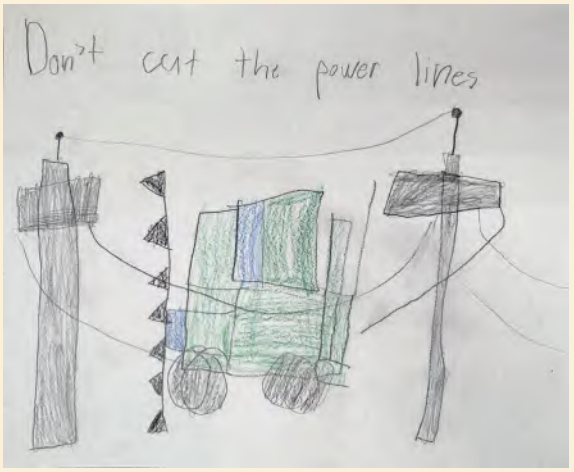
Don't pick up that shovel without a doctor's permission if you have a history of heart disease. A clear driveway is not worth your life.

Snow Blower Safety

In addition to possible heart strain from pushing a heavy snow blower, stay safe with these tips:

- If the blower jams, turn it off.
- Keep your hands away from the moving parts.
- Be aware of the carbon monoxide risk of running a snow blower in an enclosed space.
- Add fuel outdoors, before starting, and never add fuel when it is running.
- Never leave it unattended when it is running.

Source: National Safety Council



"Don't Cut the Power Lines!"

David Raak, Age 7 ½

David Raak cautions readers to be careful when working around power lines. Thank you for your picture, David! David's parents are Nathaniel and Katie Raak, members of Central Electric.

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.

Crockpot GREATNESS

CROCKPOT CORN

Ingredients:

3 16-oz. packages frozen corn
8 oz. cream cheese
1/2 cup (1 stick) butter
2 tbsps. sugar
2 tbsps. water

Method

Place corn in crockpot. Cut cream cheese and butter into small cubes. Add cream cheese, butter, sugar and water to corn. Stir. Cook on high for 45 minutes. Stir. Turn to low and cook for three more hours, stirring occasionally.

Elaine Rieck
Harrisburg, S.D.

CROCKPOT BAKED BEANS

Ingredients:

2 cans black beans
2 cans red beans (drained)
2 cans great northern
1 can baked beans with brown sugar
1 lb. diced ham
1 heaping tsp. mustard (regular)
2 full tbsps. ketchup
Garlic powder (optional)
1 small onion (chopped)

Method

Mix all ingredients in crockpot except ham. Cook 2 hours on high. Mix in ham and cook another hour on high. Enjoy!

Rose Tucker
Hot Springs, S.D.

CHICKEN FIESTA SLOW COOKER RECIPE

Ingredients:

2 lbs. boneless skinless chicken breasts
1 package slow cooker fiesta chicken seasoning mix
2 cans (14 1/2 oz. each) diced tomatoes, undrained
1 can (15 3/4 oz.) whole kernel corn, drained
1 can (15 oz.) black beans, drained and rinsed

Method

Place chicken in slow cooker. Mix seasoning, tomatoes, corn and beans until blended. Pour over chicken. Cover. Cook eight hours on LOW or four hours on HIGH. Remove chicken from slow cooker. Shred chicken, using two forks. Return chicken to slow cooker; mix well. Serve over cooked rice with assorted toppings, if desired.

McCormick.com

Please send your favorite 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 2024. All entries must include your name, mailing address, phone number and cooperative name.

SCHOLARSHIP & YOUTH TOUR

Black Hills Electric Cooperative is now accepting applications for the $1,000 scholarship sponsored by Basin Electric Cooperative, our generation cooperative based in Bismarck, ND. The recipient will be selected based on a combination of criteria, including SAT or ACT scores, overall GPA, a personal statement of career goals, a one-page essay, and an adult appraisal. All applications are confidential and will only be reviewed by the BHEC-appointed selection committee.

Application forms are available on our website at www.bhec.coop. Please send all supporting documents to BHEC, Attn: Michelle Fischer, PO Box 792, Custer, SD 57730, no later than Friday, February 7th. For more information, you can reach Ms. Fischer at 800-742-0085 or via email at michellef@bhec.coop.

SCHOLARSHIP DEADLINE: FEBRUARY 7, 2025 **WINNER WILL BE ANNOUNCED IN APRIL**

One lucky dependent of a Black Hills Electric Cooperative member has the chance to win a FREE trip to Washington, D.C. from June 15-21 as part of the NRECA Youth Tour! This exciting opportunity allows students to explore our nation's capital, develop leadership skills, and gain a deeper appreciation for the role of electric cooperatives.

To apply, students must submit a 500-word essay on the topic: **"As technology evolves, electric cooperatives face new opportunities and challenges. How do you see technology shaping the future of energy?"** Applicants must also complete page 2 of the Youth Tour Application, available on our website at www.bhec.coop. Please note that students must be at least 16 years old at the time of the tour.

Entries can be emailed to michellef@bhec.coop or mailed to BHEC, Attn: Michelle Fischer, PO Box 792, Custer, SD 57730, no later than Friday, February 7th, 2025.

YOUTH TOUR DEADLINE: FEBRUARY 7TH, 2025

AREA MEETINGS SCHEDULED FOR 2025

Meal will be served from 5:30 - 6:30 p.m. at all meetings.

AREA MEETING	DATE	LOCATION	CO-SPONSOR
Oelrichs	February 13th	Oelrichs Community Hall	Oelrichs Rodeo Assocation
Whispering Pines	February 17th	Whispering Pines VFD	Whispering Pines VFD
Rockerville	February 21st	Rockerville Community Hall	Rockerville Community Hall
Johnson Siding	February 27th	Rimrock Community Hall	Rimrock Community Club
Hermosa	March 7th	Hermosa Elementary School	Battle Creek Fire District
Rochford	April 11th	Rochford Community Hall	Rochford Community Club

A historic photo shows a man standing in front of an auger used to dig holes for utility poles.
Photo submitted by Moreau-Grand Electric

When the Lights Turned On: Janet Gesinger Remembers the Days Before Power

Frank Turner
frank.turner@sdrea.coop

Memory is a fickle thing. It's funny how a certain smell or simple photo can evoke vivid memories of an age long past. After all, how can a memory be lost when we can't even remember losing it?

At the age of 89, Janet Gesinger doesn't remember the exact moment when Cam Wal Electric, her local rural electric cooperative, introduced electricity to her childhood farm and ranch 13 miles west of Gettysburg, but she does remember the days without it.

"It's amazing that I can remember some things from my childhood so vividly, but I couldn't tell you what I had for lunch last week," Gesinger laughed.

Gesinger remembers growing up on the farm during a time when the glow of kerosene lamps helped her family navigate the dark and a cistern well kept their food cool.

"I don't know how we could see with the little lamps, but we did," she said. "People were careful because they knew what the risks were, carrying around those lamps."

At the age of 9, Gesinger and her three older siblings lost their mother. The profound loss meant that Gesinger had to step up to help her siblings and father keep the farm and ranch going.

"I ended up helping my dad outside more than I did anything inside the house," she said. "We lived in such a remote place. There weren't even gravel roads back then. If I ever wanted to leave the farm, I had to help my brother milk cows and do chores so he would take me into town."

In high school, Gesinger's horizons broadened past the farm, and she began working as a waitress at the Medicine Rock Café where she met her late husband, Robert Gesinger. A year later the couple married and moved to Robert's family farm and ranch just a few miles north of Ridgeview in 1954. The Ridgeview community gained power just one year earlier in 1953, and Janet continues to live there now as a member of Moreau-Grand Electric.

Janet Gesinger
Photo by Frank Turner

When Janet moved to Ridgeview it was a bustling, small town with a grain elevator, a grocery store with a post office in it, a liquor store, a school, and electricity. Today, nearly all those amenities are a distant memory, but the rural electricity that continues to power the homes of the roughly 25 residents of Ridgeview, including Janet, remains.

"Ridgeview had gotten electricity just before we got married," she said.

Once she lived in a home with electricity, Janet found it hard to imagine life without it. One winter storm in 2010 wreaked havoc on the rural landscape and broke more than 200 utility poles, leaving Robert and Janet without power for 21 days.

"By day three of the outage, we ended up getting a PTO driven generator that could hook up to the tractor," Janet said. "Robert was sure glad when the power came back on, because that way we didn't have to fuel the tractor twice a day to run it – and the cost of diesel to run it."

Reflecting on her experiences, Janet acknowledges the transformative impact of electricity on rural life and finds it hard to imagine a world without electricity.

"It's an amazing convenience that we rely on," Janet said. "People today couldn't live without it because what in the world would ever replace it? We have a lot of technology in this world, but there is nothing that can replace electricity."

An aerial view of the Pioneer Generation Station Phase IV near Williston, N.D. *Photo submitted by Basin Electric Power Cooperative.*

FORECASTING THE FUTURE

Basin Electric's Vision for Reliable Energy

Frank Turner
frank.turner@sdrea.coop

Keeping the lights on in a dynamic world isn't as simple as flipping a switch. It requires a forward-thinking approach, almost like gazing into a crystal ball, to anticipate future energy demand. Energy infrastructure projects begin long before the first shovel breaks ground, and it's a challenge that Basin Electric Power Cooperative confronts every day to ensure consistent and reliable power amid an ever-changing landscape of new technologies and growing membership.

A new plant or transmission line can take years of planning and coordination by Basin Electric and its member cooperatives. The process is similar to predicting the weather; it all begins with a forecast to determine what energy demand is brewing on the horizon.

Basin Electric works with the members and other stakeholders to develop highly accurate load forecasts. Those load forecasts are then compared against our existing resource portfolio. If any gaps are identified, resource alternatives are identified and reviewed against each other to arrive at the best resource portfolio outcome.

"Once a need for a new generation project or transmission project has been identified, Basin Electric assembles a project team," explained Matt Ehrman, vice president of engineering and construction at Basin Electric.

"Developing and defining project scope is vital to project success as it's really the foundation for the project," Ehrman continued. "Good upfront planning minimizes project execution

risks later, so Basin places a lot of emphasis on the development work that happens before any detailed engineering design can begin."

Basin Electric is currently undertaking one of its largest single-site electric generation projects in the last 40 years near Williston, North Dakota, known as Pioneer Generation Station Phase IV. Once completed, this project will add 580 megawatts of natural gas generation capacity to Basin Electric's energy portfolio. Although the project broke ground in March 2023, planning for the project began in 2021, standing as a testament to the cooperative's long-term mindset and commitment to meeting its load forecast.

So what goes into the planning of such a major project? Ehrman says everything from identifying project objectives to permitting and contracting strategies to engineering studies all take place within the years leading up to new infrastructure.

"In the case of a generation project, the project site, fuel, water, and transmission sources are identified during the project development phase," Ehrman said. "After the development phase is complete, the more detailed engineering design work can begin. This is when the engineers really begin to dig into the details of how to arrange and interconnect all of the many different types of equipment required for a given project. Eventually, those design details are used to develop construction specifications, contractors are selected and construction begins."

The first gas turbine delivery for Pioneer Generation Station Phase IV. *Photo submitted by Basin Electric Power Cooperative.*

Beyond the demanding complexity of the project itself, Basin Electric's project team must also navigate regulatory matters and policy. While many projects share similarities, no two are identical when navigating federal, state, and local permitting requirements.

"Large generation and transmission projects can take years to permit, and the permitting duration depends on the project," Ehrman said. "Basin's teams have successfully permitted and executed many projects over the years and as a result have learned a lot about those processes in our service territory."

Slated to be operational in 2025, Pioneer Generation Station Phase IV will come on board during a time when electricity demand is increasing significantly. The completion of the project will expand Basin Electric's resource portfolio, which uses a vast diversity of generation resources to serve its member cooperatives. Even still, Ehrman said it still takes a massive effort to stay prepared for what the future may bring.

"Planning and building energy infrastructure is a massive team effort that involves teams from Basin and its membership," he said. "These are complex projects, and there are challenges involved in all phases of the projects. Basin has extremely talented, dedicated and hard-working teams developing these projects that really enjoy working out all the technical and non-technical details while mitigating risks to achieve success and deliver the best possible outcome for the membership."


Early construction of the Pioneer Generation Station Phase IV. *Photo submitted by Basin Electric Power Cooperative.*

Merry Christmas & Happy New Year!

WALKER WITT
CEO/GENERAL MANAGER
26 YEARS

DEAN WHITNEY
FOREMAN
36 YEARS

BILL BRISK
MANAGER OF OPERATIONS
34 YEARS

SAMMI LANGENDORF
CFO
32 YEARS

STEPHANIE ZACHER
MEMBER SERVICE REPRESENTATIVE
30 YEARS

LONNIE SCHRYVERS
STAKING TECHNICIAN
29 YEARS

JENNIFER KAINZ
MEMBER SERVICE REPRESENTATIVE
26 YEARS

KENT SCHNEIDER
PURCHASING AGENT/WO CLERK
26 YEARS

MARK SVOBODA
JOURNEYMAN LINEMAN
24 YEARS

TRAVIS CARLIN
JOURNEYMAN LINEMAN
24 YEARS

RORY HALVERSON
STAKING TECHNICIAN
22 YEARS

JESSE SORENSON
SYSTEM COORDINATOR
21 YEARS

COREY SCOTT
JOURNEYMAN LINEMAN
19 YEARS

BEAU BRADEEN
FOREMAN
17 YEARS

CASEY ELLERTON
JOURNEYMAN LINEMAN
17 YEARS

MICHELLE FISCHER
COMMUNICATIONS & MEMBER SERVICES
17 YEARS

KENNY PARKER
JOURNEYMAN LINEMAN
17 YEARS

NATHAN SCHERER
ACCOUNTING CLERK
17 YEARS

TERRI HERMAN
ADMINISTRATIVE ASST./MSR
13 YEARS

JEFF BARNES
IT SPECIALIST
11 YEARS

DANNY DOOLEY
JOURNEYMAN LINEMAN
8 YEARS

JEREMIAH KELLER
METER TECHNICIAN
6 YEARS

SCOTT SCHRAMM
RIGHT-OF-WAY TECHNICIAN
6 YEARS

CARLOS RODRIGUEZ
APPRENTICE LINEMAN
5 YEARS

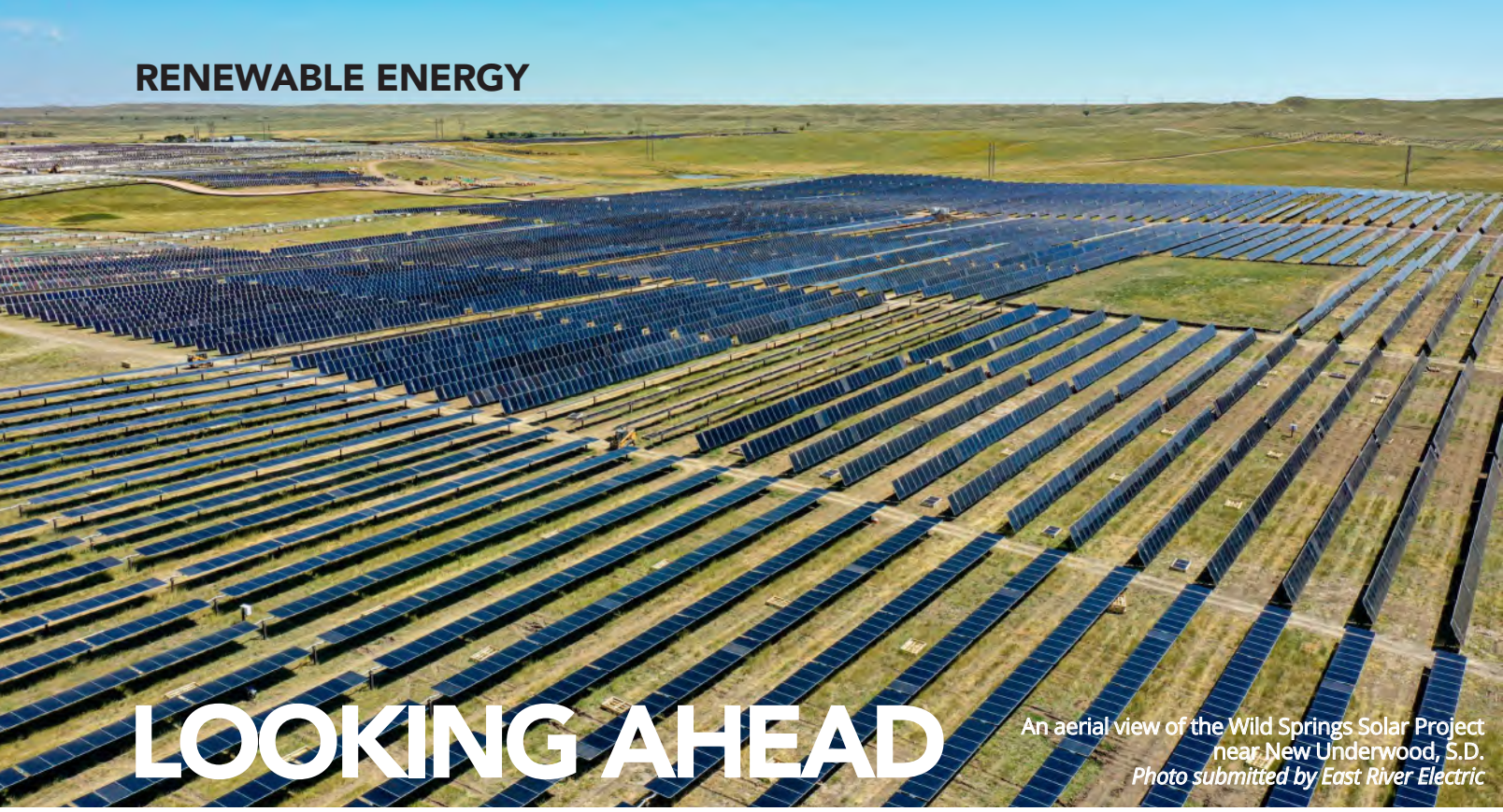
SHANNAN STEELE
MEMBER SERVICE REPRESENTATIVE
4 YEARS

DOMINICK SCHOOLER
JOURNEYMAN LINEMAN
2 YEARS

TAITON SKAARE
APPRENTICE LINEMAN
1 YEAR

TRACY KELLEY
ATTORNEY
10 YEARS

BOARD OF DIRECTORS:
BACK ROW L-R: GARY KLUTHE 30 YEARS, ALAN BISHOP 13 YEARS, THAD WASSON 4 YEARS, DENNIS QUIVEY 10 YEARS
FRONT ROW L-R: DAVE LINDBLOM 14 YEARS, JIM PRESTON 16 YEARS, AND DON ANDERSEN 6 YEARS.



LOOKING AHEAD

An aerial view of the Wild Springs Solar Project near New Underwood, S.D. *Photo submitted by East River Electric*

Wind Energy Association Changes Name, Advocates For All Renewables

Jacob Boyko
jacob.boyko@sdrea.coop

The South Dakota Wind Energy Association is getting a fresh coat of paint this year with a rebrand that will expand the association's advocacy mission to include more forms of renewable energy.

As solar energy generation in the state increases with new and upcoming projects, expanding the association — now called the South Dakota Renewable Energy Association — to include other forms of renewable energy and battery storage was the clear way forward according to association president and Sioux Valley Energy Director Gary Fish.

"The association started out as being very wind oriented, and that's our legacy," Fish explained. "But we also have somewhat migrated to having an energy portfolio where wind coexists with coal, natural gas and solar, and that was the driver behind changing our name."

The change comes in the wake of South Dakota's first large-scale solar farm near New Underwood, which began commercial operation in March 2024. Basin Electric Power Cooperative will purchase 114 megawatts of the 128-megawatt renewable project.

The association began with the leadership of East River Electric Power Cooperative in the mid-2000s as the generation and transmission co-op looked for ways to develop wind generation in the state to serve its growing member utilities and bring economic development and job opportunities to the state.

"Wind energy was at that time starting to become a more viable utility-scale source of power generation," said Chris Studer, chief member and public relations officer at East River Electric.

A look on the ground as crews prepare the Wild Springs Solar Project for power generation. *Photo submitted by East River Electric*

"East River led an effort to build an association of stakeholders in South Dakota that can help advocate for the wind industry."

It's a mission that's propelled South Dakota to being the state with the third highest renewable energy makeup, with more than 54% of instate power generated from renewable wind and solar resources.

"We've gone from essentially zero wind energy to more than 3,000 megawatts of installed capacity in the state," Studer said. "We have far surpassed what our original goal was."

In the South Dakota Wind Energy Association's initial stages, the board was composed mostly of utilities and developers focused on studying potential economic benefits and the infrastructure needs that come with increasing generation.

"I think everyone knew we had a great wind resource, but the real issue was having additional transmission to get the power out," Fish said. "Could we build the towers? Yes. Could we get the power to market? That was the challenge."

As the association successfully made the case for wind energy, the membership grew to include other G&Ts and investor-owned utilities, landowner groups, turbine manufacturers, servicing companies and others from the wind energy supply chain.

One of the first large-scale renewable energy wins for the South Dakota Wind Energy Association and rural electric cooperatives was the 2011 commissioning of the 172-megawatt Crow Lake Project north of White Lake, South Dakota. The association membership helped support the launch of South Dakota Wind Partners to bring local residents an opportunity to invest in and own several turbines in the project.

According to East River Electric, the program generated about $16 million worth of local investment.

"It was a very unique and successful project that the South Dakota Wind Energy Association had involvement in and advocated for," Studer said. "The people that invested got tax equity benefits over time, and after about 10 years they sold it back to Basin Electric and got their investments back."

Moving forward, the association will continue to advocate for a renewable energy-friendly business environment to propel South Dakota energy projects forward.

"South Dakota Renewable Energy Association is here to make sure our state's tax policies are fair, that developers still want to come here and develop renewable energy projects, and that there's a market for all of the supply chain that's needed for wind energy and now for solar, as well as the necessary transmission," Studer continued.

A new South Dakota Renewable Energy Association website and promotional material will debut within the next several months.

The Crow Lake Wind Project near White Lake, S.D., is the largest wind project owned soley by a cooperative in the United States. The $363 million wind project went into operation in 2011.
Photo submitted by East River Electric

RENEWABLE ENERGY

Purchasing Credits Means Renewable Energy Anywhere

Jacob Boyko
jacob.boyko@sdrea.coop

Did you know there's a way your home or business can operate with 100% renewable energy?

With renewable energy credits, or RECs, electric cooperative members can purchase the renewable aspects of their utility's energy and run on 100% green energy without needing to install on-site solar panels or wind generation.

"A REC is a renewable attribute of a megawatt hour of electricity," explained Ted Smith, vice president of engineering and operations at Sioux Valley Energy. "One megawatt hour produced by any renewable generator provides one REC."

Basin Electric Power Cooperative – the generation and transmission cooperative that sells electricity to South Dakota's rural electric cooperatives – reported about 21% of its energy sales in 2023 was renewable energy. Since it's impossible to pinpoint the exact generation origin of each individual electron moving along a distribution line and entering a home or business, there's no way to tell what is actually being powered by renewable energy and what isn't.

However, by having a renewable energy credit program where members can claim rights to the renewable energy generated, members who participate can affirm they are being powered by renewable energy. It's kind of like "calling dibs" on something; everybody is purchasing reliable power, but the members who "call dibs" are purchasing the renewable power.

One Sioux Valley Energy member that makes use of the renewable energy credit program is Marmen Energy in Brandon, South Dakota. Through the program, the wind tower manufacturer's operations are powered 100% by renewable energy.

"We get all renewable energy to power our facility," Marmen Energy Plant Manager Danny Lueders said. "We build renewable energy wind towers – how

could we not get the renewable energy credit program?"

At a scale like Marmen's, which produces between 300 and 400 wind towers annually, being 100% renewable is a statistic that not only makes a statement, but increases demand for more renewable energy.

"It makes sense for us to have it and support that industry all the way through," Lueders continued. "It's an industry we're heavily involved with and we want to do everything we can to support and promote that industry."

Support for renewable energy through the REC program has other benefits; the extra funds Rushmore Electric Power Cooperative generated from selling allocated RECs made it possible to purchase a solar demonstration trailer to educate the public about the benefits and drawbacks of solar energy and the need for a diversified mix of energy resources.

"We sell the RECs on the open market so others can satisfy their renewable mandates and so we can fund future renewable energy projects," Rushmore Electric CFO Mark Miller added.

On the market, RECs vary in price, usually between $1 and $3. The generation source – wind, solar, hydro, geothermal, waste heat recovery – as well as the year the REC's production year affect the commodity's value.

"They have a shelf life," Miller explained. "They're valuable in the first year because some states mandate RECs that are current."

States like Minnesota with renewable energy standards require utilities to retire their RECs to meet the energy standards, or buy credits on the market to reach the mandated renewable energy percentage of their energy mix.

In South Dakota, a state without renewable energy mandates but with more than 54% of instate power generated by renewable resources, the Marmen Energy CEO simply believes continuing to support renewable energy is the right thing to do.

"South Dakota is a strong proponent of renewable energy," Lueders said. "The amount of industry renewables are supporting throughout the state of South Dakota is a strong issue, from an economic footprint and continuing to grow South Dakota's self-reliance on homemade energy."

(Right) Jay Buchholz, Key Account & Community Relations Executive for Sioux Valley Energy, presents Marmen Energy employees Vincent Trudel, Chief Operating Officer, Yannick Laroche, Fabrication Manager, with renewable energy credit certificates.

(Below) Marmen Energy's Brandon, S.D., manufacturing plant purchases renewable energy credits to cover 100% of its operations, meaning all wind towers produced here are built using 100% renewable energy. *Images submitted by Sioux Valley Energy*

REGISTER TO WIN!

Bring this coupon and mailing label to the Touchstone Energy® Cooperatives booth at Black Hills Stock Show & Rodeo to win a Blackstone electric grill!

Your Phone Number:_____

Your E-mail Address:_____

Photo courtesy of South Dakota Snow Queen Festival

JAN. 11
Snow Queen Coronation
7 p.m.
Aberdeen Civic Theater
Aberdeen, SD
SDSnowQueen.com

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.

UNTIL DEC. 26
Christmas at the Capitol
8 a.m.-10 p.m.
Pierre, SD
605-773-3178

UNTIL DEC. 29
Trees & Trains Exhibit at SD State Railroad Museum
Hill City, SD
605-665-3636

UNTIL DEC. 29 (WEEKENDS)
1880 Train Holiday Express (Spiked! 21+)
Hill City, SD
605-574-2222
1880train.com

UNTIL DEC. 31
Olde Tyme Christmas at participating businesses, Lane of Lights Viewing
Hill City, SD

JAN. 3, 10, 17, 24, 31
Granite Sports Fantastic Friday
3 p.m.-6 p.m.
Hill City, SD
605-574-2121

DEC. 31-JAN. 1
New Year's Eve in Deadwood
Deadwood, SD
800-999-1876

JAN. 11
Coats for Kids Bowling Tournament
Meadowood Lanes
Rapid City, SD
605-393-2081

JAN. 14
Hill City Senior Sunday Breakfast
8 a.m.-12 p.m.
Hill City Center
Hill City, SD

JAN. 15
46th Ranchers Workshop
9 a.m.-3 p.m.
Community Events Center
White River, SD
605-259-3252 ext. 3

JAN. 16
Approach to Inflamation Class
6:30-7:30 p.m.
The Wellness Way
Hill City, SD

JAN. 18
Breakin' the Winter Blues Chili Cookoff
Main Street
Hill City, SD

JAN. 22
Hill City Garden Club 'Gardening With Children'
Janessa Bixel, Ed.D
1 p.m.
Hill City Center
Hill City, SD

JAN. 23, 25
A Trip to Chile
6:30 p.m. Thursday
5:30 p.m. Saturday
Mangiamo Pizzeria
Reservations Required
Hill City, SD

JAN. 26
Souper Supper Fundraiser Rapid Valley United Methodist Church
5:30-7:30 p.m.
Tickets $6
5103 Longview Dr.
Rapid City, SD

JAN. 31-FEB. 8
Black Hills Stock Show & Rodeo
Central States Fairground
Rapid City, SD
605-355-3861

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