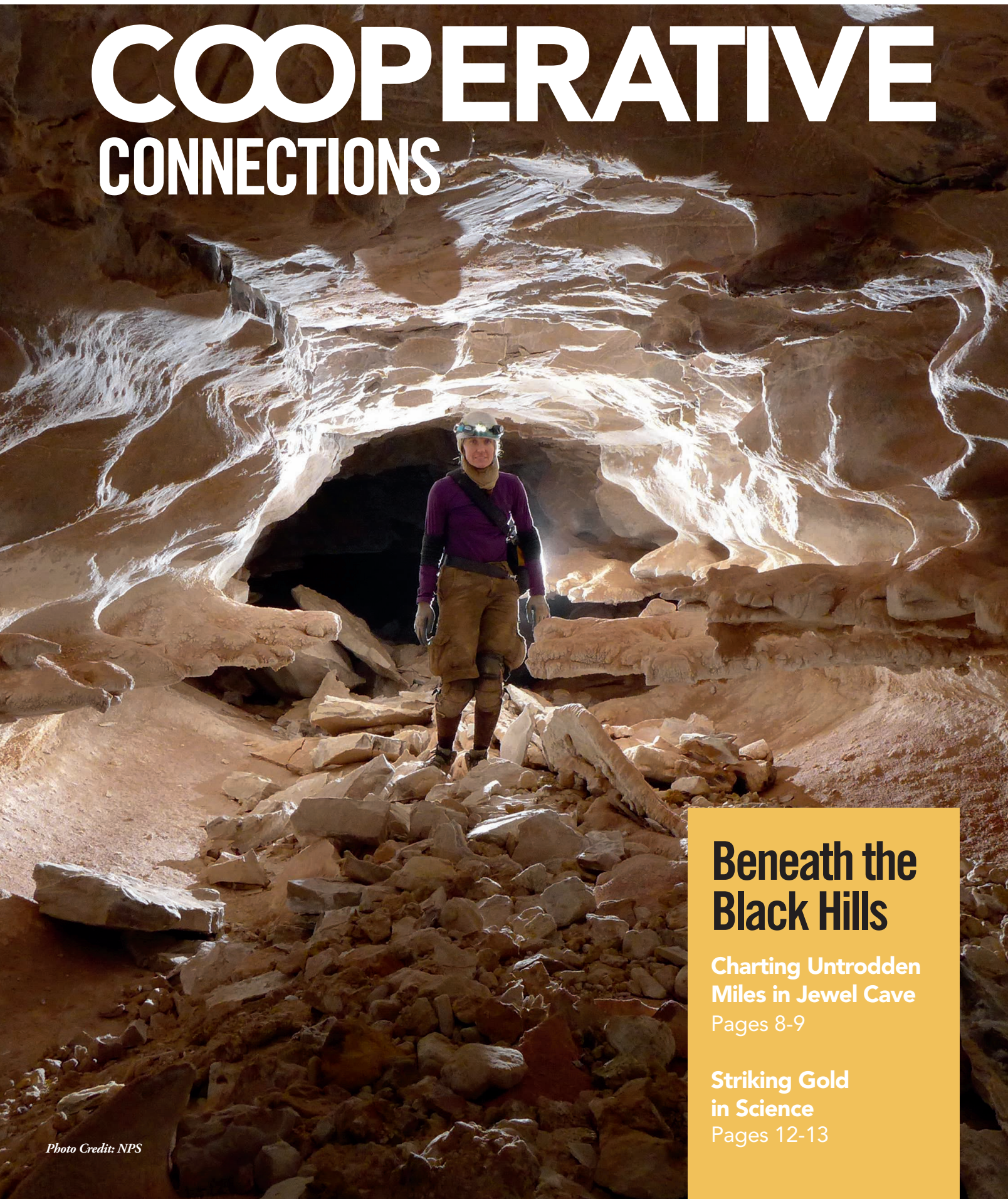


# COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS



## **Beneath the Black Hills**

**Charting Untrodden  
Miles in Jewel Cave**  
Pages 8-9

**Striking Gold  
in Science**  
Pages 12-13

# Renville-Sibley Board of Directors Approve Capital Credit Retirement



**Amy Ervin**  
Member and  
Board Services  
Representative

Capital credits can be confusing to new members and sometimes even the more seasoned members could use a refresher course. So let me explain how capital credits work.

First of all, Renville-Sibley Cooperative Power Association is a member owned company. As a cooperative, our main goal is to provide an

at-cost electric service, not to make a profit. Anyone who uses or purchases electric energy is a member. As a member, you invest in the efficient operation of your co-op. Unlike an investor-owned utility, we don't pay dividends or other amounts to shareholders who don't purchase electricity from us.

Generally, co-ops operate at cost, meaning they collect enough revenue to run and expand the business without over-charging members. At the end of each year, any excess revenue is allocated back to the membership in the form of capital credits. The allocation is based on the amount of electricity each member consumed during the year. Please see the article published in the September 2023 Cooperative Connections newsletter for more details on the 2022 margin that was allocated to the members.

When our board of directors determines it is financially feasible and prudent, and when we meet the financial requirements stated in our loan documents, we retire capital credits. At the October board meeting, the board of directors of Renville-Sibley Cooperative Power Association approved the disbursement of \$217,615 retirement to be applied on the December statement. Checks will be issued to inactive members who have a capital credit balance in the years being retired.

This retirement reflects the remaining 2001, all of 2002 as well as 5% of the 2003 allocation from East River Electric, the remaining 2003 allocation, and 6.6% of the 2004 allocation from Basin Electric. East River and Basin Electric are our Generation and Transmission Cooperatives (G&Ts). Renville-Sibley will retire approximately 4% of the 2022 allocation. Please note that the value of your retirement from RSCPA is based on 4% of the 2022 allocation, but the dollars will be retired from each members oldest unretired allocation year(s).

Below are some common capital credit questions. If you have any further questions regarding capital credits, please contact the office.

### Common Capital Credits Questions:

#### What are capital credits?

An electric cooperative operates on an at-cost basis by annually "allocating" to each member, based upon the member's purchase of electricity, operating revenue remaining at the end of the year. Later, as financial condition permits, these allocated amounts—capital credits—are retired. Capital credits represent the most significant source of equity for Renville-Sibley. Since a cooperative's members are also the people the co-op serves, capital credits reflect each member's ownership in, and contribution of capital to, the cooperative. This differs from dividends investor-owned utilities pay shareholders, who may or may not be customers of the utility.

#### Where does the money come from?

Member-owned, not-for-profit electric co-ops set rates to generate enough money to pay operating costs, make payments on any loans, and provide an emergency reserve. At the end of each year, we subtract operating expenses from the operating revenue collected during the year. The balance is called an operating "margin."

#### How are margins allocated?

Margins are allocated to members as capital credits based on their purchases from the cooperative—how much power the member used. Member purchases may also be called patronage.

#### Do investor-owned or municipal utilities retire capital credits?

No. Within the electric industry, capital credits only exist at not-for-profit electric cooperatives owned by their members.

#### Are capital credits retired every year?

Each year, the Board of Directors makes a decision on whether to retire capital credits based on the financial health of the cooperative. During some years, the co-op may experience high growth in the number of new accounts, or severe storms may result in the need to spend additional funds to repair lines. These and other events might increase costs and decrease member equity, causing the board to not retire capital credits. For this reason, Renville-Sibley's ability to retire capital credits reflects the cooperative's strength and financial stability.

#### Do I lose my capital credits in the years the co-op decides not to make retirements?

No. All capital credits allocated for every year members have been served are maintained until such time as the board retires them.

#### What years will be retired this December?

Renville-Sibley will retire the remaining 2001, all of 2002, as well as 5% of the 2003 allocation from East River Electric, the remaining 2003 allocation, and 6.6% of the 2004 allocation from Basin Electric.

East River and Basin Electric are our Generation and Transmission Cooperatives (G&Ts). Renville-Sibley will retire approximately 4% of the 2022 allocation. Please note that the value of your retirement from RSCPA is based on 4% of the 2022 allocation, but the dollars will be retired from each members oldest unretired allocation year(s).

#### How much will be retired in total in 2023?

Nearly \$220,000 will be retired in December.

#### I did not get electric service from Renville-Sibley 2001, will I get any retirement?

Maybe. Although you will not receive a retirement from 2001, you will receive a retirement if you purchased electric service in 2002, 2003, 2004 or 2022. This credit will be applied to the December electric statement.

#### How much has Renville-Sibley paid in total capital credits retirements since it began in 1938?

Renville-Sibley will have paid nearly \$15 million in capital credits retirements to current and former members by the end of this year.

#### How often do members receive capital credit retirements?

The Board of Directors decide each year by November whether or not to retire capital credits. When the cooperative is strong enough financially and member equity levels high enough, the board directs staff to retire some portion of past years' capital credits.

#### How will the retirement work?

Active members will receive a credit on their December electric statement. Inactive members will be mailed a check provided the amount is over \$5. Due to the expense involved in printing checks, the minimum retirement check that will be written will be \$5.

#### What if I have moved?

If you move or no longer have electric service with Renville-Sibley, it is important that you inform the cooperative of your current address, so that future retirements can be properly mailed to you. If you purchased electricity during the years being retired, then you will receive a capital credit retirement, even if you move out of our service area. If we have your current address, we will send your retirement check by mail.

#### How many people will get retirements?

Roughly 1,492 active members will have a credit applied to their account and about 506 inactive members will receive a check.

#### Can I donate my retirement back to the cooperative?

Yes. If you would like to donate your retirement back to the cooperative, please call our office at 800-826-2593 or email our Member and Board Services Representative, Amy Ervin, at [aervin@rscpa.coop](mailto:aervin@rscpa.coop) for instructions. All donated capital credit retirements will be designated to our scholarship fund and will be awarded at the next annual meeting to students in our local communities.

# November Board Meeting Highlights

The November board meeting was held on Tuesday, November 28 at 8 a.m. All board members were present except Whitey Hinderman and Jeff Boersma. Others present were CEO DeeAnne Norris, Attorney Jeff Whitmore, and Gene Alex.

The board reviewed and approved the following items:

- Minutes of the October 24 board meeting
- Operating and disbursement reports for the month of October
- Capital Credits to Estates
- Safety Report for November
- 2024 Market Rate
- Nominating Committee Appointments
- NRECA Annual Meeting Voting Delegates
- NRTC Annual Meeting Voting Delegates
- CoBank Permissions

The board reviewed:

- Total new members
- Capital Credits Transferred
- Reports from staff members as to the activities in their department. Items in the reports include:
  - o High-level Statement of Operations

review – YTD through October (unaudited)

- o Organization activities
- o East River update
- o Basin Electric update
- o NRECA update
- o MREA update
- o Linecrew work in progress, equipment update, and outage update
- o Accounts Receivable
- Sale of Cooperative facilities
- Christmas Open House
- Member Informational Meetings
- REPAC Donations
- ACRE Dues

Please contact the Renville-Sibley office if you would like more information regarding the board meeting.

## COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS

### RENVILLE-SIBLEY CO-OP POWER

(USPS 019-074)

#### Board of Directors

Roger Manthei – Chair  
 Whitey Hinderman – Vice Chair  
 Wayland Zaske – Secretary/Treasurer  
 Jeff Boersma  
 Gary Eekhoff  
 Vicky Firlé  
 Alan Neyers  
 Gary Peterson  
 Helen Ruebel

#### Renville-Sibley Employees

Gene Alex – Line Superintendent  
 Brian Athmann – Journeyman Lineman  
 Shawn Beckler – Crew Chief  
 Mike Benson – Journeyman Lineman  
 Brad Braulick – Crew Chief  
 Nick Bruns – Technology Manager  
 Anthony Carruth – Journeyman Lineman  
 Amy Ervin – Member and Board Services Representative  
 Brayden Fischer – Journeyman Lineman  
 DeeAnne Norris – CEO  
 Cali Olson – Cooperative Support Specialist  
 Clint Olson – Journeyman Lineman  
 Kathy Ridl – Accounting Clerk  
 Shane Suess – PT Janitor

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**Web site:** [www.rscpa.coop](http://www.rscpa.coop)

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## Notice:

The December board meeting will be held on  
 Tuesday, December 19 at 9 a.m.

The January board meeting will be held on Tuesday,  
 January 23 at 9 a.m.

# January is National Radon Action Month

### Radon is a Natural Danger

About one in 15 homes in the U.S. has radon levels at or above the the EPA action level, according to the National Cancer Institute. You can't see or smell radon, and scientists estimate 20,000 lung cancer deaths in the U.S. each year are attributed to it.

Radon is produced from a natural breakdown of uranium in soil, rock and water. It enters homes, offices, schools and other buildings through cracks in floors and walls, construction joints or gaps around service pipes, electrical wires and sump pits. The Environmental Protection Agency reports elevated levels of radon gas have been measured in every state and estimates nearly one out of every 15 homes in America has elevated radon levels.

People who breathe in these radioactive particles, swallow water with high radon levels or are exposed to radon for a long period of time are susceptible to lung damage and lung cancer. Smokers who are exposed to elevated levels of radon gas have a 10 times higher risk of developing lung cancer, according to the Centers for Disease Prevention and Control.

It may take years before health problems appear. Your chances of getting lung cancer from radon depend mostly on:

- How much radon is in your home
- Where you spend most of your time (the main living and sleeping areas)
- The amount of time you spend in your home
- Whether you are a smoker or have ever smoked

### Test Your Home

Old homes, new homes, homes with basements and homes without basements can have radon problems. Testing is the only way to determine how much radon is present.

Consider hiring a professional tester. Short-term (2-90 day) and long-term (more than 90-day) test kits are available, with the long-term kit producing more accurate results. The EPA website can help you find a radon test kit or measurement and mitigation professional near you. Do-it-yourself test kits also are available at many local hardware stores.

No level of radon exposure is considered completely safe, however the EPA only recommends reducing radon levels in your home if your long-term exposure averages four picocuries

per liter (pCi/L) or higher. A pCi is a measure of the rate of radioactive decay of radon gas. This decay causes radioactive particles that can get trapped in your lungs when you breathe.

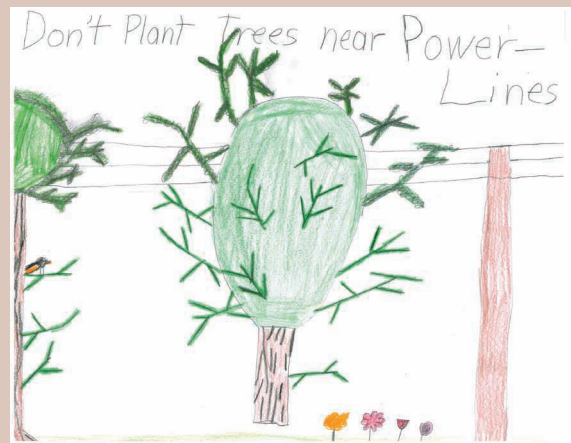
### Reduce Radon Gas in Your Home

The American Cancer Society says a variety of methods can be used to reduce radon gas levels in your home, including sealing cracks in floors and walls and increasing ventilation though sub-slab depressurization using pipes and fans.

The EPA recommends using a state or nationally certified contractor, because lowering high radon levels often requires technical expertise and special skills. Two agencies have set the standard for participants seeking certification:

- The American Association of Radon Scientists and Technologists
- National Radon Safety Board

Always test again after the work is finished and then every two years. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has designated January as National Radon Action Month, a time when health agencies across the country urge all Americans to have their homes tested for radon.



### Don't Plant Trees Near Power Lines

#### Annette Tschetter, Age 9

Annette Tschetter instructs readers to not plant trees near power lines. Annette is the daughter of Ryan and Elaine Tschetter from Revillo, S.D., members of Whetstone Valley 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.

# SOUPS & STEWS

## PUMPKIN APPLE SOUP

### Ingredients:

3 tbsps. butter  
1 cup finely chopped onion  
2 tps. pumpkin pie spice  
1 tsp. ground ginger  
1 can (15 ounces) pumpkin  
1 cup chunky applesauce  
3 1/2 cups chicken broth  
3/4 cup heavy cream

### Method

Melt butter in large saucepan on medium heat. Add onion; cook and stir 5 minutes or until softened. Stir in pumpkin pie spice and ginger.

Stir in pumpkin, applesauce and broth until well blended and smooth. Bring to boil, stirring occasionally. Reduce heat to low; simmer 5 minutes. Remove from heat. (If a smoother soup is desired, place mixture in batches in blender container; cover and blend until smooth.) Stir in cream. Heat gently before serving, if necessary.

[McCormick.com](http://McCormick.com)

## CREAMY CHICKEN NOODLE STEW

### Ingredients:

1/3 cup butter, cubed  
1 med. carrot, shredded  
1 celery rib, finely chopped  
1/3 cup all-purpose flour  
1 carton (32 oz) chicken broth  
1 cup whole milk  
1 cup uncooked kluski noodles or other egg noodles  
2 cups cubed cooked chicken  
1 1/2 cups shredded cheddar cheese  
1/4 tsp. salt  
1/4 tsp. pepper

### Method

In a large saucepan, heat butter over medium high heat; saute carrot and celery until tender, 3 to 5 minutes. Stir in flour until blended; gradually add the broth and milk. Bring to a boil, stirring constantly. Cook and stir until thickened, 1-2 minutes. Stir in the noodles. Reduce heat; simmer uncovered, until noodles are al dente, 8-10 minutes, stirring occasionally. Add the chicken, salt and pepper. Cook and stir until the chicken is heated through. Stir in the cheese until melted. Serve.

Susan Mitzner  
Balaton, Minn.

## CHICKEN NOODLE SOUP WITH ROTISSERIE CHICKEN

### Ingredients:

1 tbsp. vegetable oil  
1 1/2 cups chopped carrots, (about 1/2-inch)  
1 1/2 cups chopped celery, (about 1/2-inch)  
1 cup chopped white onion, (about 1/2-inch)  
1 tbsp. rotisserie chicken seasoning  
4 cups chicken stock  
4 cups medium egg noodles  
2 cups chopped rotisserie chicken  
1 tbsp. parsley flakes

### Method

Heat vegetable oil in large saucepan on medium-high heat. Add carrots, celery and onion; cook and stir 8 to 10 minutes until softened and lightly browned. Stir in Seasoning. Cook 1 minute.

Add stock and egg noodles. Bring to boil. Reduce heat; simmer 8 to 10 minutes until noodles are just tender.

Gently stir in chicken and salt. Simmer 2 minutes longer. Remove from heat. Stir in parsley to serve.

[McCormick.com](http://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 2023. All entries must include your name, mailing address, phone number and cooperative name.

# Please report any suspicious activity in or near substations, other electrical equipment

Substations are part of the electrical generation, transmission and distribution system. Transformers are contained inside many of them, and their job is to transform voltage from high to low or vice versa, depending on their location within the distribution path.

Besides transformers, substations usually house switches, protective devices and control equipment. In large substations, circuit breakers are used to interrupt any short circuits or overloads that may occur.

No one should approach a substation, touch the fence or enter the gate unless they are authorized to do so.

Paying attention to individuals and activity around substations and other utility equipment helps keep everyone safe. Here are some things to look for:

- Take notice of individuals in street clothes working near or on utility equipment; if you see this, please report it immediately.
- Notice whether individuals are dressed in proper personal protective gear or have utility identification badges.
- Check vehicles or work trucks in the area for utility branded logos or information.
- Report any suspicious behavior you see, including non-utility employees tampering with utility poles, meters, padmount transformers or other equipment.
- If you notice anything unusual at a substation, please report it to the utility. Examples include the following:

- o An open or unlocked gate.
- o A damaged fence.
- o Obvious damage to equipment inside the fence.
- Call 9-1-1 and then the Renville-Sibley Cooperative Power Association if you see the following:
  - o Smoke or fire.
  - o Non-utility workers inside the substation fence.

Never try to address an issue yourself. Please report any suspicious activity or damage to the police or Renville-Sibley Cooperative Power Association.

### First responder safety

First responders should always wait for the go-ahead from the electric utility before addressing a fire or vandalism at a substation, power plant or solar farm. First responders should also communicate with and wait for the utility before approaching a downed power line or damaged padmount transformer.

### General substation safety

Renville-Sibley Cooperative Power Association and

Safe Electricity remind you to:

- Never go near a substation.
- Teach children to never go near a substation or climb its fence to retrieve a ball or pet. Let them know they should always stay away and tell a parent or adult, who should call us to report the incident at 800-826-2593.
- Teach children about the dangers of electricity from an early age.
- Never try to extinguish a transformer that is on fire since water and electricity do not mix. Call 9-1-1 to report the fire.
- If you see an issue with or notice something unusual about a substation, transformer or power line, contact us. Never try to address a problem yourself.

For more information about electrical safety, visit [SafeElectricity.org](http://SafeElectricity.org).

**RESPECT SUBSTATIONS**  
and all other electrical equipment

**REPORT SUSPICIOUS ACTIVITY**

Only authorized utility workers should approach a substation, touch the fence or enter the gate.

Paying attention to activity in or near substations and other utility equipment helps keep everyone safe.

Learn more at: [SafeElectricity.org](http://SafeElectricity.org)

**Authorized workers should:**

- Wear proper personal protective gear and display an ID badge.
- Use work vehicles that have utility branded logos/information.

**Suspicious activity includes individuals in street clothes who are:**

- Near or inside a substation fence.
- Tampering with equipment, such as power poles, meters and padmount transformers.

**If you notice anything unusual at a substation, please report it to the electric utility. Examples include:**

- An open or unlocked gate.
- A damaged fence.
- Obvious damage inside the fence.

**Call 9-1-1 and then the electric utility if you see:**

- Smoke or fire.
- Non-utility workers inside the substation fence.
- Non-utility workers on a pole or tampering with a meter.

## Co-ops in the Classroom



**Amy Ervin**  
Member and  
Board Services  
Representative

On November 15th and 16th, Renville-Sibley Co-op Power employee, Cali Olson and Jenny Gross from East River Electric had the chance to visit four of our area schools and brought Co-

ops into the Classroom. The schools they visited were BOLD, RCW, Cedar Mountain, and GFW. The goal of this program is to teach students about electricity, generating electricity and being safe around electricity. While at RCW, we also visited the second-grade students where we discussed safety around overhead and underground power lines. Most students learn

best with hands-on activities. One of the demonstrations the fourth-grade students enjoyed was the Van de Graaff generator. This hair-raising demonstration clearly showed the movement of electrons by causing the students' hair to stand on end while standing on a plastic stool along with the opportunity to give their friends a little shock. Many students raise their hands to volunteer for this activity. Another device that invokes a lot of excitement with the fourth graders is the Pedal Power bicycle generator. Students are asked to become power plants as they provide the energy for lights and small household devices. Students quickly learn that the more devices that are plugged into the bicycle's generator, the harder it is to peddle. Some students commented that it feels like riding a

bike up hill. In one of the activities, the student riding the bicycle is tasked with generating enough power to turn on different types of light bulbs. The student quickly learns that it takes more peddle power to light an incandescent light bulb than it does to power a CFL. LED light bulbs are the easiest to power. Gross encourages students to share this information with their parents and encouraged everyone to conserve energy by using LED light bulbs. By the end of the presentation, students had developed a new understanding and appreciation for electricity. With two more classroom visits scheduled in May 2024, we plan to visit a couple more area schools to present this exciting demonstration to students. I thank the schools for allowing Jenny and Renville-Sibley Co-op Power the opportunity to come into their classroom to talk about electricity.

## Scholarships to be Awarded

Renville-Sibley Cooperative Power Association will be offering \$6,000 in scholarship money to students in this region. The scholarships are for the 2024 – 2025 school year.

Renville-Sibley is allocated a \$1,000 scholarship from Basin Electric to be awarded at the discretion of the cooperative. Another \$1,000 scholarship is from Renville-Sibley.

A committee of Renville-Sibley Board members, as well as an employee of the cooperative, will select the recipients of the \$1,000 Basin Scholarship and the \$1,000 Renville-Sibley Scholarship. These scholarships will be awarded based on a combination of SAT/ACT scores and overall grade point average, work experiences, participation in school and community activities, the personal statement of career goals and the written recommendation by a third party. Additional consideration will be given to applicants interested in a position related

to the electric industry for the Renville-Sibley scholarship.

The remaining four \$1,000 scholarships are distributed from uncashed capital credit checks and are awarded by a random drawing at the annual meeting from the remaining completed applications.

All scholarship applicants must be U.S. citizens and a dependent of a member of Renville-Sibley Cooperative. They must be a high school senior who plans to enroll as a full-time student in an undergraduate course of study at an accredited two-year or four-year college, university, or vocational/technical school. Applications will be accepted until February 22, 2024. Winners will be announced to the public at the Cooperative's Annual Meeting on March 26, 2024.

Renville-Sibley participates with other Minnesota electric cooperatives in sponsoring the continuation of the Jay York Scholarship. Mr. York was a Lake Wilson

farmer who dedicated his life to the rural electric program and to education in rural Minnesota. He was the first Minnesotan to serve as president of the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA). Scholarships are available each year from this program and are selected by random drawing. Each participating cooperative may submit one candidate's name for the drawing. The amount of this scholarship is determined based on the number of cooperatives that participate in the program. Over the past 20 years, Renville-Sibley has awarded 12 Jay York scholarships.

Only one completed application is required for an applicant to be considered a candidate for any of the available scholarships. Incomplete applications will be excluded. For more information and a scholarship application form, contact Renville-Sibley at 1-800-826-2593 or 826-2593. Application forms are also available at our website [www.rscpa.coop](http://www.rscpa.coop).



Jewel Cave's walls glisten with a coating of calcite crystals coating that give this cave its unique name. *Image credit: NPS*

# BENEATH THE BLACK HILLS

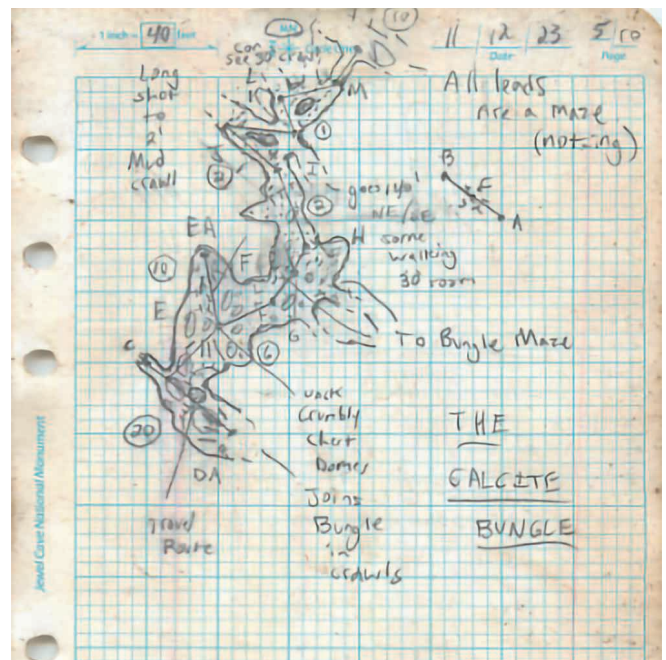
## Charting Untrodden Miles in Jewel Cave

Frank Turner

frank.turner@sdrea.coop

In the depths of the Black Hills lies an immense domain of underground caves renowned for their untouched beauty, enticing tourists with the opportunity for stunning photography and expert-led tours. Digging a little deeper, however, reveals that many of these unsuspecting attractions are actually home to a vast network of rooms and passages where no human has ever set foot before. Jewel Cave National Monument, located west of Custer and celebrated for its unique, crystal calcite coating, is one such subterranean cavern that continues to be a frontier of exploration.

Jewel Cave has thousands of miles of unexplored passages, crawlways and chasms that await discovery, making it one of the largest cave systems in the world. The immensity of Jewel Cave and others like it in the Black Hills has inspired multiple



A field sketch from the four-day Veterans Day weekend expedition. *Image credit: NPS*

generations of ambitious cave explorers who have devoted years of their lives to mapping out new areas of these underground expanses.

Despite their efforts, only a small fraction of Jewel Cave has



been navigated and mapped, leading to new cave discoveries being recorded even now.

Recently, a group of National Park Service volunteer cave explorers, led by volunteer Chris Pelczarski, expanded the known limits of Jewel Cave in an expedition over Veterans Day weekend of this year.

In total, their journey lasted four days. Bringing only what they could carry, the small group of cavers wriggled through miles of passages without natural sunlight or ready supplies to ultimately be the first to step into what was previously untrodden terrain.

To achieve their goal, the volunteers tackled the 3-D maze that defines the Jewel Cave network, hiking and climbing steep underground terrain. Despite the challenge, Pelczarski said the ending discovery made the whole journey worthwhile. When discovering something new, the challenge pales in comparison.

“The experience of pushing the edge of something is very unique,” said Pelczarski. “When entering a new space, it weighs on you that it’s the first time that a human has ever interacted with that space. As explorers, we have an incredible amount of responsibility because we are the ones who share that story with others and set the tone of that space.”

In total, the explorers discovered and charted just over one mile of new passages during their Veterans Day expedition, uncovering new passages and even a distinctive split in the rock their group named ‘Fruit by the Foot,’ due to the volunteer group garnering a “fruitful yield” of discovery from the rock formation.

The broader work of these cavers has led to several breakthroughs over the years, including the discovery of Jewel Cave’s first cave lake, Hourglass Lake.

“In 2015, our explorers got to a point where the lowest part of the cave dipped into the Madison Aquifer. It was Jewel Cave’s first cave lake,” said Michael Wiles, Chief of Resource Management at Jewel Cave National Monument. “Since that initial discovery, 12 more lakes have been

found within Jewel Cave.”

With the possibility of discovery around every corner, Wiles regards volunteer explorers like Pelczarski as torchbearers in a continuing legacy created by the many cave explorers that came before them, including South Dakota caving legends Herb and Jan Conn and Wiles himself.

“Herb and Jan are icons in the Black Hills area and throughout the world because they were the first to document and map the cave back in 1959,” said Wiles. “They fell in love with the cave and it really captured their imagination.”

Together, Herb and Jan discovered the first 70 miles of Jewel Cave. Building from Herb and Jan’s initial discoveries, Wiles, with the help of volunteers like Pelczarski,

has been involved in the mapping of an additional 150 miles of cave since the Conns retired.

To date, 218.8 miles of Jewel Cave have been discovered. However, Wiles explained that barometric airflow studies indicate that the cave could be up to 14,000 miles long, and only 3% of the cave’s estimated total length has been mapped and discovered.

“Jewel Cave, for practical purposes, isn’t going to end,” said Wiles. “We know that the cave is hundreds if not thousands of miles long and that, alone, is exciting.”

With only a fraction of the total cave discovered, it’s evident that several years of cave discoveries lie ahead.



Volunteer cave explorer Dan Austin sketching a passage of Jewel Cave. Using coordinates to draw a survey line in the book, Austin draws the cave walls around the line to represent the cave walls around him, adding additional notes as needed. *Image credit: NPS*

# Are You Interested in a New Adventure?

Renville-Sibley Cooperative Power Association is beginning to plan for the 86th Annual meeting of the membership that will be held on March 26, 2024 at the Redwood Area Community Center in Redwood Falls, Minnesota. Three (3) directors will be elected during that time, each for a 3-year term.

The First District, consisting of the townships of Cornish, Severance and Moltke in Sibley County; the townships of Ridgely and West Newton in Nicollet County; and the townships of Cairo, Wellington, Martinsburg, Camp, Bandon and Palmyra in Renville County is represented by Alan Neyers, Whitey Hinderman and Vicky Firl. Alan Neyer's term will expire in 2024.

The Second District, consisting of the townships of Honner and Delhi in Redwood County; and the townships of Beaver Falls, Flora, Henryville, Birch Cooley, Norfolk, Melville, Bird Island and Kingman in Renville County is represented by Helen Ruebel, Wayland Zaske and Jeff Boersma. Helen Ruebel's term will expire in 2024.

The Third District, consisting of the townships of Roseland and Holland in Kandiyohi County; Rheiderland in Chippewa County the townships of Troy, Winfield, Emmet, Crooks, Sacred Heart, Hawk Creek, Ericson and Wang in Renville County is represented by Gary Eekhoff, Gary Peterson and Roger Manthei. Gary Peterson's term will expire in 2024.

As stated in the Renville-Sibley by-laws, the following is the Qualifications and Tenure for the position of Director:

Each director shall be a member of the Cooperative and shall be elected by the members within their respective district at the annual meeting of the members for a term of three years. No

member shall be eligible to become or remain a director or to hold any position of trust in the Cooperative who is not a bona fide resident in the area served by the Cooperative, or who is in any way employed by or financially interested in a competing enterprise or a business selling electric energy or supplies to the Cooperative, or a business primarily engaged in selling electrical or space heating/cooling appliances, fixtures, or supplies to the members. When a membership is held jointly by two or more persons, including husband and wife, only one of such joint tenants may be elected a director, provided, however, that neither one shall be eligible to become a director, unless all shall meet the qualifications herein set forth.

Director qualifications required for service to the cooperative shall include:

A. Must be an individual and must be at least 18 years of age.

B. Must be competent and able to execute a contract.

C. Must not have been convicted of a felony or gross misdemeanor during the preceding 5 years prior to becoming a director for the Cooperative or during the period while serving as a director.

D. Must have a high school diploma or equivalent.

E. Must make a reasonable effort to become and remain knowledgeable about special issues regarding electric cooperatives by attending training, workshops and seminars.

F. Must attend at least three-fourths (3/4) of all monthly scheduled board meetings during any twelve (12) month period.

Upon becoming a candidate for and/or to remain a Director, an individual must complete an annual conflict of interest disclosure form, approved by the Board of Directors. All Directors

and/or Director candidates must comply with or meet the following conflict of interest qualifications:

A. Shall not be a close relative of an existing Director, employee, agent or representative of the Cooperative other than an existing Director who will cease being a Director upon the candidate assuming office;

B. Within 5 years immediately prior to becoming a Director, shall not have been a Cooperative Officer, employee, agent or representative of the Cooperative or any subsidiary or affiliated company;

C. Shall not be employed by, materially affiliated with, nor share a material financial interest with any current Director;

D. Shall not be engaged in any business, nor employed by, nor materially affiliated with, nor have a material financial interest in any individual or entity that:

1. Is regularly, directly, and substantially competing with the Cooperative or any other entity that the Cooperative controls or in which the Cooperative owns a majority interest (Cooperative Subsidiary).

2. Is regularly selling goods and services to the Cooperative or the Cooperative Subsidiary.

3. Possesses a substantial conflict of interest with the Cooperative or the Cooperative subsidiary.

E. A former Director is ineligible for employment by the Cooperative for 5 years following the end of the tenure as a Director.

As a Director, the member agrees to:

- o Abide by, promote and uphold the Articles of Incorporation and By-laws, both of which can be found on our website, and Policies of Renville-Sibley Cooperative Power Association.

- o Attend regular and special Board meetings of the Cooperative.

o Attend, when appointed, committee meetings of the Cooperative.

If anyone should decide to seek candidacy for the board of directors, there are many rewards to be enjoyed when elected. A director has the opportunity to demonstrate their leadership quality and increase their knowledge within the cooperative business environment and the electric industry. As a director, this person could play a significant role in the future development of Renville-Sibley Cooperative Power Association.

A director also has a very important responsibility which is to uphold and abide by the bylaws of the cooperative. Directors are to act as the trustees for the assets of the cooperative and are assigned the duties of formulating, approving and reviewing the policies that provide guidelines for the cooperative. 940500

The board is responsible for sending representatives to the affiliated association meetings that often include voting requirements. They include East River Electric Power Cooperative, Minnesota Rural Electric Association, Basin Electric Power Cooperative, National Utilities Cooperative Finance Corporation, CoBank, Cooperative Network and the National Rural Electric Association.

Directors attend seminars and meetings of several organizations to

learn about the industry. Directors are asked to lobby and remain informed on legislative issues that could impact this industry and/or the cooperative way of doing business. The Board meets monthly and reviews financial reports, work plans, annual audits, planning documents and evaluates the cooperative operations while approving budgets and purchases.

Most of all, a director should be available to visit with their constituents and have a genuine spirit of helping others at all times.

Board meetings are typically held on the fourth Tuesday of every month, beginning at 9:00 a.m. in December, January and February and beginning at 8:00 a.m. the rest of the year. Board meetings will be held in person or via Zoom. The estimated time needed to be committed annually is approximately 30 days which includes monthly meetings and committee assignments. Directors are compensated per diem for their time as well as all personal expenses.

If you are interested in becoming a candidate for the Renville-Sibley Board of Directors, contact the Renville-Sibley office at 1-800-826-2593 before January 2nd for further information.

## ANNUAL MEETING SAVE THE DATE

Renville-Sibley's 86th Annual Meeting will be held on March 26, 2024 at the Redwood Area Community Center in Redwood Falls. More annual meeting information will be provided in upcoming newsletters.

## WHERE'S THE NUMBER?

Last month RSCPA member did not find their member number in the newsletter. The value of the energy credit will be increased to \$30. Another number has been hidden in this newsletter. If you find your number and call the office by the 2nd of January, you will receive this credit on your electric statement. Good luck in your search!

## OPERATION ROUND UP

The next meeting will be held Tuesday, January 16, 2024 at 3 p.m. The deadline for applications is Tuesday, January 2, 2024. Applications for donations can be found at <https://rscpa.coop/operation-round>. Contact the office at 320-826-2593 for more information.

## OUTAGE REPORT

*Affecting 10 members or more*

**Date: 10-24-23**

Time off: 9:30 AM

Time on: 11:55 AM

Substation: Troy

Cause: Other Prearranged

**Date: 10-30-23**

Time off: 8:33 PM

Time on: 9:23 PM

Substation: Emmet

Cause: Excavating Contractor

Please contact Renville-Sibley's office for more details about these power outages.



The Sanford Underground Research Facility partners with more than 2,000 scientists from more than 200 global institutions and universities, enabling groundbreaking research across multiple disciplines.

# STRIKING GOLD IN SCIENCE

## Unearthing Research at the Sanford Underground Research Facility

**Frank Turner**

frank.turner@sdrea.coop

Years ago, the Homestake Mine in Lead, South Dakota, lured prospectors with the promise of riches during the gold rush era. Yet today, the site where miners once delved for gold now hosts scientists pursuing their own discoveries, not for gold, but for discoveries in particle physics and dark matter at the Sanford Underground Research Facility.

The mine's transformation into a

state-of-the-art research facility really began in 1970 when Raymond Davis Jr. began what is now known today as the Homestake experiment, a research project that would forever change the entire landscape of western South Dakota. Seeing beyond the precious metal, Davis envisioned the Homestake Mine as the perfect location to conduct research on the illusive neutrino particle. Conducting neutrino research underground was a crucial component of the project because the deep

environment of the mine shielded his experiments from cosmic rays, allowing for more accurate detection of neutrinos. While the Homestake Mine was still in operation, Davis worked among the bustle of mining activities to conduct research, which led to groundbreaking discovery in neutrino research and ultimately to a Nobel Prize in 2002.

As Davis concluded his groundbreaking neutrino research, a chapter was closing for the Homestake Mine. According to the facility's website, Homestake was North America's largest and deepest gold mine at the time of its closing, producing approximately 41 million ounces of gold in its 126-year lifetime. When the mine was decommissioned in 2002, it threatened to not only leave a vast cavern in the earth but also a significant void in the local economy. Davis's success, however, prompted South Dakota's leadership to step in at a critical moment and

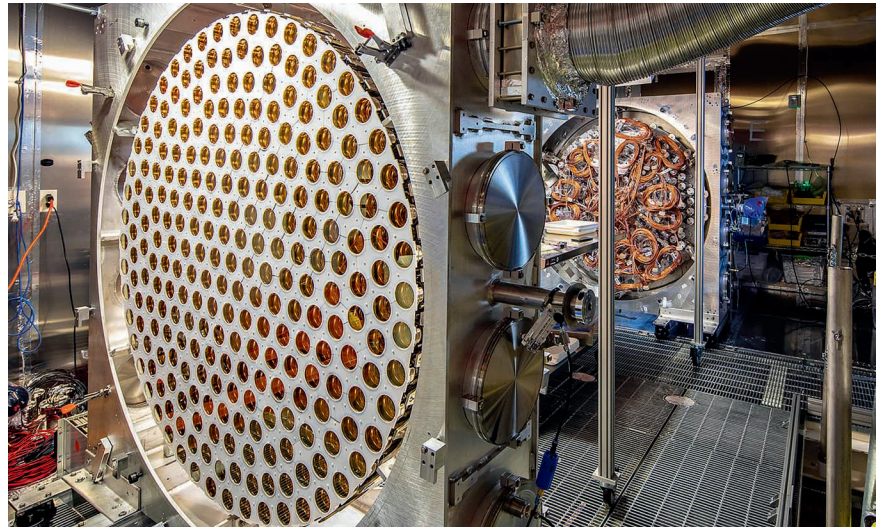
repurpose the mine into a bastion of scientific research.

Mike Ray, Media Relations Manager at Sanford Underground Research Facility, reflected on the state's response to the mine's closure. "Those in leadership at the time saw that this mine was closing and the terrible economic impact that the closure was going to have on the northern hills and this community, but they saw a light at the end of the tunnel," he said.

The light at the end of the tunnel became the Sanford Underground Research Facility. To advance one of South Dakota's most ambitious projects, the state secured a \$70 million donation from philanthropist T. Denny Sanford and a land donation from Barrick Gold Corporation, the mine's owner. The state then established the South Dakota Science and Technology Authority, which contributed an additional \$40 million to realize the project. These donations paved the way forward to begin construction on a space for some of the most advanced science projects ever made.

The herculean effort, Ray explained, was not only to mitigate the negative economic impact of the mine's closure but to create something even more impactful for South Dakota and its residents. Today, the Sanford Underground Research Facility collaborators include over 2,000 scientists from over 200 institutions and universities worldwide. It is expected to garner an estimated \$2 billion net economic impact in South Dakota by 2029.

Beyond its economic contributions, the lab holds potential for groundbreaking discoveries across various disciplines, including projects researching biology, geology, engineering or particle physics. Notably, the lab is currently home to LUX-ZEPLIN, the world's most sensitive dark matter detector and DUNE, the Deep



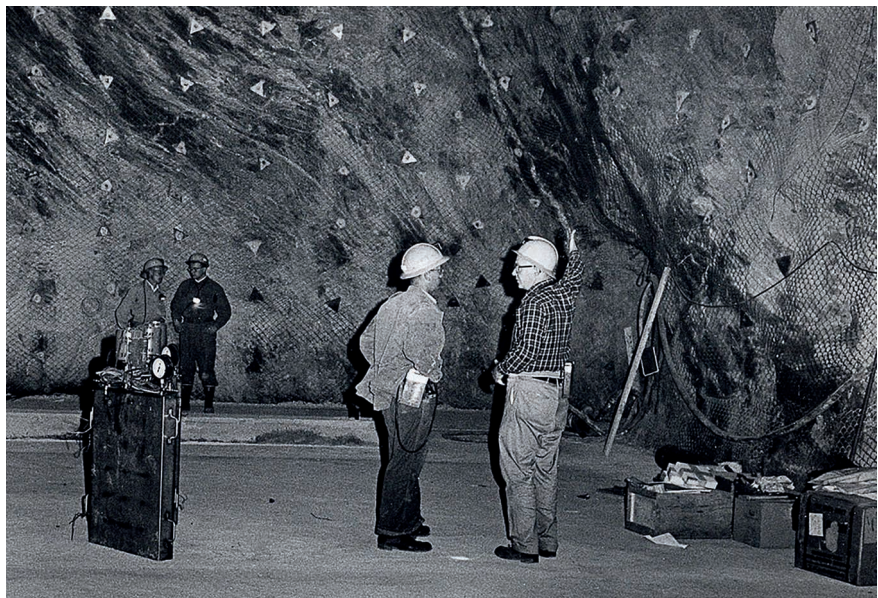
An array of the LUX-ZEPLIN, the world's most sensitive dark matter detector. Photo Credit: Matthew Kapust, Sanford Underground Research Facility.

Underground Neutrino Experiment, among several other significant projects. While LUX-ZEPLIN and DUNE are distinct projects, both seek to provide fundamental insights into our current understanding of the laws of physics.

"There are so many examples of how fundamental research can take decades to lead to innovation," Ray said. "The beauty of this is that we don't always know where this research will

take us, but if we don't do this kind of exploration, we will never know the applications of these far-reaching projects."

Regardless of the outcome, the Sanford Underground Research Facility will continue to not only preserve the historic legacy of South Dakota's Homestake Mine, but also place South Dakota at the forefront of discovery and innovation for years to come.



A historic view of the Davis Cavern that hosted Ray Davis's Nobel Prize-winning solar neutrino experiment. The cavern has since been expanded and its walls have been coated with shotcrete, a type of spray-on concrete, to accommodate research on dark matter. Photo Credit: Anna Davis, Sanford Underground Research Facility.

# Scholar of the Month

Renville-Sibley Co-op Power, your Touchstone Energy Cooperative, congratulates Caitlynn Roiseland on being selected as the November Scholar of the Month. C.C. is a senior at Central Minnesota Christian School and was nominated because she demonstrates a strong sense of honesty, ethics, and integrity. She takes ownership of her responsibilities with purpose and is a great team member and student who can be counted on. Her ability to think outside the box and embrace new ideas has been a driving force behind her success in school and life. C.C. has ambitious goals for her future and is committed to her educational journey and the betterment of her community. Renville-Sibley Co-op Power salutes C.C. Roiseland as the November Touchstone Energy Scholar of the Month.



Renville-Sibley Co-op Power, your local Touchstone Energy Cooperative congratulates C.C. Roiseland as the November Touchstone Energy Scholar of the Month.

## REMINDER

Renville-Sibley encourages any member planning on making changes to their service in 2024 to please contact the office as soon as possible. In order to complete these projects on time, material may need to be ordered well in advance as often there is extended lead time to get the appropriate material. In addition, crew time will be scheduled in the order projects and materials are received.

## REMINDER

As of August 7th, Renville-Sibley's headquarters is now located at 515 Hwy 212 W in Danube. If you plan to drop off your payments, please use the dropbox located on the east side of the building.

## Comparative Report

	Current YTD	One Year Ago YTD	10 Years Ago YTD
<b>Average # of Consumers</b>	1,879	1,889	1,918
<b>kWhs purchased</b>	19,512,198	19,569,183	20,645,345
<b>Cost of purchased power</b>	\$1,168,628.79	\$1,240,508.52	\$1,108,434.22

## THANK YOU

Thanks so much for your donation to Day of Thunder weekend events! We appreciate your continued support. We used your donation funds to pay for weekend events and everyone had a great weekend!  
 – The Fairfax Day of Thunder Committee

## FREE Want Ad Service

Members can submit ads for the following categories: Giveaway, For Sale, For Rent, and Wanted. Ads should be or are limited to no more than 15 words and must be received by the first of the month to be included in the following month's newsletter. Renville-Sibley reserves the right to edit content or exclude ads due to space restrictions. Ads will be run one time only unless resubmitted. Please complete the following information and mail it to the Renville-Sibley Cooperative Power, PO Box 68, Danube, MN 56230.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Phone number: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Ad to be placed (limit of 15 words per ad)

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Type of ad:  Giveaway  For Sale  For Rent  Wanted

## FOR SALE

Grass fed, grass finished beef for sale. Burger-Steaks-Roasts. Call for pricing.

Dave Pastoors  
 Olivia, MN 56277  
 320-522-4851

## Energy Audits

Renville-Sibley offers energy audits to all members. The audit includes a walk-through of your home, taking pictures with an infrared camera of any areas where cold air might be entering your home, along with a review of the energy consumption in your home. The cost of this audit is \$150. If the member makes

improvements recommended in the follow-up report and submits invoices showing that \$150 or more was spent on these improvements, the charge will be refunded. Please contact the office at 800-826- 2593 for more information or if you are interested in having an energy audit of your home.

## Member Informational Meetings

Renville-Sibley will be hosting our annual member informational meetings throughout the service area on February 3, February 5, February 6, and February

8, 2024. More information about the meeting dates will be in the February issue of Cooperative Connections.



## Mission Statement

Renville-Sibley Cooperative Power Association will provide efficient, reliable electric energy and services to enhance the quality of rural living.

## Nondiscrimination Statement

In accordance with Federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its Agencies, offices, and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, gender identity (including gender expression), sexual orientation, disability, age, marital status, family/parental status, income derived from a public assistance program, political beliefs, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity, in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA (not all bases apply to all programs). Remedies and complaint filing deadlines vary by program or incident. Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotope, American Sign Language, etc.) should contact the responsible Agency or USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TTY) or contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339. Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English.

To file a program discrimination complaint, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, AD-3027, found online at [http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint\\_filing\\_cust.html](http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_cust.html) and at any USDA office or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by: (1) mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; (2) fax: (202) 690-7442; or (3) email: [program.intake@usda.gov](mailto:program.intake@usda.gov). This institution is an equal opportunity provider.



**Jan. 26-27**  
**Pro Snocross Races**  
 18 Seventy Six Dr.  
 Deadwood, SD  
 605-578-1876

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.

**JAN. 5**  
**Granite Sports Fantastic Friday**  
 3 p.m.  
 Hill City, SD

**JAN. 6**  
**Live on Stage**  
 High Country Guest Ranch  
 Hill City, SD

**JAN. 10**  
**45th Annual Ranchers Workshop**  
 9 a.m.  
 Sinte Gleska University Multi-Purpose Center  
 Mission, SD

**JAN. 12**  
**Granite Sports Fantastic Friday**  
 3 p.m.  
 Hill City, SD

**JAN. 13**  
**Knights of Columbus Bowling Tournament**  
 1 p.m.  
 Meadowood Lanes  
 Rapid City, SD

**JAN. 20**  
**Live on Stage**  
 High Country Guest Ranch  
 Hill City, SD

**JAN. 23**  
**A Trip to Chile (Reservations Required)**  
 6:30 p.m.  
 Mangiamo  
 Hill City, SD

**JAN. 25**  
**A Trip to Chile (Reservations Required)**  
 5:30 p.m.  
 Mangiamo  
 Hill City, SD

**JAN. 26**  
**Granite Sports Fantastic Friday**  
 3 p.m.  
 Hill City, SD

**JAN. 26-27**  
**Reliance Area Community Development 29th Annual Dinner Theater**  
 6 p.m.  
 Reliance Legion Hall  
 Reliance, SD

**FEB. 3**  
**Live On Stage**  
 High Country Guest Ranch  
 Hill City, SD

**FEB. 3**  
**Lake Hendricks Fishing Derby**  
 11 a.m.  
 City Boat Landing  
 Hendricks, MN

**FEB. 10**  
**Polar Bear Chili Cook-Off**  
 11 a.m.  
 Main Street  
 Hill City, SD

**FEB. 10**  
**Tour de Chocolate**  
 Main Street  
 Hill City, SD

**FEB. 17**  
**Live On Stage**  
 High Country Guest Ranch  
 Hill City, SD

**FEB. 18-20**  
**MASC presents Disaster! the Musical**  
 Vesta Community Center  
 Vesta, MN

**FEB. 20**  
**A Trip to Portugal**  
 6:30 p.m.  
 Mangiamo  
 Hill City, SD

**FEB. 22**  
**A Trip to Portugal**  
 6:30 p.m.  
 Mangiamo  
 Hill City, SD

**FEB. 23-24**  
**Women in Blue Jeans Conference**  
 Highland Conference Center  
 Mitchell, SD

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