

# COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS



(left to right) Rosebud Electric Directors Dennis Purvis and Boyt Young and Butte Electric CEO Matt Sleep serve a homemade meal to legislators, state employees and Capitol visitors in South Dakota State Capitol.

Photo by Jacob Boyko

## Co-ops at the Capitol

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and Reliability**  
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# A Growing Momentum for Nuclear Energy

**Darrick Moe**

President and CEO, Minnesota Rural Electric Association

In 2023, the state of Minnesota passed legislation that all electricity used in the state would come from 100% carbon free resources by 2040. As the state takes strides toward meeting this ambitious carbon-free goal, we are seeing a growing enthusiasm for nuclear energy, both within our borders and nationwide. The Minnesota Rural Electric Association helped form the Minnesota Nuclear Energy Alliance (MNEA) because we see the promise of nuclear energy in helping to meet our state goals.

The MNEA has grown to more than 40 organizations dedicated to lifting Minnesota's decades-old moratorium on new nuclear facilities. Those who have joined the coalition include leaders in labor, business, utilities, environmental advocacy and local government. This growing coalition reflects a recognition that nuclear energy is no longer viewed in isolation but as a vital piece of our clean energy puzzle. It speaks to the broader consensus forming around nuclear energy's proven record — its ability to generate reliable, always-on power while contributing profoundly to economic development and decarbonization efforts.

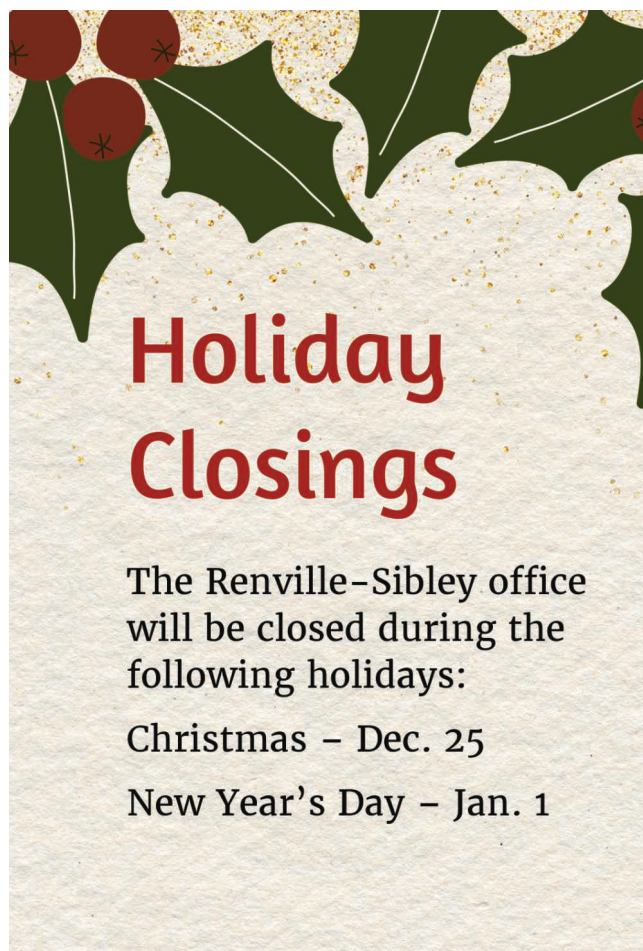
Did you know that of all the carbon free energy produced in Minnesota last year, nuclear energy made up about 40% of it? Fossil fuels still make up about 50% of all electric generation. As we replace these resources we must include generation that we can count on in any weather and at all times of the day — whose production is not at the whims of nature. Nuclear is the only generation fuel that is carbon free and can provide continuous power that other carbon free sources lack.

For me, this topic represents a long-overdue opportunity. In the 30 years since Minnesota enacted its nuclear moratorium, the landscape has changed dramatically. Advanced nuclear technologies now deliver greater efficiency and safety than ever before. Meanwhile, renewables such as wind and solar have scaled impressively — but still face physical limitations in providing consistent, firm power. And while the federal government's pace finding a permanent solution for spent nuclear fuel has been disappointing, our existing Minnesota nuclear fleet demonstrates we can securely manage waste locally with zero public harm.

Today, Minnesota faces an urgent decision. States surrounding us — Wisconsin, Illinois and North Dakota — are actively positioning themselves for nuclear development. Without removing structural barriers, Minnesota runs the risk of missing the boat, relegating ourselves to purchasing

nuclear-generated electricity from neighboring states when we could build and benefit from clean energy solutions right here at home. Nuclear energy provides excellent paying jobs — and many of them. It provides significant benefits to the communities who are open to the economic development they bring, and the continuous power they provide continues to grow in importance to our power grid.

Lifting the moratorium does not mean a plant will be built tomorrow. The process will still go through our regular certificate of need process at the Public Utilities Commission. Lifting the moratorium clears the way for research, innovation and comprehensive planning. As Minnesotans, we pride ourselves on leading — not following — on issues that matter. By embracing nuclear energy alongside other technological advancements, we hold the power to create an energy system that meets our growing demands and lights the way for future generations.



**Holiday  
Closings**

The Renville-Sibley office  
will be closed during the  
following holidays:

Christmas – Dec. 25

New Year's Day – Jan. 1



## Member Information Meetings

Renville-Sibley will be hosting our annual member informational meetings throughout the service area from March 9, March 10, March 12, and March 14, 2026. More information about the meeting dates will be in the February issue of *Cooperative Connections*.

## STAY SAFE THIS WINTER

This time of year can be downright dangerous. If you're in a car accident involving a power line, stay in your vehicle and call 911. Wait until electric utility personnel de-energize the line. Report any downed lines or damaged equipment to your local Touchstone Energy Cooperative.

### RE-ENERGIZING SAFETY

Your local Touchstone Energy® Cooperative wants you to be safe. For more safety tips, visit [YourCoopPower.com](http://YourCoopPower.com).

## COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS

### RENVILLE-SIBLEY CO-OP POWER

(USPS 019-074)

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Jill Woods – Member Services Professional

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

This institution is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

# Tree Trimming Safety

Trees are majestic, beautiful and good for the soul. But we also know that our members depend on us to deliver reliable power to their homes and businesses. South Dakota's electric cooperatives strive to balance maintaining the beautiful surroundings we all cherish with ensuring reliable electricity. You might not realize it, but there are several benefits to regular tree trimming.

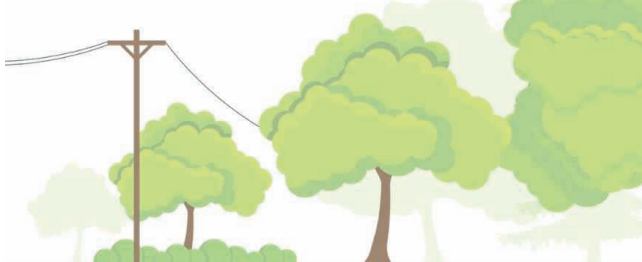
Keeping power lines clear of overgrown vegetation improves service reliability. After all, we've seen the whims of Mother Nature during severe weather events with fallen tree limbs taking down power lines and utility poles. While many factors can impact power disruptions, about half of all outages nationally can be attributed to overgrown vegetation.

Overgrown vegetation and trees also pose a risk to power lines. For example, if trees are touching power lines in our members' yards, they can pose grave danger to families. If children can access those trees, they can potentially climb into a danger zone. Electricity can arc, or jump, from a power line to a nearby conductor like a tree. A proactive approach also diminishes the chances of fallen branches or trees during severe weather events that make it more complicated and dangerous for line workers to restore power.

If trees and other vegetation are left unchecked, they can be-

## BENEFITS OF TREE TRIMMING

- ✓ Improves service reliability
- ✓ Speeds up restoration time
- ✓ Keeps crews & communities safe



come overgrown and expensive to correct. A strategic vegetation management program helps keep costs down for everyone.

When it comes to vegetation management, there are ways you can help too. When planting new trees, make sure they're planted a safe distance from overhead power lines. Medium-height trees (40 ft. or smaller) should be planted at least 25 ft. from power lines. Taller trees (over 40 ft.) should be planted at least 50 ft. from power lines. You can also practice safe planting near pad-mounted transformers. Plant shrubs at least 10 ft. from the transformer door and 4 ft. from the sides. If your neighborhood has underground lines, remember to contact 811 before you begin any project that requires digging.

Additionally, if you spot an overgrown tree or branch that's dangerously close to overhead lines, please contact your local electric cooperative.

We have deep roots in our community, and we love our beautiful surroundings. It takes a balanced approach, and our vegetation management program is a crucial tool in ensuring service reliability.



### "Watch for overhead power lines."

Jacob Ymker, Age 10

Jacob reminds readers to watch out for overhead power lines. Great job, Jacob! Jacob's parents are Mark and Marion Ymker from Armour, S.D.

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.



# Heart-Warming DESSERTS

## APPLE BREAD

### Ingredients:

1/2 cup brown sugar  
1 1/2 tsps. cinnamon  
*Mix in small dish & set aside.*

2 eggs (room temperature)  
1/2 cup sugar  
1 tsp. vanilla  
1/2 cup melted butter or  
margarine

*Mix together in a bowl and add:*  
1 1/2 cups flour  
1 tsp. baking powder  
1/2 tsp. baking soda  
2 cups chopped apples

### Method

Pour 1/2 of the batter into a greased and floured bread pan. Sprinkle 1/2 of the cinnamon and sugar mixture over it. Add remaining batter and top with remaining cinnamon sugar mixture.

Bake at 350° for 45-60 minutes.

**Grace Klein**  
Sioux Valley Energy

## PUMPKIN CHEESECAKE DESSERT

### Ingredients:

1 cup heavy whipped cream  
8 oz. cream cheese, whipped  
1/3 cup sugar  
1/2 cup brown sugar  
1 can pumpkin puree  
1 tbsp. pumpkin pie spice  
1 tsp. vanilla  
1 pkg. cheesecake pudding mix

### Method

Beat 1 cup heavy whipped cream and set aside.

In a separate bowl, mix and beat the cream cheese, sugar, brown sugar, pumpkin puree, pumpkin pie spice, vanilla, and cheesecake pudding mix.

Fold the whip cream into this mixture and spread in a graham cracker crust

Refrigerate two hours before serving plus add a spray of whip cream and sprinkle cinnamon on top.

(Optional) add chopped pecans or walnuts.

**Susan Forma**  
Union County Electric

## CHERRY COCONUT BARS

### Ingredients:

#### Crust

1 cup flour, sifted  
1/2 cup butter  
3 tbsps. powdered sugar

#### Mixture

2 eggs, slightly beaten  
1 cup sugar  
1/2 tsp. baking powder  
1/4 cup flour  
1/4 tsp. salt  
1 tsp. vanilla  
3/4 cup chopped nuts  
1/2 cup coconut  
1/2 cup red maraschino cherries,  
quartered

### Method

Mix together flour, butter and powdered sugar. Spread in 8" square pan. Bake at 350° for 20-25 minutes or until it is a delicate brown.

In a bowl, mix in the remaining ingredients in the order given: eggs, sugar, baking powder, flour, salt, vanilla, chopped nuts, coconut, maraschino cherries.

Spread this mixture over the crust and bake again for 25-30 minutes. cool and cut into squares.

**Barbara Anderson**  
Lake Region Electric

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 2025. All entries must include your name, mailing address, phone number and cooperative name.

# Save Money With a DIY Home Energy Audit

Want to cut costs and make your home more comfortable? A DIY home energy audit can uncover hidden energy drains, like leaky windows, drafty ducts and inefficient appliances. Identifying trouble spots now can set you up for savings and comfort year-round.

## Your step-by-step efficiency guide

Before you dive in, grab a few basic tools: flashlight, dust mask, tape measure and something to take notes (your phone works great!). We'll start with simple, no-cost changes you can do right away, then move on to tasks that take a little more effort.

### Step 1: Adjust your thermostat

- Revisit your thermostat settings each season. Lowering the temperature at night or when no one is home is a simple way to cut costs.
- Use a smart thermostat for even greater savings. It automatically adjusts based on your schedule.

### Step 2: Lower water heater temperature

- Lower your water heater temperature to save money and reduce the risk of scalding burns. Some water heaters are factory-set to 140 F, but most households only need 120 F.

### Step 3: Find and fix energy vampires

- Shut off energy vampires — devices that draw electricity even when turned off. This idle load can account for 23% of your home's energy use.
- Unplug appliances when not in use and fully power down devices like computers or gaming consoles. 847001
- Use a smart power strip to shut off multiple electronics at once — it's an easy way to stop energy waste at the source.

### Step 4: Check your lighting

- Swap out older bulbs, like incandescent or CFLs, for LEDs. They use less energy and last longer. Lighting can account for about 10% of your electric bill.
- Add dimmers or timers to cut down on wasted electricity.
- Don't overlook outdoor fixtures. Choose LEDs with features like daylight shut-off or motion sensors for even more savings.

### Step 5: Review major appliances

- Look for the ENERGY STAR label when buying new. If your refrigerator, washer, dryer or heat pump is more than 10 years old, it may be worth replacing rather than repairing. Newer appliances are more energy-efficient and can often pay for themselves in savings within a few years.
- Check your heating and cooling systems. Their lifespan can range from 10-30 years depending on the type and maintenance. If yours is older, start planning ahead for an upgrade.
- Replace air filters to keep your system running efficiently.

### Step 6: Seal leaks

Air leaks can waste 10-20% of your home's energy each year, but they're often simple to fix. Here's where to look and how to seal them.

- Check baseboards, floor edges and wall-to-ceiling joints indoors.
- Focus on where different materials meet outdoors.
- Pay special attention to windows, doors, light fixtures, plumbing and outlets.
- Use caulk for gaps around windows, doors and baseboards.
- Add weatherstripping to doors and operable windows.

### Step 7: Inspect insulation

#### Check attic insulation:

- Grab your dust mask and tape measure to check the depth of the insulation. It should be at least 12 inches deep, but you may need more depending on the type and your climate. Check EnergyStar.gov for recommended R-values.
- Spread insulation evenly. Loose-fill or blown-in insulation should be fluffy with even coverage, while rolled batt insulation should fit snugly with no gaps.

#### Inspect exterior walls:

- Check insulation by turning off the power, removing an outlet cover or switch plate and shining a flashlight into the cavity. Many homes built before the 1960s have little to no insulation, and houses from the 1960s-70s often need more.
- Call a professional to blow in insulation (from the outside or inside) if wall insulation is missing.

#### Don't forget the basement:

- Ensure rim joists (the area between the top of the foundation and the underside of the first floor) are well insulated in unfinished basements.
- Insulate the underside of the floor between the joists in crawl spaces.
- Add insulation to pipes and ductwork for an extra efficiency boost.

For renters: You may not be able to make major upgrades, but you can ask your landlord to seal leaks or start small with temporary fixes.

## Enjoy your energy savings

Congratulations — you've taken important first steps toward lowering your energy bills and boosting comfort.



# November Scholars of the Month

Renville-Sibley Cooperative Power Association (RSCPA), your Touchstone Energy Cooperative, is proud to recognize two exceptional seniors as our November Scholars of the Month! **Brynn Hoffbeck** from Cedar Mountain and **Kalleigh Wertish** from RCW truly represent the values we hold dear—integrity, accountability, innovation, and a strong commitment to community.

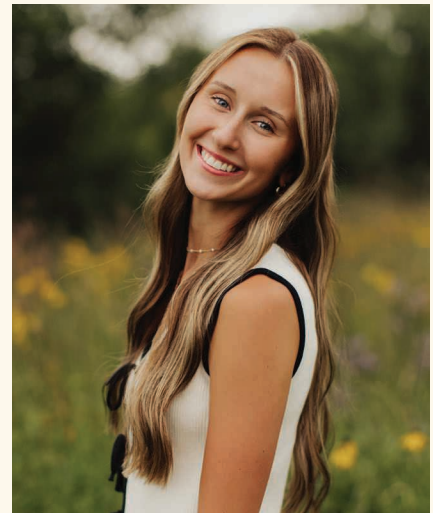
Brynn approaches every challenge with determination and a positive attitude. Her hard work shines both in the classroom and in her involvement in 4-H and FFA. Kalleigh is a natural leader, serving in student government, participating in athletics, and



Kalleigh Wertish

volunteering with multiple clubs. Her passion for animals drives her dream of studying veterinary medicine and one day serving in a rural practice.

Please join us in celebrating Brynn and Kalleigh for their dedication,



Brynn Hoffbeck

leadership, and the positive impact they make every day. **Congratulations to our November Touchstone Energy Scholars of the Month!**

## Scholarships to be Awarded

Renville-Sibley Cooperative Power Association will be offering \$7,000 in scholarship money to students in this region. The scholarships are for the 2026 – 2027 school year.

Renville-Sibley is allocated a \$2,500 scholarship from Basin Electric to be awarded at the discretion of the cooperative. Another \$1,500 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 \$2,500 Basin Scholarship and the \$1,500 Renville-Sibley Scholarship. These scholarships will be awarded based on a combination of SAT/ACT scores and overall grade point average, work experience, 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 three \$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 12, 2026. Winners will be announced to the public at the Cooperative's Annual Meeting on March 26, 2026.

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 been awarded 14 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).



The South Dakota State Capitol  
in Pierre, S.D.  
Photo by Frank Turner

# CO-OPS AT THE CAPITOL EVERY VOICE COUNTS

**Frank Turner**

[frank.turner@sdrea.coop](mailto:frank.turner@sdrea.coop)

Electric cooperatives carry a wide range of responsibilities to the members they serve. Beyond keeping the lights on, co-ops represent their communities, focus on member needs and help strengthen the places they call home. But behind the scenes, cooperatives also stay actively involved in legislative discussions to stay engaged in the decisions that shape how they serve their members.

According to Steve Barnett, general manager of the South Dakota Rural Electric Association, legislative efforts help protect reliable electricity, keep costs manageable and support rural communities across South Dakota.

“While it’s important that we stay involved in the topics that are relevant to our industry, it’s really about sharing our values and telling our story,” Barnett said. “Being involved means being engaged and aware of the challenges and issues coming up in the 2026 Legislative Session,”

In addition to SDREA’s internal

leadership, legislative efforts are supported by the association’s lobbying team in Pierre, led by Darla Pollman Rogers of Riter Rogers LLP. Rogers and her colleague, Ellie Bailey, have been involved with SDREA’s legislative work for more than two decades.

“A key component of this work involves relationship building with legislators to establish trust and credibility,” Rogers said.

Rogers noted that member engagement strengthens the cooperative voice during session and throughout the year. “The grassroots approach is huge for co-ops,” she said. “Hearing from members across the state and from different cooperatives helps strengthen our overall impact.” Rogers added that one of the best ways members can get involved is by getting to know their local legislators or attending Co-op Day at the Capitol to observe the process firsthand.

With the next session approaching, several topics are already drawing the attention of not only electric cooperatives but utilities across the

state. One of the proposals SDREA is following closely is Rep. Kent Roe’s data center bill, identified as Draft HB 31.

“We’re seeing an increase in interest from large data center developers looking to site facilities in cooperative service territory,” said Chris Studer, chief member and public relations officer at East River Electric Power Cooperative, a wholesale power supply cooperative which serves distribution co-ops in eastern South Dakota and western Minnesota. “We have been providing input on the data center bill to make sure the law would fit within our process and require data centers to invest in generation and transmission infrastructure to serve them, so we can protect our current cooperative consumers from the risk of building generation to serve these large consumers. At the end of the day, we’re not going to put our member-owners at risk, and engaging with lawmakers working on that issue is very important to our cooperative network.”

The association has also been working



with investor-owned utilities on wildfire mitigation legislation, which stands out as another priority for South Dakota cooperatives.

“Wildfire risk is a growing concern, and this proposal gives utilities a clear, consistent way to plan ahead. At its core, this legislation is about preparedness – making sure utilities have a plan and have reviewed it with their governing authority. By strengthening infrastructure, improving vegetation management, and coordinating closely with communities, the framework helps protect public safety while supporting the reliable service South Dakotans depend on,” Black Hills Electric General Manager Walker Witt said.

Cooperative members also have an important role in legislative advocacy. Their engagement helps ensure that rural needs and perspectives reach decision makers. Barnett encouraged members to stay active by reaching out to local lawmakers in their districts and attending local legislative forums and cracker barrels. These are formal town hall style gatherings where legislators answer questions and update the community.

“Members can contact legislators in their respective districts via email or by telephone,” Barnett said. “Attending cracker barrels is also a good way to stay engaged. These opportunities give members a chance to hear updates, ask questions, and share how policy decisions affect their communities.”

Barnett also noted the importance of staying alert during the legislative process, particularly when a bill is significantly amended. He explained that when a bill gets “hog housed,” it means it has been changed so much that the original version is no longer recognizable. “A hog housed bill is changed or amended significantly, to the point where a person may change their position on the bill,” he said. “Tracking these changes is essential to understanding the real impact a proposal may have if it becomes law.”

Barnett said SDREA will continue to represent the interests of both cooperatives and rural communities across the state. At the end of the day, it’s all about providing dependable electricity and keeping the lights on.



Gov. Larry Rhoden takes a picture with members of the electric cooperative network at Co-op Day at the Capitol last February.

*Photo by Jocelyn Johnson*

## STAYING INVOLVED

### Co-op Day at the Capitol

Electric cooperatives’ efforts to engage local legislators extend far beyond traditional lobbying. Every February, cooperatives from across the state gather for a light-hearted dinner at the South Dakota State Capitol to break bread with lawmakers, provide attendees industry updates and sit in on legislative committee meetings.

Last year, South Dakota cooperatives continued their time-honored tradition of serving pulled pork sandwiches and cowboy beans prepared by Ken Gillaspie, who formerly served as a director for East River Electric and as board president for Oahe Electric, and Roger Crom, a former loss control manager at SDREA.

The next Co-op Day at the Capitol is scheduled for Feb. 17, 2026.

### Legislative Banquets

In addition to Co-op Day at the Capitol, select electric cooperatives across the state host legislative banquets as a means of communicating the latest legislative environment with both their members and local lawmakers. Many times, these events provide a free meal to attendees and include updates on both the successes and challenges for the co-op.

Reach out to your local cooperative to learn more about local Legislative Banquets, Co-op Day at the Capitol or the latest legislative news affecting cooperatives. The co-op network is more than happy to engage.

# Are You Interested in a New Adventure?

Renville-Sibley Cooperative Power Association is beginning to plan for the 88th Annual meeting of the membership that will be held on March 26, 2026, 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 Firlle. Vicky Firlle's term will expire in 2026.

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. Jeff Boersma's term will expire in 2026.

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. Roger Manthei's term will expire in 2026.

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:

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

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 last Wednesday 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 5th for further information.

## OUTAGE REPORT:

*Affecting 10 members or more*

**Date: 10-4-2025**

Time off: 5:31 AM

Time on: 9:33 AM

Substation: Troy, Crooks

Cause: Equipment Failure

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

## FOR SALE:

2007 Kenworth W900L 86" Sleeper  
280 wheelbase  
565 Cummins auto shift  
300,000 miles on overhaul

Cherry Fiedler  
Danube, MN 56230  
320-979-1286

## SAFETY NOTE

If your machinery or vehicle comes in contact with a power line, do not get out of the cab. Call 9-1-1 and the dispatched utility will de-energize the power so that you can safely exit your tractor or vehicle

## CALL BEFORE YOU DIG!

Call 811 or go online to [www.gopherstateonecall.org](http://www.gopherstateonecall.org) and file a locate request before you dig!  
Toll Free: 1-800-252-1166



South Dakota law allows electric cooperatives to place poles along public rights-of-way without needing an easement. Shown here, East River Electric's transmission lines north of Pierre are built within the right-of-way. In cases where the rights-of-way are crowded, have obstacles, or are otherwise not suitable for poles or line work, a co-op may seek an easement outside of the right-of-way.

*Photo by Jacob Boyko*

# EASEMENTS BRING SAFETY, RELIABILITY

## Why More Room Makes Sense for Co-ops, Line Crews & Members

**Jacob Boyko**

[jacob.boyko@sdrea.coop](mailto:jacob.boyko@sdrea.coop)

Serving rural members means maintaining thousands of miles of power line – and finding the space to safely build and access it. At your local electric cooperative, building, maintaining and repairing thousands of miles of infrastructure is a logistical challenge, but each and every piece of the system has its role in a functioning and reliable electric grid.

That's why easements, or agreements to use and access private land, are essential for co-ops and their members. At East River Electric Power

Cooperative, the generation and transmission co-op serving 25 member distribution systems in South Dakota and Minnesota, Engineering and Planning Services Manager Jon Aus works directly with co-op members to get easements for power lines.

In 2025, most cooperatives prioritize building lines along the public right of way – the area between the road and fence lines along roadways – instead of along quarter lines like they have historically, back when rights-of-way were cluttered with telephone and other overhead lines.

“That’s where we like it from an access and maintenance perspective,”

Aus said of rights-of-way. “Nowadays, when we develop a route for a line, we pick the roads we want to zigzag down to get from Point A to Point B.”

Placing infrastructure along roads improves accessibility for crews and speeds up outage response time, especially when mud or snow are a factor, Aus added. But the trade offs are a workspace limited to the shoulder and ditch and overall limited access to the infrastructure.

That’s where easements make all the difference. When a co-op member allows an easement, the co-op will set poles back just several more feet away from the road right-of-way onto private land, and crews can cross behind the fence when they need to access the poles. The impact on private land is minimal, but it’s a massive benefit for the line crews.



“Having an easement allows crews to work on the backside of the structures,” Aus said. “If you don’t get an easement and you don’t have any access rights, they’re stuck working everything from the ditch and the roadside.”

Engineers are meticulous when mapping routes for new lines, Aus added, noting the lengthy process for engineers as they consider pole placement, obstacles, hazards and community impact.

“At the onset of any project, we’re evaluating the impact of our routing,” Aus continued. “Public impact is right up there on our priorities along with reliability and maintenance. We don’t go down routes we foresee to have challenges with public impact.”

Distribution cooperatives see similar challenges on the ground. In southwest South Dakota, Black Hills Electric Cooperative System Coordinator Jesse Sorensen aims to manage a system that’s not only reliable and affordable, but also built on cooperation with members.

“Very rarely do we have someone reject giving an easement,” he said. “We’ve had very good luck sitting down with members and explaining everything to them that there are hundreds – if not thousands – of landowners that allowed easements so we could get electricity to this property.”

He continued, “The biggest concerns from landowners are about losing their trees or the aesthetic value of their property, and we’ll work with landowners by rerouting lines to prevent cutting prize trees or installing lines in prime views.”

At East River Electric, Aus’ team fields similar questions from landowners, usually concerning specific pole placement and whether poles will interfere with field access, an approach or operation of large machinery. He says it’s usually something the engineers can accommodate because ultimately, co-ops want to leave members’ land as good or better than they found it.

“We’ll even work with landowners to pay to replace any trees we have to remove if we obtain an easement from them,” Aus said.

As the co-op steadily grows and expands its transmission system, East River Electric General Counsel Danny Brown stresses that the co-op relies on voluntary easements, and in its 75-year history has never used eminent domain to obtain an easement.

“Eminent domain is not something we ever want to use,” Brown explained. “We try to educate and work with the property owners the best we can. At the end of the day, an easement is voluntary, and if we can’t make it work from the right of way, we have to start thinking about changing our route.”

But opting for alternate, less-efficient routes is a concession that can severely impact system reliability and leads to a higher price tag for co-op members to pay. Fortunately, Aus and Sorensen said most landowners understand the value of working with their cooperative for themselves and their community.

“There have been several times when landowners have said, ‘Absolutely, bring that line through here,’” Aus recalled. “They want to improve their reliability, or they know that they just need more electricity in that area for whatever they might be doing on their property. Most of the time we’re welcomed with open arms.”

That willingness helps keep cooperative power moving across the countryside.



When a co-op obtains an easement to build a line along a road right-of-way, the line is placed several feet away from the right-of-way border. In this photo, the right of way border is about at the fence line, with the poles placed several feet behind the fence.

On this route, East River Electric has an easement for 30 feet behind the fence line for when line crews need to maintain or repair the line, giving crews more room to work and better access to the structures.

*Photo submitted by East River Electric.*

## November Board Meeting Highlights

The November board meeting was held on Thursday, November 20th, 2025, at 8 a.m. All board members were present. Others present were CEO DeeAnne Norris, Nick Bruns, Gene Alex, Amy Ervin, and Carren Frank.

The board reviewed and approved the following items:

- Minutes of the October 28th, 2025 board meeting
- Operating and disbursement reports for the month of October
- Safety Report for November
- Acknowledgement of Capital Credits to Estates
- Basin Load Forecast
- NRECA Annual Meeting Voting Delegates
- CRC Annual Meeting Voting Delegates
- NRTC Annual Meeting Voting Delegates
- MREA Annual Certification of Voting Delegates and Alternates for all 2026 Membership Meetings
- Nominating Committee Appointments
- Director Expenses

The board reviewed the following items:

- Total new members
- 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 MN Paid Leave
  - o Basin Electric update
  - o East River update
  - o Director meeting reports
  - o Linecrew work in progress, equipment update, and outage update
  - o Accounts Receivable
- Member Informational Meeting Schedule
- ACRE/REPAC Dues

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

## 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 \$60. Another number has been hidden in this newsletter. If you find your number and call the office by the 5th of January, you will receive this credit on your electric statement. Good luck with your search!

## REMINDER

Renville-Sibley encourages any member planning on making changes to their service in 2026 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.

## OPERATION ROUND UP

The next meeting will be held Tuesday, January 13, 2026, at 2:30 p.m. The deadline for applications is Wednesday, December 31, 2025. If your non-profit organization has a project or event that would benefit the community, Operation Round Up funds may be available to help your group reach its goal.

Applications for donations can be found at [rscpa.coop/operation-round](https://rscpa.coop/operation-round). Contact the office at 320-826-2593 for more information.

## 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



# SAVE THE DATE

## 88<sup>th</sup> RENVILLE-SIBLEY ANNUAL MEETING

THURSDAY

26TH OF MARCH 2026

Redwood Area Community  
Center in Redwood Falls

Renville-Sibley's 88th Annual Meeting will be held on March 26, 2026, at the Redwood Area Community Center in Redwood Falls. More annual meeting information will be provided in upcoming newsletters.

## Notice

The board will not meet in January 2026.

The February board meeting will be held on Wednesday, February 25, 2026 at 9 a.m.

## Mission Statement

Renville-Sibley Cooperative Power Association will provide safe, 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, audiotape, 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.

## REGISTER TO WIN!

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

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

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



### UNTIL JAN. 6

#### Garden Glow

5-9 p.m. (Closed Dec. 24-25, Jan. 1)  
SDSU McCrory Gardens  
Brookings, SD  
[www.sdstate.edu/mccrory-gardens](http://www.sdstate.edu/mccrory-gardens)

*Photo Courtesy of Travel South Dakota*

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

### UNTIL DEC. 26

#### Christmas at the Capitol

8 a.m.-10 p.m. (Holidays Included)  
South Dakota State Capitol  
Pierre, SD  
605-773-3178  
[christmasatthecapitol.sd.gov](http://christmasatthecapitol.sd.gov)

### UNTIL JAN. 5

#### Winter Wonderland at the Falls

5 p.m.  
Falls Park  
Sioux Falls, SD

### DEC. 20-21, 23-24, 27-28

#### 1880 Train Holiday Express

Hot Chocolate, Santa  
Hill City, SD  
[www.1880train.com](http://www.1880train.com)  
605-574-2222

### DEC. 31

#### American to the Heart New Year's Eve Bash

Doors Open at 5:30 p.m.  
American Legion  
Sioux Falls, SD  
Tickets: 605-336-3470

### JAN. 4, FEB. 1

#### American Legion Post 15 Pancake Breakfast

8:30-12 p.m.  
The Alliance  
1600 W. Russell St.  
Sioux Falls, SD  
605-336-3470

### JAN. 6-8

#### Dakota Farm Show

USD Dakota Dome  
Vermillion, SD  
[www.dakotafarmshow.com](http://www.dakotafarmshow.com)

### JAN. 20

#### Prohibition & the Pig

Lake Cty. Museum Fundraiser;  
Prohibition-Era Bootlegging  
6 p.m.-7:30 p.m.  
\$60 per ticket  
The Office Bar & Grill  
Madison, SD  
605-256-5308

### JAN. 23-24

#### Pro Snocross Races

Deadwood, SD  
605-578-1876

### JAN. 27, FEB. 24

#### American Legion Post 15 Bingo

5 p.m. Social, 6 p.m. Meal,  
6:45 p.m. Bingo  
Reservation Required for Meal  
1600 W. Russell St.  
Sioux Falls, SD  
605-682-1222

### JAN. 28-30

#### Sioux Falls Farm Show

Sioux Falls Convention Center  
Sioux Falls, SD

### JAN. 30-FEB. 7

#### Annual Black Hills Stock Show

Central States Fairgrounds  
Rapid City, SD  
[www.centralstatesfairinc.com](http://www.centralstatesfairinc.com)

### FEB. 1

#### The Great Lake County Hotdish Competition

11:30-1:30 p.m.  
St. Thomas School Gym  
Madison, SD  
605-256-5308

### FEB. 6-7

#### Brookings Home Show

Dakota Bank Center  
Brookings, SD  
[brookingsregionalbuilders.com](http://brookingsregionalbuilders.com)

### FEB. 7-8

#### The Black Market/Formerly Benson's Flea Market

Sioux Falls, SD  
605-332-6004

### FEB. 13-16

#### 12th Annual Frost Fest

Brookings, SD  
605-692-7444

### FEB. 21-MARCH 1

#### Sioux Falls Home Show

Sioux Falls Convention Center  
Sioux Falls, SD

**Note: We publish contact information as provided. If no phone number is given, none will be listed. Please call ahead to verify the event is still being held.**