

# COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS



## Power on Wheels

**Solar Power  
Education**

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## Flipping the Switch

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Members of Sioux Valley Energy's Beneficial Electrification Department install panels on a 50 kW community solar array at the Sioux Valley Energy Colman office.

# MN Energy Connection— transmission line update

**Randy Fordice**

Transmission Communications and Public Affairs Manager, Xcel Energy

Xcel Energy has proposed the new MN Energy Connection 345 kilovolt transmission line project that, if approved by the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission, would connect new renewable energy in Southwest Minnesota and the retiring Sherco power plant near Becker, Minn. The project would enable the connection of at least 2,000 megawatts of new renewable energy in the wind-rich region, and re-use the existing grid connection at the Sherco plant.

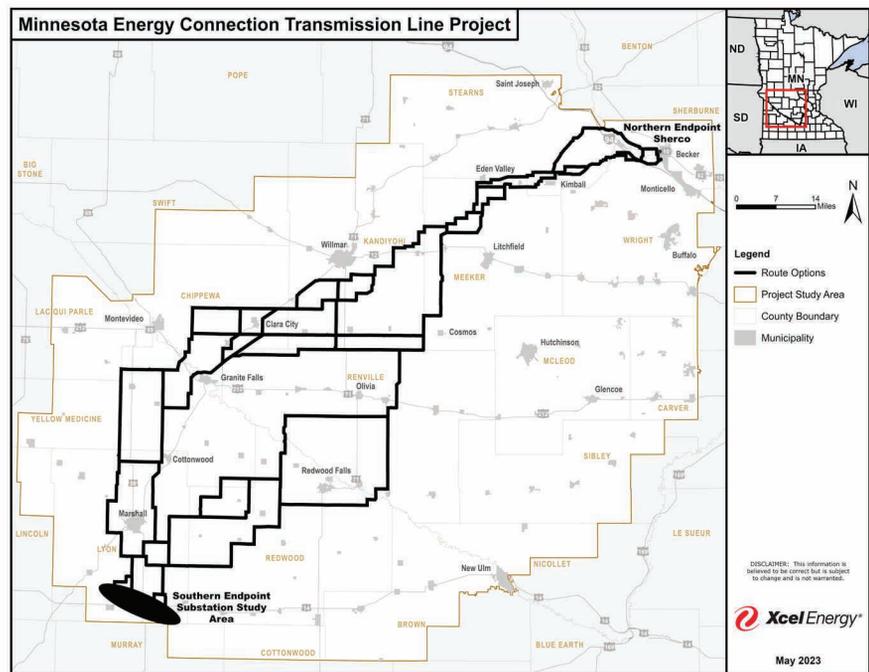
Xcel Energy is currently reviewing preliminary route options and asking for landowners and other stakeholders to provide feedback to the project team ahead of the submission of a Route Permit application, expected to be filed this fall.

Minnesota rules require that a utility submit at least two route options in an application to be considered, and the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission, which reviews these applications, would select one following a period that includes several opportunities for public input.

## Regulatory Process

Following Xcel Energy’s application this fall, the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission and Department of Commerce will schedule meetings and hearings that provide opportunities for public comment about the route options.

The review process generally takes about 12-18 months for a project



The map shows preliminary route options currently under consideration for the MN Energy Connection project.

of this size.

In addition to the upcoming Route Permit application, Xcel Energy has also filed an application for a Certificate of Need, which is currently under review. Meetings and hearings about the Certificate of Need will be scheduled later this year.

Potentially affected landowners will be mailed information when those meetings are scheduled, and the meetings will be publicized in local newspapers.

## Comments about route options accepted through July

Landowners can submit comments

through the project website (visit [www.MNEnergyConnection.com](http://www.MNEnergyConnection.com) and select ‘community engagement’) or via email at [MNEnergyConnection@xcelenergy.com](mailto:MNEnergyConnection@xcelenergy.com). Xcel Energy asks that comments be sent by the end of July so the project team can conduct additional information review ahead of finalizing the Route Permit application.

More information, including detailed maps of route options, can be viewed at the website.

Landowners can also call 1-888-292-4714 with questions.

**COOPERATIVE**

CONNECTIONS

**RENVILLE-SIBLEY  
CO-OP POWER**

(USPS 019-074)

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

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# Touchstone Energy Hot Air Balloon Scheduled for Renville-Sibley Open House Aug. 22

Join us for an exciting day at Renville-Sibley's open house on Tuesday, August 22, where the Touchstone Energy Hot Air Balloon will take flight, weather permitting. This magnificent balloon serves as a proud ambassador for Touchstone Energy® Cooperatives, enchanting audiences at annual meetings, farm shows, balloon festivals, family days, rodeos, county fairs, and numerous other events over the past two decades.



Prepare for an extraordinary lineup of activities at the open house. Members and visitors will have the opportunity to embark on guided tours of our new facility, bear witness

to a special dedication ceremony, and have an opportunity to take an up-close look at electric vehicles. As part of our unwavering commitment to the community, we will showcase an informative display focused on energy and safety.

Furthermore, we are diligently organizing a range of informational booths that cover compelling topics such as renewable energy, load management, and the convenience of Smarthub—an online platform that empowers our members with access to billing and usage information. Stay tuned for additional engaging topics that are currently in the planning stages. Additionally, we have videos and pictures that offer a behind-the-scenes glimpse into the building process.

Inside our facility, we are thrilled to host an exceptional exhibit created by Jessica Stolen-Jacobson and Scott Tedrick. This captivating display boasts an impressive collection of 150 photographs and narratives, illuminating the stories of 30 diverse Minnesota cooperatives.

Be sure to keep an eye out for next month's newsletter, as we unveil more news and details about this remarkable event.

# Fireworks Safety Tips

Summer is synonymous with barbecues, parades and fireworks. The National Safety Council advises everyone to enjoy fireworks at public displays conducted by professionals, and not to use any fireworks at home. They may be legal but they are not safe.

In 2017, eight people died and over 12,000 were injured badly enough to require medical treatment after fireworks-related incidents. Of these, 50% of the injuries were to children and young adults under age 20. Over two-thirds (67%) of injuries took place from June 16 to July 16. And while the majority of these incidents were due to amateurs attempting to use professional-grade, homemade or other illegal fireworks or explosives, an estimated 1,200 injuries were from less powerful devices like small firecrackers and sparklers.

Additionally, fireworks start an average of 18,500 fires each year, including 1,300 structure fires, 300 vehicle fires and nearly 17,000 other fires.

## Fireworks Safety Tips: If You Choose to Use Legal Fireworks

If consumer fireworks are legal to buy where you live and you choose to use them, be sure to follow the following safety tips:

- Never allow young children to handle fireworks
- Older children should use them only under close adult supervision
- Never use fireworks while impaired by drugs or alcohol
- Anyone using fireworks or standing nearby should wear protective eyewear
- Never hold lighted fireworks in your hands
- Never light them indoors
- Only use them away from people, houses and flammable material
- Never point or throw fireworks at another person
- Only light one device at a time and maintain a safe distance after lighting
- Never ignite devices in a container
- Do not try to re-light or handle malfunctioning fireworks
- Soak both spent and unused fireworks in water for a few hours before discarding

- Keep a bucket of water nearby to fully extinguish fireworks that don't go off or in case of fire
- Never use illegal fireworks

## Sparklers Are Dangerous

Every year, young children can be found along parade routes and at festivals with sparklers in hand, but sparklers are a lot more dangerous than most people think.

Sparklers burn at about 2,000 degrees – hot enough to melt some metals. Sparklers can quickly ignite clothing, and children have received severe burns from dropping sparklers on their feet. According to the National Fire Protection Association, sparklers alone account for more than 25% of emergency room visits for fireworks injuries. For children under five years of age, sparklers accounted for nearly half of the total estimated injuries. Consider using safer alternatives, such as glow sticks, confetti poppers or colored streamers.



## Call Before You Dig!

### Dixie Koistinen

Dixie Koistinen advises diggers to call 811 before digging. This is a great tip for anyone doing construction or yard work this summer. Dixie is the daughter of Jerome and Lisa Koistinen from Lake Norden, S.D., members of H-D 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.

# Summer DESSERTS

## VICKY'S RHUBARB CAKE

Ingredients:

- 1 egg
- 1 cup sugar
- 1 cup cream (sweet or sour)
- 1 1/2 cups flour
- 1 tsp. soda
- 1/4 tsp. cinnamon
- 2 cups rhubarb (slice thin)

**METHOD**

Mix in order. Grease and flour pan. Pour batter into pan and sprinkle 1 cup brown sugar, 1/2 cup nuts, and 1/2 cup chocolate chips over the top. Bake at 350°F for 50 minutes.

**Vicky Hoffman**  
South Dakota

## CHERRY CLOUD 9 DESSERT

Ingredients:

- 1 white cake mix
- 1 (3 oz.) pkg. cherry jello
- 1 (8 oz.) carton of Cool Whip
- 1 (24 oz.) can cherry pie filling

**METHOD**

Bake 1 white cake mix in 9x13" pan according to directions. Poke holes in cake and pour in 1 (3 oz.) pkg. cherry jello made with only 1 1/2 cups water. Refrigerate.

When this is cool, cover with 1 (8 oz.) carton of Cool Whip. Gently spoon on 1 (24 oz.) can of cherry pie filling. Refrigerate and serve.

This is a pretty red and white dessert to serve during holiday gatherings.

**Jane Ham**  
Rapid City, S.D.

## EASY RASPBERRY MOLTEN CAKES

Ingredients:

- 4 oz. semi-sweet chocolate
- 1/2 cup (1 stick) butter
- 4 tsps. raspberry extract
- 1 cup confectioners' sugar
- 2 eggs
- 1 egg yolk
- 6 tbsp. flour
- Raspberry Sauce (recipe follows)

**Raspberry Sauce:**

- 1 package (10 ounces) frozen raspberries in juice, thawed
- 1/2 teaspoon raspberry extract

**METHOD**

Preheat oven to 425°F. Butter 6 (6 oz.) custard cups or soufflé dishes. Place on baking sheet.

Microwave chocolate and butter in large microwavable bowl on HIGH 1 minute or until butter is melted. Stir with wire whisk until chocolate is completely melted. Stir in raspberry flavor and vanilla. Stir in sugar until well blended. Whisk in eggs and yolk. Stir in flour. Pour batter into prepared custard cups.

Bake 10 to 14 minutes or until sides are firm but centers are soft. Let stand 1 minute. Carefully loosen edges with small knife. Invert cakes onto serving plates.

For the Raspberry Sauce, mix raspberries and raspberry extract until well blended. Serve with cakes.

[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.

# When the weather is extreme, use energy wisely

We hear a lot about peak energy demand, but what is it and how does it impact electricity use? As the name implies, peak energy demand occurs when energy consumption is at its highest. In much of the U.S., energy use spikes in summer and winter due to the need to heat and cool indoor spaces.

Although it depends on where you live, summertime energy demand increases between mid-to-late afternoon (when outdoor temperatures soar) and evening. In the winter, there are two high-use times of day: early morning and late afternoon/evening. Weekends and holidays are typically considered off peak.

Changing the time of day you use energy can help lower your energy bills and avoid interruptions or service glitches that can occur during peak demand times. To do this, consider running major appliances during off-peak times; smart devices or appliances that have delay starts can help achieve this goal.

Do your part to use energy wisely when temperatures are high. In the summer months, help decrease demand by doing the following:

- Turn your thermostat up by two degrees or more.
- Program your thermostat to a higher temperature when no one is home.
- If you do not have one, consider purchasing a smart thermostat.
- Make sure your HVAC system is in good working order.

**YOU SCHEDULE MEETINGS AND LUNCHES SCHEDULE YOUR WASHING MACHINE AND DISHWASHER TOO!**

Peak energy demand is a hot topic, but what is it and how does it impact electricity use? Simply stated, **PEAK DEMAND** is when energy consumption is at its highest.

In much of the U.S., energy use spikes in summer and winter due to **INCREASED ENERGY DEMANDS** for indoor cooling and heating. In the summer, energy use spikes between mid-to-late afternoon and evening. In the winter, energy use is higher in the early morning and late afternoon/evening.

Consider running major appliances during off-peak times to decrease strain on the energy grid.

**CHANGING THE TIME OF DAY YOU USE ENERGY CAN:**

- 🔌 Help lower your energy bills.
- ⚡ Avoid service interruptions or glitches.

Do your part to use energy wisely, especially when energy demands are high.

Safe Electricity.org<sup>®</sup> Learn more at:

- Use bathroom and kitchen fans temporarily to remove heat and humidity.
- Use your countertop toaster/convection oven instead of your oven.
- Use major appliances in the early morning or late evening.
- Program smart devices to run appliances at off-peak times.
- Close window coverings during the hottest part of the day.
- Use minimal lighting.
- Turn off and disconnect electronics that are not in use.
- Turn off stand-alone dehumidifiers.

Making small changes to conserve energy can help even out energy use, save money on your utility bill and avoid service interruptions caused by high demand. To learn more about energy efficiency and electrical safety, visit [SafeElectricity.org](http://SafeElectricity.org).

## Minnesota's Extreme Heat Law

Minnesota Statute 216B.0975 requires that “a utility may not involuntarily disconnect residential services in affected counties when an excessive heat watch, heat advisory, or excessive heat warning is in effect and has been issued by the National Weather Service.”

Renville-Sibley will continue to make efforts to stall involuntary disconnection of our members' electric service for non-payment and will continue to provide our members with past-due account opportunities to work out a feasible payment schedule. However, in order to construct a payment plan, members must contact Renville-Sibley ahead of time to make payment arrangements and to sign a payment agreement.

Renville-Sibley does not want to interrupt service to any member at any time, but in a cooperative, all members are affected by those whose electric bills remain unpaid. To ensure fair and

equitable rates for all our members, those members with past-due accounts that neglect to contact the office to make mutually agreed payment arrangements or members who fail to meet agreed-upon payment arrangements will have their electric service disconnected once the excessive heat watch, advisory or warning has expired.

For energy assistance, please contact:

**Minnesota Valley Action Council**  
800-767-7139 (Toll-Free) or 507-345-6822 (Mankato)

**Prairie Five Community Action Council**  
320-269-6578 (Montevideo)

**United Community Action Council**  
507-537-1416 (Marshall)  
320-235-0850 (Willmar)  
320-523-1842 (Olivia)

# Variety of Payment Options Available to Members

Renville-Sibley members have a variety of options available to pay their monthly electric bills. Located on the top of the homepage of Renville-Sibley's website [www.rscpa.coop](http://www.rscpa.coop) is the SmartHub Pay Portal. In the upper right-hand corner, you will find the PayNow option. The difference between these two options is the SmartHub application requires a username and password and will give more account information such as view and manage your usage tool, billing and payment history, the ability to manage the contact information, set up account notifications along with the option to make a payment or set-up autopay. The PayNow option can be accessed by entering the account number and last name. The only option available on this site is to make a payment on the account.

Along with the traditional payment method of mailing or dropping off a check, Renville-Sibley offers an automated pay-by-phone option which is available in both English and Spanish. Members can call 844-244-1498 to make a payment on the account, update the phone number or update bank draft information.

More and more members are setting up their accounts for automatic payment on the 3rd. This convenient service can be set up by completing an in-house form that allows Renville-Sibley to deduct the balance from either a checking or savings account on the 3rd of each month. Members also have the option to set up automatic payment in SmartHub. Through SmartHub, members can select the payment source to be either a checking or savings account or a credit card. 963900

Also available to the membership is budget billing. Members on budget billing pay the budget amount, which is the average bill calculated over the past 12 months factoring in any rate increases for the next year if applicable. Budget billing is great for members who experience a higher electric bill during the winter months and want to level their payments throughout the year. All accounts in the budget payment plan must be paid in full each year with the August 3rd payment. The new budget amount begins with the next bill. Anyone interested in budget billing should contact the office to determine what their monthly budget amount will be and to get signed up for the program.

## Save the Date

Farmfest, Morgan, MN August 1 – 3  
Family-a-Fair Night at the Renville County Fair,  
Bird Island, MN, August 10th

## Operation Round Up

As a reminder, the next meeting of the Board of Trustees will be held on July 18, 2023. Please submit applications by July 1.

## WHERE'S THE NUMBER?

Last month Joshua Weber did not find his member number in the newsletter. The energy credit will be increased to a value of \$90. Another number has been hidden in this newsletter. If you find your number and call the office by the 5th of July, you will receive this credit on your electric statement. Good luck in your search!

## OUTAGE REPORT

*Affecting 10 members or more*

**Date: 4/1/23**

Time off: 3:36 a.m.

Time on: 5:45 a.m.

Substation: Cairo

Cause: Wind Not Trees

**Date: 4/10/23**

Time off: 7:34 a.m.

Time on: 9:05 a.m.

Substation: Troy

Cause: Material or Equipment Fault/Failure

**Date: 4/16/23**

Time off: 2:20 p.m.

Time on: 3:45 p.m.

Substation: Kingman

Cause: Motor Vehicle

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

## THANK YOU

I am writing to express my sincere gratitude to you for choosing me as a scholarship recipient. This will assist me with my future plans to attend SCC for Agribusiness.

Sincerely grateful,  
Madalynn Nachreiner



# POWER ON WHEELS

West Central Electric Cooperative's solar trailer serves as an interactive exhibit showcasing solar power generation in action for members. Equipped with a built-in generator, battery storage unit, inverter, and six rooftop solar arrays, the trailer is a great resource for public outreach and education efforts in South Dakota.

## Solar trailer takes renewable education on the road

**Frank Turner**

frank.turner@sdra.coop

Solar panels are creating a buzz in the energy industry. Every day, co-op employees around the state answer an ever-growing list of questions, such as “Can solar save me money on my energy bill?” and “Are solar panels a reliable source of energy?”

Addressing increasing public interest, West Central Electric Co-op, serving towns such as Murdo and Kennebec, has developed an innovative approach to public outreach regarding solar panels. Their solution: a solar trailer — a portable structure designed to inform the public about the efficiency, pros and cons of solar panels.

“West Central Electric has approxi-

mately 3,700 members and I get two or three calls a month from our members asking about solar power,” said Jessie Tucker, the co-op’s member services manager.

Tucker noted that the recent surge in solar power interest isn’t limited to West Central. Co-ops throughout the state have been fielding similar inquiries. So, when the concept of a solar trailer was introduced in 2021, several nearby co-ops, including Rushmore Electric Power, were quick to get on board.

“We thought, wouldn’t it be great if we had something that we could show to the membership and explain how solar panels work and go from there,” said Tucker. “We envisioned the trailer as a resource that could be utilized throughout western South Dakota, if not the entire state.”

With support from surrounding co-ops, the trailer was completed in June 2022. Although the trailer is a work in progress, it has already been showcased at several co-op outreach events over the past year, including Black Hills Electric’s Co-op Day and more.

The solar trailer serves as an interactive exhibit where members can step inside for a first-hand experience. Upon pressing a button, the six rooftop solar arrays activate and start generating a total of 1.92 kilowatts of energy directly from the trailer’s roof. Apart from solar panels, the trailer is equipped with a built-in generator, a battery storage unit, and an inverter that converts power from direct current (DC) to alternating current (AC).

The trailer, according to Tucker, highlights the benefits of a diversified approach to South Dakota’s energy mix. For a reliable and dependable energy grid, renewable sources such as solar need to be paired with other forms of power generation.

“What we are really trying to com-

municate is that you can't fully rely on distributed generation, whether it's solar or wind," Tucker explained. "For reliability and safety, it's important to consider all available energy sources. Solar power has its limitations, especially when the sun isn't shining or during the night."

The introduction of a solar trailer comes as co-ops across the state are in the midst of their own solar initiatives. Just last month, Sioux Valley Energy completed its own solar project that permits its members to purchase a 20-year subscription to the power output from a newly constructed 140-panel solar array located in Colman, S.D. The project allows members who are passionate about renewable energy a direct route to purchase solar power through their local co-op.

"A lot of people are very interested in solar power, but they don't want to go through the process of using up land and roof space," said Ben Pierson, manager of beneficial electrification for Sioux Valley. "Members aren't interested in constructing these projects themselves, so our solar

project offers those members an alternative way to get involved in solar."

More than 30 members participate in the subscription program, and because the project was entirely financed by the participating members, it won't impact other members of the co-op.

"This project was one hundred percent funded by the members that are purchasing the output of those panels," said Pierson. "This project allows these members to see a local, physical solar asset in their community that is working for them and is credited on their bill each. So really



The solar trailer has been featured at several co-op public outreach events.

our focus with renewable is really about member choice."

The landscape of renewable energy is vast and ever-changing and every co-op is planning their own approach, but with resources like the solar trailer, tools for education and engagement are within reach for members wanting to learn more.



The interior of the solar trailer is equipped with battery storage and outlets – powering everyday electrical appliances, such as a hairdryer.

# NEW FACILITY UPDATE

The office now has all the cabinetry and flooring installed, and the mechanical, electrical, and plumbing work will soon resume and be completed in the following weeks. Once all the interior features are finished, a final cleaning will take place. The office furniture was installed on June 12th.

The final grading and yard work started at the end of May, and the installation of curb and gutter started the second week of June.

To watch the outside activity at the new facility, check out the video on our website: [rscpa.coop/news/renville-sibley-new-facility](http://rscpa.coop/news/renville-sibley-new-facility)

When you watch this video, it will seem like everything happened so fast right away then nothing happened for a bit. Then, when the walls and roof went up, there was a lot of activity on site. Now that the walls and roof are installed, the contractors are working inside the building so it will again appear as if nothing is happening at the site.

Comparative Report			
	Current YTD Through April 30, 2023	One Year Ago YTD Through April 30, 2022	10 Years Ago YTD Through April 30, 2013
Average # of Consumers	1,881	1,889	1,918
kWhs purchased	15,688,877	15,635,370	14,311,720
Cost of purchased power	\$1,003,199.38	\$966,477.53	\$770,172.04

## 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

## REMINDER

Renville-Sibley encourages any member planning on making changes to their service in 2023 or 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.

## FOR SALE:

**Bad Boy side-by-side. 500 hours.**

John Kiecker  
Fairfax, MN 55332  
507-828-4847

**Craftman Sander (belt and disk). Like new.**

John Kiecker  
Fairfax, MN 55332  
507-828-4847

**7 cattle panels, very heavy, 1/4" rod.**

\$50  
Roger Freitag  
Renville, MN 56284  
320-220-1832

**Cub Cadet electric riding mower. Used 1 season. 42" deck.**

Daryl Wendt  
Gibbon, MN 55335  
507-327-8101

## WANTED:

**Small trailer for riding lawn mower.**

Steve & Chris Hettig  
Morton, MN 56270  
320-522-3915

# May Board Meeting Highlights

The May board meeting was held on Tuesday, May 23 at 8 am via Zoom. All board members were present. Others present were CEO DeeAnne Norris, Cindy Mertens, Gene Alex, and Amy Ervin.

The board reviewed and approved the following items:

- Minutes of the April 25 board meeting
- Policy 207 – Financial and Operational Objectives
- Donation of \$1,000 to the Cooperative Family Fund
- Operating and disbursement reports for the month of April
- Capital Credits to Estates
- Safety Report for May
- New logo tabled
- CoBank 2023 Incumbency Certificate
- CoBank 2023 Resolution
- Lobbying Certification
- CRC Director Election

The board reviewed:

- Xcel Energy and East River Electric update on the Nighthawk Project
- Total new members
- Capital Credits Transferred
- Reports from staff members as to the activities in their department. Items in the reports include:
  - High-level Statement of Operations review – YTD through April (unaudited)
  - Organization activities
  - East River update
  - Basin Electric update
  - NRECA update
  - MREA update
  - Linework in progress, equipment update, and outage update
  - Accounts receivable
  - New facility update

Please contact the Renville-Sibley office to view the full minutes or if you would like more information regarding the board meeting.

## NOTICE:

The June board meeting will be held on Tuesday, June 27 at 8 am.

The July board meeting will be held on Tuesday, July 25 at 8 am.

## Member Notice

Renville-Sibley's office will be closed on Monday, July 3rd, and Tuesday, July 4th in observance of Independence Day.

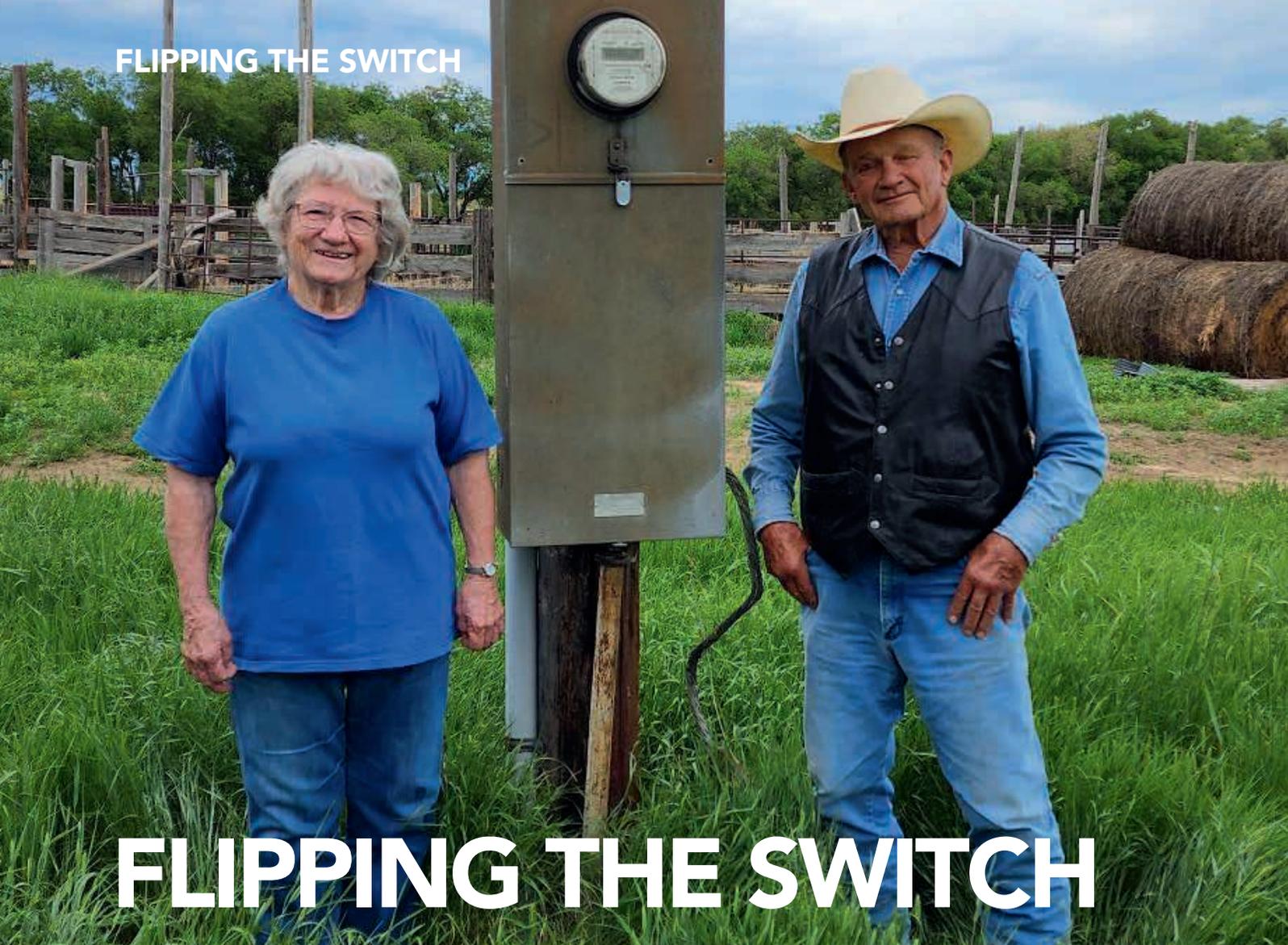
## Mission Statement

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.



# FLIPPING THE SWITCH

Third generation ranchers Ken and Kathleen Meier stand by one of the first electric utility pole installed on their ranch.

## The Meier Family and Illuminating Rural South Dakota

**Frank Turner**

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

In the rural heartland of Firesteel, S.D., a transformational moment still echoes in the minds of third-generation ranchers Ken and Kathleen Meier. Over a span of 56 years on their farmstead, they have run cattle, reared horses, and even raised two children. After all

of those years, however, they still vividly remember the moment when electricity illuminated their rural community for the first time in the early 50s.

It's safe to say, their memories go back a long way. And yet, their bond with their home extends even further, reaching back a century to when their families were still

establishing roots in the frontier of the rural prairie.

Ken recalls the unlikely story which brought his grandpa, Anton Meier, from Iowa to the captivating, rolling landscape near Timber Lake, S.D., in 1923.

“Well, my grandpa was ornery when he had a bit too much to drink,” said Ken. “Anyway, after a night of drinking, they threw him out of a bar in Iowa, so he crawled into a train car for a nap. When he woke up, he was in South Dakota.”

According to Meier, his grandpa Anton quickly fell in love with the state and decided to relocate his

family to a new frontier near Timber Lake. In a coincidental twist of fate, Kathleen's family also settled in the same area around the same time. Unlike Anton's serendipitous journey,

Kathleen's grandfather, Frank Holzer, had a more traditional approach.

"My grandpa didn't get a free ride," laughed Kathleen. "He came down with our family from North Dakota with a horse and a milk cow tied to the back of the family's covered wagon."

When their families first settled the area, it was the era of kerosene lamps, horses and hard work. Yet in their childhood, both Ken and Kathleen witnessed the transition from kerosene lamps to electric light bulbs, a change that would propel their families and their communities forward.

"I must have been 9 or 10, but I remember when Moreau-Grand put our line up," Ken reminisced. "The memory of those first poles being driven into the ground by a couple of guys with an old International Truck has stuck with me. It was just something you don't forget."

Today, those original poles placed in the ground more than 70 years ago still stand tall on their ranch. Kathleen, too, recalls the transformative impact they had.

"I was about the same age when we first wired our house," said

Kathleen. "I remember how fun it was to just turn the lights on and have bright lights."

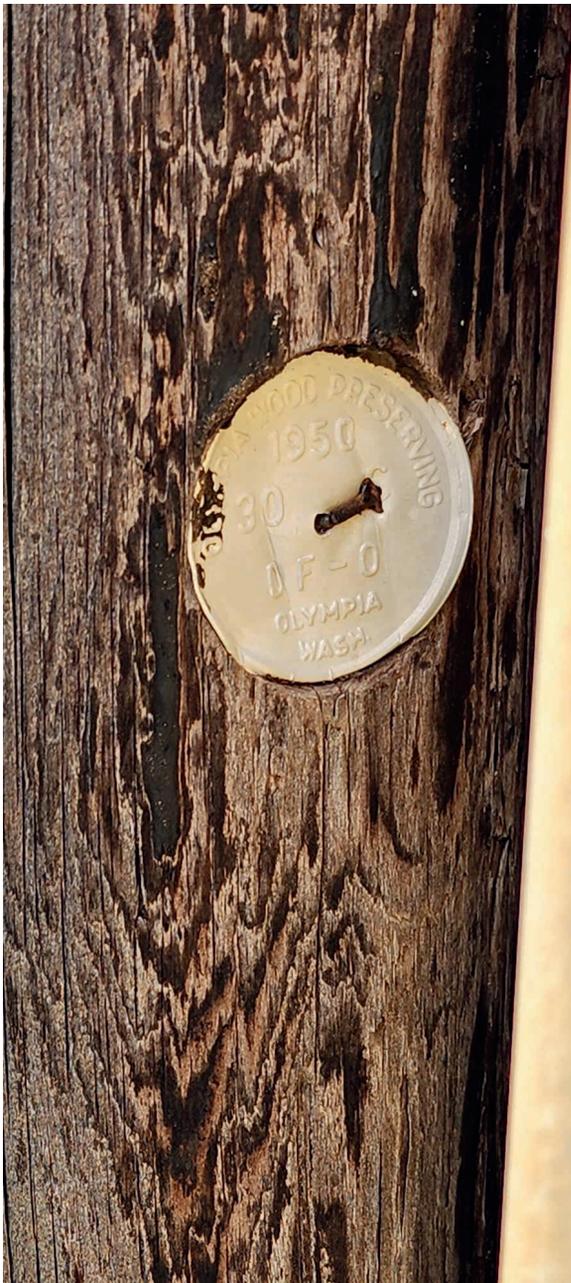
However, the electrification of their neighborhood brought more than just the novelty of flipping a switch. Kathleen's family promptly modernized their home. Their stove and fridge transitioned from kerosene to electric, and they even invested in a milking machine. The arrival of electricity didn't just bring about change; it revolutionized daily life on the ranch, making it cleaner and more efficient.

"Our old washing machine ran on a gas engine," said Kathleen. "You had to stomp on a pedal to get that motor started. It smoked up the entire house. Once we had electricity all we had to do was plug it in."

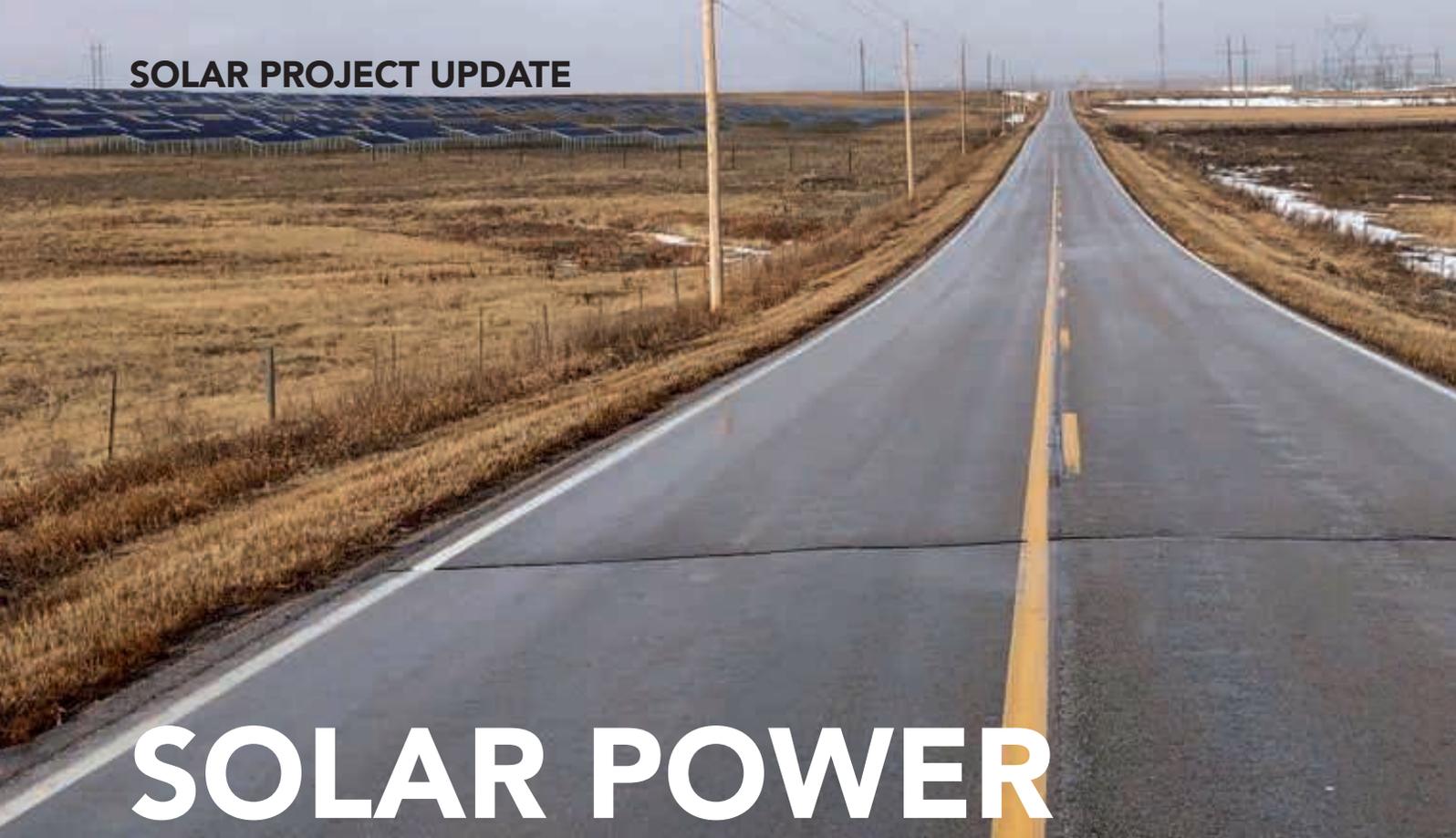
Progress didn't stop at the washing machine. "It didn't take long for things to change," added Ken. "I remember when I was about thirteen, my neighbor purchased the first television in the neighborhood, so everything happened fast. We would all go to watch whatever was on."

The transition has continued to benefit the Meier family. Today, their son, Kent Meier, works in the power industry with Border States Electric, a company that sells electrical equipment, tools and appliances. Their daughter, Cindy Lindskov has carried on the family tradition as a fourth-generation rancher in Isabelle, S.D., a town conveniently located just a stone's throw away from her parents.

It's amazing how much has changed over the years," said Ken. "Since the day we first got electricity, Moreau-Grand has done a great job of keeping our light on and burning bright."



One of the original utility poles on Ken and Kathleen Meier's land was created in 1950, yet it still functions to this day.



# SOLAR POWER

National Grid Renewables is building a solar farm next to an existing substation near New Underwood. Photo courtesy of Western Area Power Administration

## New Underwood Solar Power Update

**Scott Waltman**

Next year, a new solar farm near New Underwood should be providing power for homes and businesses in South Dakota and beyond.

Wild Springs Solar is being developed by Minnesota-based National Grid Renewables. The same company already operates a wind farm in Clark County, so it might already be familiar to some residents.

The solar farm is projected to be the biggest one in the state, according to National Grid Renewables. It's being built on roughly 1,000 acres.

Plans call for it to produce 128 megawatts a year. That could power 16,000 South Dakota homes, though some of the electricity will also be sent

out of state.

The solar farm is being built near an existing Western Area Power Administration substation, making for easier power distribution to groups like Basin Electric Power Cooperative, one of the largest providers of electricity in the Dakotas.

“When determining where to site renewable energy projects, things we consider include but are not limited to accessibility to transmission, land availability, resource, customer demand and community support,” a Wild Springs Solar representative. “The Wild Springs project area was selected for proximity to the electrical transmission system, New Underwood substation, land suitable for a solar project from an environmental, regulatory/permitting,

design perspective and cooperative landowners.”

Construction on the solar farm began in January.

Basin Electric, which is based in Bismarck, N.D., is a transmission cooperative that serves about 3 million customers in nine states. It has an agreement with National Grid Renewables to purchase 114 megawatts of electricity.

For Basin Electric, the agreement amounts to the first time it has agreed to buy solar power on a large scale. The cooperative has plans to bring on more than 150 megawatts of solar capability in the next two years.

Andy Buntrock, Basin Electric's vice president of strategic planning and communications, said stressing reliability is a priority for the cooperative this year.

“When we communicate on renewables we emphasize that they are just part of an all-of-the-above energy strategy that ensures reliable and

affordable power for our membership,” he said. “It’s important that we maintain dispatchable generation that has a reliable fuel source, while taking advantage of non-dispatchable generation like our first-ever solar project in South Dakota.”

Coal and natural gas are examples of dispatchable generation. They are fuels that are highly dependable because they are in constant supply.

“The construction of the Wild Springs Solar Project in South Dakota represents our commitment to bringing clean, renewable energy and economic development to the state of South Dakota. The project will contribute significantly to the tax base, as well as the local communities,” the National Grid Renewables spokesperson said.

In 2020, the South Dakota Public Utilities Commission approved a construction permit for Wild Springs Solar. That procedure set out what’s being built near New Underwood, including:

- 340,000 solar panels.
- A tracking system.
- Access roads.
- A substation.
- An operation and maintenance building and parking lot.
- Electric collection lines.

The plant will use solar panels that have been developed by First Solar.

National Grid Renewables is establishing a charitable fund for the New Underwood School District with plans to donate more than \$500,000 in the

first plant’s first two decades.

“Our National Grid Renewables onsite team has also worked closely with the school board and district to provide additional education about solar energy and the Wild Springs Solar project to some of the local high school classes, including a personalized tour of the site,” the company representative said.

But National Grid sees benefits that extend far beyond the Pennington County community. The upside, according to National Grid Renewables, will also include:

- Offsetting 193,000 metric tons of carbon dioxide emissions each year.
- A \$22 million economic impact in the project’s first 20 years of operation.
- \$12 in new tax revenue in the first two decades.
- 225 new construction and operation jobs.

And when the plant is producing power, that should equate to the removal of 41,000 vehicles from roads in a year’s time.

WAPA helped clear the way for the project in 2021, finding the solar farm would have no significant impact on environmental resources or humans, said Eric Barendsen, public affairs specialist for WAPA.

That’s also when WAPA entered into an agreement with Wild Springs Solar and the Southwest Power Pool allowing the solar farm to be connected to WAPA’s New Underwood Substation.

Ultimately, that will help Basin Electric power South Dakota.

The cooperative transmits power to two generation and transmission cooperatives in the state – Rushmore Electric Power Cooperative and East River Electric Cooperative. Those co-ops then send electricity to their distribution cooperatives, which provide electricity to homes, schools and businesses across South Dakota.

The Clark County wind farm uses 77 turbines to create 200 megawatts of power, the National Grid Renewables representative said. It began operation in 2019 and employs 10 people.



Construction began earlier this year on a large solar farm near New Underwood in Pennington County. Some of the power will be purchased by Basin Electric and be distributed to cooperatives in South Dakota.

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**July 14-16**  
**Badlands Astronomy Festival**  
25216 Ben Reifel Road  
Interior, SD  
605-433-5243

**JUNE 23-25**  
**46th Annual Main Street Arts & Crafts Festival**  
Centennial Park  
Hot Springs, SD

**JULY 1**  
**Hill City's Annual Star-Spangled Celebration**  
8 a.m.  
Hill City, SD  
605-574-2368

**JULY 4**  
**Philip VFD Firework Display**  
Lake Waggoner  
Philip, SD

**JULY 7-8**  
**Buffalo Gap Blow Out Rodeo**  
6 p.m.  
Buffalo Gap, SD  
605-890-1533

**JULY 8-9**  
**Brookings Summer Arts Festival**  
Brookings, SD  
605-692-2787

**JULY 12**  
**Tracy Area Gardens & Quilts Tour**  
2 p.m.  
Tracy, MN

**JULY 13-16**  
**Pioneer Days**  
White, SD  
605-690-4458

**JULY 14-16**  
**Burke Stampede PRCA Rodeo**  
Burke, SD  
605-830-2083

**JULY 15**  
**Huron MS Walk/Run**  
8 a.m.  
Lake Byron  
Huron, SD  
605-350-5922

**JULY 15-16**  
**Charles Mix Saddle Club SDRA Rodeo**  
Geddes, SD  
605-680-2763

**JULY 21-23**  
**Winner Elks 54th Annual Rodeo**  
Winner, SD

**JULY 28-29**  
**Farley Fest**  
Lake Farley Park  
Milbank, SD  
www.farleyfest.com

**JULY 29**  
**BBQ Pit Row and Car Show**  
Winner, SD  
605-842-1533

**JULY 30**  
**Bergen Threshing Bee**  
9 a.m.  
Bristol, SD

**AUG 1-4**  
**Farmfest**  
8 a.m.  
Gilfilan Estate  
28269 MN-67  
Morgan, MN

**AUG 9-11**  
**Family-a-Fair Night Thursday, August 10th (Free admittance to members)**  
10 a.m.  
Renville County Fairgrounds  
Bird Islands, MN

**AUG 21**  
**30th Annual Bishop's Cup Golf Tournament**  
Minnehaha Country Club and  
The Country Club of Sioux Falls  
Sioux Falls, SD  
605-988-3765

**SEPT 29-30**  
**Junkin' Market Days**  
Ramkota Exhibit Hall  
Sioux Falls, SD  
605-941-4958

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.

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