

# COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS



## Forecasting the Future

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All Renewables**

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# Giving Back is the Cooperative Way



**Chris Larson,**  
General Manager

The holiday season brings a spirit of generosity and compassion. It's a time to reflect on our many blessings and uplift those in need. While this is certainly a special time of year, cooperatives like Clay-Union Electric are deeply rooted in giving back to their local communities year-round.

Our mission is reliable power. Our purpose is people—the members we're proud to serve.

One way Clay-Union Electric gives back is by investing in tomorrow's leaders.

Through presentations at elementary schools, scholarship opportunities and the Electric Cooperative Youth Tour program, we aim to empower students for a brighter future. When we invest in our local youth, we strengthen the fabric of our community.

As a not-for-profit electric cooperative, we believe in giving credit where credit is due—to the members who shape our co-op. One of the ways we do this is through capital credits. Because Clay-Union operates at cost, we give cash back to our members rather than outside investors or shareholders.

Here's how capital credits work:

Clay-Union members use the electricity we provide and pay their monthly bills, and we track their business with the co-op over time. Clay-Union pays all operating expenses throughout the year, and if any operating revenue is leftover, we allocate it as capital credits. When financial conditions permit,

**Clay-Union has returned approx. \$6,407,000 to the members**

the co-op's board of directors votes to pay capital credits back to the members. Clay-Union sends you a check.

Clay-Union has returned approx. \$6,407,000 to the members.

Capital credits are just one of the many benefits of co-op membership. Giving back to our local members instead of outside parties is one of the many aspects that set cooperatives apart from other types of businesses.

Our members guide every decision we make and are the reason our co-op exists. To us, you're more than a customer. This holiday season, we hope you're proud to be part of a community-focused co-op that puts people before profits.

From your friends at Clay-Union Electric, we hope you have a bright, blessed holiday season.

**Thank you again, for allowing us to provide your electric service needs.**

**Chris Larson**  
General Manager  
[clarson@clayunionelectric.coop](mailto:clarson@clayunionelectric.coop)

**HOW CAPITAL CREDITS WORK**

Electric co-ops are not-for-profit and operate at cost. Capital credits are a financial benefit of co-op membership.

1. Members pay their electric bills, and we track their business with us each month.
2. The co-op pays operating expenses throughout the year and allocates any leftover operating revenue as capital credits.
3. When financial conditions permit, the co-op board votes to retire (pay) capital credits to the members.
4. We send members their share of capital credits as a bill credit or check.

**COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS**

**CLAY-UNION ELECTRIC SPARKS**

(USPS 116-800)

Office Hours  
Monday through Friday  
7:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.  
31321 SD Hwy. 19, Vermillion, S.D.

**Board of Directors**

Tom Larsen, President  
Christopher Kinney, Vice President  
Mike Slattery, Treasurer  
James Ryken, Secretary  
Sara Schulte, Asst. Secretary

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Mike Kruse, Operations Manager  
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Alan Gauer, Crew Foreman  
Curt Johnson, Lead Lineman  
Nick Buckman, Journeyman Lineman  
Travis Wells, Journeyman Lineman  
Casey Ihnen, Journeyman Lineman  
Quinn Springer, Lead Lineman  
Jake Husby, Journeyman Lineman  
Clayton Sorensen, Apprentice Lineman

**POWER FAILURE – 24-hour service  
In case of Power Failure Call:  
1-800-696-2832 or 624-2673**

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*This institution is an equal opportunity provider and employer*



**YEAR-TO-DATE FINANCIALS**

	Oct. 2024	Year To Date
Number of Consumers.....	3,899	3,894 Avg.
Total Revenue .....	\$575,200	\$7,291,913
Total Cost of Service.....	\$713,177	\$8,073,065
Operating Margins .....	\$(137,977)	\$(781,152)
Other Margins.....	\$9,438	\$686,278
Total Net Margins.....	\$(128,539)	\$(94,874)
kWh Purchased.....	4,936,112	67,440,236
Cost of Power .....	\$317,054	\$4,229,023
kWh Sales.....	4,665,841	64,054,095
Residential Average Usage .....	1,042	1,249
Residential Average Monthly Bill.....	\$136	\$152

# Snow Safety

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

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

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

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

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

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

**National Safety Council recommends the following tips to shovel safely:**

- Do not shovel after eating or while smoking.
- Take it slow and stretch out before you begin.
- Shovel only fresh, powdery snow; it’s lighter.
- Push the snow rather than lifting it.
- If you do lift it, use a small shovel or only partially fill the shovel.

- Lift with your legs, not your back.
- Do not work to the point of exhaustion.
- Know the signs of a heart attack, stop immediately and call 911 if you’re experiencing any of them; every minute counts.

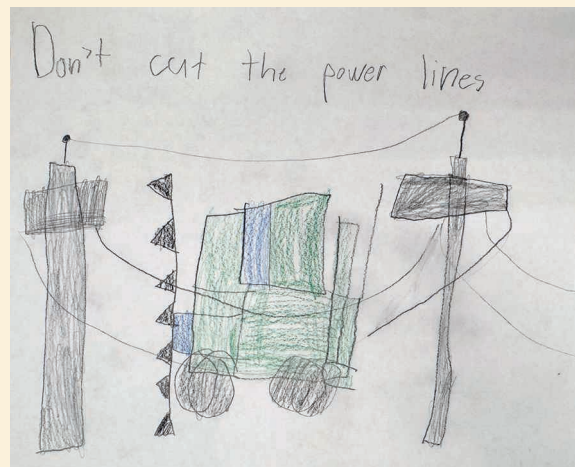
Don’t pick up that shovel without a doctor’s permission if you have a history of heart disease. A clear driveway is not worth your life.

### Snow Blower Safety

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

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

*Source: National Safety Council*



### “Don’t Cut the Power Lines!”

#### David Raak, Age 7 ½

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

Kids, send your drawing with an electrical safety tip to your local electric cooperative (address found on Page 3). If your poster is published, you’ll receive a prize. All entries must include your name, age, mailing address and the names of your parents. Colored drawings are encouraged.



# Crockpot GREATNESS

## CROCKPOT CORN

### Ingredients:

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

### Method

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

**Elaine Rieck**  
Harrisburg, S.D.

## CROCKPOT BAKED BEANS

### Ingredients:

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

### Method

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

**Rose Tucker**  
Hot Springs, S.D.

## CHICKEN FIESTA SLOW COOKER RECIPE

### Ingredients:

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

### Method

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

**McCormick.com**

Please send your favorite recipes to your local electric cooperative (address found on Page 3). Each recipe printed will be entered into a drawing for a prize in December 2024. All entries must include your name, mailing address, phone number and cooperative name.



# Board of Director Nomination Petitions Available

## Districts #4 & #5

**Jackie Williams**

[jwilliams@clayunionelectric.coop](mailto:jwilliams@clayunionelectric.coop)

Pursuant to Section 7, Article 3 of the By-Laws of Clay-Union Electric, as amended by the members March 27, 2012, nominations for the Board of Directors of Clay-Union Electric are accomplished by petition.

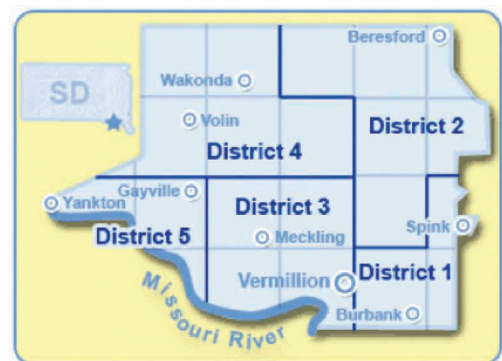
Director Nomination Petitions are available for the nomination of a member in good standing with Clay-Union Electric from District #4 & District #5. Petitions are available at the cooperative office and can be picked up by the person pursuing the position. Clay-Union Electric, 31321 SD Hwy. 19, Vermillion, SD. Office hours: Monday through Friday, 7:30 a.m. until 4:00 p.m. Phone: 1-605-624-2673 or 1-800-696-2832.

**The completed petitions must be returned to Clay-Union Electric**

**no later than 4 p.m. Friday, February 7th, 2025 or postmarked no later than February 7th, 2025.**

**DISTRICT 4:** The territory served by Clay-Union Electric beginning at a point on the Northeast corner of the territory at the junction of 458th Ave. and 297th St.; thence south on 458th Ave. to the intersection with 303rd St.; thence east on 303rd St. to the intersection with 464th Ave.; thence south on 464th Ave. to the intersection with 309th St.; thence west on 309th St. to the intersection with 446th Ave.; thence north on 446th Ave. to 297th St.; thence west on 297th St. to the intersection with 458th Ave., the point of beginning.

**DISTRICT 5:** The territory served by Clay-Union Electric beginning at a point on the Northeast corner



### Clay-Union Electric Board of Director Districts

of the territory at the junction of 452nd Ave. and 309th St.; thence south on 452nd Ave. to where a projection of 452nd Ave. meets the Missouri River; thence west along the South Dakota boundary of the Missouri River to a point that would be a projection south of 440th Ave.; thence north on 440th Ave. to the intersection with 308th St.; thence east on 308th St. to the intersection with 446th Ave.; the south on 446th Ave. to the intersection with 309th St.; thence east on 309th St. to the intersection with 452nd Ave., the point of beginning.





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



Janet Gesinger  
*Photo by Frank Turner*

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

**Frank Turner**

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

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

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

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

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

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

what the risks were, carrying around those lamps."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



PLANNING AHEAD



# FORECASTING THE FUTURE

## Basin Electric's Vision for Reliable Energy

**Frank Turner**

frank.turner@sdrea.coop

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

reliable power amid an ever-changing landscape of new technologies and growing membership.

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

Basin Electric works with the members and other stakeholders to

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

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

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



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

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

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

“In the case of a generation project, the project site, fuel, water, and transmission sources are identified during the project development phase,” Ehrman said. “After the development phase is complete, the more detailed engineering design work can begin. This is when the engineers really begin to dig into the details of how to arrange and interconnect all of the many different types of equipment



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

required for a given project. Eventually, those design details are used to develop construction specifications, contractors are selected and construction begins.”

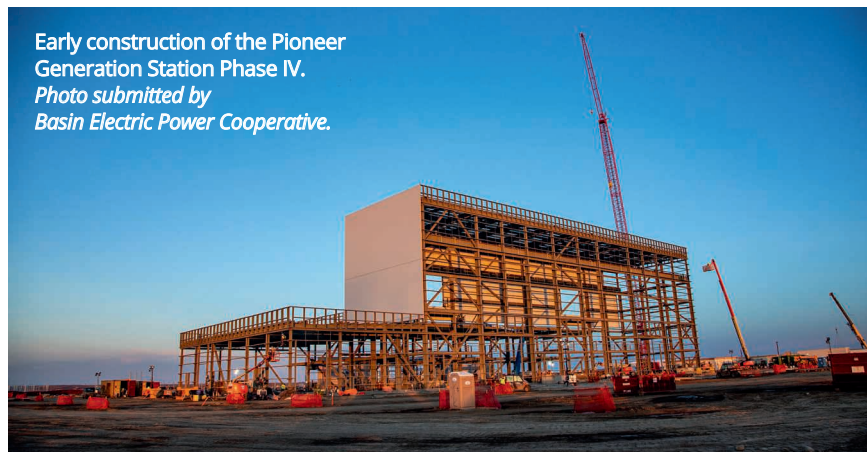
Beyond the demanding complexity of the project itself, Basin Electric’s project team must also navigate regulatory matters and policy. While many projects share similarities, no two are identical when navigating federal, state, and local permitting requirements.

“Large generation and transmission projects can take years to permit, and the permitting duration depends on the project,” Ehrman said. “Basin’s

teams have successfully permitted and executed many projects over the years and as a result have learned a lot about those processes in our service territory.”

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

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



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

# BOARD MEETING SUMMARY

## Clay-Union Electric Corporation Board Meeting Summary

OCTOBER 25, 2024 • VERMILLION, SOUTH DAKOTA

The board meeting was called to order on October 25, 2024, at 8:30 a.m. by board President Tom Larsen. The meeting was held in the conference room at the Clay-Union Electric Headquarters.

In attendance were Tom Larsen, Chris Kinney, Jim Ryken, Mike Slattery and Sara Schulte. Attending staff members included Chris Larson, Beth Bottolfson, Mike Kruse and Jackie Williams.

**Agenda (ACTION ITEM)** – A motion was made, seconded, and carried to approve the agenda as presented.

**Visitors to Be Heard** – None

**Approval of Minutes from the September Board Meeting (ACTION ITEM)** – A motion was made, seconded, and carried to approve the September board minutes held on 9/27/24.

**Approval of Minutes from the September Executive Session (ACTION ITEM)** – A motion was made, seconded, and carried to approve the September executive session held on 9/27/24.

**Check List & Electronic Funds Transfer** – The board reviewed the EFT/ACH payments, and the monthly check list as presented.

**New Members and Refunds (ACTION ITEM)** – A motion was made, seconded, and carried to approve new members, refunds and credit deposits as presented.

**Early Retirement of Capital Credits** – None

**Contracts** – None

**Policy Review** – The following Policies were presented to the board:

- A motion was made, seconded and carried to approve changes to Board of Directors Policy 106, Compensation and Reimbursement of Directors.
- A motion was made, seconded and carried to approve the revisions to Policy 715, Paid Time Off and Other Absences.
- A motion was made, seconded and carried to authorize the General Manager to approve administering a one-time exception to Policy 715.
- A motion was made, seconded and carried to approve changes to Rates Tariffs: 801, Single Phase; 802, Campground and Multi Residential Lodging; 805, Small Three Phase; 807, Large Power; 813, Three Phase Irrigation; and 819, Large Power with Generator, all with an effective usage start date of 01/1/2025.

**Work Order and Special Equipment Summary** – None

**Management Reports:**

**A. Manager's Report** - Manager Larson provided reports on the monthly activities:

**November Board Meeting** – The date of November 21, was set as the next regular board meeting to begin at 8:30 a.m.

**East River REED/MAC** – The REED Board met on October 2nd at East River followed by the ER MAC and then a joint East River MAC/Board budget presentation.

**Lewis and Clark Rate for 2025 (Action)** - A motion was made, seconded, and carried to approve the rate for Lewis and Clark Regional Water for 2025.

**New Building** - Manager Larson reviewed with the Board various warranty and other happenings that are being worked through with Puetz and other contractors.

• A motion was made, seconded and carried to approve payment for maintenance expenses for landscaping and tree grove establishment.

**Joint Jurisdictional Zoning Area** – Manager Larson reported on his continued participation in offering input while the City and County work through the JJZA update.

**SD Line Patrol** - Virtual meetings have started in planning the SD Line Patrol poker run scheduled for September 2025 that will be hosted by BY, Union and Clay-Union.

**Mid-West Annual Meeting (Action)** – Manager Larson reported on the meeting date in December. No one is able to attend this year on Clay-Unions' behalf.

**SE Managers** – The SE Managers met on October 18th in Tabor for the quarterly meeting.

**Legislative Forum** - The legislative forum has been scheduled for November 25th in Yankton at the Best Western Kelly Inn.

**Distributed Generation** – Manager Larson reported that he is working with Kristi Robinson at Star Energy to help develop Clay-Union's Distributed Generation program. The program will be developed so members can apply for approval to interconnect with the power grid and assure that other members are protected from excess cost shifts.

**East River Member System Director and Employee Orientation** - On Monday November 18th, East River is hosting their annual orientation for new directors and employees.

**B. Administrative Report** – Manager of Finance and Administration Bottolfson reviewed the following reports with the board:

- Billing Statistics
- September 2024 Financials
- Annual Material Inventory
- Capital Credit Retirements (ACTION ITEM) – A

motion was made, seconded, and approved to retire capital credits for the year(s) 1994 & 1995 in its entirety for approximately \$452,800.

• Annual Inventory Adjustment (ACTION ITEM) - A motion was made, seconded, and carried, to approve the annual inventory adjustment.

*All reports were posted to the website earlier for board review.*

**C. Operations Report** – Operations Manager Kruse reviewed the following reports with the board:

- Monthly department work summary
- FEMA
- New Services
- Service Upgrades
- September Outage Report
- Wiring

*All reports were posted to the website earlier for board review.*



**Financial Report** – Manager of Finance and Administration Bottolfson reviewed the following reports with the board:

- Actual to Budget
- Balance Sheet
- Interest Income
- kWh Sales Report
- Large Power
- Line Loss
- Operating Statement
- Power Bill
- Summary of Purchased Power
- Wiring Income & Expense

*All reports were posted to the website earlier for board review.*

**Legal Report** – None

**Strategic Planning** – None

**Safety Meeting Minutes** – The October Safety Meeting Minutes were posted to the website for the board to review and were discussed during the meeting.

**Cyber Security** – The September Cyber Security report from East River IT was posted to the website for the board to review and was discussed during the meeting.

**Video and/or Meeting Reports** –

- East River Report
- East River Financials
- Basin Reports
- SDREA Reports

**Calendar** – The board reviewed the November 2024 calendar.

**Executive Session** – The board went into Executive Session at 11:10 a.m., Executive Session was adjourned at 12:21 p.m. There was no action taken.

**Adjournment** – There being no further business, a motion was made, seconded, and carried, to adjourn the meeting at 12:30 p.m.

**Thomas Larsen, President**

**James Ryken, Secretary**

## Outage Reports

Date	Time	Township	Members	Cause
11/4	2:30 p.m.	Spirit Mound	4	Contractor Dig In
11/7	1:00 p.m.	Riverside	1	Animal
11/30	11:00 a.m.	Riverside	17	Member

**Come visit**

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 



**January  
7th - 9th  
2025**

## Office Hours and Due Dates

Our office hours are Monday – Friday, 7:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. Please remember your PAYMENT DUE DATE is the 20TH OF EACH MONTH. Your payment must ARRIVE in our office on the 20th to avoid any penalties. Please allow mailing time as we go by the received date, NOT the postmark. If the 20th falls on a weekend or holiday, payment is due the following business day. If payment is still not received within 10 days by 8 a.m., a \$25 collection fee will be applied and a final disconnect notice will be mailed. If disconnection for nonpayment occurs, all past and current energy charges, a reconnect fee and sufficient credit deposit will be required before the meter can be reinstalled.

**FOR YOUR CONVENIENCE, WE ALSO ACCEPT THESE PAYMENT OPTIONS.**



**Bank Draft** – Have your payment automatically deducted from your checking or savings account. No fees apply for this service.

**Recurring Debit/Credit Card**

– You may call in your credit/debit card payment and ask for recurring, it will then bill to that card every month on the 20th (or next business day) of each month until you call to cancel. No fees apply for this service.

**Pay by Phone** – You may call in your credit/debit card payment each month. No fees apply for this service.

**By Mail** – Send check or money order with your payment slip. Please be sure to mail early so we receive it by the 20th, we do not go by postage date.

**In Office** – We accept cash, check and money order or we can take your credit/debit card in our office. No fees apply for this service.

**On Line Billing** – Pay your bill on line at [www.clayunionelectric.coop](http://www.clayunionelectric.coop) No fees apply for this service.

Collection Fee .....	\$25
Standard Reconnect Fee .....	\$50
Reconnect Fee for Non-Payment.....	\$100
After Hours Reconnect Fee.....	\$150
Insufficient Funds Check Fee .....	\$30

**Delinquent Accounts (gross rate)**  
10 percent on the first \$200 plus 2 percent on the balance.





## LOOKING AHEAD

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

### Wind Energy Association Changes Name, Advocates For All Renewables

**Jacob Boyko**  
jacob.boyko@sdrea.coop

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

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

“The association started out as being very wind oriented, and that’s our legacy,” Fish explained. “But we also have somewhat migrated to having an energy portfolio where wind coexists

with coal, natural gas and solar, and that was the driver behind changing our name.”

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

The association began with the

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

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

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





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

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

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

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

“I think everyone knew we had a great wind resource, but the real issue was having additional transmission to get the power out,” Fish said. “Could we build

the towers? Yes. Could we get the power to market? That was the challenge.”

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

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

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

“It was a very unique and successful

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

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

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

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



The Crow Lake Wind Project near White Lake, S.D., is the largest wind project owned solely by a cooperative in the United States. The \$363 million wind project went into operation in 2011.

*Photo submitted by East River Electric*



# RENEWABLE ENERGY

## Purchasing Credits Means Renewable Energy Anywhere

**Jacob Boyko**

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

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

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

"A REC is a renewable attribute of a megawatt hour of electricity," explained

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

Basin Electric Power Cooperative – the generation and transmission cooperative that sells electricity to South Dakota's rural electric cooperatives – reported about 21% of its energy sales in 2023 was renewable energy. Since it's impossible to pinpoint the exact generation origin of each individual electron moving along a distribution line and entering a home or business, there's no way to tell what

is actually being powered by renewable energy and what isn't.

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

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

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



could we not get the renewable energy credit program?”

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

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

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

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

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

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

States like Minnesota with renewable energy standards require utilities to retire their RECs to meet the energy standards, or buy

credits on the market to reach the mandated renewable energy percentage of their energy mix.

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

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

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



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



## REGISTER TO WIN!

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

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

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



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

Photo courtesy of South Dakota Snow Queen Festival

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

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

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

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

**UNTIL DEC. 31**  
**Garden Glow at McCrory Gardens**  
5-9 p.m.  
Brookings, SD

**UNTIL DEC. 31**  
**Hall of Trees**  
12-4 p.m. Mon.-Sat.  
The Mead Museum  
Yankton, SD

**DEC. 31**  
**American Legion Post 15 Save the Last Dance 2024**  
8 p.m.-12:30 a.m.  
El Riad Shrine  
Sioux Falls, SD  
605-336-3470

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

**JAN. 5, FEB. 2**  
**American Legion Post 15 Pancake Breakfast**  
8:30 a.m.-12 p.m.  
1600 W. Russel St.  
Sioux Falls, SD  
605-336-3470

**JAN. 7-9**  
**Dakota Farm Show**  
Tue. & Wed. 9 a.m.-5 p.m.  
Thurs. 9 a.m.-3 p.m.  
USD DakotaDome  
Vermillion, SD

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

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

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

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

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

**FEB. 14-17**  
**11th Annual Frost Fest**  
9 a.m.-3 p.m.  
Brookings, SD  
605-692-7444

**FEB. 22**  
**Bellator Titans Charter Casino Night Fundraiser**  
6-11 p.m.  
316 2nd St.  
Aberdeen, SD

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