

# COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS



## River Power Renewed

**Fort Randall Renovations**  
Pages 8-9

**Pick, Sloan & the Missouri**  
Pages 12-13

The Fort Randall Dam is retrofitted  
with new generating units.  
Photo by U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

www.touchstone.com

# Looking Ahead: Strategic Planning Underway



**Robert Raker**  
CEO/GM

As we move into the spring season, your Board of Directors is preparing for a strategic planning session that will set the direction for West River Electric over the next three to five years.

That might sound like an internal process, but it has a direct impact on you. The decisions made during this planning effort shape the reliability of your power, the stability of your rates, and how prepared we are for the challenges ahead.

We know these days trust does not come automatically. It is earned through consistent performance, clear communication, and making decisions that hold up over time. That is exactly what this process is designed to do.

Shifting gears to our work plan, one of the realities we are facing right now is how dry conditions have become across our region. As we head into summer, wildfire risk is higher than any of us would like. That is not something we can ignore, and it is influencing how we plan and operate our system. 1117700

You will see that reflected in the work we are doing, one area being vegetation management. There is a separate article in this issue that goes into more detail, but the reason behind that work is simple. Keeping lines clear helps reduce outages and lowers wildfire risk. It is not always popular when crews are in your area trimming trees, but it is one of the most effective ways we can protect reliability and safety for everyone.

We are also continuing to invest in infrastructure and evaluate larger projects that will position the cooperative for the future. At the same time, we are seeing growth across our service

territory. New homes, businesses, and energy demands bring opportunity, but they also require discipline. Not every project is the right fit, and part of protecting our members is making sure we are backing the right ones for the long term.

While much of our work happens behind the scenes, we also want to stay connected to the communities we serve. That is why we are launching a member photo contest for an upcoming cooperative calendar. This is a chance to showcase the people, landscapes, and communities that make our service territory unique. Winning photos will be featured in the calendar, and there will be prizes for selected entries. We encourage you to participate and share your perspective. To learn more, read the article later on in the magazine.

As work picks up this spring and summer, you will see more crews in the field. Please stay alert around work zones and give them the space they need to operate safely. We also encourage members to take simple steps around their own property during dry conditions to reduce fire risk.

At the end of the day, this cooperative exists for one reason: To serve our members' best interest. This strategic planning effort is about making sure we are doing that well not just today, but for years to come. You should expect reliable service, thoughtful decisions, and fewer surprises from us.

Thank you for the trust you place in West River Electric. We know it has to be earned, and we take that responsibility seriously.

*Robert Raker*  
CEO & General Manager



## Save the Date

AG APPRECIATION AT THE CENTRAL STATES FAIR

August 24, 2026

5pm - 6:45pm

Monument Health Community Stage



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DEADLINE TO APPLY:  
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- Learn about cooperative principles

## COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS

### WEST RIVER ELECTRIC

(USPS No. 675-840)

#### Our Mission:

To serve our members' best interest.

#### Our Vision:

We will be a high performing co-op.

#### Our Values:

1. Safety
2. Accountability
3. Integrity
4. Innovation
5. Commitment to Community

This institution is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

**Board President:** Andy Moon

#### Board of Directors

Stan Anders – Vice President  
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 Chuck Sloan – Treasurer  
 Taran Eisenbraun  
 Peter Blake  
 Jason Habrock  
 Steven Edoff  
 Sue Peters

**CEO and General Manager:**

Robert Raker –  
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Other correspondence to: West River Electric Cooperative Connections, 3250 E Hwy 44, Rapid City, SD 57703; telephone (605)393-1500, Exts. 6564, 6531 or 6522; fax (605)393- 0275; e-mail [amanda.haugen@westriver.coop](mailto:amanda.haugen@westriver.coop).

## NATIONAL SAFETY MONTH: PLUG INTO WHAT MATTERS

Safety is a word that shows up in mission statements, meetings and job sites across every industry. At its best, it reflects preparation, awareness and responsibility.

That's where the difference shows.

Electricity doesn't leave room for shortcuts. It demands attention, consistency and respect every day. For your local cooperative, that responsibility is built into the work.

The job goes beyond delivering power. It protects the people who build and maintain the system and the communities who rely on it. Reliable and affordable electricity matters, and so does making sure every crew member goes home at the end of the day.

That outcome takes focus, repetition and a culture where doing things right matters more than doing them fast.

### Built on the Right Habits

Linework is demanding and, at times, dangerous. It's also highly structured. Crews follow national standards designed for utility work. Protective equipment isn't optional. Procedures aren't suggestions.

Before a job begins, it's planned. Crews walk through the work, identify risks and make sure everyone is aligned. Communication stays constant.

What happens after the job matters just as much. Near-misses are tracked, reviewed and discussed to understand what happened and prevent it from happening again. Over time, those lessons build a stronger, more prepared workforce.

Everyone is expected to look out for each other. If something doesn't look right, it gets said. That accountability turns policies into habits.

Contractors working alongside cooperative crews are held to those same expectations.

### Extending Beyond the Jobsite

The work doesn't stop at the edge of a right-of-way. Because crews live in the communities they serve, that responsibility carries beyond the job.

Your local cooperative shares electrical safety information through schools, events and outreach. It's simple advice that helps prevent accidents.

June is National Safety Month. Most electrical injuries are preventable, and small decisions matter.

Leave electrical work to qualified professionals. Don't overload outlets. Stay clear of downed power lines and report them. If something looks off, whether it's a damaged transformer or an open substation, say something.

### Take the Extra Moment

Electricity is easy to take for granted. But the systems behind it, and the people maintaining them, depend on careful decisions.

When a task involves electricity, take a moment. Look twice. Think it through.

That pause can make all the difference.



### "Be safe, lineman!"

#### Renn Ronning, age 8

Renn urges the line crew to stay safe on the job. Thank you for sharing your picture, Renn! Renn's parents are Justin and Katrina Ronning from Elk Point, 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.

# Easy & Delicious FAMILY MEALS

## TACO SOUP

### Ingredients:

- 1 lb. hamburger, cooked and drained
- 1 28 oz. can red or kidney beans
- 1 28 oz. can petite diced tomatoes
- 1 14 oz. can corn
- 1 pkg. taco seasoning

### Method

Put all ingredients into bean pot. Microwave for 20 minutes. Serve with shredded cheese and corn chips. Do not drain liquids.

**Marla Gilbert**  
Southeastern Electric

## QUICK PORK CHOP DINNER

### Ingredients:

- 4 pork chops
- 2 tps. prepared mustard
- 2 tbsps. flour
- 1/2 tsp. salt or Mrs. Dash
- Dash of pepper
- 2 tbsps. fat or oil
- 1 10 oz. can of chicken rice soup or chicken broth
- 1/2 cup water
- Add onion, potatoes, carrots, garlic powder to taste

### Method

Spread mustard over pork chops and sprinkle with flour, salt and pepper. Brown thoroughly in fat or oil in pressure cooker. Add chicken soup and water. Add vegetables and cover. Set control at 10 and cook 12 minutes or 35 minutes if you add vegetables. Cool pan for 5 minutes, then reduce pressure.

**Ruth Konechne**  
Central Electric

## CARAMELIZED HAM & SWISS SLIDERS

### Ingredients:

- 12 Hawaiian dinner rolls, split
- 1/4 cup horseradish sauce, optional
- 12 slices deli ham (or 24 if it's thinly sliced)
- 6 slices Swiss cheese, cut in fourths (so you have 24 squares of cheese)

### Sauce

- 1/2 cup butter
- 1/4 tsp. onion powder
- 2 tbsps. brown sugar
- 1 tbsp. Dijon mustard
- 2 tps. poppy seeds
- 1-1/2 tps. Worcestershire sauce
- 1/4 tsp. garlic powder

### Method

Spray a 9x9 or 9x13 glass dish with non-stick cooking spray. Set aside. Preheat oven to 325°. Spread roll bottoms with horseradish sauce (if using). Fold up pieces of ham to fit the rolls and place them on the bottom halves of the roll. Next, place 2 squares of cheese, replace roll tops and place in a single layer in the prepared pan.

In a small skillet, heat butter over medium-high heat. Stir in remaining ingredients. Pour over rolls. Cover with foil and bake covered for 20 minutes. Remove foil and bake 5 more minutes. \*These can also be made ahead of time. Just cover with foil and refrigerate for several hours or overnight. Bake as instructed.

**Jerald and Virginia Jensen**  
Sioux Valley Energy

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 2026. All entries must include your name, mailing address, phone number and cooperative name.

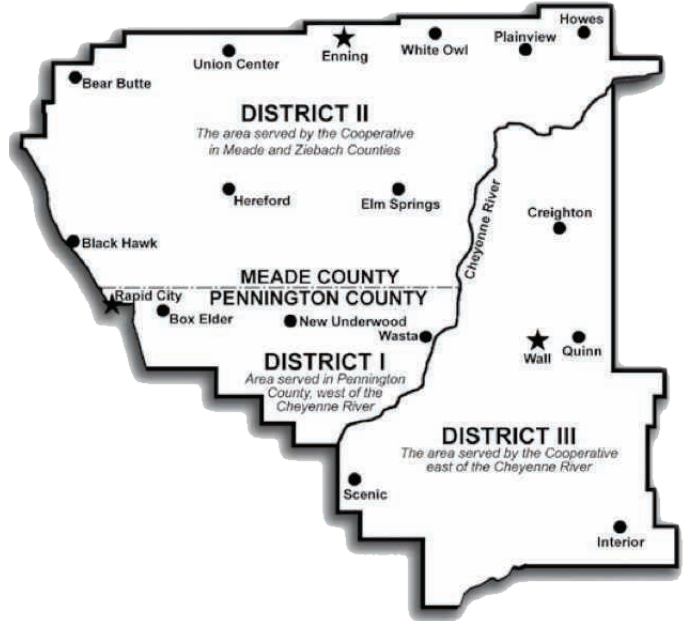
Picture by Shutterstock.

# Directors Seek Re-Election to the Board

At the April 2026 West River Electric Board of Directors meeting, three incumbent directors, Peter Blake of Box Elder for District 1, Chuck Sloan of Piedmont for District 2, and Taran Eisenbraun of Wall for District 3 have announced their intent to seek re-election to the Board of Directors of West River Electric Association. 12180200

This means Peter Blake of Box Elder for District 1, Chuck Sloan of Piedmont for District 2, and Taran Eisenbraun of Wall for District 3 will be asking for your vote as they seek re-election at the Oct. 10, 2026, Annual Meeting of the membership of West River Electric.

Per Article V Section 4 of the bylaws of West River Electric a member may seek election to the Board of Directors of West River Electric by taking out a petition and have it signed by at least 15 members at least 120 days but not less than 60 days prior to the annual meeting. Signatures of members must have their name on the monthly billing statement and will be verified by 5pm on the deadline date. It is encouraged to have more than 15 signatures in the event one is not valid.



The deadline for petitions is August 11, 2026, by 5pm. No nominations are taken from the floor at the annual meeting. Candidates must be members of the cooperative and reside in the district they are seeking election from, be in good standing with the cooperative and not be employed or financially interested in a competing enterprise or major supplier to the cooperative.



Peter Blake - District 1



Chuck Sloan - District 2



Taran Eisenbraun - District 3

# Through Your Lens: Launching Member Photo Calendar



**Amanda Haugen**  
Communications  
Specialist

West River Electric is excited to introduce a new way to celebrate the beauty, people, and lifestyle that makes our region unique. Beginning in 2027, the cooperative will produce an annual calendar featuring photographs submitted by the members we proudly serve.

This project is designed to showcase the landscapes, wildlife, and everyday moments that define life in western South Dakota.

From the Badlands and snow-covered hills to community events and quiet rural scenes, members are encouraged to share images that reflect all four seasons and the character of our area. 10988100

Each year, 13 photos will be selected from submissions—one for each month and one for the calendar cover. Members whose photos are chosen for the month will receive a \$20 bill credit, while the members’ photo of the cover image will receive a \$50 bill credit. Photographers will also receive recognition, with their names included wherever the images are featured, including the calendar, West River Electric’s social media pages, and the Cooperative Connections magazine.

### Submit Photos Using This QR Code!



Plain Jane Photo and Video

Calendars will be available for members to pick up at West River Electric offices beginning in October.

### How to Participate

Members can submit photos online between June 1, 2026 and August 31, 2026. To be eligible, participants must be active co-op members, and each household may submit up to three photos for consideration.

To ensure the highest print quality, submitted photos should meet the following guidelines:

- High resolution (300 ppi or higher)
- Horizontal orientation
- File format: JPG, PNG, or TIFF

Because the calendar is designed in a horizontal layout, vertical images cannot be accepted. Similarly, panoramic photos should be cropped to fit a standard horizontal composition before submission. 11352400

Members are also encouraged to upload original images directly from their device rather than from social media. Platforms like Facebook, compress photos, which reduces image quality and may make them unsuitable for print.

The submission link will open on June 1, 2026. West River Electric looks forward to seeing the creativity and perspective of its members come to life through this project- one photo at a time. 4258400

Please scan the QR code or visit our website for more information and to upload photos when the link opens. Should you have any questions, please contact Amanda at 605-393-1500.



The rotor is lifted out of the generator unit using two cranes. This component of the generator will be reused once other parts are replaced.  
Photo Submitted by USACE

# RENEWING RIVER POWER

## Fort Randall Dam Undergoes Multiyear Renovation

Jacob Boyko

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

A 72-year old hydropower dam in southeast South Dakota is the first of the state's four mainstream Missouri River dams to undergo a substantial retrofit to improve the facility's efficiency and reliability.

Fort Randall Dam, which began operating in 1954, was built near Pickstown, South Dakota, through the Pick-Sloan Missouri Basin Program. The program was included in the Flood Control Act of 1944 by Congress to dam the Missouri River at multiple points to improve the region's water management, irrigation, flood control and navigation while also generating much-needed hydropower. (See Pages 12-13 for more on how the program came to be.) A marvel at the time of its construction, the two-mile-long rolled-earth dam holds back 5.4 million acre-feet of water in Lake Francis Case. The dam's eight turbine generators have a maximum generating capacity of 320 megawatts – enough electricity to power about 245,000 homes.

Now, more than seven decades later, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is looking to boost those numbers and revitalize the aging dam with state-of-the-art, 21st-century technology to ensure the facility keeps up with the region's modern energy demands.

Overseeing the multi-year project is Maintenance and Operations Manager Michael Schenkel, who's spent the last 14 years at the Fort Randall Project overseeing the facility's maintenance, operation and planning. Schenkel says while the dam's eight original 72-year-old generators and turbines have served reliably, a renewal will improve the project's operation.

"Like many aging public assets, it's time for reinvestment," Schenkel said. "The turbine-generator units were installed in the

1950s and are beyond their expected service life. We're replacing them to ensure long-term energy and infrastructure resilience."

He pointed out that the USACE got its money's worth with the original generators, saying how rare it is for a generator to last over 70 years without needing a rewind – referring to the process of replacing the stators, or the copper windings and insulation that help convert the turbine's rotation into electricity. Over time, heat, vibration and age can weaken that insulation and increase the risk of failure. Schenkel noted that Fort Randall is the only Missouri River dam in South Dakota that has retained its original stators up to this point.

The scale of the units pose a significant challenge – each unit is 40 feet tall and weighs more than 400 tons, necessitating piece-by-piece transport, assembly and installation. Voith Hydro North America, the company awarded the contract to manufacture and install the new turbine runners and generator stators, began the decommissioning and replacement of the first generator in July of 2025. USACE expects that generator to be offline until November 2026 after installation is complete and engineers can inspect it for any issues. Once the first unit is back online and clears inspection, engineers will give the contractor the green light to proceed. To keep up with hydropower demand and allow adequate flow downstream, USACE's goal is to keep six units operating and two units offline for renovation at a time until the project is wrapped up in 2031.

Schenkel explained how the upgrade solves two problems at once: it replaces aging components in the dam and provides the opportunity to install new, highly efficient generators and turbines to produce more power with the same amount of water.

Fort Randall's original turbines generate hydropower most efficiently with 103 feet of head – the vertical distance between the water levels above and below the dam, determining the pressure at which water moves through the turbine. At 103 feet of head, each generator will produce about 31 megawatts of electricity.

However, due to the region's fluctuating power demands, water

management and other factors, operating in the efficient middle ground isn't always ideal. Schenkel says USACE often operates Fort Randall at 40 megawatts and 119 feet of head – about 4% below peak efficiency.

To solve this problem of lost efficiency, the new turbines being installed are highly-efficient, rated for 52 megawatts at 119 feet of head. This change raises the facility's total generating capacity from 320 megawatts to about 400 megawatts – enough electricity to power more than 300,000 homes.

"We expect to recover roughly 10% more energy output from the same water volume," Schenkel said. "Essentially free power beyond the capital investment once the upgrade is complete."

As part of the renovation, USACE also completed as-needed updates to the switch yard, which is the infrastructure that routes power to transmission lines for transport across the region.

Electricity generated at the Fort Randall Dam is managed, transported and sold by the Western Area Power Administration under the U.S. Department of Energy.

As a co-op member, part of your utility's energy mix is hydropower from the Missouri River dams, including Fort Randall, "so this work directly affects co-op members," Schenkel added.

Looking at the dam's age and efficiency profile – and also being the only dam in South Dakota possessing its original stator windings – Schenkel said Fort Randall was the clear priority. The USACE has begun planning a similar renovation project for the Oahe Dam.

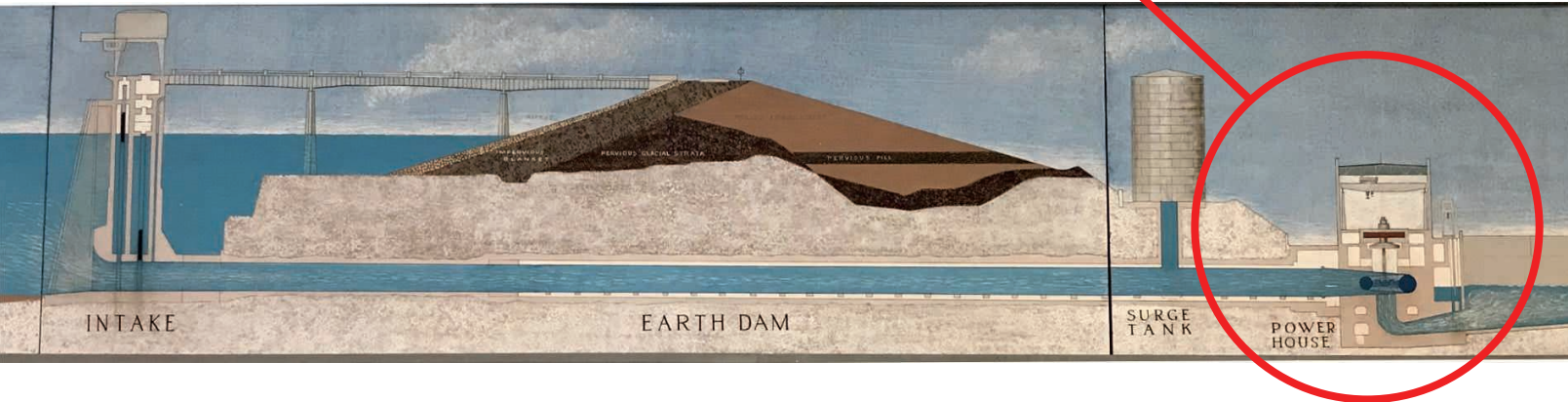
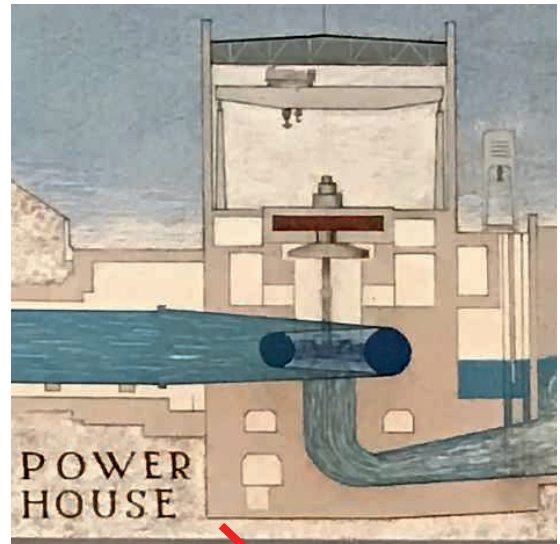
Work at the Fort Randall Project is scheduled to wrap up in 2031 once all eight generating units are replaced.



Above: The Fort Randall Dam is equipped with eight turbines. Unit 6 turbine is shown being removed for the first time since it went online in 1955.

Below & Right: A visual of Fort Randall Dam. Water flows into the powerhouse via the intake tunnel. As the water passes through, it spins the turbine. The rotor, connected to the turbine, spins inside the stator. As the rotor spins inside the stator, its magnetic field passes through copper windings and produces electricity.

Photos Submitted by USACE



# Is Your Home Wasting Energy?



**Jared Stalley**  
Marketing Rep

Warmer weather typically results in higher energy bills, and summer is starting to come in full swing. We'd like to remind you about a service that can help boost your homes efficiency and possibly save you money.

Many homes, even new ones, lose energy through air leaks, poor insulation, or inefficient equipment. An energy audit provides a detailed look at how your home uses and loses energy. Understanding how your home uses energy can help determine the best ways to adjust energy consumption, improve problem areas, increase home comfort and ultimately keep more money in your wallet. You could say this is a good kind of audit. 2937700

### What to expect during an audit:

West River Electric currently offers two different levels of residential energy audits. The first is a free walk-through inspection. One of our trained energy advisors will conduct a walk-through of your home identifying visible problem areas. They look as specific areas such as doors, windows and insulation levels as well as

appliances and your heating/cooling system.

The second audit West River Electric offers is a more in-depth assessment offered for \$200.00. This audit includes a full walk-through using different energy efficiency tools, a blower door test to measure how airtight your home is and a detailed written report highlighting specific findings and recommendations.

### The power to save is in your hands:

Once either audit is performed and completed, you will receive recommendations on how to improve your home's energy efficiency. Whether it be sealing gaps, replacing light bulbs, appliance suggestions or thermostat adjustments, West River Electric's trained energy advisors are here to help you save. Energy efficiency isn't about just cutting costs; it's about creating a more comfortable home and helping you to understand how to use electricity safely and efficiently. To learn more or to schedule your audit, give us a call at 605-393-1500.

## Energy Efficiency: The Good Kind of Audit

Schedule your energy audit today.

 [info@westriver.coop](mailto:info@westriver.coop)

 605-393-1500



# Why Vegetation Management Matters



**Brendan Nelson**  
Manager of  
Operations

There's something timeless about trees. They ground us. They remind us of where we've been, and they stretch toward what's ahead. Here in our community, we take pride in the natural beauty that surrounds us—the shade on a summer afternoon, the colors that mark the changing seasons, the quiet strength of something that grows slowly but endures.

At the same time, we share another responsibility—one that's just as essential to our daily lives. The responsibility to

keep the lights on, to power our homes and businesses, to make sure that when you flip a switch, the energy you depend on is there.

That's why West River Electric works every day to strike a careful balance between preserving the beauty we cherish and delivering the reliable electricity you expect.

One of the most important ways we do that is through regular tree trimming.

Now, it may not always be obvious, but keeping lines clear of overgrown vegetation plays a major role in preventing power outages. We've all seen what can happen when severe weather rolls in—strong winds, heavy ice or sudden storms can bring down branches and, with them, power lines and poles. In fact, nearly half of all power outages can be traced back to trees and vegetation coming into contact with electrical infrastructure.

That's why you may notice crews, from West River Electric or our trusted contractors, working in neighborhoods throughout the year. Our crews are highly trained and certified, following the latest industry standards to ensure the job is done safely and effectively. Their work might seem routine, but it's anything but—it's a proactive step that helps prevent problems before they start.

And it's not just good practice—it's required. Electric utilities across the country are obligated to manage vegetation near power lines. Scheduled trimming helps remove dead or weakened limbs and keeps fast-growing trees from becoming hazards. It's about staying one step ahead, especially as we prepare for the increasing frequency and intensity of severe weather events.

We're also using new tools and technologies to do this work smarter. Through drone inspections, for example, we can monitor power lines and surrounding vegetation more efficiently, reducing costs while improving accuracy. These small but powerful tools allow us to identify potential risks early and respond quickly.

But beyond reliability and efficiency, there's another reason this work matters: safety.



Electricity is a powerful force, and when trees grow too close to power lines, that power can become dangerous. Branches that touch lines—or even come close—can carry electrical current. Children climbing trees in their own yards may not realize the risk. And during storms, fallen trees can create hazardous conditions not only for families but also for our lineworkers working to restore service.

There's also a financial reality we can't ignore. Preventative maintenance—like tree trimming—is far more cost-effective than repairing widespread damage after an outage. Left unchecked, overgrown vegetation can lead to more frequent disruptions and higher costs for everyone. A thoughtful, strategic vegetation management program helps keep those costs down for our members.

You can help, too. When planting new trees, consider their mature height and distance from nearby power lines. Trees that grow up to 40 feet should be planted at least 25 feet away from overhead lines. Larger trees—those that exceed 40 feet—should be planted at least 50 feet away. If you're landscaping near pad-mounted transformers, keep shrubs at least 10 feet from the front and 4 feet from the sides to allow safe access.

If your neighborhood has underground lines, don't forget to call 811 before digging. It's a simple step that can prevent serious accidents.

At the end of the day, we all want the same thing: a community that's safe, resilient and beautiful. At West River Electric, we're proud to be part of that effort. Our roots run deep here, just like the trees we work to care for.

# THE PICK-SLOAN PLAN

## Taming North America's Longest Waterway

Jacob Boyko

jacob.boyok@sdrea.coop

In the 1930s, both the upper Missouri River and its home in rural America looked notably different than they do today.

That was a period in which electricity was still a luxury enjoyed by townsfolk lucky enough to have a municipal or investor-owned utility serving the community. As rural neighbors founded electric cooperatives to serve their homes, the once-primitive prairie quickly began to light up. And with that step into the modern age came the growing need for more electricity.

At this same time, the 2,300-mile-long Missouri River passing through seven states in the region was proving to be an untamable, destructive force for the communities and agriculture producers on its banks.

The floods would wreak havoc on riverside cities like Omaha, Kansas City, St. Louis, and Mississippi River communities like Memphis and New Orleans during swells, disrupting economic activity and trade. During low-flow years and toward the end of summer, the low water levels made navigation extremely difficult for barge traffic.

These problems had been ongoing. All the way back in 1933, President Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal constructed the Fort Peck Dam near Glasgow, Mont. There, the nearly 4-mile-



long and 250-foot high rolled-earth dam created Fort Peck Lake, stretching 134 miles across eastern Montana and generating up to 185 MW of electricity. Even so, the federal government understood more work was needed to fully rein in the power of the Missouri.

### Competing Visions: Pick vs. Sloan

Lewis A. Pick, an officer with the US Army Corps of Engineers, and William G. Sloan, an official with the Bureau of Reclamation, each had a vision for the future of the Missouri River Basin.

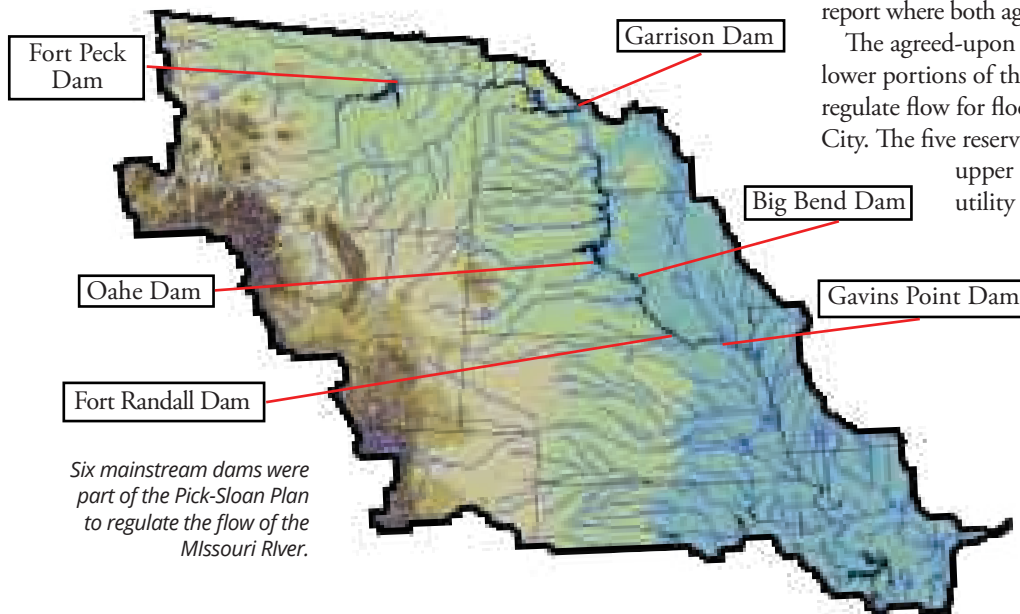
Pick envisioned large dams on the main channel of the Missouri River with a focus on flood control and navigation downstream in the lower Missouri River basin. His plan included five main-channel dams with levees from Sioux City, Iowa, to the river's confluence with the Mississippi River in St. Louis, Missouri.

Sloan, on the other hand, wanted the projects to benefit the upper Missouri River basin, with a focus on water storage for irrigation and agricultural development. Sloan recommended dozens of smaller dams with hydro-electric power plants.

The battle between the USACE and DOR was contentious, but it became clear that no side could garner enough support on its own to pass a project with price tags of about \$1 billion each.

Finally, in 1944, USACE and DOR released a joint engineering report where both agencies' goals for the basin were represented.

The agreed-upon plan would benefit both the upper and lower portions of the basin, with five hydro-power dams to regulate flow for flood control and navigation past Sioux City. The five reservoirs would store water for uses in the upper basin, including irrigation, recreation, utility systems and hydropower generation.



Oahe Dam during construction in 1958.  
Photo Courtesy of S.D. State Historical Society

## Fort Randall Dam (1946-1954)

**Location:** Pickstown, S.D.

**Length:** 10,700 feet long – over 2 miles!

**Height:** 165 feet at highest point

**Generating Capacity:** 8 hydroelectric generating unites producing up to 320 MW. (See pp. 8-9)

Completed in the 1950s, Fort Randall was the first of South Dakota's mainstream Missouri River dams to come online, generating hydropower for the region and changing the river from a threat into a resource. The Fort Randall Dam creates Lake Francis Case, named for South Dakota's US Senator and Pick-Sloan advocate Francis Higbee Case. The reservoir can store about 5.3 million acre-feet of water (enough water to flood 5.3 million acres at a depth of 1 foot).

## Garrison Dam (1947-1955)

**Location:** Riverdale, N.D.

**Length:** 11,300 feet long – over 2 miles!

**Height:** 210 feet at highest point

**Generating Capacity:** 5 hydroelectric generating unites producing up to 583 MW.

Garrison Dam creates lake Sakakawea, which stretches across western and central North Dakota. The reservoir is the largest on the Missouri River, holding more than 23.5 million acre-feet of water. The dam is named after the nearby town, Garrison. Controversially, the lake flooded the homes of the Mandan, Hidatsa and Arikara tribal nations.

## Oahe Dam (1948-1963)

**Location:** Pierre/Fort Pierre, S.D.

**Length:** 9,360 feet long – about 1.8 miles!

**Height:** 245 feet at highest point

**Generating Capacity:** 7 hydroelectric generating units producing up to 786 MW.

Oahe Dam sits north of Pierre and Fort Pierre, forming Lake Oahe. The reservoir can hold about 23 million acre-feet of water. Oahe Dam has the highest generation capacity, producing enough electricity to power about 600,000 homes.

The dam and lake's name came from the Oahe Indian Mission established more than 70 years before. The mission's site, as well as other communities and tribal lands, were submerged beneath the reservoir.

## Gavin's Point Dam (1952-1957)

**Location:** Yankton, S.D.

**Length:** 8,700 feet long – about 1.6 miles.

**Height:** 74 feet at highest point

**Generating Capacity:** 3 hydroelectric generating unites producing up to 132 MW.

The farthest downriver dam on the Missouri, Gavin's Point is a dam essential for controlling the water levels for downstream barge traffic starting at Sioux City on the Missouri River and all the way down to New Orleans on the Mississippi River. The dam creates Lewis and Clark Lake on the South Dakota-Nebraska border, with a storage capacity of 492,000 acre-feet of water.

## Big Bend Dam (1959-1966)

**Location:** Fort Thompson, S.D.

**Length:** 10,570 feet long – about 2 miles.

**Height:** 95 feet at highest point

**Generating Capacity:** 8 hydroelectric generating unites producing up to 439 MW.

The final mainstream Pick-Sloan dam to be completed on the Missouri River, Big Bend Dam creates Lake Sharpe, holding about 1.7 million acre-feet of water.

## The Good and the Bad

A lot of good came from the Pick-Sloan Plan: affordable hydropower for communities throughout the region and water storage to mitigate drought and reduce flooding.

However, a project of such magnitude will also naturally have downsides. University of South Dakota Professor David Swanson says the disruption of

natural patterns has affected ecology for riverside habitats.

Cottonwood seedlings need wet, sandy soil to germinate – without spring floods, it's hard for new trees to establish. Today, there are fewer young cottonwoods growing.

In addition, birds like the least tern that nest on sand bars struggle to find suitable ground, affecting populations.

The reservoirs also flooded more than 1 million acres of land along the Missouri River, some held by private landowners and tribes, and displaced about 6,000 people from land where their families had lived for generations.

In South Dakota, several former communities lay beneath Lake Oahe, including parts of Polluck and Forest City.

Between Chamberlain and Oacoma, American Island was once a statewide destination for boy scouts, with its miles of forest, camp with cabins and bathhouse, racetrack. Today, it sits below dozens of feet of water in Lake Francis Case.



American Island's locally-famous animal statues were moved before Lake Francis Case flooded the island. Photo Courtesy of the Cozard Memorial Library



Tribal leader George Gillette wipes tears as land is seized for the Garrison Dam. Photo Courtesy of National Archives

# 2026 Scholarship Recipients



**Cashley King**  
\$1,250 Basin Electric  
Power Cooperative Essay



**Kingston Wulf**  
\$1,250 Basin Electric  
Power Cooperative Essay



**Cameron Ritter**  
\$1,000 PowerUp Youth  
Leadership



**Brand Hilgenkamp**  
\$750 PowerUp Youth  
Leadership



**Cayne Merrill**  
\$750 PowerUp Youth  
Leadership



**Kaylee Erickson**  
\$500 PowerUp Youth  
Leadership



**Cassie Chambliss**  
\$500 West River  
Electric Essay



**Karlie Kammerer**  
\$500 West River  
Electric Essay



**Fallon Ostenson**  
\$500 West River  
Electric Essay



**Jaiden Fauske**  
\$500 West River  
Electric Essay



**Trevor Schulz**  
\$500 West River  
Electric Essay



**Soraya Luschas**  
\$500 West River  
Electric Annual Meeting



**Talon Anderson**  
\$500 West River  
Electric Annual Meeting



**Morgan Miller**  
\$500 West River  
Electric Annual Meeting



**Louis Rancour**  
\$500 West River  
Electric Annual Meeting



**Brooke Howell**  
\$500 West River  
Electric Annual Meeting



**Austan Kjerstad**  
\$500 West River  
Electric Annual Meeting



**Makenzi Hill**  
\$500 West River Electric  
Member Appreciation  
Day



**Andrew Divis**  
\$500 West River Electric  
Member Appreciation  
Day



**Gage Carlson**  
\$500 West River Electric  
Member Appreciation  
Day



**Payton Davis**  
\$500 West River Electric  
Member Appreciation  
Day



**Hayden James**  
\$500 West River Electric  
Member Appreciation  
Day



**Grace Ragains**  
\$500 West River Electric  
Member Appreciation  
Day



People • Power • Purpose



South Dakota Rural Electric  
**YOUTH EXCURSION**  
 July 20-22, 2026

**Application Form**

To apply for 2026 Youth Excursion, complete the form below and return it to West River Electric. The deadline to apply is June 15, 2026. If you have any questions, please call 605-393-1500.

2026 Youth Excursion Application

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address: \_\_\_\_\_ City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Phone#: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_  
 School: \_\_\_\_\_ 2026-2027 Class/Year: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Gender: \_\_\_\_\_ T-shirt Size: \_\_\_\_\_

Return this information by June 15, 2026 to:  
 West River Electric  
 Attn: Amanda Haugen  
 3250 E Hwy 44  
 Rapid City, SD 57703

Scan for more information!



**LOCATE YOUR ACCOUNT NUMBER**

There are five (5) account numbers placed randomly throughout the publication. If you locate your account number anywhere in this issue of the Cooperative Connections, you will be credited \$10.00, towards your next bill. You must notify our office by the 10th of the following month to receive your credit.

**WEST RIVER ELECTRIC OFFICE HOURS**

**RAPID CITY OFFICE**

3250 E Hwy 44  
 Rapid City, SD 57703  
 Monday – Friday: 7 a.m. – 5 p.m.  
 605-393-1500  
 Info@westriver.coop

**WALL OFFICE**

1200 W 4th Ave  
 PO Box 412  
 Wall, SD 57790  
 Monday – Friday: 7 a.m. – 5 p.m.  
 605-279-2135  
 Info@westriver.coop

\*This email is not monitored on nights or weekends and it is not for reporting outages. To report an outage please follow the instructions below.

**OUTAGE OR EMERGENCY?**

Our calls are answered 24/7. In the event on an outage, please report it via the SmartHub app, texting OUT to 855-939-3719, or by calling our office at 605-279-2135 or 605-393-1500.



**JUNE 19-20**  
**77th Annual Tabor**  
**Czech Days**  
 Food, Dancing, Parade  
 Tabor, SD  
[taborczechdays.com](http://taborczechdays.com)

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

**JUNE 4-6**  
**Black Hills Quilt Show**  
 Thurs. 5-8 p.m.  
 Fri. 9 a.m.-5 p.m.  
 Sat. 9 a.m.-4 p.m.  
 Rushmore Hall  
 at the Monument  
 Rapid City, SD

**JUNE 5**  
**Northern Bull Riding Tour**  
 Prairie Village  
 Madison, SD

**JUNE 6**  
**Bulls 'n' Pulls**  
**Antique Tractor Pull**  
 Prairie Village  
 Madison, SD

**JUNE 6**  
**Sportsman's Bash**  
 Social: 3:30 p.m.  
 Dinner: 6 p.m.  
 Auction: 6:45 p.m.  
 Weston Cty. Senior Center  
 627 Pine St.  
 Newcastle, WY

**JUNE 12-14**  
**South Shore 125th**  
**Anniversary Celebration**  
 South Shore, SD  
 605-756-4130  
[www.southshore-sd.com](http://www.southshore-sd.com)

**JUNE 13**  
**Journey Into Uncovering**  
**Historic Pickstown**  
 9 a.m.-5 p.m.  
 Pickstown, SD  
 605-487-7299

**JUNE 13**  
**SGT Colton Levi Derr Foundation**  
**Charity Golf Tournament**  
 7:30 a.m. registration  
 8:30 a.m. start  
 Elks Golf Course  
 Rapid City, SD  
[www.sergeantderrfoundation.org](http://www.sergeantderrfoundation.org)

**JUNE 13**  
**Luce Pioneer Day**  
 10 a.m.-3 p.m.  
 Rope & Candle Making, Butter  
 Churning, Dutch Oven Cooking  
 Lake Herman State Park  
 Madison, SD  
 605-880-5077

**JUNE 19-20**  
**Estelline Rodeo Days**  
 5:30 p.m. Mutton Bustin'  
 6 p.m. Rodeo (Both Days)  
 Estelline, SD  
[www.estellinerodeo.com](http://www.estellinerodeo.com)

**JUNE 20**  
**Grace's Gas Guzzlers**  
 Car Show & Vendor Fair  
 10 a.m.-2 p.m.  
 202 Second St. SE  
 Watertown, SD  
 605-237-8005

**JUNE 24-26**  
**Bruce Honey Days**  
 Bruce, SD  
 605-627-5671

**JUNE 24-27**  
**Crystal Springs Rodeo**  
 Clear Lake, SD  
 605-874-2996

**JUNE 26-27**  
**Buckhorn Rodeo**  
 Britton, SD  
 Pickstown, SD  
 605-880-5077

**JULY 2-4**  
**USA 250th Celebration**  
**at Mount Rushmore**  
 Rapid City, SD  
[www.nps.gov](http://www.nps.gov)

**JULY 11**  
**40th Annual Spearfish Canyon**  
**Half Marathon & 5K**  
 Start: 7 a.m., Savoy, SD  
 End: City Park, Spearfish, SD  
 Register: [www.nhcasa.org](http://www.nhcasa.org)

**JULY 25**  
**Evergreen Garden Club**  
**Flower Show**  
 10 a.m.-3 p.m.  
 Hill City Center  
 227 Walnut Ave.  
 Hill City, SD

**JULY 25**  
**Disability Awareness &**  
**Accessibility Committees**  
**Resource Fair (DAAC)**  
 11 a.m.-2 p.m.  
 Minneluzahan Senior Center  
 315 North 4th St.  
 Rapid City, 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.**