

COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS



Jackson Neprud, 4-H archer for Jones County, poses next to his target.

South Dakota 4-H Shooting

Shooters Prepare for
the State Competition
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Black Hills Sanctuary
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Standing with Strength: A Vision for Our Cooperatives Future



Robert Raker
CEO/GM

Members,

As I write this, I am traveling for work and I stopped in front of the Dignity statue near Chamberlain, South Dakota. If you've ever seen it, you know it's a breathtaking sculpture of a Native woman, standing tall with a star-quilt flowing behind her, overlooking the Missouri River. She represents dignity, strength, and perseverance qualities that have long defined the people of South Dakota and, I believe, the spirit of your cooperative.

Analogous to Dignity, West River Electric stands tall in service to you, our member-owners. We are here not just to provide power, but to uphold the values of reliability, integrity, and community. As I take on the role of CEO, I reflect on those values and what they mean for our future.

Facing Challenges with Strength

The Dignity statue stands firm against the elements, and we must do the same in the face of industry challenges. As I mentioned last month,

our wholesale power suppliers, Basin Electric and WAPA, are raising rates in 2025. To address this, we are implementing a Power Cost Adjustment (PCA). West River Electric is also facing pressures from increased localized costs (poles, wire, and transformers), therefore, a \$3.00 increase to the base charge starting in March is necessary to recover those costs.

These decisions are never easy, but they are necessary to ensure we can continue delivering safe and reliable power. We've worked hard to minimize the impact on our members making internal adjustments, cutting costs where possible, yet refusing to compromise on the quality of service you depend on.

Prioritizing Safety for Our Employees and Our Communities

Another core value that must remain unwavering is safety. Whether it's our linemen working in challenging conditions, our office staff working with our members, or the members we serve, safety is at the heart of everything we do.

The Dignity statue is a symbol of protection, offering shelter from the wind while standing as a guardian over the river below. Similarly, we take our responsibility to protect our employees and our members seriously. That means maintaining high safety standards, and ensuring that when storms strike, we are prepared to restore power as quickly and safely as possible. 12219600

We also ask that you, as members, remain mindful of electrical safety at home and on the farm or job site. Whether it's staying clear of downed power lines, calling 811 before you dig, small precautions can prevent serious accidents. Safety is a shared responsibility, and together, we can

protect our cooperative family.

Standing Firm in Our Commitment to You

One of my personal commitments in this role is to listen, learn, and lead with understanding. That is why I have set the goal to job shadowing one employee each month in order to fully grasp the hard work that goes into keeping the lights on. Just like the woman depicted in Dignity, whose quilt represents the interconnectedness of people, I want to ensure that every employee and member feels connected to the larger mission of this cooperative.

West River Electric exists because of you, and your voices matter. Whether it's through our annual meeting, conversations with our staff, or simply stopping by our offices, I encourage you to share your thoughts. Your input shapes the future of this cooperative, and together, we will continue building something strong, lasting, and resilient just like the people of South Dakota.

Moving Forward with Purpose

Finally, the Dignity statue is a reminder of perseverance, heritage, and the power of standing together. That is exactly what gives cooperatives their power. We will face challenges, but we will stand tall. We will adapt, but we will never waver in our values.

On behalf of my family and myself, thank you for allowing me the opportunity to lead this incredible cooperative. I look forward to the journey ahead and to serving you with the dignity and strength that this role demands.

Robert Raker | CEO

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
- Jamie Lewis – Secretary
- Chuck Sloan – Treasurer
- Larry Eisenbraun
- Peter Blake
- Marcia Arneson
- Steven Edoff
- Sue Peters

CEO and General Manager:

Robert Raker – robert.raker@westriver.coop

Editor


Amanda Haugen – amanda.haugen@westriver.coop


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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.

2024

Year in Review



West River Electric Association, Inc.
Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

"Powering You For A Brighter Future"
this institution is an equal opportunity provider and employer

\$1M

in CAPITAL CREDITS returned back to the WREA membership

591

NEWLY Constructed services

85

years old in 2024!
Serving our members best interest since 1939!

134,865

HOURS WORKED by our great group of 60 employees

2


linemen sent to help with Hurricane Helene restoration in South Carolina and Georgia

\$9,200

in OPERATION ROUNDUP funds given to 7 local non-profits

1,608

new membership applications worked



West River Electric Association, Inc.
The Touchstone Energy® Cooperative
"Powering You For A Brighter Future"

Falls Are Preventable

March is Ladder Safety Month. Whether working from a ladder, roof or scaffolding, it's important to plan ahead, assess the risk and use the right equipment. First, determine if working from a height is absolutely necessary or if there is another way to do the task safely.

- Discuss the task with coworkers and determine what safety equipment is needed.
- Make sure you are properly trained on how to use the equipment.
- Scan the work area for potential hazards before starting the job.
- Make sure you have level ground to set up the equipment.
- If working outside, check the weather forecast; never work in inclement weather.
- Use the correct tool for the job, and use it as intended.
- Ensure stepladders have a locking device to hold the front and back open.
- Always keep two hands and one foot, or two feet and one hand on the ladder.
- Place the ladder on a solid surface and never lean it against an unstable surface.
- A straight or extension ladder should be one foot away from the surface it rests on for every four feet of height and extend at least three feet over the top edge.
- Securely fasten straight and extension ladders to an upper support.
- Wear slip-resistant shoes and don't stand higher than the third rung from the top.
- Don't lean or reach while on a ladder, and have someone support the bottom.
- Never use old or damaged equipment; check thoroughly before use.



Fall Hazards at Home

Are you a weekend warrior or do-it-yourselfer? If you take on home improvement or other weekend projects, it's important to prepare yourself for physical exertion, especially if you've been sedentary through the winter months, and take extra precautions to prevent falls.

Risky projects, like installing siding, gutters or roofs, are best left to professionals. Saving money isn't worth risking a debilitating or fatal fall.

At home or at work, many of the same rules apply. When taking on a project, remember the following.

- Practice all of the ladder safety tips mentioned to the left.
- Keep the work area clear of hazards and immediately clean up spills.
- Read all instructions and safety precautions on your equipment.
- Don't wear loose clothing that can get caught in equipment.

Source: National Safety Council



"Don't cut trees near power lines."

Remington Welsh, Age 11

Remington warns readers to not cut trees around power lines. Thank you for your picture, Remington! Remington's parents are Ryan and Rachel Welsh, members of Black Hills Electric Cooperative.

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.

Hearty FAMILY MEALS

EASY CREAMY HAMBURGER PASTA

Ingredients:

1 lb. ground hamburger
1 lb. cooked pasta
5 oz. spinach
1/4 cup butter
2 cups heavy cream
1 tbsp. minced garlic
1 cup grated parmesan cheese

Method

In a large pan, brown hamburger and minced garlic. Remove any excess grease. Turn heat to low and add the butter and heavy cream. Stir and simmer for a few minutes until the butter melts and it starts to boil. Stir in the spinach and cook for about three more minutes. Stir in the parmesan and cooked pasta. Enjoy!

Lyndell Todd
Rapid City, S.D.

MINI BBQ BACON CHEDDAR MEATLOAF

Ingredients:

2 lbs. ground beef
6 oz. chili sauce
4 slices bacon, cooked and crumbled
1 1/2 cups shredded sharp cheddar cheese
1/2 cup panko breadcrumbs
2 large eggs
1 tsp. onion powder
1 tsp. seasoned salt
1 tsp. garlic powder
2 tbsps. Worcestershire sauce
1 tsp. yellow mustard
1/2 cup BBQ sauce

Method

Preheat oven to 425°F. Cook and crumble bacon. In a mixing bowl, mix together all meatloaf ingredients except the BBQ sauce. Divide the mixture into eight round loaves. Press a small depression into the middle of the meatloaves. Brush BBQ sauce on top of the meatloaves. Bake for 25 minutes. Turn on broiler and brown the BBQ sauce for two to five minutes.

Kayla Beaner
Centerville, S.D.

SKILLET CHICKEN POT PIE

Ingredients:

1/4 cup butter
1 cup chopped onion
1/4 cup flour
2 cups chicken stock
1 cup milk
1/2 cup apple cider
1/2 tsp. garlic powder
1/2 tsp. ground cinnamon
1/2 tsp. whole thyme leaves
1/4 tsp. black pepper
2 cups cubed cooked chicken
1 large sweet potato, peeled and cut into 1/2-inch cubes (about 2 cups)
1 cup frozen peas
1 can (7.5 oz.) refrigerated biscuits, (10 biscuits)

Method

Preheat oven to 450°F. Melt butter in large ovenproof nonstick skillet on medium-high heat. Add onion; cook and stir five minutes or until softened. Sprinkle with flour. Stir with whisk until mixture is well blended. Add stock, milk, apple cider, garlic powder, cinnamon, thyme and pepper; whisk until mixture is smooth.

Stir in chicken, sweet potatoes and peas. Bring to boil. Reduce heat to medium; cook and stir 15 minutes or until sweet potatoes are tender.

Place biscuits on top of chicken mixture. Bake 10 minutes or until biscuits are golden brown.

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

UNDERSTANDING YOUR 2025 ELECTRIC RATES WITH



**West River Electric
Association, Inc.**

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

"Powering You For A Brighter Future"



2025 AT A GLANCE

The main challenge we, West River Electric, face heading into 2025 is a 7% power cost increase from our power suppliers; Basin Electric and Western Area Power Administration. After a thorough review, WREA explored every possible option to absorb this increase. But it just wasn't possible if we wanted to continue to deliver the SAFE and RELIABLE power you as members deserve.

RATE ADJUSTMENT Q&A

What is the adjustment? A base charge increase of \$3.00 as well as a \$0.0057 (half a cent) Power Cost Adjustment implemented March 1, 2025, reflecting February's usage.

Why is the base charge increasing? Lower electricity sales and rising localized operational costs for West River Electric.

What is a PCA: It allows WREA to recover fluctuating power supply costs not included in current rates. Such as changes in wholesale electricity prices, goods and services or fuel expenses.

Where WREA gets their power: We purchase electricity each month from our Power Suppliers, Basin Electric and Western Area Power Administration, at a wholesale cost.

What is the wholesale cost: The cost of electricity is influenced by generation expenses, fuel prices, transmission fees, and market demand; causing it to fluctuate daily.

What impacts the PCA: Demand for electricity (like in the summer or winter months), increased fuel prices to generate electricity and goods and services.

How it works: If the cost of generating electricity is higher than anticipated, those costs are spread across all members. When the cost is lower, those savings are passed to members through a credit on your monthly energy bill.

Be Ready for Storm Season: Preparedness is the Best Defense



Amanda Haugen
Communications
Specialist

Spring is on our doorstep and like many of you, I'm looking forward to more opportunities to be outdoors and enjoy warmer weather. Springtime brings many of my favorite activities like cooking out with family

and friends, time spent enjoying outdoor activities and simply slowing down a bit to enjoy life.

Unfortunately, spring and summer can also create the perfect conditions for severe storms. 4958500

West River Electric crews are always prepared and standing by to respond should power outages occur in our area. When severe storms cause power disruptions, our line crews take all necessary precautions before they get to work on any downed lines.

I would encourage you to also practice safety and preparedness to protect your family during storms and outages.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency recommends the items below as a starting point for storm and disaster preparedness, but you can visit www.ready.gov for additional resources.

- Stock your pantry with a three-day supply of non-perishable food, including canned goods, energy bars, peanut butter, powdered milk, instant coffee, water and other essentials (i.e., diapers and toiletries).
- Confirm that you have adequate sanitation and hygiene supplies including towelettes, soap and hand sanitizer.
- Ensure your First Aid kit is stocked with pain relievers, bandages and other medical essentials, and make sure your prescriptions are current.

- Set aside basic household items you will need, including flashlights, batteries, a manual can opener and portable, battery-powered radio or TV.
- Organize emergency supplies so they are easily accessible in one location.

In the event of a prolonged power outage, turn off major appliances, TVs, computers and other sensitive electronics. This will help avert damage from potential power surges and will also help prevent overloading circuits during power restoration. That said, do leave one light on so you will know when power is restored.

If you plan to use a portable generator, make sure it's rated to handle the amount of power you will need, and always review the manufacturer's instructions to operate it safely. 10318700

Listen to local news or a NOAA Weather Radio for storm and emergency information, and check West River

Electric's Facebook page for restoration updates.

Severe storms can occasionally bring down power lines. If you see a downed line, always assume it's energized and never approach it. If flooding occurs, never walk through areas where power lines could be submerged.

Advance planning for severe storms or other emergencies can reduce stress and anxiety caused by the weather event and lessen the impact of the storm's effects.

Sign up for NOAA emergency alerts and warnings and follow us on Facebook for the latest power restoration updates. If you experience an outage, please don't report it on Facebook. Call our outage reporting number at 605-393-1500 or 605-279-2135 or submit through SmartHub—this is the fastest way to let us know if your power is out. 8045500

I hope we don't experience severe storms over the spring and summer months, but we can never predict Mother Nature's plans. At West River Electric, we recommend that you make a plan today—because storm preparedness is always our best defense.

ARE YOU STORM READY?

Follow these safety and preparation tips during spring and summer storm season.

Be Prepared.

- Create an emergency kit with power outage essentials: batteries, power banks, flashlights, non-perishable foods, water, medical supplies and prescriptions.
- Develop an emergency family plan with meeting points, communication methods and evacuation routes. Share your plan with all family members.
- Monitor weather for important updates that could impact your emergency plan.

Stay Safe.

- Ensure a safe shelter. Stay away from windows and doors. In tornadoes, move to a basement or an interior room without windows.
- Use portable generators safely: operate outdoors in well-ventilated areas, place on a flat, dry surface, do not overload and always read the operating manual before use.
- Severe storms can bring down tree limbs and power lines. If you encounter a downed line, stay back. Always assume a downed line is live and dangerous.





West Central Electric CEO Jeff Birkeland, left, is the retired archery coach, and IT Coordinator Derek Wolf, right, is a first-year rifle coach for Jones County, South Dakota.

SOUTH DAKOTA 4-H SHOOTING

Shooters Prepare for the State Competition in April

Jocelyn Johnson
jocelyn.johnson@sdrea.coop

Dedicated practice is the price each marksman pays to qualify and compete at the South Dakota 4-H Shooting Sports state event.



Sophie Wolf takes aim during a weekly practice.

This year, hundreds of shooters will compete on April 25-27 to showcase marksmanship. Their hard work will be on display as every shot will impact the final score. Among these competitors is a dedicated group from Jones County, South Dakota. For the past two decades, employees from West Central Electric Cooperative in Murdo, S.D., have dedicated their time to coaching various 4-H shooting disciplines.

“It’s the cooperative giving back to the community and promoting our youth,” said Jeff Birkeland, CEO of West Central Electric. “A few years ago, we took 41 kids to state, and we brought home 43 state trophies. I’m proud of our kids.”

Birkeland coached archery for 15 years and happily recounted the experience with his two boys during that time.

“Kids want to shoot. We have the best participation in shooting sports

than we have in anything else.”

Birkeland’s son, Jacob, competed for 10 years in shooting sports among other 4-H competitions.

“While I explored many aspects of 4-H, shooting sports became my primary focus,” Jacob said. “I began my journey in shooting sports with BB gun and was introduced to archery. Archery quickly became my main area of competition, and it has been an incredibly rewarding and impactful part of my 4-H experience.”

This experience offered him a competitive edge as well as bonding memories that Jacob vouches as life shaping.

“One of the greatest highlights of my time in 4-H has been the lasting friendships and memories I’ve built along the way,” Jacob said. “Whether it was constructing a trophy shelf with my grandpa, having archery competitions against my dad to see who had to do the chores or representing South Dakota at the national shooting sports event – each experience has contributed to my personal and professional growth. I would not be where I am today without it.”



Matthew Birkeland, left, stands with Hayzen Sealey, right, at the spring state competition.

Derek Wolf, IT coordinator for West Central Electric and first-year coach for Jones County 4-H, said, “We begin practicing once a week in January. We work on safety first – getting the kids comfortable with their firearms. Then, we step into practicing for competition.”

Each county competes in three matches leading up the state competition, and every participant must make a qualifying score in at least one match to qualify for state.

“We encourage every kid to enter and compete in all three matches,” Birkeland said. “It’s better to practice at it instead of getting to state and having the wheels fall off.”

The art of practicing perfectly is what brings these competitors to state. Birkeland noted that those who practice, will win. And those who overcome a disappointment may come home with the trophy.

“It teaches those kids a lot about life,” Birkeland said. “You practice and practice, you put the time in and then one thing happens – one flinch,

one mistake and it’s over. Emotionally, hopefully it strengthens them a bit. Instead of breaking down and crying, you better be able to handle it...Limit your problems. Don’t increase them with a mental meltdown.”

Wolf agreed with this sentiment and described how overcoming a bad shot and being mentally tough is sometimes more important than being a skilled shooter.

“There are a lot of kids who find success in this, so I find it rewarding to be involved as a coach,” he said.

Wolf’s daughter, Sophie, competes in .22 rifle and archery and remarked that the highlight of the competition was that it challenged her and made her a stronger competitor. She trains twice per week for several hours while preparing for the state competition.

“I feel excitement when I compete,” Sophie said. “I love the challenge.”

In 2024, more than 1,600 participants competed in various disciplines at the spring state shooting event. These disciplines

are pistol, archery, rifle, hunting and western heritage. An additional 270 participants competed in the fall state shooting event for shotgun and muzzleloading. Each year, the top five shooters win trophies and this year’s winners may be chosen to represent at the 4-H Shooting Sports National Championships in Grand Island, Neb., on June 22-27. Last year, South Dakota tied for 2nd place with Missouri at the national event.

John Keimig, South Dakota State University Extension Youth Safety Field Specialist, emphasized that the shooting program is made great by the people who volunteer.

“One of the great things about small communities in South Dakota is people who give their time to volunteer,” said Keimig. “If it wasn’t for people who volunteer, we wouldn’t have this successful program – whether it be volunteers who work full-time for an electric cooperative or farmers and ranchers. They are the backbone of this program.”



Archers stand on the line at South Dakota’s spring state competition.

Notice of Updated Development and Temporary Connect Fees



Matt Schmahl
Construction
Project Manager

At West River Electric, our goal is to provide reliable, affordable, and efficient electric service to our community. To continue fulfilling this commitment, while addressing rising costs and the demands of growth in our service area, we have conducted a thorough review of our development and connection fee structure. After careful consideration, we find it necessary to implement updates to our fee schedule. 3975500

The updated fees will be as follows:

- Developments under 1 acre: \$1,700.00 per lot.
- Developments between 1 acre and 5

acres: \$3,300.00 per lot.

Developments larger than 5 acres: Fees will be calculated based on our Line Extension Policy.

Temporary connects: A connect fee of \$250.00 per member provided temporary service.

Why Are These Adjustments Necessary?

Increased Costs of Infrastructure Development:

The costs of materials, labor, and equipment required to install, upgrade, and maintain our electric infrastructure have significantly risen in recent years. These adjustments ensure that we can continue to meet current and future demands while maintaining the high standard of service you expect from us.

Supporting Responsible Growth:

As our region grows, the demand for electricity in new developments requires

substantial investment in infrastructure. The updated fees reflect the costs associated with expanding service to new developments in a fair and sustainable manner.

Maintaining Equity Among Members:

The revised fee structure ensures that the costs of new developments are equitably distributed among those directly benefiting from the service expansions, rather than shifting those costs to existing members.

We understand that these changes may impact your planning, and we are committed to working closely with developers and members to ensure a smooth transition. If you have any questions about the updated fee structure or need further clarification, please do not hesitate to contact our Staking Department at (605) 393-1500.

Thank you for your continued support and understanding as we work together to power the growth and success of our community.

Sincerely,
Matt Schmahl



TEACHER SCHOLARSHIPS AVAILABLE

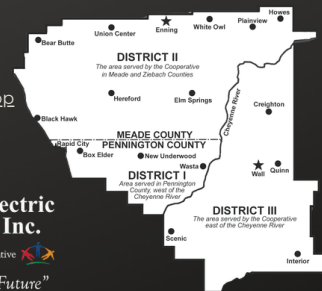
West River Electric has funds available to support K-12 classrooms in need of supplies, equipment, or a class project that directly involves students.

TEACHERS:

- Do you teach at a school who receives power from West River Electric?
- Are you in need of funds to support your classroom?
- Scan the QR Code or visit www.westriver.coop to apply!



"Powering You For A Brighter Future"
This institution is an equal opportunity provider and employer.



2025 REBATES AND PROGRAMS



West River Electric
Association, Inc.

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

"Powering You For A Brighter

Energy Audit Program

How energy efficient is your home? We offer two different types of energy audits to help pinpoint any efficiency errors and offer suggestions on improvements.

Performing these audits requires the right weather so please call if you would like to schedule this service.

Ev Charging Program

All you can charge on nights and weekends for \$30.00 a month.

*some limitations apply. Please call for more information

Air to Air Heat Pump

Heat and cool with ONE unit!
If you install an air to air heat pump, receive a \$250/ton rebate (\$750 max).

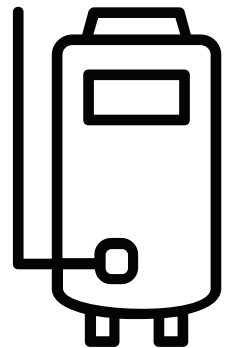
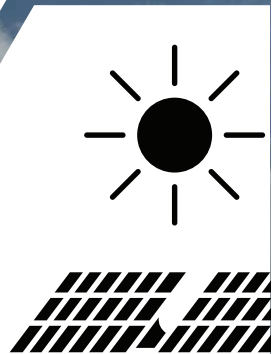
If you install a geothermal unit you receive \$250/ton rebate (\$1,000 max).

*Min. of 16 SEER. A Dept. of Energy Requirement

Marathon Water Heater

West River Electric offers Marathon water heaters at a discounted price in a variety of sizes: 105- gallon, 85-gallon, 50-gallon and 50-gallon shorty models.

Pricing is based on installation circumstances. For more details or to determine the best option for your home, please contact our office.





RUNNING FREE

Photos by Alvis Uptis

Wild Horses Roam at Black Hills Sanctuary

Jacob Boyko

jacob.boyko@sdrea.coop

In the southern Black Hills, a watchful eye will catch a rare and breathtaking sight: a herd of wild mustangs galloping freely across thousands of acres of grassland in the Cheyenne River Valley.

For the Black Hills Wild Horse Sanctuary staff and the hundreds of rescued horses they care for, it's just another day on the ranch.

The sanctuary operates like most working ranches, says Susan Watt, the president and CEO of the Institute of Range and the American Mustang. Staff regularly travel over 15 miles across the 10,000 acre ranch to fill water troughs and set out hay, mineral blocks and horse cake. It's a trek that takes them across picturesque grasslands, hills, bluffs and the muddy banks of the Cheyenne River. A bulwark against suburban sprawl, the land remains as nature intended.

"Wild horses have been part of North America since time immemorial," Watt explained. "We have a large population of American mustangs, Spanish mustangs, horses with blood lines that trace back to Spain and Portugal, and a small herd of Choctaw Indian ponies that were part of the Trail of Tears

– They are a very important part of American history we need to preserve."

The story of the sanctuary begins in the late 1930s with a young man named Dayton Hyde. At 13 years old, Hyde left his home in Michigan for his uncle's cattle ranch in Oregon after hearing captivating tales of the wild west's excitement and beauty.

Once he arrived, Hyde was completely enthralled by the western lifestyle. With each passing year, his connection to the land and the wildlife strengthened, shaping his identity as a cowboy, conservationist and writer.

Decades later in 1987, while on a trip to Nevada to purchase cattle, Hyde came across corrals of wild horses the federal government had rounded up using low-flying helicopters. Devastated by the idea of the free-roaming herds confined to pens, Hyde was inspired to create a refuge for wild horses where they could run free.

Hyde petitioned congress to allow him to take some of the captured horses and create a sanctuary. South Dakota Governor George Mickelson, who had learned of Hyde's ambitions and was supportive, invited Hyde to inspect a piece of land known as Chilson Canyon near Hot Springs, S.D.

For nearly 40 years now, that piece of land plus Hyde's hard work has given hundreds of wild horses another chance to roam wild. However, it's a luxury very few wild horses receive.

Since 2020, the Bureau of Land Management has reported

WILD HORSE SANCTUARY

rounding up over 40,000 wild horses to control herd populations, which can grow rapidly in the wild. Their fates vary; At government holding pens, they await auction where if sold they'll be rehomed with owners who agree not to sell them for slaughter outside of the U.S.

According to Watt and other wild horse advocacy groups, those assurances don't always matter.

"The horses are supposed to be protected from slaughter," she continued, "But unfortunately, you put them in a trailer and cross the border into Canada or Mexico and they don't always check to see what's in the trailer."

The horses that come to the sanctuary are generally in "emergency situations," Watt said, which means the horses are being sent to slaughter or their previous caretaker died or is unable to take care of the horses.

In addition to preserving the herds of wild horses, Hyde envisioned the sanctuary as a means to protect and preserve the land's natural beauty and rich historical legacy, which includes long-ago remnants of human activity.

"This particular tract of land was the location for ancient petroglyph writings that ancient man did on cliff walls," Watt explained. "And we're protecting the pioneer history of this land; Our buildings that we use are pioneer homesteads."

Though Dayton Hyde passed away in 2018, his legacy lives on. Today the sanctuary is home to several hundred wild horses, a herd of cattle, thousands of acres of pristine prairie

and the inextinguishable spirit of the wild west.

"He used to say every ache and pain he ever had was from a horse," Watt laughed. "What Dayton Hyde really wanted was to protect this land from subdivision, to let it be for wildlife and wild horses, and keep it safe and protected. I think South Dakota should be immensely proud of what Dayton Hyde has done."

For more information about the Black Hills Wild Horse Sanctuary, visit www.wildmustangs.com.

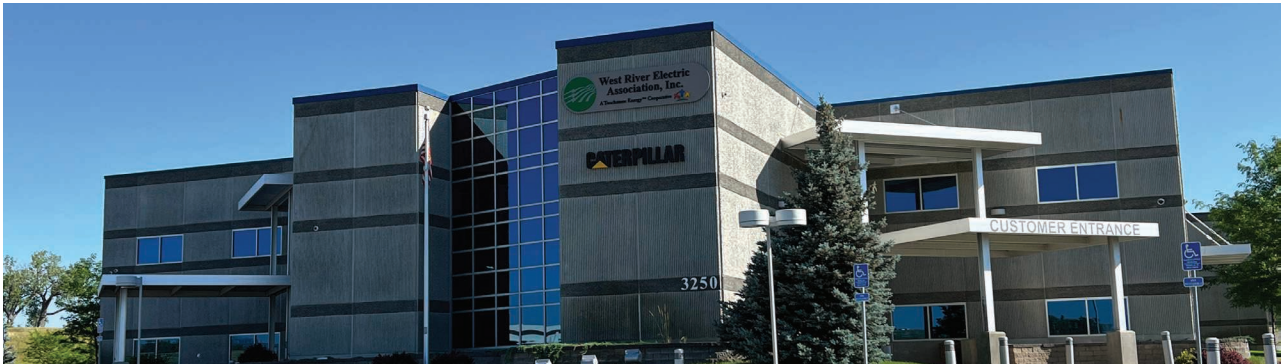


(Above) Dayton Hyde, founder of the sanctuary.
(Below) The sanctuary encompasses more than 10,000 acres of land along the Cheyenne River near Hot Springs, S.D.
Photos by Alvis Uptis



EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT

SHINING THE LIGHT ON WEST RIVER ELECTRICS DEDICATED EMPLOYEES



TYSON SELBY
APPRENTICE
LINEMAN

HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN WORKING WITH WEST RIVER ELECTRIC?

I have been with West River Electric for 2 years.

WHAT DOES YOUR JOB ENTAIL?

My job as an apprentice lineman is to maintain the power lines and various other tasks for the members at the end of the line.

WHAT DO YOU LOVE MOST ABOUT WEST RIVER ELECTRIC?

West River Electric is very caring about the communities they serve.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE MEMORY SINCE STARTING WORK AT WEST RIVER ELECTRIC? My favorite memory is touring the Basin Facilities as an employee group.

HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE WEST RIVER ELECTRIC IN THREE WORDS?

High performing co-op.

WHAT MOTIVATES YOU TO GET UP AND GO TO WORK EVERY DAY?

Working with my coworkers and the camaraderie we have.



AARIN AINSWORTH
STAKING
TECHNICIAN

HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN WORKING WITH WEST RIVER ELECTRIC?

I have been with West River Electric for 5.5 years.

WHAT DOES YOUR JOB ENTAIL?

My job entails meeting with members to discuss new/upgrade services- including new line extensions, designing, flagging, and creating the work order. I also make and obtain easements and certain permits depending on the job, calling in locates, trench inspections and construction quotes.

WHAT DO YOU LOVE MOST ABOUT WEST RIVER ELECTRIC?

The support system we have. If one of us ever needs any help or have questions someone is always willing to help.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE MEMORY SINCE STARTING WORK AT WEST RIVER ELECTRIC? There are so many good memories, it's hard to pick out just one that stands out in my mind.

HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE WEST RIVER ELECTRIC IN THREE WORDS?

Safe, dependable, member driven.

WHAT MOTIVATES YOU TO GET UP AND GO TO WORK EVERY DAY?

Knowing we have the best team of experienced/ professional staff to get through whatever comes our way.



Operation Roundup is a voluntary program that does just what the name implies. Each month we "round up" the electric bills of participating consumers to the next highest dollar. For example, a consumers monthly bill of \$37.75 would automatically be rounded up to \$38.00, with the additional 25 cents going to the Operation Roundup fund. Donations are tax deductible, and consumers are sent a summary of yearly contributions each January.

Where Does the Money Go?

All Operation Roundup donations are placed in a trust that is administered by an independent Board of Directors. This Board of Directors is made up of community leaders who serve on the Board on a voluntary basis. They are responsible in receiving the funds, evaluate all requests for funds, and decide how to distribute the funds.

How is the Money Used?

The funds will be available to help any charitable projects for organizations, groups, families, or individuals within the service territory of West River Electric. No funds shall in any way be used to support any candidate for political office or for any political purpose.



Applications are open! Scan the QR code to submit an application.



LOCATE YOUR ACCOUNT NUMBER

If you locate your account number anywhere in this issue of West River Electric's *Cooperative Connections*, you will be a winner. There will be five account numbers placed randomly throughout the publication. If you spot your account number and notify our office before the 10th of the next month, you will receive a \$10 credit on your next bill.

WEST RIVER ELECTRIC OFFICE HOURS

RAPID CITY OFFICE

3250 E Hwy 44, Rapid City, SD
Monday-Friday 7 a.m. to 5 p.m.
605-393-1500

WALL OFFICE

1200 W 4th Ave, Wall, SD
Monday-Friday 7 a.m. to 5 p.m.
605-279-2135

A night depository is available at both offices for your convenience.

SERVICE AND BILLING QUESTIONS?

Contact 605-279-2135 or 605-393-1500 during office hours. E-mail us at info@westriver.coop for questions on your account.

OUTAGE OR EMERGENCY?

Contact 605-279-2135 or 605-393-1500 in the event of an outage or other emergency. Our calls are answered 24/7.



MARCH 14-15
St. Patrick's Day
Weekened
 Fri. 5 p.m., Sat. 9 a.m.
 Deadwood, SD
 605-578-1876

*Photo courtesy of
 Travel South Dakota*

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

FEB. 28-MARCH 1
Mardi Gras Weekend
 8 p.m. Fri.-10 p.m. Sat.
 Main Street
 Deadwood, SD
 605-578-1876

MARCH 6
SD Jazz Festival Concert
 Aberdeen Community Concert
 Association
 7:30 p.m.
 NSU Johnson Fine Arts Center
 Aberdeen, SD
 Tickets Available at Concert

MARCH 8-9
Philip Area Annual Gun Show
 Sat. 9 a.m.-5 p.m.
 Sun. 9 a.m.-3 p.m.
 American Legion Hall
 Philip, SD
 605-859-2135

MARCH 8
Epiphany Sausage Sale
 10 a.m. until gone
 Parish Hall
 Epiphany, SD

MARCH 8
Minnehaha County
Pheasants Forever Banquet
 5 p.m.
 El Riad Shrine
 Sioux Falls, SD
 605-376-8219

MARCH 14-15
Badlands Quilter Weekend
Getaway
 Fri. 5 p.m.
 Sat. 8 a.m.
 Community Center
 Wall, SD
 605-685-5718

MARCH 15
VFW Teener Baseball Bingo
Benefit
 5 p.m.
 Tyndall Auditorium
 Tyndall, SD

MARCH 22
Annual Banquet & Bash
 Britton Area Chamber of
 Commerce
 5:30 p.m.
 Britton, SD
 605-448-8130

MARCH 26
Hill City Garden Club
Trip to Central Asia
 1 p.m.
 Kathryn Cleveland
 Hill City Super 8
 Hill City, SD

MARCH 29
Ready. Set. Grow!
 9 a.m.-12 p.m.
 Couteau Prairie Master Gardeners
 Codrington CTY Extension Complex
 Watertown, SD
 605-838-7098

APRIL 4
Mitchell Technical College
2025 Alumni Gathering
Cornhole Tournament
 5 p.m. Social
 6:30 p.m. Tournament
 The World's Only Corn Palace
 Mitchell, SD
 605-995-7342

APRIL 4-5
Annual Schmeckfest
 German Heritage Celebration
 748 S Main St.
 Freeman, SD
 605-925-4237

APRIL 4-6, 11-13
Women Playing Hamlet
 April 4-5, 11-12: 7:30 p.m.
 April 6, 13: 2:30 p.m.
 Mighty Corson Art Players
 Corson, SD
 www.mightycorson.com

APRIL 5-6
Youth & Family Kids Fair
 Sat. 8:30 a.m.-4 p.m.
 Sun. 12-4p.m.
 The Monument
 Rapid City, SD
 605-342-4195

APRIL 11-12
Junkin' Market Days Spring
Market
 Fri. 4-7 p.m.
 Sat. 9 a.m.-4 p.m.
 W.H. Lyon Fairgrounds
 Sioux Falls, SD
 www.junkinmarketdays.com

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