

# COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS

## Great Goats

**Goats gaining  
in popularity**  
Pages 8-9

**Irrigators benefit  
from load control**  
Pages 12-13

Bennett and Matea Gordon  
of Whitewood are part of a  
rising trend in teens choosing  
to show goats at youth  
exhibits and competitions



# THE FUTURE OF ENERGY



**Dick Johnson**  
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Let's hope the waterspouts open pretty soon. It is extremely dry out there. It makes our work difficult in the rural areas with concerns on starting a fire. We have a concern of grass fires damaging our infrastructure as well. Let's hope the skies open pretty soon. Once again, it looks like we are on track to sell more air conditioning load in the summer than we do heat load in the winter.

I recently attended the NRECA annual meeting. One of the main speakers was Robert Bryce, a noted journalist and speaker. He writes and speaks about energy issues. He has a weekly podcast that I listen to called "Power Hungry;" give it a listen. I was able to see him at a Basin event several years ago and started to follow him. I personally like him because he doesn't bash one side or the other.

## **We need a strong resilient grid when the wind isn't blowing, the sun isn't shining and the battery storage solutions have run down.**

He has a good, common-sense approach to say we need an all-of-the-above energy strategy which includes fossil fuel baseload generation along with renewable energy. Robert especially pushes for nuclear power that is clean and green. He really hits home to me on how we must work hard to keep baseload generation, so we do not have another event (rolling blackouts) like last February. He endured them for many hours in Texas. We need a robust and resilient power supply and grid.

First, Robert spoke about how energy-starved many nations are. He called it the electricity poor and electricity rich. He went on to say that we are blessed in Amer-

ica to have the grid and power we currently have. However, he slowly cast a net on how the push to electrify everything is going to cause us long-term power grid and generation problems here in the United States. Europe has recently experienced these problems with its renewable portfolio and the lack of fossil fuels to keep the electricity flowing. As I said, he is not against renewable energy at all. In fact, he has people on his podcast who are big renewable energy advocates, but they realize we need a strong resilient grid when the wind isn't blowing, the sun isn't shining and the battery storage solutions have run down. He stated that if the U.S. went to 90 percent renewable energy, it would require a doubling of high voltage transmission lines. As a nation, we currently have roughly 240,000 miles. Robert estimated it would take 140 years to build that much additional transmission. Those figures do not take into consideration all the land use ("not in my back yard") issues that come with building transmission. I will say we are seeing this become more prevalent when building small distribution lines.

A recent Wall Street Journal article expressed similar concerns. It said that the U.S. power system is faltering as millions more Americans are becoming more dependent on electricity. The article went on to state that the grid is undergoing the largest transformation in history as more natural gas is displacing coal-fired and nuclear generation and adding renewable energy. Another challenge is the aging infrastructure. 5003200

I have grave concerns about where our electricity supply is headed. I continue to beat my chest mirroring what Robert Bryce and so many others say. We NEED baseload generation along with renewable sources. However, nuclear energy is never brought up as a clean alternative. Why not – we need it.

I hope you have a safe spring. It is a busy time of the year, so be careful!

## COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS

### WEST RIVER ELECTRIC

(USPS No. 675-840)

#### Our Mission:

We are safety conscious, community oriented, and the trusted energy expert for our member owners.

#### Our Vision:

We will achieve an ACSI score of 90 by 2024.

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

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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. 6519, 6531 or 6522; fax (605)393-0275; e-mail [robert.raker@westriver.coop](mailto:robert.raker@westriver.coop).



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## IT'S BACK

Come see West River Electric at the  
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April 21-22, 2022



## DID YOU CHANGE YOUR PHONE NUMBER OR EMAIL?

It is important to keep your information updated with West River Electric. We would like to keep you updated on planned outages or other important information that may affect your service. Contact us at 279-2135 or 393-1500 to make changes to your information.

## 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

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3250 E Hwy 44, Rapid City, SD  
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 605-393-1500

### WALL OFFICE

1200 W 4th Ave, Wall, SD  
 Monday-Friday 7 a.m. to 5 p.m.  
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A night depository is available at both offices for your convenience. Office hours are subject to change in response to COVID-19.

## SERVICE AND BILLING QUESTIONS?

Contact 605-279-2135 or 605-393-1500 during office hours. E-mail us at [info@westriver.coop](mailto:info@westriver.coop) for questions on your account. 9563400

## 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.

# Budget-friendly efficiency upgrades

There are two ways to measure energy efficiency improvements.

There's the payback period - the amount of time it will take for the improvement to pay for itself. Then there's comfort.

Improvements can often increase the comfort level of a home - not easy to measure but one of the driving forces behind home weatherization efforts. There are several areas of the home that can be improved easily, without breaking your budget.

**LIGHTING** - There has been a steady decline in the price of LED bulbs for residential consumers. Nowadays, 60-watt-replacement LEDs can be purchased for \$5 or less. LEDs should save 60 percent or more on power costs compared to incandescent bulbs and last for many years. New LED fixtures are also an affordable option. They come with LED bulbs built in so you never need to change the bulbs.

**HEATING AND AIR CONDITIONING** - The Energy Information Administration estimates that heating, ventilating and air conditioning systems account for 22 percent of a typical home's annual electric bill. While newer systems can be 20-45 percent more efficient than older ones, the upfront cost is often a barrier to adoption.

But there are still ways to save. Simple solutions such as changing air filters at least every three months will increase airflow to rooms, increase the life of the HVAC unit's motor and improve air quality in the home. Sealing and insulating ductwork can be done in a weekend and results in energy savings of up to 20 percent.

To lessen the amount of work that heating and cooling systems need to do, it is important to find and seal air leaks. Look for leaks around exterior doors and windows, electric outlets, and entrance points for TV and phone cables. Also check dryer vents and any place with an opening in the wall. To seal leaks, apply caulk, spray foam or weather-stripping to these areas.

Simple acts such as cooking outdoors on a hot summer day or keeping curtains closed to keep out the summer sun will keep the interior of your home cooler and reduce the amount of time AC units need to operate.

## EV REGISTRATIONS SEE SUBSTANTIAL INCREASE



According to the South Dakota Dept. of Revenue, the state experienced a boom in electric vehicle registrations in 2021.

At year-end, there were 1,313 electric vehicles registered in the state. That compares to just 242 from the year before. EV registrations saw a slight jump from 227 in 2015 to 236 in 2019.

Minnehaha County led the state with 406 registered EVs, followed by Pennington County with 228 and Lincoln with 151. Nine counties had no EVs registered.



## Stay away from power lines

### Naomi Goldade

Naomi Goldade likes to have outdoor fun in the spring and summer but reminds co-op members to stay away from power lines. Naomi is the daughter of Alex and Rachael Goldade of Timber Lake. They are members of Moreau-Grand 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.

# SUPER CASSEROLES

## CHICKEN AND CHEESE CASSEROLE

Ingredients:  
 2 cups uncooked elbow macaroni  
 2 5-oz. cans of chicken chunks  
 2 cups shredded cheddar cheese  
 2 cups milk  
 2 cans cream of chicken soup  
 4 oz. sliced mushrooms  
 1/4 cup chopped onion

### METHOD

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. In a large bowl, mix all seven ingredients together. Pour into a 9x13 baking pan. Bake at 350 for 45 minutes or until bubbly and golden brown.

**Jeanette Kleinsasser,  
Iroquois**

## ONE DISH CHICKEN AND RICE

Ingredients:  
 1/2 to 1 cup onion, chopped  
 1/4 to 1/2 cup green and/or red bell pepper  
 1 can cream of chicken soup (or cream soup of your choice)  
 1/2 cup milk  
 1/2 tsp. salt  
 1/4 tsp. pepper  
 1/3 cup mayonnaise  
 2 cups chicken, cooked and chopped  
 1 cup peas (frozen)  
 2 cups cooked white rice  
 1 cup shredded cheddar, divided

### METHOD

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Lightly grease a 9-inch x 13-inch baking dish and set aside. Sauté onion and bell pepper in olive oil or butter. Blend soup, milk, salt, pepper, and mayo in a bowl. Add chicken, peas, sauteed onions and peppers, and rice to the prepared baking dish. Mix gently. Pour soup over chicken mixture. Mix gently. Fold in half of the cheddar. Top with remaining cheese. Bake until top is golden brown, about 25 minutes.

**Becky Walker, Sioux Falls**

## TUNA PASTA CASSEROLE

Ingredients:  
 4 oz. dried whole-wheat rotini pasta (about 1-1/2 cups)  
 Nonstick cooking spray  
 16 oz. frozen mixed vegetables, thawed  
 1 pouch (11 ounces) low-sodium chunk light tuna  
 1 can (10-3/4 oz.) low-fat, low sodium condensed cream of chicken soup  
 1/2 cup chopped roasted red bell peppers  
 1/2 cup fat-free half-and-half  
 1 tsp. all-purpose, salt-free seasoning blend  
 3/4 cup crushed low-sodium, whole-grain crackers  
 1/4 cup shredded or grated Parmesan cheese

### METHOD

Prepare pasta according to package directions, omitting salt. Using colander, drain well. Transfer to large bowl. Preheat oven to 350 F. Lightly spray 2-quart glass baking dish with nonstick cooking spray. Stir mixed vegetables, tuna, soup, roasted peppers, half-and-half and seasoning blend into pasta until combined. Transfer to baking dish. Top with crackers and Parmesan cheese. Bake, uncovered, 25-30 minutes, or until casserole is warmed through and topping is golden brown.

**familyfeatures.com**

**Please send your favorite dairy 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 2022. All entries must include your name, mailing address, phone number and cooperative name.**

# CONUNDRUM



**Robert Raker**  
 robert.raker@  
 westriver.coop

According to the oxford dictionary a conundrum is a confusing and difficult problem or question. I recently experienced a conundrum talking with one of our commercial

members whom we helped with his electric bill. He asked, “why are you helping me lower my bill when it’s your source of revenue?” “Because we’re a cooperative and you’re the owner and we want to make sure you are getting a deal,” I responded.

He thought about it and said, “I also want my customers to get a deal, but that doesn’t make me want to sell less.” At this point I knew answering his question

was going to require a deep dive into explaining from a 10,000-foot view the circumstances driving energy conservation at the co-op.

Like his business, Investor-Owned Utilities (IOU) have an incentive to sell more electricity, because they earn more revenue (and hence profit) with each kWh sold. Revenue eroded from promoting energy efficiency is often recovered from a rider in their rates because people won’t invest in an unprofitable company. Similarly, the cooperative business model requires profits to establish a prudent reserve to conduct business but after that, we differ. 10113700

## REVENUE CYCLE

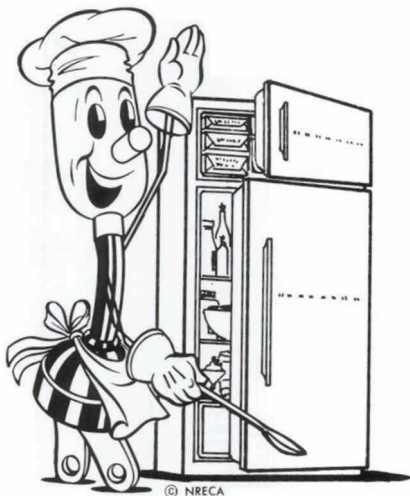
Historically, co-ops have cycled between selling and conserving kWhs. Co-ops promoted selling kWhs to earn more revenue to pay off loans used to build generation plants (traditionally coal-fired). During this time co-ops promoted programs like discounted electric heat rate and electric water heaters. These programs maximize investments and often require members’ direct investments. So, we carefully choose programs to ensure the members’ investment remains relevant into the future. For example, a water heater with a lifetime warranty helps in a conservation cycle transition by acting as energy storage.



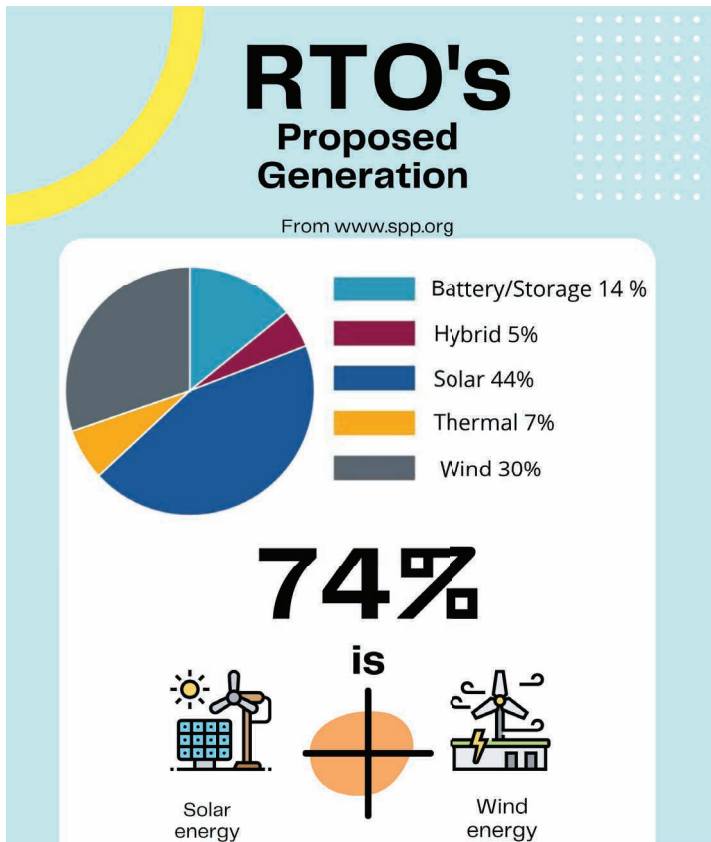
## CONSERVATION CYCLE

Next, cooperatives shift to the conservation cycle because the load grows using up excess generation capacity. February 2021 is an example of why we do not want to exceed our available capacity. In this cycle, with minimal investment, we shift water heaters to run when generation capacity is available. In other words, water heaters resemble a battery, storing energy in the form of hot water to help stabilize the grid and maximize generator output. We can also leverage electrical rate design to buy time before we need to build more generation. For example, time of use (TOU) rates incentivizes other loads to run primarily in the evenings when generation capacity is still available. These tactics buy us time until another power plant is built, which traditionally diverts us back to selling electric load.

However, today’s conservation



cycle is nothing like what we have experienced in the past. Regulations and public policy make coal generation too risky; one election can render them an obsolete stranded asset. In fact, it is unlikely we will ever see another coal plant built. Additionally, the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, the agency supposed to ensure reliable supplies of power, adequate transmission infrastructure, and competitive wholesale electricity prices on the bulk electric system appears to undervalue reliability. This is inferred by relying heavily on unreliable intermittent generation like renewable energy to add capacity to the bulk electric system.



**TODAY'S CYCLE**

Today, known generation capacity influencing co-op's to promote electricity sales can be gone when the clouds move in. So, co-ops remain in conservation cycle until an economical form of storage can replace coal piles (the original battery) to "store energy" for reliable electricity. In other words, we are waiting for technology to catch up. It is likely to eventually. In the meantime, we will conserve energy when possible and shift load to times we have generation available to stall as long as possible. Today's scenario puts a new spin on the saying, "a kWh saved is less expensive than a kWh generated." 10181100

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- (2) fax: (202) 690-7442; or
- (3) email: [program.intake@usda.gov](mailto:program.intake@usda.gov)

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# GOATS STEAL THE SPOTLIGHT



Anna Johnson and Jessemy Sharp groom at the 2021 Brown County Fair. *Photo by Donna Sharp*

## Ag students show a fondness for working with goats at youth exhibitions and competitions

**Billy Gibson**

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Matea Gordon's goats always keep her guessing.

The 17-year-old is one of four Gordon siblings from Whitewood who have been highly active - and highly successful - on the 4-H and FFA competition scenes over the past decade.

She prefers to work with market goats because the animals force her to stay on her toes. She never knows what she's going to get.

"They tend to have big personalities. Sometimes they're shy and cute. Other times they can be pretty stubborn. You just never know," she said. "Plus, it's fun to see how much progress you can make with them throughout the year."

Her younger brother, Bennett, enjoys raising and feeding the goats daily.

"I've learned about genetics, animal health and feed nutrition. The goats kind of become your friend as you bring them up and take care of them."

The brother-sister duo are part of a

trend in ag exhibition circles that finds eager competitors opting to work with goats. Their mom, Kindra Gordon, said all four of her children have been fond of tending to goats.

She said the family started with two goats a decade ago, and their involvement grew from there. Today, they travel and compete at nearly a dozen shows throughout the year. Likewise, she has seen youth participation in goat exhibitions double over the past few years.

"When the kids joined 4-H, they wanted to do a project and the goats just seemed to fit our lifestyle," she said.

Regardless of what animals her children choose, she has found there's much to be gained in participating in the competitions and other opportunities that youth ag programs provide.

"The kids have learned about responsibility, life skills and the agriculture industry. They learn about sportsmanship and how to manage stress. We tell them to be happy for their friends when it's their time to win, and

they'll be happy for you when you win. We've met a lot of people and made a lot of friends along the way."

One of those friends is Tessa Erdmann, a freshman at SDSU from Groton who serves as president of the state FFA. She is long-time friends with Matea and her older sister, Danika, both of them winners of Butte Electric Cooperative's college scholarship program.

Tessa said her choice to work with goats mostly came down to a practical matter. She cites her smallish physical stature as one reason for channeling her focus on the species.

"I'm 5 feet tall and I came to the conclusion that I didn't want to hold on to something way bigger than me," she said.

At age 12, Tessa went with her father, Darrin, to an auction and brought home her first three animals: Buttercup, Sassy and Thunderbolt. She describes the event as "love at first sight." In her first year to show at the Brown County Fair, Tessa won ribbons in the breeding and showmanship divisions and has placed many times since then.

A former gymnast and a member of Northern Electric based in Aberdeen,

## Moose sees goat-breeding as a gift



Clockwise from top/left: FFA President Tessa Erdmann; Kylee Ellerton of Custer; Taylor, Tate and Tye McGraw of Raymond.



Garret Moose isn't sure if he chose goats or goats chose him. In 2004, Moose received twin Nubian kids – a buck and a doe – as a birthday gift. That gift sparked an interest in goats that has led him to building a top breeding operation in southwest Minnesota.

By 2011, Moose was ready to hit the show circuit with only marginal success in the early stages. It would take a couple of years to make it to the American Dairy Goat Association National Show in St. Paul where Moose-G Foxy was named Reserve Junior National Champion Recorded Grade. He saw it all as a learning process.

"When I started out I didn't win anything but I learned a lot, and not to mention I met so many great people that I now call close friends," he said. "When Foxy won, that's what really got us excited and dedicated to continue on this path with dairy goats."

Moose raises and markets Alpines, Lamanchas, Saanens, Toggenburgs and Recorded Grade Seniors and Juniors.

He said he enjoys working with the animals and is especially appreciative of his "goat family."

"It's a tight community and we're always seeing each other at shows, exchanging information and sharing ideas," he said. "I couldn't do what I do without my family and friends."

For more information, Moose can be contacted at 507.530.3175.



Tessa said she has also experienced a large measure of mutual support within the animal exhibition community.

"Everybody is always so nice and you can count on everyone to help one another," she said. "We're competitive inside the ring, but outside we're family and we don't hate each other. One year, someone's father was hurt and couldn't make it to the competition. Everyone chipped in to help the family out."

Becca Tullar is a 4-H advisor in Brown County. She explained what she believes is the reason for the rising interest in goats.

"They're a good starter animal and youngsters get used to them and many of the students stick with them. They kind of grow up together," she said.

"They're easy to handle. Once you get them halter-broke they'll go wherever you want. They're fun animals to show.

"They're almost like pets and they build easy bonds."

One competitor who has a way with his goats is Tate McGraw, a 17-year-old from Raymond who has Down syndrome. His father, Wade, said Tate has been showing since he was 8.

"It's been a real blessing. He's easy-going and just has a way with the animals. He can get them to do things that other handlers can't," he said.

His other son Tye, 14, and daughter Taylor, 13, also show goats and other animals and McGraw said they each have their individual strengths.

"The best thing as a father is to see the network of friends they've developed across the state. They all support each other and they've learned to respect one another because they know one day they could be on top and the next day they could be on the bottom."

CONGRATS!

HARD WORKS PAYS

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**NOT PICTURED IS KEENAN CAESAR**



# RESTORING POWER SAFELY AND EFFICIENTLY

We can't control the weather, but as a member of West River Electric, you can feel confident knowing we're standing by, ready to restore power as quickly and safely as possible.

We do our best to avoid them, but there's no way around it: power outages occasionally happen.

For most West River Electric members, outages are rare and only last a few hours. But when a major storm impacts our area, extended outages are unavoidable.

So when the power goes out, how do crews know where to start working? How do you know if your outage has been reported? We've got answers to these questions and more, and it all starts with a safe, efficient plan for power restoration.

When the lights go out and it's safe for our crews to begin the restoration process, they start by repairing power lines and equipment that will restore power to the greatest number of people in the shortest time possible.

This process typically begins with repairs to the larger main distribution lines that service a great number of homes and businesses. After those repairs are made, crews work on tap lines, which deliver power to transformers, either mounted on utility poles (for above-ground service) or placed on pads (for underground service). Finally, individual service lines that run between the transformer and the home are repaired.

We can't control the weather, but we can prepare for it. West River Electric keeps a supply of extra utility poles, transformers and other equipment on hand so we can quickly get to work in the event of an outage. When widespread outages occur, multiple crews will be out

in the field simultaneously working to repair damage at multiple locations. We also coordinate with nearby co-ops to bring in additional crews when necessary.

A proactive approach to maintenance helps minimize the chance of prolonged outages; this is why you see crews periodically trimming trees and clearing vegetation near rights-of-way. We love trees too, but it only takes one overgrown limb to knock out power for an entire neighborhood. Trimming improves power reliability for our entire community. In addition to managing vegetation, we regularly inspect utility poles, power lines and other critical equipment to maintain a more reliable system.

If you experience a power outage, don't assume a neighbor reported it. It's best to report the outage yourself. The quickest way to report an outage is to give us at call at 605-393-1500 or 605-279-2135. We answer calls 24/7.

If you have a medical condition that requires electrical equipment, please let us know, and always have a backup plan in place. This plan could include a portable generator, extra medical supplies or moving to an alternate location until power is restored. If you plan to use a generator for backup power, read all safety information and instructions before use. 10369200

Mother Nature can be unpredictable, but as a member of West River Electric, you can feel confident knowing we're standing by, ready to restore power as quickly and safely as possible.

# THE POWER OF LOAD MANAGEMENT

Chris Danielski monitors an irrigation pivot control panel from his phone app. Photos by Billy Gibson

## Load control program reaps big rewards for both residents and large energy users

**Billy Gibson**

billy.gibson@sdrea.coop

Danielski Farms didn't become a blue chip producer over the past four decades by making boneheaded business decisions.

In 2013, the company was invited by Cherry-Todd Electric to participate in the cooperative's irrigation load management program. Load management is a term used to describe a co-op's ability to balance the system's electrical load by adjusting or controlling network demand.

Better balance brings greater efficiency and lower costs for all consumers on the system.

Len Danielski recalls pulling the leadership team together and weighing the pros and cons. The proposal included installing specialized equipment that would allow Cherry-Todd to temporarily interrupt power - when warranted - to any of roughly 200 irrigation pivots across 18,000 acres.

While different electric co-ops have their own load management policies, Cherry-Todd's guidelines call for a lower irrigation rate for participants and the right of the consumer to withdraw and return to the regular rate at any time.

The deliberation process was helped along by the fact that Danielski's General Manager Gary Garvin previously served as a board member at Cherry-Todd. He was aware the cooperative business model was designed and intended to produce "win-win" situations for both the co-op and its owner-members.

Danielski Farms ultimately decided to place all of its irrigation system under load management and Len Danielski reports the results have exceeded expectations.

"We found it was a winner all the way around. We have the choice to place one pivot, two pivots, or all pivots on the load control program, or none," he said. "We've analyzed the benefits over time and found that the company wins,

the cooperative wins and the co-op members win. It's a great partnership."

Chris Rahn, Cherry-Todd's primary key account contact, said load management is a tremendous benefit for members because it allows the cooperative - working in concert with both the member and the co-op's wholesale supplier Rushmore Electric - to distribute power more efficiently.

Rahn explained that one of the best ways to deliver power at the lowest possible cost is to "shave the peak" or to make sure supply and demand stay in a constant state of equilibrium as conditions such as weather, member consumption and market forces change constantly. Utilities are able to control supply but can find it challenging to project what consumer demand will be at any point in time.

Educated projections are important, but there are occasions when it helps for the co-op to have some control over demand. In the end, everyone benefits.

"We've had a residential water heater load control program for quite a while and it's been well-received by our

members,” Rahn said. “It enables us to get a better handle on the demand side and that’s a benefit for all the members on our lines.”

Garvin said another mitigating consideration for Danielski Farms is the fact that Cherry-Todd has done its part by making significant improvements to its infrastructure over time.

“We used to joke that we were always under load management because the power would go out a lot, but things have changed dramatically for the better and we hardly ever get bumped these days,” Garvin said. “I’ve also got load management on my water heater at home and it works for us.”

Len Danielski said that under the load control program power to his pivots rarely gets disrupted and typically only for a few hours when it does. He said the company is pleased to participate in a program that will ultimately benefit all co-op members across the system.



From left, Gary Garvin, Len Danielski, Chris Danielski and Chris Rahn discuss Cherry-Todd Electric’s load management program.

“We’ve found interruptions are usually during times when we don’t need to be irrigating anyway, like in the heat of the day when a lot of the water will only get evaporated,” he said. “And if it helps the cooperative and saves every member on the system some money, that’s great.”

Another element that makes the program work for Danielski Farms is the installation of a remote irrigation control system. All of Danielski’s pivots



All of the roughly 200 irrigation pivots at Danielski Farms are under Cherry-Todd Electric’s load management program.

are connected to the Ag Sense phone app that enables a user to turn the pivots on or off individually or in groups, and receive an abundance of electronic data.

Chris Danielski manages the app and said the telemetry allows him to track exactly when load control is being implemented, though he usually receives information from the co-op as well. He said efficiencies gained through both programs have resulted in net savings.

“If we have an hour or two of load management, once we get the notice that we’re back on I can restart the pivot from inside the office,” he said. “It used to take several hours to get someone to go out and restart the system.”

East River Electric, based in Madison, is a power supply cooperative that delivers wholesale electricity to 24 distribution co-ops in eastern South Dakota and western Minnesota. East River has offered its co-ops a load management option since 1985 and has saved members roughly \$260 million in avoided wholesale power costs.

More than 75,000 different electric loads in homes, farms and businesses are connected to the system, including water heaters, air conditioners, irrigation systems and other big energy users.

Chris Larson, general manager of Clay-Union Electric, said the co-op based in Vermillion offers end-use consumers a load control program for

water heaters, irrigation systems, grain bins and other commercial processing equipment.

The cooperative has 320 irrigation systems under load management with requests for 10 more in the near future as drought conditions show no signs of abating.

Larson emphasized that every cooperative has its own unique rate structure and load management policies when it comes to discounts, demand charges, time-of-use, system peaks and other variables. He said it’s important for consumers to contact their local co-op for details and to work closely with staff to find the best solutions for the member.

He said co-ops are obligated to capture their costs of providing power but are also responsible for finding ways to accommodate their member-owners and helping them achieve their individual goals.

“Load management really is essential to maximizing system efficiency,” Larson said. “It’s a sophisticated process that ultimately leaves the member with plenty of choices. If we’re controlling irrigation or commercial operations at a time that’s not good for them or complicates their workflow, they need the ability to override the control system so they can make a good business decision that’s best for them.”



# NATIVE SPECIES GARDENING

Southeastern Electric member Sue Nipe of Sioux Falls puts in a lot of work tending to her native species garden but also receives many rewards for her efforts. *Photos by Brett Snyders*

## Native species gardens are good for the environment, diet and soul

**Billy Gibson**

[billy.gibson@sdrea.coop](mailto:billy.gibson@sdrea.coop)

If you're a big fan of grass, you might not be too impressed with Sue Nipe's yard. That's because there's isn't a blade of grass to be found.

Nipe lives in a conventional middle-class subdivision in southeast Sioux Falls, but there's nothing conventional about her yard. She's a huge proponent and practitioner of native species gardening and her property stands out prominently from all the rest.

Diagnosed with celiac disease in 2013, Nipe decided to focus on eating healthy and growing much of her own food right there on her own plot of

suburban ground. She decided to pull out all the grass and weeds by their roots, plant some vegetables and herbs - along with a smattering of ornamentals - and before long her corner lot was bursting with native species from porch to curb.

Her key to maintaining a thriving native species garden? Well, there are several, but mulch appears somewhere at the top of the list. Ecologically friendly wood mulch, she explained, is necessary to keeping the weeds out and locking in the moisture.

"I put mulch around everything," Nipe said, noting that she purchased 150 bags of wood mulch last year and had just one weed-pulling session over

the entire spring and summer seasons

"Some try to use small rocks but most of the time they have them removed because during the summer they heat up and burn the plants from the bottom up," she cautioned.

Nipe said native species gardens are in many ways easier to maintain than exotics and are better for the local ecosystem because the plants have adapted to the climate and soil conditions over many generations, are largely resistant to pests and fit into the natural landscape both ecologically and aesthetically.

They are also better at preventing soil erosion, they help reduce air pollution in the local area, use less water, and they provide nectar, pollen and seeds for native butterflies, insects and birds to munch.



A visitor would be hard-pressed to find a blade of grass in Nipe's home landscape.

Moreau-Grand Electric member Doug Hofer is a horticulture teacher at the Cheyenne River School System in Eagle Butte. He said teaching students about the benefits of cultivating native species is important to the preservation and conservation of the landscape.

He uses the school's well equipped greenhouse to teach his students about the fundamentals of horticulture, including vegetables, ornamentals,

succulents and herbs. Toward the end of each semester, the students are instructed to choose a native species that they can find and identify on the prairie, conduct some research and produce a slide show on the topic. They also sell their plants at local markets in the spring and donate their proceeds to their FFA chapter.

Hofer also teaches a class on wildlife and fisheries at the school.

"Everything with the environment and landscape all tie in together," he said. "I think students need to learn about native species and working with those plants that have adapted to our climate and thrive in our part of the world. We also talk about how these plants and herbs have been cultivated and used by people who have inhabited the Great Plains for hundreds and thousands of years."

## Studer named winner of TSE's Distinguished Service Award



East River Electric's Chief Member and Public Relations Officer Chris Studer has been named the 2022 Touchstone Energy® Cooperatives Distinguished Service Award recipient. Touchstone Energy Board President Deb Mirasola presented Studer with the award at the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association's annual meeting in Nashville.

Studer was honored for promoting the cooperative difference and helping Touchstone Energy evolve into a strong brand with more than 650 members in 46 states.

"Chris exemplifies the values of our brand and provides unwavering support to his member systems and local community," Mirasola said.

## PHOTO CONTEST: WINTER IN JULY

By the time the summer heat sets in, many South Dakotans will be looking back with fond memories of the winter season.

Readers of Cooperative Connections are invited to send us a photo of your favorite experience from the winter of 2022. The top selected photos will be published in the July edition. A \$50 gift certificate will go to the winning photographer.

Send your photo to [billy.gibson@sdrea.coop](mailto:billy.gibson@sdrea.coop) with the subject line "Winter Memories." File format should be jpeg, PNG or PDF.

The deadline to enter is May 20. Good luck to all contestants.



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.

To view the publication's master event calendar, scan the QR code below:



Or visit <https://sdrea.coop/cooperative-connections-event-calendar> to view more upcoming events.

**APRIL 27-30**  
**45th Annual Kingswood Rummage Sales**  
 Southwest Sioux Falls, SD,  
[kingswoodrummage.com](http://kingswoodrummage.com)

**APRIL 28**  
**MercyMe: The Inhale (Exhale) Tour**  
 Denny Sanford Premier Center,  
 Sioux Falls, SD, 605-367-7288

**APRIL 28-30**  
**26th Annual Black Hills Dance Festival**  
 The Monument, Rapid City, SD,  
[blackhillsdancefestival.com](http://blackhillsdancefestival.com)

**APRIL 29-MAY 1**  
**State USBC Women's Bowling Tournament**  
 Village Bowl, Mitchell, SD,  
 605-336-5583

**APRIL 29-MAY 1, 5-7**  
**Ordinary Days**  
 Grand Opera House, Pierre,  
 SD, [pierreplayers.com](http://pierreplayers.com)

**APRIL 30**  
**SDSO Centennial Finale**  
 Washington Pavilion, Sioux  
 Falls, SD, [sdsymphony.org](http://sdsymphony.org)

**MAY 3-8**  
**Come From Away**  
 Washington Pavilion, Sioux  
 Falls, SD, [www.washingtonpavilion.org/event/come-away](http://www.washingtonpavilion.org/event/come-away)

**MAY 7**  
**Cinco de Mayo Fiesta**  
 131 E Falls Park Drive, Sioux  
 Falls, SD, 605-274-3735

**MAY 8**  
**Mother's Day Tours**  
 Historic Adams House and  
 Days of '76 Museum,  
 Deadwood, SD, 605-578-3724

**MAY 14**  
**4x4 101**  
 Central States Fairgrounds,  
 Rapid City, SD, [www.facebook.com/4x4101BH](http://www.facebook.com/4x4101BH)

**MAY 14-15**  
**Ellsworth Air and Space Show**  
 1940 EP Howe Drive, Ellsworth  
 AFB, SD, [ellsworthairshow.com](http://ellsworthairshow.com)

**MAY 15**  
**PAW Patrol Live!**  
 Swiftel Center, Brookings, SD,  
[www.swiftelcenter.com](http://www.swiftelcenter.com)

**MAY 17**  
**Norwegian Independence Day**  
 Main Street, Vivian, SD,  
 605-222-3296

**MAY 20-22**  
**Annual Sound of Silence Tesla Rally**  
 615 Washington Street, Custer,  
 SD, 605-673-2244

**MAY 20-22**  
**Open House and Free Fishing Weekend**  
 Statewide, SD, 605-223-7660

**MAY 21**  
**Booth Day**  
 D.C. Booth Fish Hatchery,  
 Spearfish, SD, [dcboothfishhatchery.org](http://dcboothfishhatchery.org)

**MAY 21**  
**Frühlingsfest & Spring Market**  
 Main Street, Rapid City, SD,  
 605-716-7979

**MAY 28**  
**Deadwood Live: Hank Williams Jr.**  
 Outlaw Square, Deadwood, SD,  
[www.deadwoodlive.com](http://www.deadwoodlive.com)

**MAY 28**  
**Memorial Weekend in Mitchell**  
 Main Street, Mitchell, SD,  
 605-292-4444

**MAY 28-29**  
**Black Hills Renaissance Faire**  
 Manuel Brothers Park, Lead,  
 SD, [www.blackhillsrenfest.com](http://www.blackhillsrenfest.com)

**MAY 29-30**  
**Back When They Bucked Rodeo**  
 Days of '76 Arena, Deadwood,  
 SD, 605-718-0810

**MAY 30**  
**Prairie Points Quilt Guild Show**  
 Harding County Memorial Rec  
 Center, Buffalo, SD,  
 605-641-5591

**JUNE 2-4**  
**Black Hills Quilt Show**  
 The Monument, Rapid City,  
 SD, 605-209-9348

**JUNE 3-5**  
**Lake Andes Fish Days**  
 Citywide, Lake Andes, SD,  
 605-487-7694

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