

# COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS

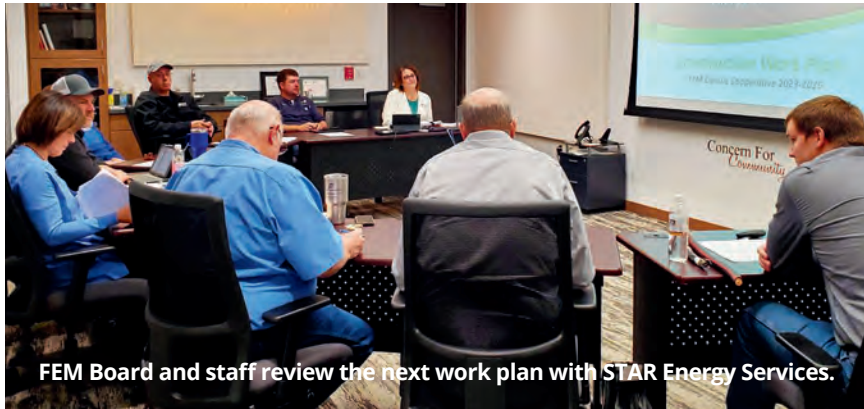


Anglers from across the region compete in the Mobridge Ice Fishing Tournament each year to try their luck and test their skills

## Hook, line and auger

Inside the Mobridge ice fishing tourney  
Pages 8-9

Shake the blues with winter outdoor fun  
Pages 12-13



**FEM Board and staff review the next work plan with STAR Energy Services.**

A regular meeting of the Board of Directors of FEM Electric was held in Ipswich, South Dakota at 8:30 a.m. on November 15, 2022, pursuant to due call and notice. It being determined that a quorum was present, President Gary Bachman called the meeting to order. Secretary Eric Odenbach kept minutes of the meeting. The following directors were declared present by roll call: Gary Bachman, Paula Petersen, Kelly Melius, Eric Odenbach, Tom Thorpe, General Manager/CEO Scott Moore, Line Superintendent Rob Vetch, Director of Finance and Benefits Rhonda Tuschner.

Ryan Holien and Jesse Brown were present until their board reports and 2023 budget were given.

Gary Bachman welcomed guest employee Foreman Justin Larson.

Angie Sieh and Sonje Oban were present until the new work plan and 2023 budget were reviewed.

James Turner and Jeremy Kalt from Star Energy were present to present the new four-year work plan and participate in the 2023 budget discussion.

**Changes to the agenda:** none  
**Changes/Additions to Minutes from October 18, 2022, meeting:** none

**Next Meeting Date:** After a review of calendars, directors agreed that the next regular meeting of the board would be on Tuesday, December 20, 2022, at 1:30 p.m. to be held at FEM Electric Board Room in Ipswich, South Dakota. The board meeting will be held immediately after the board session for strategic planning.

Motion by Tom Thorpe, seconded by Eric Odenbach and carried to approve administrative business.

Motion by Kelly Melius, seconded by Paula Petersen and carried to acknowledge manager, staff, and electrical department reports.

James Turner reviewed new four-year work plan with board and employee group with questions and discussion that followed. No action requested or taken.

Staff management and employees presented 2023 Operating budget for review with discussion that followed. No action requested or taken.

With a negative short fall projected for 2023 budget and strong October 2022 margins a discussion was held on options to mitigate both issues. With members' best interest and the cooperative business model there were a couple motions to move forward.

Motion by Eric Odenbach seconded by Tom Thorpe to do a one-time credit to active accounts in December 2022 for the availability charge of \$62.00. This credit will more than return the margin created by the \$5.00/meter rate increase that was put in place February 2022. The availability charge will remain at \$62.00 going forward. Market rate and pass-through accounts excluded.

FEM was given two power bill credits from power supplier in 2022 in the amount of \$396,000. Motion by Eric Odenbach seconded by Tom Thorpe and carried to request a One-time Economic Event Revenue Deferral Plan approval from Rural Utilities Services (RUS) to move \$396,000 into 2023 to be used in 2023 and no later than 2024. The resolution for the revenue deferral will need to be approved by RUS.

The board acknowledged reviewing the October 2022 Cyber Security Report.

## **Resolutions, Contracts, and Nominations:**

FEM Board acknowledged receipt of notice for SDREA Annual meeting.

Eric Odenbach nominated Gary Bachman as SDREA Voting Delegate and Tom Thorpe as Alternate Voting Delegate motion seconded by Paula Petersen. Motion for nominations to cease and unanimous ballot was cast for Gary Bachman as SDREA Voting Delegate and Tom Thorpe as Alternate Voting Delegate.

Kelly Melius nominated Tom Thorpe to represent FEM Electric on the SDREA Board of Directors motion seconded by Paula Petersen. Motion for nominations to cease and unanimous ballot was cast for Tom Thorpe to represent FEM Electric on SDREA board of Directors.

**Continued on pg 10**



**COOPERATIVE  
CONNECTIONS****FEM ELECTRIC  
ASSOCIATION**

(USPS 189-720)

**Board of Directors**

Gary Bachman, President  
Tom Thorpe, Vice President  
Eric Odenbach, Secretary  
Paula Petersen, Treasurer  
Kelly Melius, Asst. Sec./  
Treasurer  
Vaughn Beck, Attorney

**CEO/General Manager**

Scott Moore  
info@femelectric.coop

**Management Staff**

Rob Vetch  
Line Superintendent  
Rhonda Tuscherer  
Director of Finance and  
Benefits

**Editor's e-mail:**

oban@femelectric.coop

FEM ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS is the monthly publication for the members of FEM Electric Association, Inc., 800 5th Ave., Ipswich, SD 57451. FEM Electric Cooperative Connections' purpose is to provide reliable, helpful information to members on electric cooperative matters and better living.

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www.femelectric.coop  
Design assistance by SDREA

**FEM Electric is an equal  
opportunity provider and  
employer.**



**Scott Moore**  
**General Manager/CEO**

Although 2022 is several weeks from ending and closing our annual record keeping reports is even farther out, FEM has had, and should continue to have, a strong year both financially and completing operation projects. At FEM Electric's November board meeting, the staff and directors reviewed our past and current financial status. In November 2021, after making several budget cuts and coming off a year of reduced electric sales, and at the request of the manager, it was decided to increase FEM Electrical rates starting February 1, 2022, to all classes by \$.005 per kwh and \$5.00 per month for the availability charge.

After a lengthy discussion at FEM Electric's November 2022 board meeting, it was decided to leave availability charge at \$62.00 per month per location and give a bill credit of \$62.00 to each active location in December 2022. FEM employees put time and effort into an accurate budget, and they are pretty accurate, but we cannot control the weather or grain yields, these are big factors in our revenues.

Basin Electric, in Bismarck, ND, our generating cooperative, and East River out of Madison, South Dakota our transmission cooperative have both had above predicted revenues, mostly due to good markets and our base-load coal

generation being used on the electrical grid at a profit. In 2022 FEM Electric received several bill credits that pushed our net revenue, leaving the board with several options to review; allocate the money into capital credits and pay members in fourteen to twenty years, do a bill credit to FEM Electric members, or push the \$396,000.00 forward into 2023. With the 2023 budget showing a deficit, and once again looking at some budget cuts in 2023, it was decided to push the \$396,000.00 forward into a One-time Economic Event Revenue Deferral Plan approved by Rural Utility Services (USDA/RUS). These funds need to be recognized separately and be used or allocated back to the members by the year end 2024.

These are good problems for management and the board. The FEM Electric board of directors and all FEM employees' duties are to make sure past members capital credits are protected, and that we have a fair and transparent method of distributing current members net revenues. That's either by allocating to capital credits or returning them as bill credits. Future members need to pay their fair share of electrical infrastructure and operation costs without subsidies from past members. There is one issue that is never lost with FEM Electric directors or employees and that is "This is the members/your money."

**Continued on pg 10**

## Statement Mailing Dates

**Dec. 30, 2022 for Dec.'s energy**  
**Jan. 26, 2023 for Jan.'s energy**  
**Regardless of the statement**  
**mail out date, payments are**  
**due in the office by the 9th of**  
**the following month.**

### Tips to use your electric blanket wisely

Heating pads and electric blankets cause around 500 fires throughout the U.S. each year. Almost all of these fires involve electric blankets more than 10 years old.

Learn how to stay safe and injury-free.

- Heating appliances should never be left unattended or used while sleeping.
- Do not plug electric blankets into an extension cord or power strip, as they could overheat and cause a fire.
- Look for dark, charred, or frayed spots or electrical cords that are cracked or frayed. Replace any worn or old heating pads or electric blankets.
- Never fold electric blankets when in use. Folded or tucked-in electric blankets could overheat and cause a fire.
- When purchasing electronics, including electric blankets, be sure to only purchase from reputable retailers. Purchase devices that have been approved by a nationally recognized testing laboratory.
- Do not allow anything to rest on top of a heating pad or electric blanket when it is in use. It may cause the device to overheat.
- There are two types of personal heating appliances: electric blankets and heating pads that are placed directly on the mattress. They are not meant to be used interchangeably or at the same time.

### Gums wins Connections annual recipe contest

Lily Gums of Clear Lake has been selected winner of the annual *Cooperative Connections* member recipe contest.

Gums submitted a beverage recipe she calls "Swamp Water" that was published in the April 2022 issue of the magazine. She received a \$25 gift card for her submission. Congratulations, Lily!

She is a member of H-D Electric Cooperative based in Clear Lake.



### CO-OP LEADERS SERVE THEIR MEMBERS AND CONSTITUENTS



Ryan Maher is both a state senator and a board member at Moreau-Grand Electric Cooperative in Timber Lake. He is one of three cooperative leaders who play unique roles in serving their co-op consumers while also serving their constituents as state lawmakers during the legislative session in Pierre.

To view the comments and insights of these lawmakers and learn more about how electric cooperatives work to improve our communities, visit Cooperative Connections Plus by scanning the QR code at right.



### Be safe around power lines

#### Weston Kling

Weston Kling, age 7, urges equipment operators to always lower augers to accommodate for overhead power lines. Weston is the son of Tyler and Alexis Kling of Rapid City. They are members of West River Electric based in Wall.

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 SOUPS

## VEGGIE CHEESE SOUP

### Ingredients:

1/3 c. shredded carrots  
1/3 c. chopped celery  
3/4 c. broccoli flowerettes (fresh or frozen)  
2 tbsp. diced onion  
1/4 c. butter or margarine  
6 tbsp. flour  
2 c. chicken broth  
2 c. milk  
2 c. Velveeta cheese, cubed

### METHOD

Cook carrots, celery and broccoli in 1 cup water until tender crisp. Saute onions in butter. Add flour to blend. Add milk and stir to make white sauce then add cheese and stir until melted. Add chicken broth and vegetables in remaining water. Blend until smooth.

**Nancy Stenson, Fort Pierre**

## CHEESEBURGER SOUP

### Ingredients:

2 lbs. ground beef or ground chuck  
2 carrots, chopped  
1/2 med. onion chopped  
1/2 stalk celery, chopped  
5 med. peeled potatoes, chopped  
4 c. turkey or chicken broth  
3 c. half and half  
1 tsp. poultry seasoning  
2 tsp. garlic powder  
1 lb. Velveeta cheese, chunked  
2 tbsp. butter  
salt and pepper to taste

### METHOD

Brown ground meat in large pot. Drain and return to pot. Add butter, onion, carrots, celery and potatoes. Cook for 5 minutes. Add broth, poultry seasoning, garlic powder and continue cooking until vegetables are tender. Add half and half and Velveeta cheese and continue heating until cheese has melted. Salt and pepper to taste.

**Kathleen Meier, Firesteel**

## CHICKEN FAJITA SOUP

### Ingredients:

1 tbsp. oil  
1 med. green bell pepper, cut into 1/2-inch chunks  
1 med. red bell pepper, cut into 1/2-inch chunks  
1 sm. onion, finely chopped  
3 tbsp. tomato paste  
1 lb. boneless skinless chicken breasts, cut into 1/2-inch cubes  
1 pkg. McCormick® Organics Fajita Seasoning Mix  
3 c. chicken stock  
1 can (14.5 ounces) petite diced tomatoes, drained  
1 c. frozen corn  
1 c. tortilla strips

### METHOD

Heat oil in large saucepan or Dutch oven on medium-high heat. Add peppers and onion; cook and stir 2 minutes. Add tomato paste; cook and stir 2 minutes. Stir in chicken, Seasoning Mix, stock, tomatoes and corn. Bring to boil. Reduce heat; simmer 20 minutes or until chicken is cooked through. Ladle soup into bowls. Sprinkle with tortilla strips. Serve with desired toppings.

**mccormick.com**


Please send your favorite recipes to your local electric cooperative (address found on Page 3). Each recipe printed will be entered into a drawing for a prize in December 2023. All entries must include your name, mailing address, phone number and cooperative name.



FEM ELECTRIC'S ANNUAL

*Pancake &  
Sausage Breakfast*

JANUARY 20TH, 2023  
7:00 AM - 10:00 AM  
North Shop Building  
800 5th Ave. - Ipswich, SD



FEM Electric is hosting its annual pancake breakfast, and will collect essential paper products and cleaning supplies for local food pantries, as well as provide a free breakfast to everyone! Bring your appetite and any donation is appreciated, but the following items have been requested:

Napkins  
Cups  
Plates  
Paper Towels  
Tissues

Toilet Paper  
Shampoo  
Body Wash  
Laundry Soap  
Diapers

The annual breakfast is a great time for FEM Electric board and staff to visit with our member-owners, show our appreciation, and give back to the communities we serve.

We can't wait to see you and your family at the FEM Pancake and Sausage Breakfast!

# SCHOLAR OF THE WEEK



FEM Electric and Dakota News Now are pleased to announce that Hans Lapka was selected as the Touchstone Energy Scholar of the Week and will receive a \$250 scholarship. His story was featured on Dakota News Now the week of December 18th through the 24th, 2022.

In 2002, Touchstone Energy Cooperatives joined with Dakota News Now to recognize area high school seniors for their academic and community achievements. Seniors who are selected for scholarships often excel in the classroom, and are highly involved in extracurriculars inside and outside the school.

Hans is a senior at Leola High School, and has been involved in football, basketball and track. For 10 years he has been active in 4-H. He is also his local FFA President, is a member of FBLA, STEAM Club, jazz band, show choir, and often sings the National Anthem at events. Hans participates in Science Bowl, and can be found volunteering in the community through his church, refereeing, helping his neighbors and assisting the local ArtC Club. In almost everything he participates, he has received accolades including honor roll, Lake Region All Conference Team, Football MVP, Boys' State Representative and so much more.

In the fall, he has plans to attend South Dakota State University.

Hans' parents are Pat and Melissa Lapka of Leola, SD.

FEM Electric would like to extend a congratulations to Hans Lapka for winning Touchstone Energy's Scholar of the Week!

## Scholarships *Available*

### Attention Member Parents and Students!

The Basin Electric Power Cooperative and FEM Electric scholarship application is now available!

Graduating seniors or college freshmen can submit ONE application for a chance at THREE different scholarships!

Applications are available at your local high school counselor's offices, via the FEM electric website ([femelectric.coop](http://femelectric.coop)), or at the FEM Electric office at 800 5th Ave. Ipswich, SD 57451.

### Scholarships Available:

\$1,000 from Basin Electric Power Cooperative

\$500 from FEM Electric Cooperative

\$500 from FEM Electric Cooperative

**Deadline to apply is February 10th, 2023**





## ICE FISHING IN MOBRIDGE



The annual Mobridge Ice Fishing Tournament attracts more than 1,000 avid cold-weather anglers. *Photo by Mobridge Outdoors*

## Mobridge Ice Fishing Tournament offers fun and friendly competition

**Billy Gibson**

editor@sdrea.coop

Last fall, the world of competitive walleye fishing was shaken with a startling saga of deception and skulduggery worthy of a Tom Clancy novel.

Social media lit up showing the dramatic moment a tournament director in Ohio shouted at the top of his lungs with horror and disgust: “We got weights in fish! We got weights in fish!”

Suspicion had long surrounded a pair of locals who ultimately got nabbed stuffing lead weights down the gullets of their walleye. After the two sparked skepticism with a catch of nearly 36 lbs. - one-third heavier than the runners-up - the director gutted the fish right in front of the entire field of wary competitors and held aloft several shiny orbs the size of steel ping-pong balls.

The viral video received more than 10 million views as cameras captured the chaotic scene with one of the accused hanging his head in shame (his partner had slithered away to his truck) while fellow competitors cursed and threatened to inflict bodily harm upon the sly anglers who were later indicted on four felony counts.

Vinson Dargatz is pretty sure nothing close to that degree of high drama will be replicated at the 22nd Annual Mobridge Walleye Ice Fishing Tournament set for Jan. 14. Based on his experience participating in the event over the past 12 years, this competition is more fisherman-friendly and the atmosphere is much more focused on fun.

Dargatz, an apprentice electrician at Lake Region Electric based in Webster, has continued to make the four-hour trip from his home to Mobridge mostly

because of the fellowship and the relaxed, laid-back vibe of the festivities.

He typically gets together with his two brothers and three cousins for the tournament that he describes as a “yearly ritual.”



Vinson Dargatz is shown with one of his prize catches.

“We always have a lot of fun” he said. “We used to just bring a portable shack out on the ice and sit on some buckets while we fished. But now that we’ve gotten older, softer and a little smarter, we have an Ice Castle and we fish and hang out and grill some burgers.”



Number of two-person  
fishing teams competing

# 551

in last year's Mobridge  
Ice Fishing Tournament

Dargatz confesses that the purchase of the 8 x 16-foot Ice Castle was actually his wife's idea. When it's time for an outdoor fishing excursion, the entire family with two boys and a girl always likes to come along. And mom insists on having adequate accommodations.

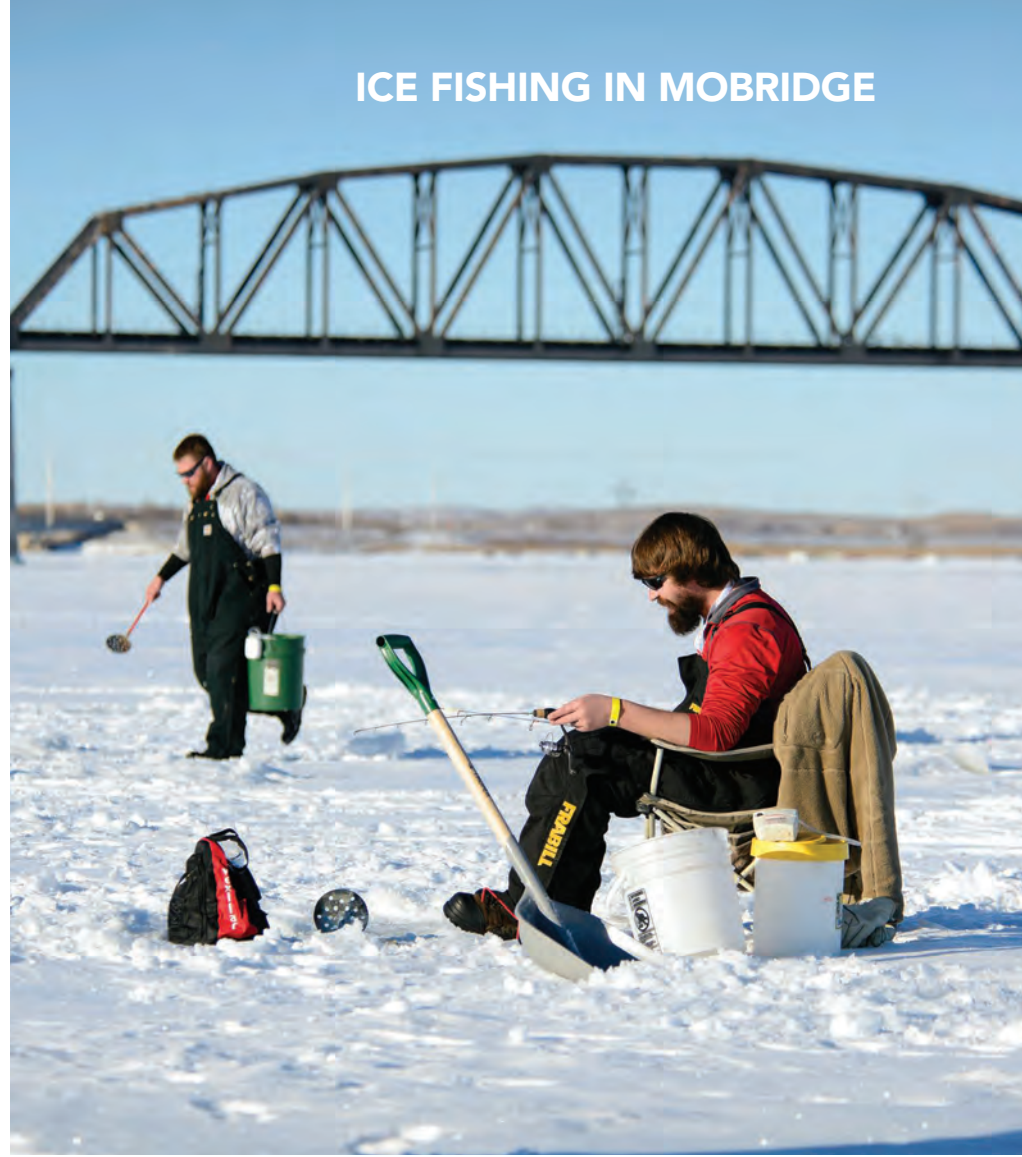
But Dargatz said when it comes to the annual winter escapes to Mobridge with the fellas, the family has to find something else to do. Besides, the town already doubles in size during tournament weekend and if every angler brought hangers-on in tow, Mobridge might expand to the size of Sioux Falls.

### FILLED TO CAPACITY

Lately, the walleye population is standing less of a chance for survival against the increasing number of competitors testing their luck and skill in the annual tournament. The field has ballooned to the point of being capped at 551 two-person teams with fishermen swarming in from 16 different states.

Only so many humans can be stuffed into the town's expo center where the group events are held.

All of these developments have bewildered Jeff Jackson, one of the tournament's founders and owner of the Wrangler Inn in Mobridge. He recalls more than two decades ago sitting around the table with a group of town leaders who were trying to figure out a way to attract visitors to the area and capitalize on all the outdoor adventure the Missouri



The Mobridge Ice Fishing Tournament draws eager competitors from 16 different states.

*Photo by Travel South Dakota*

River and Lake Oahe have to offer.

In the first year, 50 eager contenders were lured to the event by the opportunity to claim the super grand prize of a Mr. Heater. These days, the prize list represents more than \$225,000 in assorted items such as Ice Castles, four-wheelers, a Polaris Ranger, clam shacks, \$8,000 worth of outdoor gear from Scheel's and Runnings, and more.

Anglers can keep their spot in the field if they register early in mid-July, otherwise their spot will be thrown into a lottery. Three guaranteed positions are drawn each year for those who participate in the town's summer fishing tournament, the Annual Denny Palmer Memorial Walleye Classic. Three spots are auctioned off on Ebay, which typically fetch up to \$4,000 apiece, while a

final spot is raffled off.

Last year's winners were Travis Bergstrom and Tate Merchant, who registered four fish weighing a total of 15.8 lbs. including one luncker that tipped the scales at 9.33 lbs. Jason Converse and Josh Spilde finished second with five fish weighing in at 13.4 lbs.

Dargatz already has the July 2023 registration date on his calendar and reminder notifications set to make sure he doesn't miss out. He's anticipating another adventurous outing in this year's tourney.

"I think it's great for the town to have so many people visiting and spending money. It's pretty wild that a small town can pull something like that together. They run it like a well-oiled machine and make sure everyone has a good time."

## Continued from pg 2

The board acknowledged receipt of notice of Mid-West Annual meeting.

### Membership Business:

Board acknowledged membership business.

### New Memberships, Member Cancellations and Contracts:

**Disconnects:** Lloyd & Marie Bellack, Faulkton, SD, Active Farm; Theodore Beaupre, Esko, MN, Active Farm

**Reconnects:** Ed Bellack, North Vernon, IN, Active Farm; Richard Anderson, Long Lake, SD, Active Farm

**Contracts:** None

**Retired Locations:** None

### Capital Credits:

**Estates – November 2022** – One = \$571.82

**73 & Older – November 2022** – None

The board reviewed the Unclaimed Property list to be published according to South Dakota law and the FEM Electric bylaws.

**Financial Business:** The board acknowledged reviewing the following financial information: October 2022 financials and check register for the month of October 2022 contained information on checks #32913 through #32986 and all automatic payments/withdrawals for October 2022 totaling \$333,251.62.

Motion by Eric Odenbach, seconded by Tom Thorpe and carried to approve director and attorney fees.

**Legal Update:** none

### Meeting Report:

East River board update was given by Gary Bachman.

Basin Annual Meeting report was given by Gary Bachman.

Paula Petersen and Kelly Melius gave a report on East River employee/director orientation.

The board acknowledged the receipt of the October 25, 2022, Safety Meeting Minutes.

**Adjourn:** President Gary Bachman declared the meeting adjourned.

## Manager's Report Continued from page 3

Revenue deferrals are an old concept to rural electric cooperatives but new to FEM Electric. I'm not a big believer but do understand the concept of stabilizing rates. We will watch this closely to make sure the funds will benefit the membership or be returned to current members.

Star Energy engineers James Turner and Jeremy Kalt presented a new four-year work plan to staff and the board for re-view. These construction work plans are developed to work in conjunction with our annual budget. Well planned projects usually go smoother and have less surprises/cost if there is some planning and good organization ahead of time. Once our board of directors approves the plan it gives the employees direction to move forward with material purchases and completing projects.

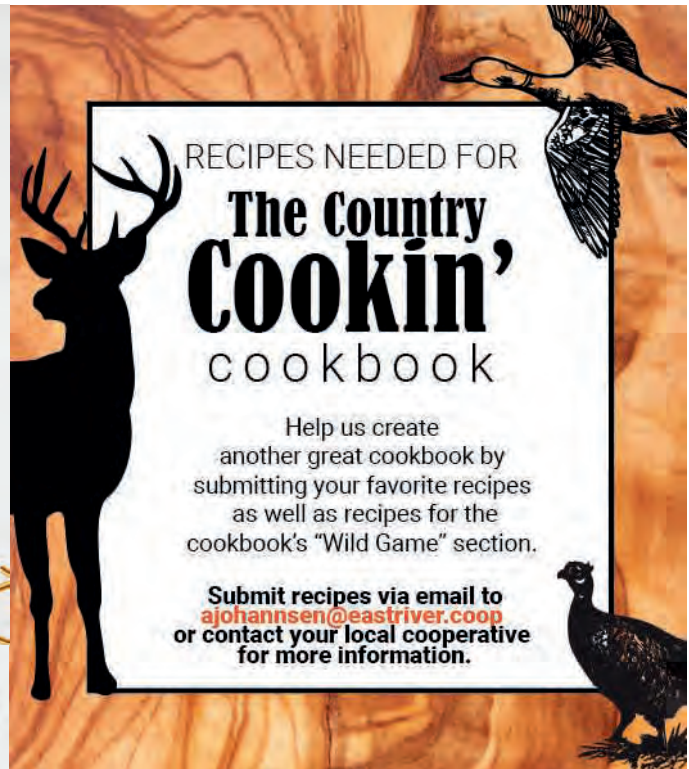
Rural South Dakota has experienced some good economic years and I believe we have more to look forward to. We have young producers and young families becoming part of our communities, schools, and businesses.

Once again if you have some electrical projects planned for 2023, please call Rob Vetch or Ryan Holien at 605-426-6891 early in the planning process.

I hope everyone has a happy and safe holiday season.







## NOVEMBER ICE STORM

The season of winter may not officially begin until December 21st, but on November 9th and 10th it gave us a preview of what may be in store for us.

An ice storm rolled through our area causing some damage. FEM crews repaired 3 broken poles, 3 anchors and 15 wire breaks caused by ice and trees during the height of the storm. Additional repairs were made the following days.

A crew of four FEM linemen took 2 bucket trucks to assist Northern Electric Cooperative with storm restoration in their territory. Northern Electric experienced extensive damage from the storm.



# WINTER OUTDOOR FUN

The chill of winter doesn't keep outdoors enthusiasts from finding adventure at Farm Island Recreation Area. *Photos by Travel South Dakota*

## Winter adventure-seekers find wonder in the chilly outdoors

**Billy Gibson**

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

Mental health counselors have discovered that seasonal affective disorder can be much more than just a harmless case of the blahs - it's a real condition that afflicts millions of people when the daylight diminishes and the temps turn colder.

They also agree that one way to defend against the winter doldrums is to get out of the house, embrace the crisp invigorating air and enjoy all the season has to offer.

It doesn't take much time or effort to create a list of fun things to do to get the blood pumping and the spirit soaring. Stepping away from a stuffy den and going outside to build a snowman, hike a nature trail, roast marshmallows over a bonfire and engage in other activities with family and friends can help bring back some

mental and emotional balance.

Nick Harrington of South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks said his department is eager to accommodate anyone looking to extract some fun from the chill of winter.

Harrington notes that many of the state's 50-plus public camping and recreation areas are open for attendance during the long winter months, although some facilities are closed in an effort to protect delicate nesting habitats

for eagles and other species of wildlife.

Some comfort stations may close down during winter but the state has modern lodges available with amenities such as heaters and running water, including cabins, suites and group lodges for cold-weather outdoor vacationing.

Harrington said that while many vacationers from far and wide flock to South Dakota in the summertime, the state boasts more than 1,500 miles of nature trails for cold-weather adventurers to discover and is one



Fat-tire biking in Spearfish Canyon



## 8 WINTER WONDERLANDS FOR OUTDOOR ADVENTURE

- ❄ Wind Cave National Park,  
Hot Springs
- ❄ Snake Creek Recreation  
Area, Platte
- ❄ Palisades State Park,  
Garretson
- ❄ Custer State Park Spur,  
Custer
- ❄ Randall Creek SRA,  
Pickstown
- ❄ Pelican Lake,  
Pelican Township
- ❄ Farm Island SRA,  
Pierre
- ❄ Oakwood Lakes State Park,  
Bruce



Time spent outdoors during the winter can be beneficial to mental and physical well-being.

of the nation's top attractions for snowmobiling, snowshoeing, hiking, fat-tire biking and many other off-season outdoor adventures.

"Some people just enjoy getting out in the cold weather. They like the changing of the seasons we get in our region and they're always looking for new opportunities to explore what we have to offer without a lot of crowds," Harrington said. "It's already a beautiful state, but winter really changes the look of the landscape and is a big draw for many people looking for outdoor fun."

World-renowned summertime attractions such as the iconic Mount Rushmore and Crazy Horse destinations take on an entirely different appeal during the snowy season. The Badlands geological formations, Ponderosa pine forests, open prairies, secluded lakes and

scenic waterways become even more alluring for landscape photographers, bird-watchers, hikers and wildlife enthusiasts when set against a charming and aesthetically pleasing wintry backdrop.

One of the most highly-attended state park destinations during both the summer and winter is Custer State Park with its 71,000 acres of trails, spectacular vistas and pristine lakes. The site is open year-round and during winter offers a wide array of things to see and do.

But there is still lots to explore across the state, including the more centrally situated Farm Island Recreation Area located four miles east of Pierre. Considered one of the park system's best-kept secrets, Farm Island sits nestled along the banks of Lake Sharpe

and the Missouri River and welcomes many winter guests who enjoy majestic glowing sunsets, ice fishing, eight miles of hiking trails, cross-country skiing and exploring the perfect natural habitat for birdwatching. There's also RV, primitive and cabin camping opportunities available.

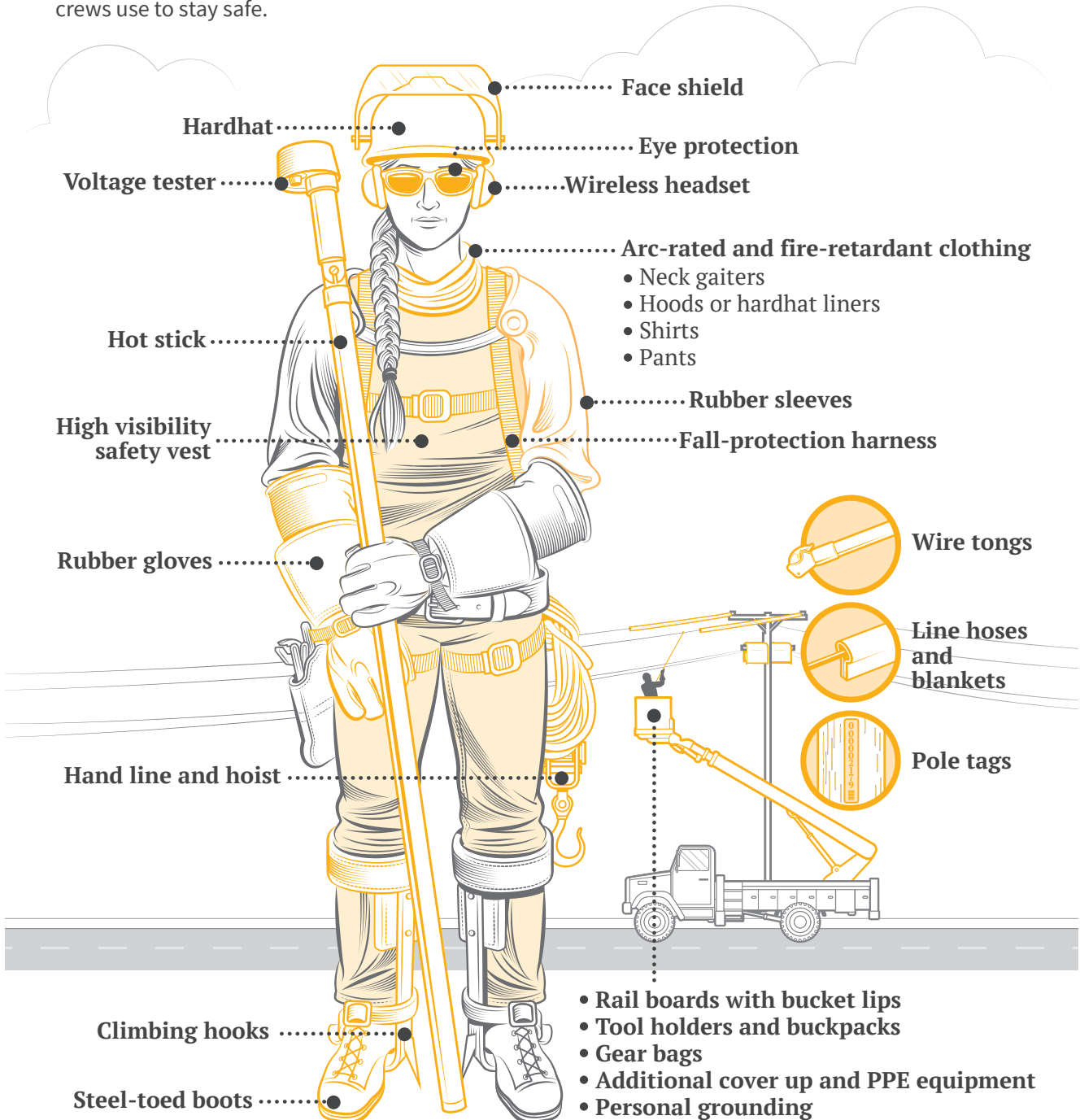
For more ideas on how to plan trip and shake off the winter blues, check out this handy guide: [www.travelsouthdakota.com/winter](http://www.travelsouthdakota.com/winter).

And after deciding on your winter vacation plans, don't forget to pack the following along with the rest of your cold-weather gear:

- Wool base layer
- Fleece mid-layer
- Windproof outer layer
- Waterproof boots
- Warm hat, scarf, gloves and socks.

# Staying Safe

Lineworkers have a dizzying array of gear they carry and wear to safely do their jobs. Some items, like climbing hooks and hot sticks, have been around since the early days of electricity, though they've been updated and improved over the years. Others, like wireless headsets and arc-rated clothing, are more modern innovations. Here's a comprehensive (though not exhaustive) look at the tools line crews use to stay safe.







# FIVE WAYS TO FIGHT THE WINTER CHILL AND SAVE ENERGY

**GET COZY UNDER YOUR FAVORITE BLANKET FOR ADDITIONAL WARMTH. DON'T FORGET TO BUNDLE UP YOUR FURRY FRIENDS, TOO. PHOTO SOURCE: MATTHEW HENRY, UNSPLASH**

We all have our favorite season. Some people love crisp, cool weather and bundling up under a favorite blanket, while others prefer the warm temperatures summer brings and all the fun outdoor activities that go with it.

But there's one thing we can all agree on: high winter bills are never fun. FEM Electric is here to help you find ways to manage your home energy use and keep winter bills in check.

Here are five tips to help increase your home's energy efficiency this winter:

**1. Mind the thermostat.** This is one of the easiest ways to manage your home energy use. We recommend setting your thermostat to 68 degrees (or lower) when you're home. When you're sleeping or away for an extended period of time, try setting it between 58 and 62 degrees; there's no need to heat your home when you're away or sleeping and less active.

**2. Button up your home.** The Department of Energy estimates that air leaks account for 24% to 40% of the energy used for heating and cooling a home. Caulking and weather stripping around windows and doors is another simple, cost-effective way to increase comfort and save energy. If you can feel drafts while standing near a window or door, it likely needs to be sealed.

**3. Use window coverings wisely.** Open blinds, drapes or other window coverings during the day to allow natural sunlight in to warm your home. Close them at night to keep the cold, drafty air out. If you feel cold air around windows, consider hanging curtains or drapes in a thicker material; heavier window

coverings can make a significant difference in blocking cold outdoor air.

**4. Consider your approach to appliance use.** When combined, appliances and electronics account for a significant chunk of our home energy use, so assess how efficiently you're using them. For example, if you're running the dishwasher or clothes washer, only wash full loads. Look for electronic devices that consume energy even when they're not in use, like phone chargers or game consoles. Every little bit helps, so unplug them to save energy.

**5. Think outside the box.** If you're still feeling chilly at home, think of other ways to warm up—beyond dialing up the thermostat. Add layers of clothing, wear thick socks and bundle up under blankets. You can even add layers to your home! If you have hard-surface flooring, consider purchasing an area rug to block cold air that leaks in through the floor.

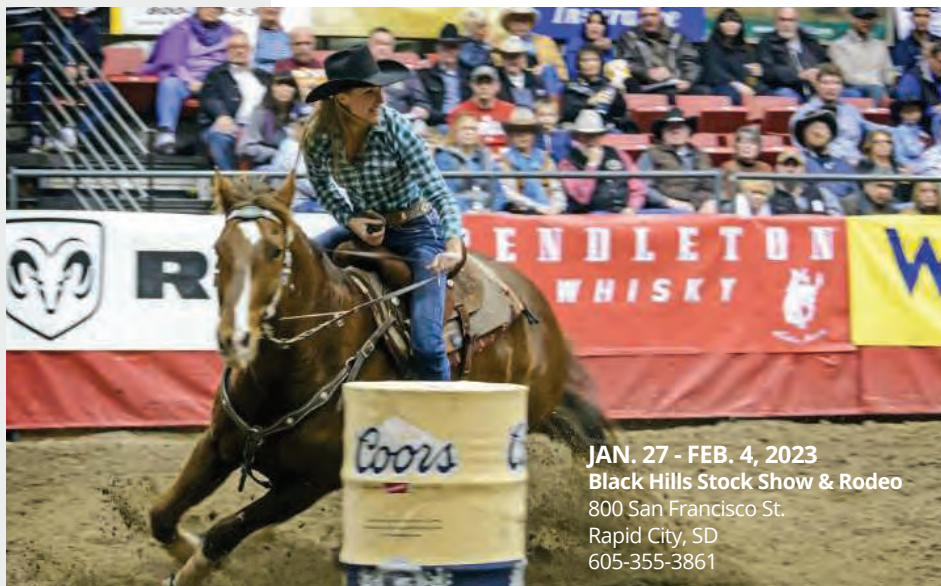
If you're taking steps to save energy but continue to see major increases in your bills, give us a call at 605-426-6891 or 800-587-5880. FEM Electric's energy experts can help identify areas and other factors impacting your home energy use and recommend next steps for savings.

Winter months often bring some of the highest energy bills of the year. By being proactive about saving energy, you can increase the comfort of your home and reduce monthly bills. Visit our website at [femelectric.coop](http://femelectric.coop) for additional energy-saving tips.

## REGISTER TO WIN!

Bring this coupon and mailing label to the Touchstone Energy® Cooperatives booth in LaCroix Hall at the Black Hills Stock Show to win an electric snow blower!

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



**JAN. 27 - FEB. 4, 2023**  
**Black Hills Stock Show & Rodeo**  
800 San Francisco St.  
Rapid City, SD  
605-355-3861

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.

**JAN. 1**  
**American Legion Post 15**  
**Pancake Breakfast**  
8:30 a.m.-12 p.m.  
South Dakota Military Heritage  
Alliance Building  
1600 W. Russell St.  
Sioux Falls, SD

**JAN. 13-14**  
**ON YOUR FEET! THE MUSICAL**  
Show Dates:  
Jan. 13, 7:30 p.m.  
Jan. 14, 2 p.m.  
Jan. 14, 7:30 p.m.  
Washington Pavilion  
Sioux Falls, SD

**JAN. 14**  
**Coats for Kids Bowling**  
**Tournament**  
Registration Starts at 1 p.m.  
\$80 for a four-person team  
Meadowood Lanes  
Rapid City, SD  
605-393-2081

**JAN. 14**  
**Chinook Days**  
**Winter Carnival**  
10 a.m.-2 p.m.  
Big Hill  
Spearfish, SD

**JAN. 20**  
**Rapid Valley UMC**  
**Soup Supper**  
4:30 p.m.-7 p.m.  
Rapid City, SD

**JAN. 21**  
**Lakota Games on Ice**  
1 p.m.-4 p.m.  
Mitchell Prehistoric Indian Village  
Mitchell, SD

**JAN. 27-28**  
**Annual Deadwood Pro**  
**Snocross Races**  
Jan. 27, 12:50 p.m.  
Jan. 28, 8:25 a.m.  
Days of '76 Rodeo Grounds  
Deadwood, SD

**JAN. 27 - FEB. 4**  
**Annual Black Hills Stock**  
**Show & Rodeo**  
Central States Fairgrounds and  
The Monument  
Tickets may be purchased  
online and at the gate  
Rapid City, SD  
605-355-3861

**JAN. 28**  
**K9 Keg Pull**  
On-site registration  
10:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.  
Deadwood Street by  
Outlaw Square  
Deadwood, SD

**FEB. 3-4**  
**TOOTSIE**  
Show Dates:  
Feb. 3, 7:30 p.m.  
Feb. 4, 2 p.m.  
Feb. 4, 7:30 p.m.  
Washington Pavilion  
Sioux Falls, SD

**FEB. 10-11**  
**Mardi Gras Weekend**  
Mardi Gras Events & Parade  
sponsored by Deadwood  
Chamber of Commerce  
Main Street  
Deadwood, SD

**FEB. 11**  
**Songs of Romance**  
7:30 p.m.  
Washington Pavilion  
Sioux Falls, SD

**MAR. 4**  
**Annual Ag Day**  
9 a.m.-1 p.m.  
Washington Pavilion  
Sioux Falls, SD

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