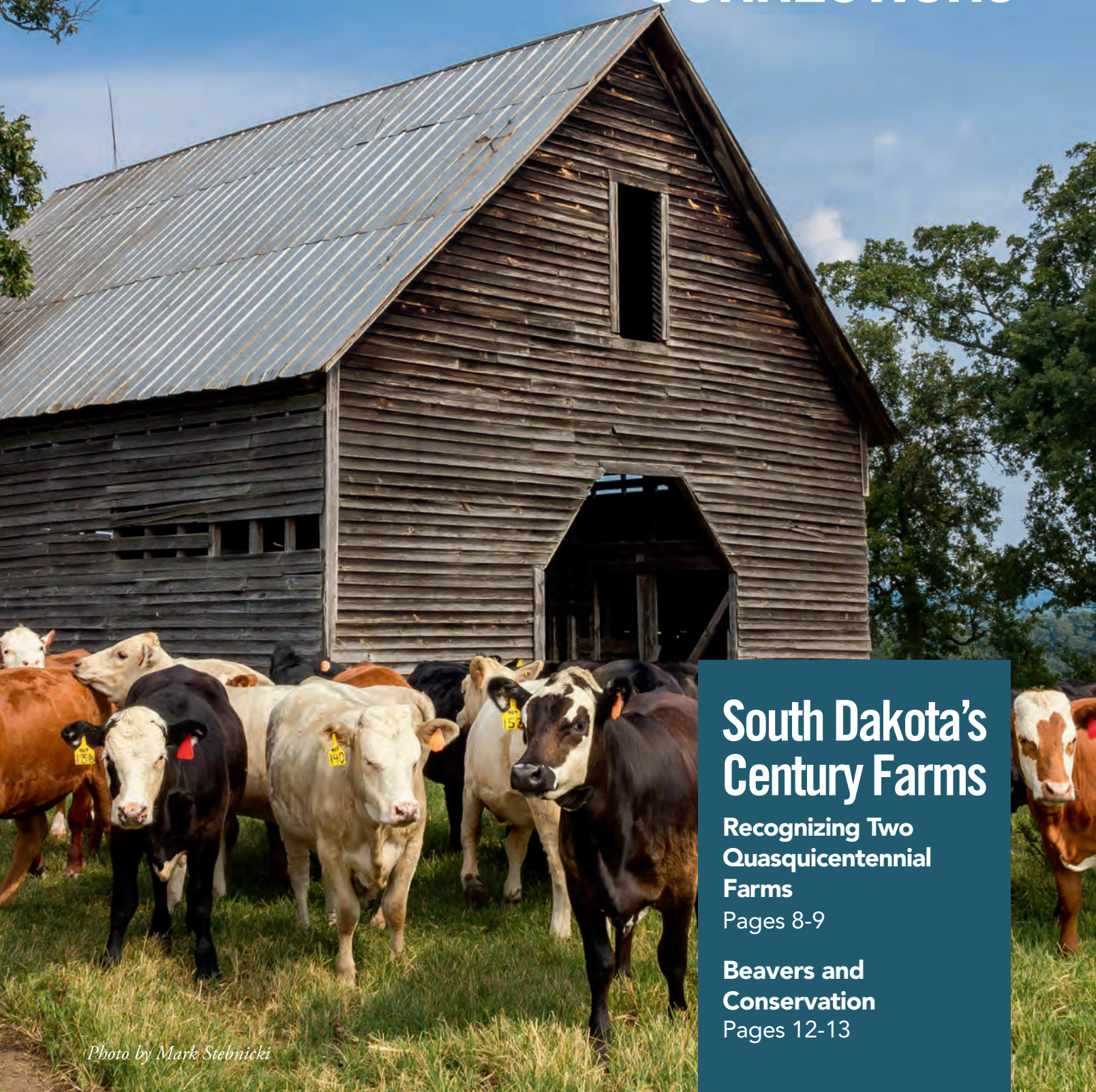


COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS



South Dakota's Century Farms

Recognizing Two
Quasiquicentennial
Farms

Pages 8-9

Beavers and
Conservation

Pages 12-13

Photo by Mark Stebnicki

BOARD REPORT



FEM board members and staff meet with Eide Baily virtually to discuss audit results.

A regular meeting of the Board of Directors of FEM Electric was held in Ipswich, South Dakota at 8:30 a.m. on April 15, 2024, 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 the minutes of the meeting. The following directors were declared present by roll call: Gary Bachman, Paula Petersen, Kelly Melius, Eric Odenbach, Tom Thorpe, Operations Manager Sean Christiansen, Director of Finance and Benefits Rhonda Tuscherer, Manager/CEO Scott Moore, Electrical Manager Ryan Holien.

Guest Employee: Angie Sieh

Changes to the agenda: None

Changes/Additions to Minutes from March 19, 2024, meeting: none

Next Meeting Date: After a review of calendars, directors agreed that the next regular meeting of the board would be on Tuesday, May 21, 2024, at 8:30 a.m. to be held at FEM Electric Board Room in Ipswich, South Dakota.

Motion by Kelly Melius, seconded by Paula Petersen and carried to approve administrative business.

Motion by Paula Petersen seconded by

Tom Thorpe and carried to acknowledge manager and staff reports.

Motion by Kelly Melius seconded by Eric Odenbach and carried to approve the following Work Order Inventories:

WOI 607	\$27,186.78
WOI 608	(\$14,388.89)
WOI 609	\$228,813.26
WOI 610	\$131,585.43
WOI 611	<u>\$127,199.40</u>
	\$500,395.98

Board acknowledged the March 2024 Cyber Security Report.

Resolutions and Contracts:

Board acknowledged receipt of NRECA Notice of 2024 Member Resolutions.

Motion By Kelly Melius seconded by Eric Odenbach and carried to approve construction contract for underground infrastructure installation with K&H Electric of Linton, ND.

Membership Business:

Board acknowledged membership business.

New Memberships, Member Cancellations and Contracts:

Disconnects: Mike & Lori Kalkman, Miranda, SD, Active Farm; Ed Heinz, Ipswich, SD, Active Farm; Blake Heinz,

Ipswich, SD, Active Farm;

Reconnects: BJ Kalkman, Miranda, SD, Active Farm; Ed Heinz, Ipswich, SD, Active Farm; Blake Heinz, Ipswich, SD, Active Farm

Contracts: BJ Kalkman, Miranda, SD, Active Farm; Justin & Nathan Davis, Ipswich, SD, Grain Bins; Dylan & Annie Perrion, Ipswich, SD, New House

Retired Locations: Melvin & Janice Beyers, Roscoe, SD, Pasture Pump

Capital Credits:

Estates - April 2024 - three = \$895.62

73 & Older - April 2024 - none

Board, staff and members of Eide Baily audit team engaged in lengthy conversation on Capital Credits and options. It was decided to leave the current processes in place.

Motion by Tom Thorpe seconded by Paula Petersen to approve allocating 2023 margins of \$1,196,680.91 to capital credits.

Board acknowledged receipt of following financial business.

Financial Business: The board acknowledged reviewing the following financial information: The check register for the month of March 2024 contained information on checks #34209 through #34276 and all automatic payments/withdrawals for March 2024 totaling \$505,576.10.

Director of Finance and Benefits reviewed March 2024 financials, Quarterly Budget Projections with TIER, CFC Member Capital Securities and SCTC Interest, CFC Benefits of Ownership and the Federated Insurance Equity. The 2023 RUS Statistical and Operating Report was provided to the board for their review, no questions.

Continued on pg 6

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. Secretary/
Treasurer
Vaughn Beck, Attorney

CEO/General Manager

Scott Moore
info@femelectric.coop

Management Staff

Sean Christiansen
Operations Manager
Ryan Holien
Electrical Department Manager
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.

Subscription information: As part of their membership, FEM members devote \$1.00 from their monthly electric payments for a subscription. Nonmember subscriptions are available for \$15 annually. (USPS 189-720) Periodical Postage Paid at Ipswich, SD 57451 and at additional offices.

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Design assistance by SDREA

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



Scott Moore
General Manager/CEO

Are policies driven by greed or, in today's world, driven by the "Green New Deal"? Are these policies good or bad? The answer lies within your own opinion or checking account. I believe America is the leader in many categories and drives the demand/markets with our purchases. Some want paper not plastic; others purchase on price not quality, some recycle, and others don't, some companies produce profits the old fashion way, creating a product or service and selling for a profit. Other companies can't make a profit without government subsidies but then complain about government policies.

The energy industry, in most cases, has spent billions of dollars on pollution controls in the past four decades after building reliable fossil fuel fired generation. I was here when the first commercial wind towers were built in South Dakota. I remember the electric cooperative family setting initiatives to be thirty percent renewable by the year 2030. We hit the thirty percent goal way

before 2030, showing our members that electric cooperative management and boards do listen. We hit that goal while keeping electricity reliable and affordable.

Some want to fix what isn't broken but rest assured they will profit from it at the expense of your bank account. In the Midwest, utilities have worked hard for over seventy years to make sure our members and communities have Safe, Affordable, and Reliable power. There are some organizations and individuals that want to change this, and you and your children will bear the cost.

Please go to VCP (Voice for Cooperative Power) and join. This only takes a few minutes and you do not need to be a cooperative member. Let Washington DC know that rural South Dakota cares about our energy.

Here is a press release from NRECA regarding the finalized decision by the EPA:

EPA's Unlawful, Unachievable Rules Jeopardize Reliable Electricity

ARLINGTON, Va. – National Rural Electric Cooperative Association CEO Jim Matheson today issued the following statement after the Environmental Protection Agency finalized four new rules to regulate power plants.

"The path outlined by the EPA today is unlawful, unrealistic and unachievable," NRECA CEO Jim Matheson said. "It

Continued on pg 6

Statement Mailing Dates

June 27, 2024 for June's energy

July 29, 2024 for July's energy

Regardless of the statement mail out date, payments are due in the office by the 9th of the following month.

Prepare Your Family for Fire Emergencies

In only a matter of minutes, a small house fire can rage out of control, reaching temperatures of up to 1,500°F. In most cases, you have one to two minutes to get out safely.

We practice fire emergency drills at work and school, but don't forget to create and practice a home escape plan, as well. It is beneficial to keep your plan visible, like on the refrigerator, to help family and visitors remember what to do. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) stresses that even children as young as three years old can understand an escape plan.

Helpful Planning Tips:

- Plan for two ways to escape from each room.
- Pick a meeting location away from your home.
- Plan for everyone in your home, including babies and others who may need help to escape.
- Teach children not to hide during a fire; they must get out and stay out.



- Practice your escape drill with everyone in your family at least twice a year.

Ways to Stay Safe:

- Clear toys, furniture and other clutter from exits.
- Check that windows open easily – fix any that stick.
- Test the batteries in your smoke alarms monthly.
- Be sure that security bars on doors and windows have a quick-release latch, and everyone knows how to open them.

Special Considerations for Apartment Buildings:

- If you live in a multi-story apartment building, map out as many escape routes as possible to get to the stairways on your floor.
- If you live in a high-rise, plan to use the stairs – never the elevator – to escape a fire.
- A secondary route might be a window onto an adjacent roof or a collapsible ladder for escape from upper-story windows – purchase only collapsible ladders evaluated by a nationally recognized laboratory, such as Underwriters Laboratory (UL).



Stay Away from Power Lines

Reese Rindels, Age 9

Reese Rindels cautions readers to watch out for utility workers. Reese's parents are Rochelle and Kyle Rindels, members of Sioux Valley Energy.

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.

DELICIOUS *Dairy*

CHOCOLATE FUDGE FROSTING

Ingredients:

2 1/4 cups confectioners' sugar
 1/4 cup unsweetened cocoa powder
 1/4 tsp. cinnamon
 6 oz. (3/4 package) cream cheese, softened
 3/4 cup (1 1/2 sticks) butter, softened
 8 oz. semi-sweet chocolate, melted and cooled slightly
 1 tbsp. pure vanilla extract

Method

Mix sugar, cocoa powder and cinnamon in medium bowl until well blended. Set aside. Beat cream cheese and butter in large bowl with electric mixer on medium speed until smooth. Gradually beat in cocoa mixture on low speed until well blended. Gradually beat in melted chocolate then vanilla until well blended.

McCormick.com

RED VELVET HOT CHOCOLATE

Ingredients:

4 cups whole milk
 1/4 cup sugar
 10 oz. semi-sweet baking chocolate, coarsely chopped
 2 tsps. red food color
 1 tsp. pure vanilla extract
Vanilla Whipped Cream
 1/2 cup heavy cream
 2 tbsps. confectioners' sugar
 1/2 tsp. pure vanilla extract

Method

Place milk and granulated sugar in medium saucepan. While stirring, bring to simmer on medium heat. Remove from heat. Stir in chocolate with wire whisk until melted. Stir in food color and vanilla. Serve with marshmallows. For the vanilla whipped cream, beat heavy cream, confectioners' sugar and vanilla in medium bowl with electric mixer on high speed until stiff peaks form.

McCormick.com

LEMON PUDDING DESSERT

Ingredients:

1 cup COLD butter
 1 8 oz. pkg. cream cheese, softened
 1 8 oz. tub cool whip, divided
 2 pkgs. (small) instant lemon pudding
 2 cups flour
 1 cup powdered sugar
 3 cups COLD milk

Method

In bowl, cut butter into flour until crumbly. Press into an ungreased 9 x 13 inch glass pan. Bake at 350 degrees for 18 to 22 minutes or until set. Cool on wire rack. In mixing bowl, beat cream cheese and powdered sugar until smooth. Fold in one cup cool whip. Spread over cooled crust. In bowl, beat milk and pudding mixes on low speed for 2 minutes. Carefully spread over cream cheese layer. Top with remaining cool whip. Refrigerate for at least 1 hour or more. Yields 12 to 16 servings.

Mary Jessen
 Holabird, S.D.

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

BOARD REPORT CONTINUED

Continued from pg 2 - Board Report

Board acknowledged receipt of March 2024 financials.

At 9:00 a.m. Derrick Larson and Parker VanZee with Eide Bailly joined the meeting by teleconference and reviewed FEM Electric's 2023 annual audit with board and staff. FEM Electric had a clean audit.

Motion by Tom Thorpe seconded by Eric Odenbach and carried to approve the 2023 annual audit as presented.

At 10:30 Scott Shewey and Danny Brown with East River reviewed Basin Electric's SPP Crypto Rate with FEM board and staff and had some conversation with other large load rates.

No action was taken by the board as Basin's new SPP Crypto Rate is at FERC (Federal Energy Regulatory Commission) waiting approval.

Motion by Eric Odenbach seconded by Kelly Melius and carried to approve board expense reports and attorney fees.

Legal Update: Moore discussed a past due collection along with two dated IRS notices Attorney Beck is assisting with.

Meeting Report:

Tom Thorpe discussed the meeting SDREA board had and he attended.

East River monthly video was watched.

Safety meeting minutes from March 14, 2024, were acknowledged.

Employee meeting minutes from March 27, 2024, were acknowledged.

Adjourn: President Gary Bachman declared the meeting adjourned.

Comments/Address Change: _____
Thank you Lineman for all
you do to keep the electricity
flowing!!
KENNETH KILBER
NORMA KILBER

Continued from pg 3 - Manager's Report

undermines electric reliability and poses grave consequences for an already stressed electric grid. The American economy can't succeed without reliable electricity. Smart energy policy recognizes that fundamental truth and works to help keep the lights on. This barrage of new EPA rules ignores our nation's ongoing electric reliability challenges and is the wrong approach at a critical time for our nation's energy future."

NRECA's assessment of EPA's power plant rule, the most impactful of the four finalized by EPA today, remains unchanged from the agency's original proposal:

- **The rule is unlawful.** It violates the law, exceeds EPA's authority, and disregards Supreme Court rulings.
- **The technology isn't ready.** The rule mandates the widespread adoption of technology that is promising, but not ready for prime time.
- **The timelines are unrealistic.** The rule gives neither existing coal units nor new gas units enough time to reach compliance.

EPA finalized its rule against a backdrop of daunting threats to reliability, as electricity demand surges at the same time supply is decreasing.

The Energy Information Administration projects that power demand will reach record highs in 2024 and 2025, increasing by 2.5% and 3.2% respectively. Grid planners forecast electricity demand to grow by 38 gigawatts through 2028, the equivalent of adding another California to the grid.

Meanwhile, the North American Electric Reliability Corporation has warned that more than 110 gigawatts of always-available generation, enough to power about 35 million homes, will retire through 2033. And all or parts of 19 states are at high risk of rolling blackouts during normal peak conditions over the next five year.

The National Rural Electric Cooperative Association is the national trade association representing nearly 900 local electric cooperatives. From growing suburbs to remote farming communities, electric co-ops serve as engines of economic development for 42 million Americans across 56 percent of the nation's landscape. As local businesses built by the consumers they serve, electric cooperatives have meaningful ties to rural America and invest \$15 billion annually in their communities.

OFFICIAL NOTICE

FEM Electric Association, Inc. Official Notice of Annual Meeting of Members

Notice is hereby given that the 76th Annual Meeting of the members of FEM Electric Association, Inc., will be held at the Ipswich High School in the City of Ipswich, State of South Dakota, at **six-thirty p.m. on Tuesday, June 25th, 2024**, for the purpose of:

1. The reports of officers, directors and committees
2. The election of directors for three-year terms

With the election of a director at this meeting, the following member has been nominated for director by the Nominating Committee in accordance with the bylaws of the Cooperative:

- Kelly Melius - District 5

Please take further notice that any fifteen or more members of the cooperative may make additional nominations by listing their nominee and the appropriate Directorate District and signing such Petition of Nomination. The petition must be submitted to the board of directors at least 25 day prior to the annual meeting. Any such petition so submitted will be posted, along with the list of nominations made by the Nominating Committee.

3. Transacting any such other business as may properly come before the meeting or any adjournment thereof.

*Eric Odenbach, Secretary
FEM Electric Association, Inc.*

**FEM ELECTRIC ASSOCIATION, INC.
IPSWICH, SOUTH DAKOTA
March 6, 2024**

We, the Nominating Committee, in session on March 6, 2024, at the Beck Law Office in Ipswich, South Dakota, hereby nominate the following:

District 5– Kelly Melius

Mary Belle
Secretary

Alan Rose
Chairman

We, the undersigned, certify that the foregoing minutes are true and correct.

Alan Rose

Mary Belle

Jeff Davis

We, the Nominating Committee, wish to place the above names in nomination.





South Dakota's Century Farms

Shannon Marvel

shannon.marvel@sdrea.coop

Soukup Homestead: Raising families and farmers for over 125 years

Nestled in the heart of southcentral South Dakota lies a cherished piece of land with a name that's been long-established in Charles Mix County – the Soukup Homestead.

Almost anyone with Wagner ties knows a Soukup.

There are even a few members of the Soukup family who are also part of South Dakota's rural electric cooperative family, including Charles Mix Electric District 1 Director Denise Soukup.

But it all had to start somewhere, and good things take time.

That was the case for the Soukup's Century Farm and the Gronseth/Fiegel/Nelson/Evans homestead, a farm located near Britton that's served by Lake Region Electric.

Really, it's a common theme for Century Farm families to be located within rural electric cooperative service areas.

The South Dakota Farm Bureau and the South Dakota Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources began the Century Farm Program in 1984 to recognize farm and ranch families who have kept the farm in the family for 100 years or more.

Farms reaching the milestone of 125 years, known as

Quasiquintennial Farms, and the venerable Sesquicentennial Farms, marking an impressive 150 years, are also given their due recognition.

With over 3,000 families honored to date, the program continues to shine a light on the enduring legacy of South Dakota's agricultural heritage. To qualify for these prestigious honors, farms must encompass at least 80 acres and provide documented proof of their original purchase date. That means a family member must have always had ownership of the land over the last 100 years, including during the Great Depression and Dust Bowl.

The annual award presentation is a cherished tradition held at the South Dakota State Fair.

After migrating with family from what is now known today as the Czech Republic in the late 1800s, Joseph and Mary Soukup



Tom Soukup stands beside his Farmall Red International Harvester 460 tractor. *Photo courtesy of Linda Soukup*

came to the Dakota Territory at a time when most of the land open for settlement had already been settled.

While living in Tabor with family, Joseph Soukup applied for a homestead on reservation land that was now open for settlement at the U.S. Land Office in town of Mitchell on Jan. 30, 1896.

“In the following five years he built a frame house 13 feet by 18 feet in order to establish a residence, then a grainery, a corn crib, and he also fenced in 80 acres,” said Linda Soukup, the wife of Tom Soukup. Her husband is Joseph and Mary’s grandson.

Joseph and Mary raised ten children on the very homestead that Tom and Linda raised their kids.

“There’s a lot of pride in the heritage and the legacy of, you know, having it passed down,” Linda said. A new house was built on the site of Joseph and Mary’s original home’s structure in 1952.

That’s where Tom and Linda lived and became the third generation to live on the homestead.

“When we lived here and Tom’s parents and their brothers and sisters used to all come here,” Linda said, as she started walking towards one of the farm buildings on the property referred to as “the shed.”

“And they would butcher hogs and cattle and we would process them down there. We had a meat cooler in the basement. And then one of the families owned the meat saw and one owned the sausage stuffer,” she recalled. “That was always kind of what we did until, well, families got bigger, and you couldn’t. You just couldn’t keep up, you know? We could have had a critter in there all the time,” she said.

Tom and Linda raised their children – Becky, David, Kathy and Mary – in the house as well.

Their son David works as a project engineer for Phillips Petroleum in Texas. Two of their daughters live in different towns but remain relatively close to the homestead.

Kathy Jaeger lives in Tyndall and Mary Ringling lives in Platte. In 1996, their daughter Becky and her husband, Mike

Brunsing were living in Montana when Tom and Linda decided to move into town, so in 1998 the Brunings moved back to South Dakota and began helping Tom on the farm while living in the house.

Becky raised three children of her own in the house she grew up in herself.

Becky and Mike still live on the homestead but in a more recently built home.

Now her son Dylan, 28, is raising his own family in the 1952 farmhouse.

In doing so, he became the fifth generation on the homestead.

Dylan and his wife, Keely, have two sons – a 20-month-old and an infant born in late March.

After 126 years, Torger Gronseth’s homestead continues to bring family together.

It’s hard for Carol Evans to put into words how she feels when she reflects on the 126 years of history of her family’s farm in Marshall County.

“It’s so important to us,” Evans said. Then she takes pause.

“I’m sorry, it’s emotional for me,” she says, before telling her family’s – and the farm’s – origin story.

In 1872, her great grandfather, Torger Gronseth, immigrated to America from Norway at only 14 years old.

He made the trip to join his eldest brother in Minnesota. He officially “staked his claim” and homesteaded in the Pleasant Valley Township of Marshall County in 1901.

Over the next two decades, Torger and his wife, Berthe Lea, amassed over 960 acres of undeveloped land in the Coteau de Prairie of northeastern South Dakota.

To each of their six children, Torger bequeathed a quarter of land.

The pioneering couple sold a quarter to their daughter, Louise, upon her marriage to George Fiegel for \$1.

While they were building the house that Carol and Frank Evans now call home, the Fiegels welcomed their first child.

“All of them were born in that house built in 1920. The first born was born on

the actual homestead. The house was being built when my first aunt was born,” Evans said.

Louise and George owned the house and quarter of land until 1972, at which point ownership was passed onto their daughter Joyce and her husband Orvin Nelson.

“We bought the house in 2011. Last year after my mom passed, we were able to buy the entire quarter,” she recalled.

Carol and Frank then got to work refurbishing the 800-square-foot house.

The Evans live in Arizona in the fall, winter, and spring months, but spent years renovating the farmhouse over the course of several summers.

“We go back in May every year, and we’ve renovated the house from the chimney to the basement,” Evans said.

Their summer stay at the farm begins with the help of Lake Region Electric Association.

“The first thing we do when we get there is turn the power on. Then we turn the water on and then we mow,” she said.

The week over the Fourth of July holiday is especially meaningful to Carol. That’s when her grandchildren make their pilgrimage back to the Gronseth/Fiegel/Nelson/Evans homestead.

“They’re always here around Fort Sisseton Days,” Evans said.

The traditional agenda for the kiddos also includes picnics at Roy Lake, routine farm work, and touching up the paint on an American Flag pallet display located at the base of Torger Gronseth’s tombstone.

“Every one of the kids has learned how to drive when they’re back in South Dakota – because it’s safe,” Evans said.

Evans ensures the next generation knows their family history.

“They know their great grandpa was only 14 years old when he left Norway. The strength of the person to do that – the longevity of our genetic background, the struggle, and the fact that we’re so fortunate – are something they’ll understand,” Evans said.

“And that it’s home. It’s never going to the farm. It’s going home.”

COOPS IN THE CLASSROOM

SPRING COOPS IN THE CLASSROOM FEATURING ELECTRICAL SAFETY... AND COOKIES?

Throughout the month of April, FEM employees Crystal Thorson and Ryan Holien visited 6 schools and 4 colonies to talk about electrical safety, and where their electricity comes from.

This year, FEM added a new classroom activity that demonstrated how lignite coal is mined in North Dakota by using chocolate chip cookies. Each student was given a few tooth picks and a chocolate chip cookie, and were tasked to “mine” the chocolate chips. The goal was to leave the cookie in good condition, similar to how lignite coal is mined. Once the chocolate chips are mined, students then try to put their cookie back together in the best condition possible. Lignite coal is mined in a similar way. Once the coal is mined, the land is returned to its original condition, if not better, by reclaiming the soil.

As a bonus, students were also able to test out linemen gear. The gear consisted of a hard hat, safety glasses, linemen gloves,



tool belt, and knee pads, all of which are designed to protect the linemen from electrical currents and other hazards. They used extendo poles and hot sticks as well.

At the end of the lesson, students were given a linemen appreciation coloring contest sheet to return to FEM. Winners will receive a prize for the best work, and entries will be displayed at the annual meeting on June 25th.



5 WAYS TO SAVE THIS SUMMER

When summer temperatures rise, so do our energy bills. Here are a few ways you can reduce energy use and grow your summer savings.

1. Raise your thermostat.

The smaller the difference between the indoor and outdoor temp, the more you'll save.

2. Install window coverings

like blinds or light-blocking curtains to prevent indoor heat gain during the day.

3. Seal leaks with caulk and weatherstripping around windows and exterior doors. Air leaks force your air conditioner to work harder and run longer than necessary.

4. Run ceiling fans for additional cooling but turn them off when you leave the room.

5. Lower your water heater thermostat to 120 degrees to reduce standby heat loss.



Source: Dept. of Energy



Tim Flakoll

Dad loved his time on the board. A life highlight for sure

Thank you so much for all of your love and support during this difficult time of loss.

Our sincere thanks for your expression of heartfelt sympathy for our beloved dear father, Alden Flakoll and our family. We feel loved and honored that you took the time to reach out to us with kindness and a memorial in honor of our father.

As much as he did to prepare us for this time, the loss is still immense. We will miss him every day, but with support from friends like you, we will be okay. The love, faith and living service he exhibited now grows in all of us.

Mom and Dad were married for 69 years and now they spend eternity together in heaven, and we look forward to being with them again.

We will truly miss this amazing man.

The family of Alden J. Flakoll

MESSAGING SIMPLIFIED

You can make payments and receive text updates from one number: (844) 965-1321



FEM Electric
Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

Smart Management. Smart Life. SmartHub.



REBUILDING HABITATS

Beavers provide many environmental benefits including drought resilience, flood control and wildlife habitat. *Photo Credit: Richard Hamilton Smith.*

BEAVER-INSPIRED STREAM RESTORATION

Frank Turner

frank.turner@sdrea.coop

Centuries ago, the arrival of European traders in North America marked the beginning of a multi-century hunt for furs. The pelt of the North American beaver was at the forefront of this fur trade, prized for its use in crafting felt hats. These stylish hats fueled an ever-increasing demand for beaver furs that persisted for centuries, leading to a severe decline in beaver populations. By the early 1900s, beavers had become critically endangered, nearly vanishing from the expansive wetlands across the continent.

As the beavers dwindled, so did their dams. Lazy streams and rivers, once

tamed by beaver dams, began to flow more rapidly. The disappearance of the dams caused waterways to narrow and floodplains essential to willow trees and cottonwoods to vanish. The loss of these beaver-engineered habitats set the stage for the significant erosion of precious prairie lands.

In 2020, The Nature Conservancy set out to combat these issues by launching a project in partnership with the Natural Resources Conservation Service, South Dakota State University and local conservation agencies to restore stream health in western South Dakota.

“Our West River streams make up a small percentage of the total landscape – just under two percent of our total acreage is stream and valley

bottom,” said Lori Brown, riparian health program manager with The Nature Conservancy. “Yet, nearly everything in the prairie depends on these streams, including us in our rural communities.”

Prior to launching the project, The Nature Conservancy engaged local landowners in discussions to best understand their challenges and needs. During the discussions, several landowners faced similar issues: streams were eroding the land, fence lines were being washed away, and the water table was too low. Despite having effective tools for managing grasslands, landowners lacked the means to best maintain healthy streams.

“We needed to explore options

that any landowner could implement – strategies that didn't require a hydrologist to implement or an engineer to design," Brown said. "Our ranchers and landowners are some of the best stewards of the land. A lot of them are hungry for information and tools that can help them help the land."

The solution was simple, inspired by the ingenious works of an aquatic rodent: an artificial beaver dam. After all, if a beaver can engineer a dam, why can't a landowner?

Known as beaver analog devices, these simple speedbump-like structures quickly became integral to a broader strategy known as process-based restoration, a method that uses nature to help nature. Composed of locally sourced sticks, rocks and mud, beaver analog devices replicate a key natural process once performed naturally by beavers centuries ago. When established correctly, they filter water,

slow fast-flowing streams, and even recreate floodplains.

After settling on a solution, The Nature Conservancy set out to implement the idea in the real world, working with 10 landowners to help build and record the effects of the simulated beaver dams.

"Every day that I go out to one of these sites and I see that the beaver dams that we have built aren't totally washed out, it absolutely amazes me," Brown said. "I've read the manuals and I know how it's supposed to work, but I'm always in awe at what we are able to accomplish with the right building blocks in place."

After four years of the project, Brown said there is a lot to be excited about as the benefits of the project are evident. Signs of stream restoration are well underway. Sediment is accumulating rather than eroding, and revitalized floodplains are sprouting new willow trees.

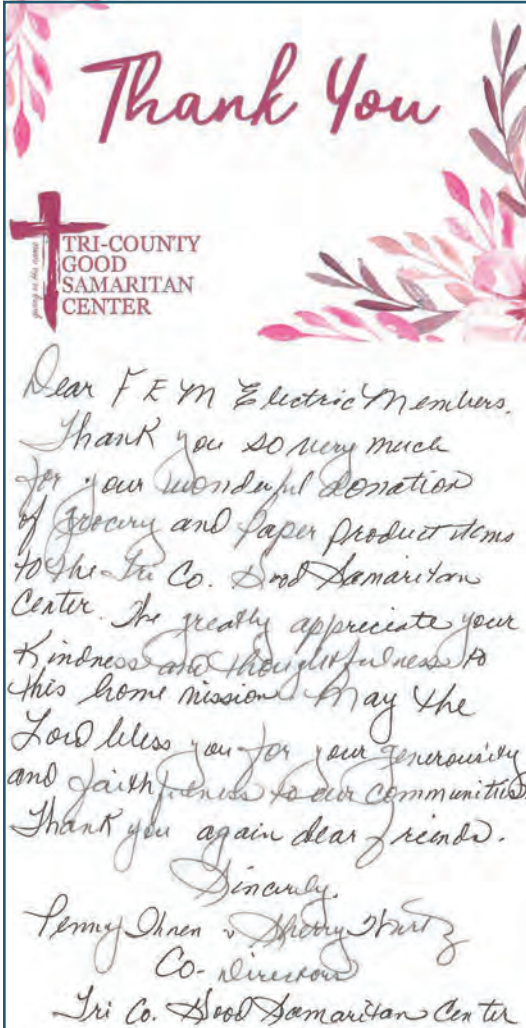
"Without any planting on our part, woody species are now returning to these stream channels," Brown said. "The next step will be to lean into the success of this project. We want to act as a support for our conservation partners and other interested landowners that want to see their stream condition improve on their properties."

Others have been inspired by demonstrations led by The Nature Conservancy and other conservation organizations in the state to take action to slow down and hold water.

"We are just starting to see some of the effects from our outreach and education side of this project," said Brown. "The most rewarding part of this effort has been hearing the stories from local ranchers and landowners and hearing them get excited about the project."



A rock structure installed to help prevent headcuts from eroding upstream reaches. *Photo Credit: Joe Dickie, Generation Photography, Inc.*



Thank you for supporting the Ipswich Area Youth Wrestling program.

Thank you for the donation of water for our home youth wrestling program tournament. We truly appreciate your continued support. Our youth wrestlers had a very fun & successful wrestling season.

Thank you,
Fasw.ch wrestling booster club.

TESTING OUR RESILIENCY

POLE INSPECTIONS: COMING TO A POLE NEAR YOU

Power poles are the backbone of any electric cooperative, and it is no different at FEM. They need to be strong, sturdy and reliable, which is why FEM has brought in a contractor to inspect them.

Starting in early June, EXO will have an inspector based out of Watertown, SD working in Onaka, Roscoe and Bowdle areas testing poles. The inspector will be in a side-by-side that will have "FEM Pole Tester" labeled on it.

Why are we testing poles?

Pole testing is important to maintaining the reliability of FEM's system. While poles may appear to be fine on the outside, what's inside is what truly counts. Decay and old age may have taken a toll, and a visual inspection may not catch these signs of damage. Pole inspections may also reveal bad pole grounds, ground rods or if a pole needs to be completely replaced.

Testing poles helps FEM catch bad poles before they become a problem. Poles may not stand up to a storm if they're already decaying, or may just fall and become a public safety concern.

How are pole inspections done?

Pole inspections are done in a number of ways, and often combine multiple methods to make sure the integrity of a pole is up to snuff. Methods include sounding a pole, or hammering on a pole a number of times and listening for rattling or hollow noises that indicate rot. Other methods include boring holes at specific angles to catch rot or damage, digging into the ground around the pole where rot is most likely to begin, and using ultra sonic testing, which requires very little damage to a pole unlike boring holes.

Results

Every pole will be inspected eventually. If a pole fails inspection, it will be replaced with a good pole, which means the cooperative's and members' system will be that much more reliable in the future.

If you have any questions about pole testing, please contact FEM at 605-426-6891 or 1-800-587-5880.



Dear FEM,

With sincere gratitude
and appreciation.

Thank you ^{so}/_z much for your generous donation of water for our spring workshop. We had a great event with over 35 participants. Your support of the community does not go un-noticed.

Thank you,
Brooke Meshele
Edmunds Co
Conservation

JUNE 12-JULY 20, 2024
Prairie Repertory Theatre
Summer Season
Oscar Larson Performing
Arts Center
Brookings, SD
605-688-6045



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.

MAY 27
Memorial Day Services
12 p.m.
Groton Union Cemetary with lunch at Legion Post #39I
Groton, SD

JUNE 1
Blessed Sacrament
Pastorate-Wide Celebration
3:30 p.m.
Aberdeen Civic Center
Aberdeen, SD
605-216-2081

JUNE 1
Eureka City Wide Rummage
Sale & Farmer's Market
Eureka, SD

JUNE 9
Brookings Car Show
11:30 a.m.-3 p.m.
Pioneer Park
Brookings, SD

JUNE 12-13
Rangeland & Soil Days
Contest
Codington County Extension Building
Watertown, SD

JUNE 14-16
Ipswich Trail Days
Ipswich, SD
ipswichtraildays.com

JUNE 14-16
Highmore's Old Settler's
Day Weekend
Highmore, SD

JUNE 15
Branding Party & Brisket
Feed
6 p.m.
102 Dakota Ave.
Wessington Springs, SD

JUNE 20
Prairie Partners Master
Gardeners Garden Walk
Aberdeen, SD

JUNE 21-23
Scavenger's Journey
Yard sales, farmer's markets & specialty shops
Wall to Wagner
www.scavengersjourney.com

JUNE 22-23
"Our Place: 15 Years of
Onaka" Photography Exhibit
11 a.m.-6 p.m. Sat.
12-4p.m. Sunday
Onaka Community Hall
Onaka, SD

JUNE 26-29
Crystal Springs Rodeo
Clear Lake, SD
605-874-2996

JULY 13
9th Annual Auto Value Car
Show
11 a.m.-4 p.m.
Hav-A-Rest Campground
Redfield, SD

JULY 14
Lion's Club Summer Fest/
Car Show
9 a.m.-4 p.m.
Groton City Park
Groton, SD

JULY 20
21st Annual "On the Road to
Wishes" Poker Run for Make
a Wish
10:30 a.m.
Bieglers Motors/CNS Motor Sports
Aberdeen, SD

JULY 26-27
Eurekafest
Eureka, SD

JULY 28-30
Bowdle Tower Days
Bowdle, SD

JULY 26-28
Clear Lake Days
ClearLakeDays.com
Clear Lake, SD

AUG. 8
Family Fun Fest
5:30-7:30 p.m.
Groton, SD

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