

COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS



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

South Dakota 4-H Shooting

Shooters Prepare for
the State Competition
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Wild Horses Roam at
Black Hills Sanctuary
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Your FEM Electric Board of Directors

January Board Report

A regular meeting of the Board of Directors of FEM Electric was held in Ipswich, South Dakota at 8:30 a.m. on January 21, 2025, 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, Tom Thorpe, Eric Odenbach, Kelly Melius. Electrical Manager Ryan Holien, Director of Finance and Benefits Rhonda Tuscherer, Operation Manager Sean Christiansen.

Guest Employee: Justin Larson

Changes to the agenda: None

Changes/Additions to Minutes from December 17, 2024, meeting: None

Next Meeting Date: After a review of calendars, directors agreed that the next regular meeting of the board would be on Friday, February 14, 2025, at 8:30 a.m. to be held at FEM Electric Board Room in Ipswich, South Dakota.

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

Motion by Eric Odenbach, seconded by Paula Petersen and carried to acknowledge manager and staff reports.

December 2024 Cyber Security Report was acknowledged.

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

#617	\$154,728.63
#618	\$424,193.38
#619	\$183,014.97
Total	\$761,936.98

Motion by Kelly Melius seconded by Eric Odenbach and carried to approve ordering \$255,915.00 of underground conductor for two FEMA mitigation projects to be completed in 2026.

Resolutions and Contracts:

Motion by Tom Thorpe seconded by Kelly Melius and carried to approve Revisions to Policy 315 Fees Policy.

Motion by Paula Petersen seconded by Tom Thorpe and carried to approve Board President Gary Bachman to sign amended electrical service agreement between FEM Electric and Aberdeen Energy, LLC. /Glacial Lakes Energy, LLC.

Motion by Kelly Melius seconded by Paula Petersen and carried to sign

Federated Insurance Subscribers Agreement & Power of Attorney.

Membership Business:

Board acknowledged membership business.

New Memberships, Member Cancellations and Contracts:

Disconnects: Harlan & Stella Buechler, Bowdle, SD, Active Farm; DaPaVa, LLP, Rapid City, SD, Grain Bin; Rick & Jessica Moen, Hosmer, SD, Active Farm; Mark & Vicki Melius, Lincoln, NE, Grain Bin; Michael & Shirley Williams, Mina, SD, Active Farm

Reconnects: Mathew Buechler, Bowdle, SD, Active Farm; David & Shirley Holt, Cresbard, SD, Grain Bin; Jeff Paplow Harvesting, LLC, Roscoe, SD, Active Farm; Daniel Lagerhausen, Faulkton, SD, Grain Bin; Justin & Melissa Williams, Cresbard, SD, Active Farm

Contracts: Ronald & Beverly Bornemann, Fargo, ND, House

Motion by Eric Odenbach was seconded by Kelly Melius and carried to approve one construction contract for new service.

Capital Credits:

Estates: January 2025 – None
73 & Older: January – 2025 - None

Board acknowledged receipt of following financial business.

Financial Business: The board acknowledged reviewing the following financial information: The check register for the month of December 2024 contained information on checks #34886 through #34987 and all automatic payments/withdrawals for December 2024 totaling \$547,621.95.

Board acknowledged receipt of

Continued on page 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*

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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

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opportunity provider and
employer.**



Scott Moore
General Manager/CEO

As we listen and watch the news and follow our favorite newspaper, it may seem that Washington, DC is getting turned upside down as former President Biden left office and President Trump moves into office. Executive orders seem to be the tool of current politicians to move their agenda forward, but even executive orders have guard rails.

FEM Electric, our members, and over 900 electric cooperatives across the United States belong to NRECA (National Rural Electric Cooperative Association), in Arlington, VA. This group performs many functions for your local electric cooperative, but one main duty is to monitor and negotiate with all branches of the federal government. NRECA has worked with both the Biden team and President Trump transition team throughout the past year making sure ours and your electrical needs are considered. As I have said many times, if we are not at the table, it would be easy to be forgotten.

Then what? As with most business, electric cooperatives rely on good policies at the federal and state levels, creating both opportunities and roadblocks, sometimes forcing tough conversations. At all levels of government good relationships and partnerships are a must to be successful. We are fortunate to have NRECA, SDREA (South Dakota Rural Electric Association), and other organizations that monitor specific legislation that can have positive or negative consequences on your monthly electric invoice.

As many of you are aware, forest and wildland fires are a big concern and are a big expense to insurance companies. You may not think this is a big deal for the prairies of South Dakota but that would be wrong. Insurance companies will need to spread their losses to stay financially strong. Many electric providers, municipals, investor-owned utilities, and electric cooperatives will be working with legislation, now and the near future, to find common ground to help protect utility assets. As I write this article it has **Continued on page 6**

**FOLLOW US ON
SOCIAL MEDIA**

@FEMEelectric on

@fem_electric on

@FEMEelectric on

We'll post outage updates, safety tips, news and more to keep our members informed on all the latest from FEM Electric.

Statement Mailing Dates

March 26, 2025 for March's energy

April 29, 2025 for April's energy

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

Falls Are Preventable

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

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



Fall Hazards at Home

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

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

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

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

Source: National Safety Council



"Don't cut trees near power lines."

Remington Welsh, Age 11

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

Kids, send your drawing with an electrical safety tip to your local electric cooperative (address found on Page 3). If your poster is published, you'll receive a prize. All entries must include your name, age, mailing address and the names of your parents. Colored drawings are encouraged.

Hearty FAMILY MEALS

EASY CREAMY HAMBURGER PASTA

Ingredients:

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

Method

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

Lyndell Todd
Rapid City, S.D.

MINI BBQ BACON CHEDDAR MEATLOAF

Ingredients:

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

Method

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

Kayla Beaner
Centerville, S.D.

SKILLET CHICKEN POT PIE

Ingredients:

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

Method

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

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

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

McCormick.com

Please send your favorite recipes to your local electric cooperative (address found on Page 3). Each recipe printed will be entered into a drawing for a prize in December 2025. All entries must include your name, mailing address, phone number and cooperative name.

Board Report Continued from page 2

preliminary December 2024 financials.

Director of Finance Rhonda Tuscherer reviewed RUS and CFC loan summaries.

Motion by Eric Odenbach seconded by Tom Thorpe and carried to approve board expense reports and attorney fees.

Legal Update: Attorney Vaughn Beck joined the meeting and updated the board on PUC proceedings involving Leola Data Center/MDU vs FEM Electric/East River/Basin Electric. The suggested names of the nominating committee were also given to Mr. Beck.

Meeting Report:

East River monthly board report was given by Gary Bachman along with a video report.

Tom Thorpe reported on SDREA January board meeting.

Tom Thorpe and Gary Bachman reported on SDREA Annual meeting.

Safety meeting minutes from December 13, 2024, were acknowledged. The Safety Committee meeting from December 6 were reviewed along with 2025 ERP Plan. December 20, 2024, Safety Committee meeting was reviewed. January 7, 2025 Employee Meeting minutes were reviewed.

Adjourn: President Gary Bachman declared the meeting adjourned.

Manager's Article Continued from page 3

been extremely dry this past fall so remember to be safe.

Some may have started, and other operators will be calving soon, please remember to be safe while working around livestock and operating your four-wheelers and side by side. I would remind you to tighten your saddle cinch but I'm guessing only a few still use a horse.

If you are planning on adding any electrical load, please contact Sean Christiansen or Ryan Holien at 605-426-6891. FEM Electric can also complete your secondary wiring projects.

5 Tips To GO GREEN for St. Patrick's Day

- 1. Replace your HVAC filter.**
These typically need replacing every three months, though factors like pets, climate and system age can affect the timing.
- 2. Install a smart thermostat.**
A smart thermostat offers convenience, savings and efficiency by adjusting the temperature based on your schedule – reducing usage when no one is home.
- 3. Cut energy use during peak hours.**
In spring, peak electricity hours are usually in the evening. Reduce usage by visiting a park, a theater or dining out.
- 4. Upgrade to energy-efficient appliances.**
Look for appliances that are ENERGY STAR-certified, using 10 to 15% less energy and water than standard models, according to Energy.gov.
- 5. Save energy through rebate programs for solar, battery storage or electric vehicles.**
Check with utilities and government programs for rebates and incentives to help make these technologies more accessible.
Learn more at: [SafeElectricity.org](https://www.SafeElectricity.org)

ENERGY EFFICIENCY
TIP OF THE MONTH

March is an ideal time to service your home cooling system, ensuring it runs efficiently when the heat of summer arrives. Routine maintenance, like cleaning or replacing filters, checking refrigerant levels and inspecting parts, can improve your system's energy efficiency and lower your energy bills. By addressing potential issues early, you can avoid costly emergency repairs and extend the lifespan of your unit. Scheduling service in the spring helps you beat the peak-season rush, giving you faster access to qualified technicians. A well-maintained cooling system can save energy and keep your home comfortable all summer long.



FEM ELECTRIC'S ANNUAL PANCAKE & SAUSAGE BREAKFAST

OVER 180 SERVED AT FEM'S ANNUAL BREAKFAST

FEM saw another successful year of serving members pancakes and sausage. Over 180 people came through FEM's doors to enjoy breakfast, and visit with FEM staff and board members.



Board members Tom Thorpe, Gary Bachman, Paula Peterson and Eric Odenbach made pancakes and visited with members as they filtered in. Eric even brought his daughter to help flip flap jacks.

Donations were collected for food pantries in Faulk, Edmunds and McPherson counties as well. A nice pile was split between the 3 counties and distributed shortly after the breakfast concluded.



FEM staff and board members would like to say thank you to everyone who was able to join us for breakfast, and to those who were able to donate. We hope to continue this tradition for years to come. See you next year!





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

SOUTH DAKOTA 4-H SHOOTING

Shooters Prepare for the State Competition in April

Jocelyn Johnson
jocelyn.johnson@sdrea.coop

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



Sophie Wolf takes aim during a weekly practice.

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

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

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

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

than we have in anything else.”

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

BE READY FOR STORM SEASON

PREPAREDNESS IS THE BEST DEFENSE

Spring is on our doorstep and many of you are looking forward to more opportunities to be outdoors and enjoy warmer weather. Springtime brings our favorite activities like cooking out with family and friends, time spent working in the garden and simply slowing down a bit to enjoy life.

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

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

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

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

- Stock your pantry with a three-day supply of non-perishable food, including canned goods, energy bars, peanut butter, powdered milk, instant coffee, water and other essentials (i.e., diapers and toiletries).
- Confirm that you have adequate sanitation and hygiene supplies including towelettes, soap and hand sanitizer.
- Ensure your First Aid kit is stocked with pain relievers, bandages and other medical essentials, and make sure your prescriptions are current.
- Set aside basic household items you will need, including flashlights, batteries, a manual can opener and portable, battery-powered radio or TV.
- Organize emergency supplies so they are easily accessible in one location.

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

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

Listen to local news or a NOAA Weather Radio for storm and emergency information, and check FEM Electric's social media pages for restoration updates.

Severe storms can occasionally bring down power lines. If you

see a downed line, always assume it's energized and never approach it. If flooding occurs, never walk through areas where power lines could be submerged.

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

Sign up for NOAA emergency alerts and warnings and follow us on Facebook, Instagram or X for the latest power restoration updates. If you experience an outage, please don't report it on Facebook. Call our office at 605-426-6891 or 1-800-587-5880 this is the fastest way to let us know if your power is out.

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



FEM DIRECTOR DISTRICTS 1 AND 4 UP FOR ELECTION

FEM Electric Directors in District 1 and District 4 will be up for election at the 2025 annual meeting June 24th, 2025.

Paula Petersen and Eric Odenbach will seek re-election for their districts.

To be an eligible nominee, one must be an active member (with an FEM Electric energy account in their name) who resides in the Director’s District in which the nominee seeks to run. FEM Electric Director Districts are as follows:
 District No. 1: McPherson County Townships of Bauer, Bergdorf, Cleveland, Detmold, Glucksthal, Hillsview, Jackson, Kassel, Odessa, Petersburg, Rosenthal, Spring Creek and Stickel, and Edmunds County Townships of Hosmer, Modena, Sangamon;

District No. 2: McPherson County Townships of Arena, Blaine, Carl, Dewey, Harrison, Highland, Hoffman, Howard, Koto, Leola, Lincoln, Long Lake, Moscow, Spring, Wachter, Wacker, Washington, Weber, Willow;

District No. 3: Edmunds County Townships of Bowdle, Bryant, Cloyd Valley, Cottonwood, Glen, Glover, Hillside, Hudson, Madison, Montpelier, North Bryant, Odessa and Vermont, and Faulk County Townships of Clark, Enterprise and Sherman;

District No. 4: Edmunds County Townships of Adrian, Belle, Clear Lake, Cleveland, Cortlandt, Fountain, Harmony, Huntley, Ipswich, Kent, Liberty, Pembrook, Powell, Richland, Rosette and Union;

District No 5: Faulk County Townships of Arcade, Bryant, Centerville, DeVoe, Elroy, Ellisville, Emerson, Fairfield, Freedom, Hillsdale, Irving, Lafoon, Latham, Myron, O’Neil, Orient, Pulaski, Saratoga, Seneca, Tamworth, Thirteen, Union and Wesley.

Committee which shall consist of three to seven members from the Director District(s) which are up for election and shall include one at-large position. This group shall be appointed no more than 180 days and no less than 60 days prior to the annual meeting. The committee shall post the nominations at least 30 days prior to the annual meeting of the members of FEM Electric Association, Inc. set for June 24th, 2025.

Nomination by Petition: Any 15 or more members of the cooperative may make additional nominations by listing their nominee and the appropriate Director District and signing such Petition for Nomination. The petition must be submitted to the board of directors at least 25 days prior to the annual meeting. Any such petition so submitted will be posted along with the list of nominations made by the Nominating Committee.

FEM Electric Director Districts

	Spring Creek	Detmold	Petersburg	Bergdorf	Harrison	Wacker	Weber	Wachter
McPherson County	Glucksthal	Rosenthal	Odessa	Long Lake	Highland	Hoffman	Koto	Carl
	Bauer	Stickel	Kassel	Moscow	Arena	Spring	Leola	Willow
	Jackson	Hillsview	Cleveland	Blaine	Dewey	Howard	Washington	Lincoln
	Modena	Hosmer	Sangamon	North Bryant	Adrian	Rosette	Belle	Pembrook
Edmunds County	Bowdle	Cottonwood	Glen	Bryant	Huntley	Ipswich	Fountain	Cortlandt
	Odessa	Cloyd Valley	Glover	Montpelier	Cleveland	Harmony	Union	Richland
	Hudson	Madison	Hillside	Vermont	Liberty	Powell	Kent	Clear Lake
		Sherman	Clark	Enterprise	Freedom	Emerson	Fairview	Union
Faulk County	Elroy	O’Neil	Saratoga	Pulaski	Myron	Devoe	Wesley	
	Seneca	Latham	Bryant	Tamworth	Lafoon	Centerville		
	Ellisville	Thirteen	Irving	Orient	Arcade	Hillsdale		

NOMINATIONS

There are two processes (committee and petition) by which an eligible member’s name may be nominated for the board of directors election for FEM Electric Association, Inc. No nominations may come from the floor during your co-op’s annual meeting.

Any member of FEM Electric requiring additional information may refer to the bylaws of the association or may contact the FEM Electric office at 605-426-6891.

Nomination by Committee: The board of directors shall appoint a Nominating

The colored areas of the district map are up for election in 2025.

District 1 Director Eric Odenbach will be seeking re-election.

District 4 Director Paula Petersen will be seeking re-election.

District 2 is represented by Tom Thorpe of Forbes, ND, District 3 is represented by Gary Bachman of Bowdle, and District 5 is represented by Kelly Melius of Faulkton.



RUNNING FREE

Photos by Alvis Uptis

Wild Horses Roam at Black Hills Sanctuary

Jacob Boyko

jacob.boyko@sdrea.coop

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Since 2020, the Bureau of Land Management has reported

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

and the inextinguishable spirit of the wild west.

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

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



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



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Utility scams in this age of AI: How to spot and avoid fraud

Someone calls claiming to be from your utility company. They say your service will be cut off if you don't pay them immediately. Real utility companies don't do this. But scammers want to scare you into paying before you have time to confirm what they're telling you. And scammers are now using Artificial Intelligence (AI) to craft frauds that are difficult for consumers to detect. Learn how to protect yourself.

Beware of these common scam tactics

- Disconnection threats: Scammers claim your service will be cut off without immediate payment.
- Caller ID spoofing: Fraudsters use software to make their calls appear legitimate.
- Overpayment claims: They may say you've overpaid and ask for personal or banking information to issue a refund.
- Smishing: Scammers send fake text messages that seem to come from your utility company.
- Phishing attempts: Beware of emails that look like bills; always verify the sender's email before clicking links.

If you have any doubt about the status of your electric service, call your utility company using the customer service phone number on their website.

Watch for the following red flags

- High-pressure tactics that demand urgent action.
- Unusual payment method requests (wire transfer, gift cards, reloadable cards or cryptocurrency).
- Poor grammar, misspellings and suspicious email addresses.

AI use enhances utility scams

By leveraging AI-powered techniques, utility scammers can create sophisticated and convincing frauds that are hard for consumers to recognize and avoid.

- AI helps scammers craft convincing emails that appear to be from legitimate utility companies and include the use of company colors and logos.

- Scammers use AI to create realistic-looking utility company websites that are nearly indistinguishable from legitimate ones.
- AI technology can clone the voices of utility company representatives, making phone scams convincing.
- AI analyzes victims' online presence and social media to create highly personalized spam related to your utility services.
- Scammers create geographically targeted online ads that appear when users search for keywords related to their energy bills.
- Scammers use AI to launch large-scale utility scam campaigns quickly and efficiently.

According to Kathy Stokes, AARP Director of Fraud Prevention Programs, "the ability of AI to improve and scale scam tactics is the equivalent of the Industrial Revolution for fraud criminals."

Protect yourself

- Take your time: Don't rush into payments or action.
- Verify any communication by calling your utility company directly using the number on your bill.
- Never share personal information. Legitimate companies won't ask for sensitive details over the phone.
- If someone claims to be a utility worker, request official identification.

If you suspect a scam, report it to your utility company and the FTC at [ReportFraud.ftc.gov](https://www.reportfraud.ftc.gov).

Remember, legitimate utilities will provide multiple notices before disconnection and will not pressure you for immediate payment. If you are in doubt, let your utility company know so they can take proactive measures to both protect you and others from becoming victims.

Learn more at: 



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

*Photo courtesy of
 Travel South Dakota*

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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