

# COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS



Katie Grott, field station manager at SDSU's Cottonwood research facility near Philip, stays busy overseeing several ongoing projects designed to deliver practical and profitable solutions for producers.

## Blazing new trails

**Ag research abounds at Cottonwood**  
Pages 8-9

**Line work courses through their veins**  
Pages 12-13



# BOARD REPORT



FEM Electric Board of Directors and FEM staff review an emergency response scenario as a group at the February board meeting.

A regular meeting of the Board of Directors of FEM Electric was held in Ipswich, South Dakota at 8:30 a.m. on February 25, 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 Tuscherer. President Gary Bachman welcomed guest employee Jesse Brown.

Ryan Holien was present until his report was given.

**Changes to the agenda:** Revised agenda was given to board before meeting.

**Changes/Additions to Minutes from January 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, March 15, 2022, 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 Tom Thorpe, seconded by Eric Odenbach and carried to acknowledge manager, staff, electrical department reports, East River Load Management Report along with following work order inventories.

#579	\$101,814.80
#580	\$ 0.00
#581	\$180,661.32
#582	<u>\$247,815.60</u>
	\$530,291.72

Emergency Response Plan (ERP) was reviewed with board on where to go and what to do under three situations if an emergency was to happen during a board meeting. Three situations fire, bad weather, and active shooter. Employees/safety committee present were Barb Schaefer, Sonje Oban, Carol Schaffner, Angie Sieh, Rhonda Tuscherer, Rob Vetch, Ryan Holien, Jesse Brown, Scott Moore.

The board approved signing 2022 engineering contracts with Dalager Engineering and Star Engineering as FEM Electric begins to move engineering services.

The board acknowledged reviewing the January 2022 Cyber Security Report.

Motion by Eric Odenbach seconded

by Paula Petersen and carried to enter executive session at 12:13.

Motion By Kelly Melius seconded by Eric Odenbach and carried to leave executive session at 12:26.

## Resolutions, Contracts, and Nominations:

Motion By Tom Thorpe seconded by Kelly Melius and carried to approve 2022 nominating committee for board election in District 4 - Jesse Nierman, Joe Galbraith; District 1 - James Schumacher, Dale Schutz; At Large - Justin Davis.

FEM Board of Directors acknowledged notice of NISC Annual Meeting.

Motion By Kelly Melius seconded by Paula Petersen to approve 2022 underground construction contract with K & H Electric from Linton, North Dakota.

**Membership Business:** The board acknowledged the following membership business as presented:

### New Memberships, Member Cancellations and Contracts:

**Disconnects:** Harry Kirschenmann, Hosmer, Active Farm; David Grabinski, Rockham, Active Farm; Timothy J Kessler, Aberdeen, Active Farm; Don Hansen, Egan, Vacant Farm; Donald Steward, Chelsea, Active Farm

**Reconnects:** Rodney & Cheryl Kirschenmann, Hosmer, Active Farm; Nathan Grabinski, Rockham, Active Farm; Big Shot Land Hunt LLC - Matt Lane, Cresbard, Active Farm; David Hansen, Orient, Vacant Farm; Allan & Laura Steward, Chelsea, Active Farm

**Contracts:** None

**Retired Locations:** Steven Scherr, Roscoe, Pasture Pump; Alton Jung, Roscoe, Active Farm

### Capital Credits:

**Estates: February 2022:** One = \$69.76

**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. 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:

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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

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



**Scott Moore**  
General Manager/CEO

I don't believe in today's world we are having more, or different, problems than in the past hundred years. The big difference is today we have social media and twenty-four-hour cable news. In the past they had newspapers, radio, and TV with maybe two channels. In the past, people would go to a neighbor or local cafe for coffee and a fresh baked sweet, and debate or discuss the local, state, and national issues. In the past we had wars, pandemics, political disputes, wealthy and poor American citizens, babies born every day and people died every day. Today it is text and emails with very little personal conversation or interaction, and we still have many of the same issues.

In rural South Dakota we need to stay focused on a good and strong rural economy. We need to stay informed on new farming technology, value added products, education for our youth and retaining some of the best future employees, business, and government leaders. South Dakota has seen many opportunities develop in the past twenty years, and I believe there are, and will be many more, opportunities for South Dakota. We need to continue with a strong, positive desire to keep investing in South Dakota and our economy.

We have some of the best

telecommunication/internet systems in the world right here in rural South Dakota thanks to our sister telecommunication cooperatives. This opens the door for many business and job opportunities. Nationally there is a big push by electric cooperatives to enter the broadband business to get their areas members reliable and usable internet for their daily needs or to grow their business.

The cooperative electrical system is strong and getting stronger. Many electric cooperatives are currently replacing or have replaced their electrical plant to maintain a reliable, safe system to allow our members to grow.

We don't need to Build Back South Dakota because we never lost South Dakota. Over the last several years, South Dakota residents moved forward with a positive, common-sense approach that kept the state and the rural economy strong. When the settlers crossed these prairies to homestead, history shows they always had strength in numbers. If FEM Electric would operate solo, we would be just one of millions. Operating with our sister electric cooperatives in the state and nationally, we are millions operating as one, with a loud voice and strong backing.

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## Statement Mailing Dates

Mar. 29, 2022 for Mar.'s  
energy

Apr. 28, 2022 for Apr.'s energy  
Regardless of the statement  
mail out date, payments are  
due in the office by the 9th of  
the following month.

# 10 helpful tips for spring energy savings

Every season of the year provides many unique energy-saving opportunities for you and your family.

Here are some ideas particularly well suited for you to apply this spring.

1. **Clear the air:** Open windows to allow fresh air to circulate throughout your home.
2. **Cook outside:** Enjoy the sunshine by using your grill or smoker to add festive flavors to meals.
3. **Search and seal:** Cracks and spaces let conditioned air slip outdoors. Caulk and weatherstrip to seal leaks.
4. **Natural light:** Open blinds and curtains and turn off the lights to save energy and money.
5. **Be fan friendly:** Use ceiling fans to circulate air and keep cool.
6. **Atmospheric adjustment:** Remember to adjust your thermostat settings for the warmer months ahead.
7. **Tune up:** Schedule an appointment with a qualified heating, ventilating and air conditioning technician to identify any potential problems with your system.
8. **Peak savings:** Plan household chores that require electricity during off-peak hours (when energy demand is low).
9. **Take charge:** Consider disconnecting electrical devices you don't use regularly until you need them. Plugged-in devices use energy even when not in use.
10. **Move outdoors:** Time spent outdoors offers opportunities to turn off lights, TVs, computers and appliances. You'll be more active, have more fun and save more money.



## DON'T TOY WITH PERSONAL SAFETY



When playing outdoors, keep a safe distance from power lines, substations and other equipment your electric co-op uses to send electricity to your home.

Flying remote-controlled toys and drones is a great way to have fun, but accidentally making contact with a power line or other electrical equipment can be dangerous and, in some cases, even deadly.

- Never fly kites or drones near power lines.
- Stay away from power lines, meters, transformers and electrical boxes.
- Never climb trees near power lines.
- If you get something stuck in a power line, call your electric co-op.



## Fire Prevention

### Jonie Smith

Jonie Smith sends out an important safety message for campers to extinguish fires before leaving the area. Jonie is the daughter of Myles and Amber Smith of Castlewood. They are members of H-D 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.



# LIP-SMACKING BEVERAGES

## BLUEBERRY BANANA SMOOTHIE

**Ingredients:**  
 1 cup spinach  
 1/2 cup water  
 2 tbsp. apple cider vinegar  
 1 tbsp. almond butter  
 1/2 cup bananas, frozen  
 1/2 cup blueberries, frozen  
 1 tbsp. chia seeds  
 1/4 tsp. ground cinnamon  
 1/4 tsp. minced ginger  
 1/2 cup berry yogurt  
 fresh blueberries, for garnish (optional)  
 Ground black pepper to taste

### METHOD

In blender, blend spinach, water, apple cider vinegar, almond butter, frozen bananas, frozen blueberries, chia seeds, cinnamon, ginger and yogurt until smooth. Pour into two glasses and garnish with fresh blueberries, if desired.  
**culinary.net**

## FRENCH ICED COFFEE

**Ingredients:**  
 3 cups strong coffee  
 2 cups sugar  
 1 pint cream or half & half  
 1 qt. milk or almond milk  
 2 tsp. (vanilla) flavoring (other flavorings also work)

### METHOD

Dissolve sugar in hot coffee. Cool. Add other ingredients. Pour into containers (I use the tall 2 c. Tupperware for individual drinks, but also use quarts.) Freeze. Take out and let thaw.

**Ruth Schilberg, Viborg**

## SWAMP WATER

**Ingredients:**  
 1 small package lime gelatin  
 1 cup hot water  
 1 (12-oz.) can frozen unsweetened pineapple juice concentrate  
 2 liters carbonated water

### METHOD

Mix lime gelatin with hot water to dissolve. Add frozen concentrate and carbonated water. Chill. Makes 10 servings.

**Lily Gums, Clear Lake**

## FRUIT SLUSH

**Ingredients:**  
 4 cups sugar (granulated)  
 6 cups water  
 1 46 oz. can pineapple juice  
 2 12 oz. cans frozen orange juice  
 1 12 oz. can frozen lemonade (pink or yellow)  
 2 small bananas, mashed very fine (or other fruit)

### METHOD

Mix and bring to a boil the sugar and water. When mixture is cool, add juices and fruit. Put in 5-quart pail and freeze. When frozen, use 2-3 scoops in a glass with 7-Up or ginger ale. Great drink for spring or summer.

**Alana Neville, Milesville**

## STRAWBERRY SMOOTHIE

**Ingredients:**  
 2 cup fresh strawberries, stemmed & halved  
 1 cup plain yogurt  
 1/2 cup ice cubes or chips  
 1/2 tsp. ground cardamom  
 1/4 tsp. ginger

### METHOD

In a blender, combine all ingredients. Blend on high speed until smoothie texture. Makes 2-12 oz. glasses.

**Jane Ham, Rapid City**

**Please send your favorite casserole recipes to your local electric cooperative (address found on Page 3). Each recipe printed will be entered into a drawing for a prize in December 2022. All entries must include your name, mailing address, phone number and cooperative name.**

## Continued from pg 2 - BOARD REPORT

### 73 & Older: February 2022: None

Motion By Eric Odenbach seconded by Tom Thorpe and carried to cancel membership and retain all FEM capital credits and a portion of Basin and East River capital credits to past due debts on one account.

Motion by Kelly Melius seconded by Paula Peterson to write off \$38.31 to bad debt from another account.

**Financial Business:** The board acknowledged reviewing the following financial information: Check register for the month of January 2022 contained information on checks #32221 through #32301 and all automatic payments/withdrawals for January 2022 totaling \$326,581.81.

“Unaudited” December 2021 financials were reviewed. FEM Electric may end the year with an unaudited positive net margin but may not make all banking ratios.

Director of Finance and Benefits, Rhonda Tuscherer reviewed KWH Tax report, our Federated insurance group retention report, FEM's January 2022 financials along with East River's January 2022 power bill credit.

Board President and Treasurer also signed the funds transfer for the RUS Loan Advance (FRS#28) on 02/10/2022 in the amount of \$750,000.00.

Motion by Eric Odenbach, seconded by Kelly Melius and carried to approve director and attorney fees.

**Legal Update:** none

**Meeting Report:** East River board update was given by Gary Bachman. East River Forum was given by Gary Bachman and Tom Thorpe.

The board acknowledged the receipt of the Safety Meeting Minutes with current accident and near miss reports from January 25, 2022.

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

## Continued from pg 3 - MANAGER'S REPORT

Your annual meeting is June 28, 2022, please plan to attend. Please contact Rob Vetch or Ryan Holien early if you are planning to add any electrical load.

Calving season is here and spring work will be here shortly please be safe.

## MATERIAL SHORTAGES

FEM Electric has been affected by ongoing material shortages and shipping delays. Efforts have been made to ensure we can continue to service our members safely and with the quality they have come to expect.

However, if any FEM members have upcoming projects that require new or upgraded electrical service, please make every effort to contact FEM early.

Shortages include transformers, metering equipment, wire, conduit and more. FEM staff has done their best to order early to keep ahead of shortages the best they can, but some shipping estimates are coming in at 12 to 24 months before orders arrive.

Now is the time to make a call if you're looking at a project. The earlier you call, the more likely FEM can complete a project for you in a timely manner.

If you have questions, call us at 605-426-6891 or 1-800-587-5880 and we'll be happy to discuss upcoming projects with you.



# FEM Electric Co-op Directors Achieve Credential in Today's Electric Utility Competencies

Eric Odenbach and Kelly Melius from the FEM Electric Board of Directors recently received the Credentialed Cooperative Director certificate from the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA).

An ever-changing business environment has imposed new demands on electric cooperative directors, requiring increase knowledge of changes in electric utility business, new governance skills and a solid knowledge of the cooperative principles and business model. FEM Electric has a commitment to work through NRECA to sharpen this body of knowledge for the benefit of their electric cooperative member-owners.

The NRECA Credentialed Cooperative Director (CCD) program requires attendance and demonstrated understanding of the basic

competencies contained in five core courses:

- Director Duties and Liabilities
- Understanding the Electric Business
- Board Operations and Process
- Strategic Planning
- Financial Decision Making



Eric Odenbach and Kelly Melius display their CCD certificates.

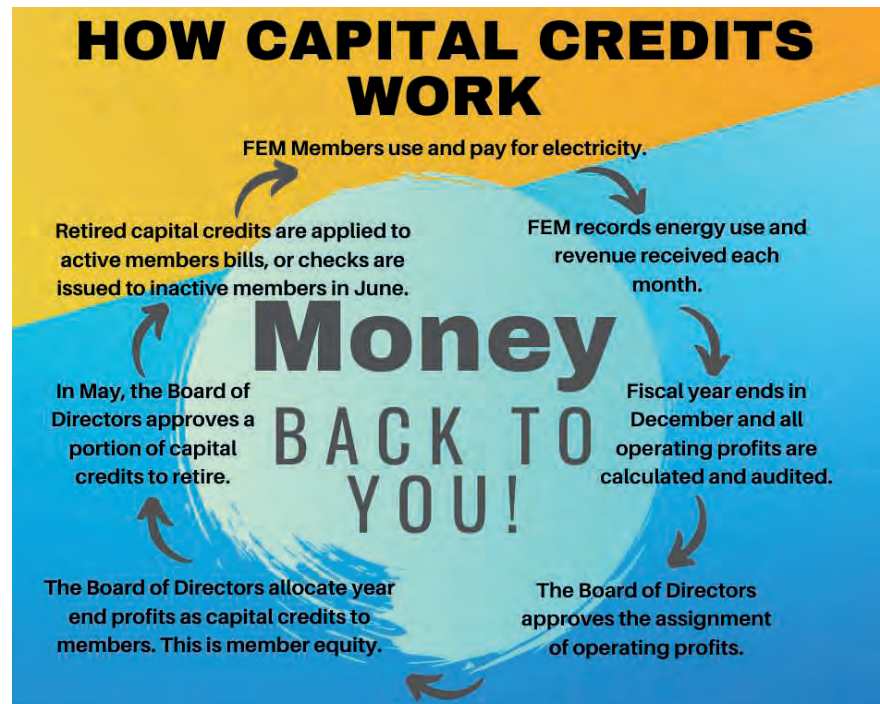
FEM Electric commends Eric Odenbach and Kelly Melius for their commitment to providing quality representation of FEM members, as well as their commitment to educating themselves about cooperatives. Congratulations to both directors for their hard work to achieve the Credentialed Cooperative Director certificate.

## CAPITAL CREDITS AND YOU

Once the 2021 audit is complete, and the FEM board of directors has a chance to review operating profits, capital credits will be allocated. FEM members (that's you) could see a credit on your billing statement in June, or receive a check in the mail.

Now is a great time to update your contact information if you have moved, changed phone numbers, or have a new email address. This ensures you will receive capital credits in the future, and it will help us keep you updated on any planned outages or important information about your FEM service.

You can contact FEM at 605-426-6891 or at 1-800-587-5880 to update your information, or if you have any questions about capital credits.







# ROBO RANCHING

Cottonwood Field Station Manager Katie Grott and student Lily McFadden take a break from their work. *Photos by Billy Gibson*

## Cottonwood Field Research Station is abuzz with studies designed to increase producer profitability

**Billy Gibson**

billy.gibson@sdua.coop

There are robo-cops, robo-codes and robo-calls. But robo-cattle ranching?

That futuristic phrase is part of the nomenclature surrounding a beef production movement called “precision ranching,” an offshoot of the “precision agriculture” approach that promotes the use of advanced technology to improve yields and profitability.

This new wave of ag research evokes postmodern images of bovines grazing through the fields wearing high tech gadgets. Turns out, it’s a description not too far off the mark, according to Dr. Jamie Brennan, an assistant professor of research and extension specialist at South Dakota State University.

Based out of the West River Research and Extension Center in Rapid City, Brennan is using SDSU’s Cottonwood Field Station near Philip to study the viability of using high-tech GPS tracking collars to deliver real-time information on steer activity and behavior.

“By monitoring animal movement we can identify changes in behavior that might indicate sickness, for example, which can be sent as an alert to producers,” Brennan said.

He’s deploying the type of advanced accelerator technology commonly associated with Fitbit watches, vehicle trackers, smartphone map apps and other monitoring devices.

“We’re working to develop the capability for producers to easily identify not only where animals are on the landscape but also where they are selecting for grazing and resting locations,” Brennan said. “The work we are doing at the station is designed to determine the potential benefits - and possible shortcomings - of precision ranching technology and to predict the return on investment for the producer.”

Brennan’s project is just one of several intriguing studies currently in play at the Cottonwood Field Station. One of six field research centers in the SDSU Agriculture Experiment Station network, Cottonwood is among the

oldest facilities of its kind in the country. Covering more than 2,600 acres, Cottonwood was established in 1907 and has received regional and national acclaim with impactful results such as developing a new method of determining stocking rates for western regions and devising the Universal Soil Loss Equation now known as RUSLE2.

These scientific forays into precision ranching include virtual fencing (Vence™), Smart Feeder™ systems, mobile app-based mineral consumption monitors, methane emissions measuring devices and soil moisture monitoring.

The exploration into virtual fencing holds plenty of promise in helping producers manage their livestock and landscape more efficiently and effectively, according to Cottonwood Field Station manager Katie Grott.

While it may be hard for an old-school rancher to envision a world without barbed wire, fence posts and cattle guards, moving this technology to market could result in substantial savings for farm families.

Grott explained the technology is a much more sophisticated version of the kind of residential-grade invisible fence





A cow at the Cottonwood Field Research Station waits patiently for a Smart Feeder to be loaded with hay.

designed to keep pets from wandering around the neighborhood streets. Virtual fencing is already being used to contain goat herds and other smaller animals with measurable success.

The latest research testing involves combining an electrical pulse administered through a GPS-enabled collar, combined with an auditory stimulus to keep cattle confined within certain boundaries. A software program allows the rancher to define those boundaries as needed for successful grazing rotation and land management.

“We’re looking at how virtual fencing affects animal behavior, performance and natural resources,” Grott said.

Dr. Krista Ehlert, assistant professor and extension specialist, is also involved in the project and adds, “Virtual fencing turns physical labor into cognitive labor for producers, helping to reduce labor and potentially improve work-life balance for producers.”

Other projects at Cottonwood include work being led by assistant professor Dr. Hector Menendez. The research uses technology developed by the Rapid City firm, C-Lock. C-Lock has a scale that collects daily weight records on animals every time they drink. The data provide

valuable information on stocking rates, forage quality and weather conditions on individual animal performance.

“It’s an exciting time in the area of agricultural research,” Menendez said. “We have secured funds to proceed with a project on interdisciplinary engagement in animal systems and precision livestock water monitoring. And we’re excited about holding producer-oriented workshops, training classes and field days to educate producers on how these advancements can improve their profitability.”

One rancher who keeps a close eye on the latest research results is Eric Jennings, president of the South Dakota Cattleman’s Association.

“There are some interesting new concepts being explored through this facility and others,” Jennings said. “We’re watching to see which of these systems prove to become both practical and affordable for producers to implement in their daily operations. For instance, the idea of virtual fencing has been around for a while, but the research and application of new technology has emerged as a viable option.”

Brennan, Ehlert, Menendez and others who work daily to blaze new pathways

Amount of acres  
researchers have

**2,640**

at their disposal at the  
Cottonwood  
Field Station

for cattle producers take gratification from knowing their labor and application of scientific methods could result in a farm family turning the corner toward profitability and sustaining a generational way of life. Plus, they enjoy drawing students into the process and inspiring the next generation of farmers.

“They receive training in animal science, rangeland ecology, precision technology, modeling, computer programming and boots-on-the-ground ranching,” Menendez said. “One of our aims is to encourage the next generation of professionals that can merge precision technology to maximize rangeland livestock production while maintaining ranching culture.”

# FEM ELECTRIC PROPOSED BYLAW CHANGES

The following FEM Electric Association, Inc. bylaw changes will be voted on by the membership during the business portion of the FEM Electric annual meeting that begins at 6:30 p.m. on Tuesday June 28th, 2022 at the Ipswich High School.

## ARTICLE I MEMBERSHIP

**Section 1. Requirements of Membership.** Any person, firm, association, corporation or body politic or subdivision thereof may become a member of FEM Electric Association, Inc. (hereinafter referred to as Cooperative) by:

- (a) Making a written application for membership therein;
- (b) Agreeing to purchase from the Cooperative electric energy as hereinafter specified;
- (c) Agreeing to comply with and be bound by the articles of incorporation and bylaws of the Cooperative and any rules and regulations adopted by the Board of Directors;
- (d) Paying the membership connection fee hereinafter specified; and
- (e) Execution of a contract with the member on a form provided therefor by the Board of Directors;

provided, however, that no person, firm, association, corporation or body politic or subdivision thereof shall become a member unless and until he/she or it has been accepted for membership. An application for membership shall be approved by the Manager and reviewed by the Board of Directors at the next meeting thereafter. No member may hold more than one (1) membership in the Cooperative, and no membership in the Cooperative shall be transferable, except as provided in these bylaws. For clarification, it is deemed that any firm, association, corporation, partnership, limited liability company, political subdivision or individual (if an individual is married, his/her membership shall be a joint membership only) may hold one (1) membership only. The number of accounts held under said membership may vary.

Any person, firm, association, corporation or body politic or subdivision thereof, whose application, for sixty (60) days or longer, has been submitted to but not approved by the **Board of Directors Manager** may, by filing written request therefor,

with the Cooperative at least thirty (30) days prior to the next meeting of the members, have their application submitted to and approved or disapproved by the vote of the members at such meeting, at which the applicant shall be entitled to be present and be heard.

**Section 2. Joint Membership.** A **husband and wife married couple** will apply for a joint membership and, subject to their compliance with the requirements set forth in Section 1 of this Article, may be accepted for such membership. The term "member" as used in these bylaws shall be deemed to include a **husband and wife married couple** holding a joint membership and any provisions relating to the rights and liabilities of membership shall apply equally with respect to the holders of a joint membership. Without limiting the generality of the foregoing, the effect of the hereinafter specified actions by or in respect of the holders of a joint membership shall be as follows:

## ARTICLE VII NON-PROFIT OPERATION

**Section 2. Patronage Capital in Connection with Furnishing Electric Energy.** In the furnishing of electrical energy the Cooperative's operation shall be so conducted that all electric members alike will, through their patronage, furnish capital for the Cooperative. In order to induce patronage and to insure that the Cooperative will operate on non-profit basis, the Cooperative is obligated to account on a patronage basis to all its members for all amounts received and receivable from the furnishing of electric energy in excess of the following:

- (a) operating costs and expenses properly chargeable against the furnishing of electrical energy;
- (b) amounts required to offset any losses incurred during the current fiscal year; and
- (c) amounts, which required, in the judgment of the Board of Directors, as reserves, for the payment of the essential cost of electrical power and energy purchased by the Cooperative for resale to its patrons; said reserve amounts shall be set aside pursuant to a margin stabilization plan, revenue or expense deferral plan or other plan, or plans, that provide for the retention of revenues and receipts in excess of those needed to meet current losses and expenses.



All such amounts in excess of operating costs, expenses, losses, and reserves, as set forth in (a), (b) and (c) above, at the moment of receipt by the Cooperative are received with the understanding that they are furnished by the patrons as capital. The Cooperative is obligated to pay credits to a capital account for each patron all such amounts in excess of operating costs, expenses, losses, and reserves, as set forth in (a), (b) and (c) above.

The books and records of the Cooperative shall be set up and kept in such a manner that at the end of each fiscal year the amount of capital, if any, so furnished by each patron is clearly reflected and credited in an appropriate record to the capital account of each patron, and the Cooperative shall within a reasonable time after the close of the fiscal year notify each patron of the amount of capital credited to the member's account, provided, that individual notices of such amounts furnished by each patron shall not be required if the Cooperative notifies all patrons of the aggregate amount of such excess and provides a clear explanation of how each patron may compute and determine for the member the specific amount of capital so credited to the member. All such amounts credited to the capital account of any patron shall have the same status as though they had been paid to the patron in cash pursuant of a legal obligation to do so and the patron had then furnished the Cooperative corresponding amounts for capital.

In the event of dissolution or liquidation of the Cooperative, after all outstanding indebtedness of the Cooperative shall have been paid, outstanding capital credits shall be retired without priority, on a prorated basis before any payments are made on account of property rights of members. If, at any time prior to dissolution or liquidation, the Board of Directors shall determine that the financial condition of the Cooperative will not be impaired thereby, the capital then credited to patrons' accounts may be retired in full or in part. Notwithstanding any other provision of these by-laws, the Board of Directors shall determine the method of allocation, basis, priority and order of retirement, if any, for amounts furnished as patronage capital.

The Board of Directors shall have the power to adopt any individual patron rules providing for the separate retirement of that portion ('power supply portion') of capital credited to the accounts of patrons which corresponds to capital credited to the account of the Cooperative by an organization furnishing electric service to the Cooperative. Such rules shall (a) establish a method for determining the power supply portion of capital credited to each patron for each applicable fiscal year, (b) provide for separate identification on the Cooperative's

books of the power supply portion of capital credited to the Cooperative's patron's, (c) provide for appropriate notifications to patrons with respect to the power supply portion of capital credited to their accounts and (d) allow a general retirement of the power supply portion of capital credited to patrons for any fiscal year prior to the general retirement of other capital credited to patrons in any fiscal year.

Notwithstanding any other provisions of these by-laws, the Board of Directors, at its discretion, shall have the power at all times upon the death of any patron, if the legal representatives of the member's estate shall request in writing that the capital credited to any such patron be retired prior to the time such capital would otherwise be retired under the provisions of these by-laws, to retire capital credited to any such patron immediately upon such terms and conditions as the Board of Directors, acting under policies of general application, and the legal representatives of such patron's estate shall agree upon; provided, however, that the financial condition of the Cooperative will not be impaired thereby. Capital credits retired by the Board of Directors and unclaimed by a cooperative member or former cooperative member shall be forfeited to the Cooperative in accordance with South Dakota Codified Laws, specifically SDCL 47-16-54 through 47-16-59, as the same may be amended.

**The Board of Directors, at its discretion, shall have the power to adopt a value-added economic development patronage loan program. Said program if adopted by the Board of Directors shall allow Cooperative Members the option to participate in said program by borrowing against future capital credit payments in accordance with the procedures, rules, and determinations made and established by the Board of Directors for a value-added economic development patronage loan program.**

**ARTICLE X  
FINANCIAL TRANSACTIONS**

~~Section 4. Change of Rates. Written notice shall be given to the Administrator of the Rural Electrification Administration of the United States of America not less than ninety (90) days prior to the date upon which any proposed change in the rates charged by the Cooperative for electric energy becomes effective.~~

**Section 5 4. Fiscal Year.** The fiscal year of the Cooperative shall begin on the first day of January of each year and shall end on the thirty-first day of December of the same year.



# VOLTAGE IN THEIR VEINS

The Miller and Wingen men share a total of 177 years of experience in the electric utility industry. Pictured above are Joel Miller, Rollie Miller, Travis Miller, Corey Miller, Wes Wingen and Dustin Wingen.

## Miller, Wingen utility workers represent a combined 177 years of faithful service

### Tara Miller

taram@centralec.coop

Take a moment to imagine life without electricity. No household appliances, no electric heat, no air conditioning, no internet and no phone. In 1925, only half of homes in the U.S. had electricity. Fast forward to 2022, and electricity is a basic necessity.

April is Lineworker Appreciation Month – a time to celebrate and honor the brave men and women who often work in hazardous conditions to power our world.

The Miller family, originally from Canova, has 177 years of electric industry experience, and most of them started their careers as lineworkers.

### WHERE IT ALL STARTED

Before attending school to become a lineworker, Joel Miller, better known as “Joe” or “Smokey” to some, graduated from Canova High School and began working at Overhead Door Company

in Sioux Falls. While he didn’t mind the work, he knew it wasn’t what he wanted to do for the rest of his life. Joe then heard about an opportunity to attend school and become a lineworker.

“I knew Ron Callies. He was an instructor,” Joe said. “He told us to look at the program, so Robert Zens and I checked it out and thought we would give it a try.”

Joe graduated from what is now known as Mitchell Technical College (MTC) in 1978 and began the family’s legacy of life on the line when he joined East River Electric in Madison. He started on the construction crew and later worked in maintenance. His friend Robert Zens also worked at East River Electric, but passed away in a motorcycle accident in 1980.

Joe worked at East River Electric for nearly 20 years before he moved to Western Area Power Administration (WAPA) in Pierre. WAPA is a federal organization that markets and delivers hydroelectric power and related services

across the 15-state region. Joe retired from his position of line foreman at WAPA in 2020 after 43 years.

### FOLLOWING THE LEADER

Rollie was next in the Miller family line-up, a year younger than Joe. His mom talked him into going to Pipestone, MN, to work at Bayliner Boats with his older brother Ed. Rollie then worked at Feterl’s Manufacturing in Salem where he welded augers until he decided to enroll in line school at MTC at the age of 20.

“The biggest reason I went to line school was because Joe had just done it, and I was friends with Robert Zens. I saw how they just did it, and I thought I could do it, too,” Rollie explained.

Rollie now manages Vigilante Electric Cooperative in Dillon, MT. Before running the show, he worked for an electrical contractor and for West River Electric.

He then attended SDSU and worked for Bob’s Electric in Flandreau with Reggie Gassman, who is manager of customer electrical services at Sioux



Valley Energy. They both grew up in the Canova area.

Rollie earned a bachelor's degree in electrical engineering, allowing him to become a licensed professional engineer.

"My education has greatly benefited me throughout my career," Rollie said.

Rollie's boys are also following the family tradition. Cody Miller attended SDSU to become an electrical engineer and consults for electric utilities, and Logan "L.J." Miller is enrolled in the power line construction and

maintenance program at MTC.

"It's not a cake walk. I told them you really have to study and work hard," he said.

After Rollie, Corey was the next Miller brother to attend MTC.

"The reason I went into it is because I had two older brothers who were



Cody Miller



L.J. Miller

linemen. I knew when I was a freshman in high school that I was going to be a lineman," Corey said.

After graduating from MTC in 1987, Corey became an apprentice lineworker at Public Service of New Hampshire. He worked there for three years, then took a position at Missouri Public Service.

Like his brothers, Corey worked his way up the ranks. He was hired as a lineworker and promoted to foreman, then supervisor, and now works in management. He is also on the board of directors for the International Lineman Rodeo Association, helping host the annual lineman rodeo event which promotes lineworker safety.

Corey's 15-year-old son Zach plans to become a lineworker after high school. Corey shares this advice for anybody

- **Joel Miller**, Retired Line Foreman at Western Area Power Administration (Pierre, SD)  
43 Years, 6 months of industry experience
- **Rollie Miller**, General Manager at Vigilante Electric Cooperative (Dillon, MT)  
42 years, 6 months of industry experience
- **Corey Miller**, Director of Regional Operations at Evergy (Lexington, MO)  
35 years, 6 months of industry experience
- **Travis Miller**, Foreman at Southeastern Electric (Salem, SD)  
30 years of industry experience
- **Wes Wingen**, Manager of Meter Services at Black Hills Power (Rapid City, SD)  
15 years, 10 months of industry experience
- **Cody Miller**, Electrical Engineer (Dillon, MT)  
8 years, 6 months of industry experience
- **Dustin Wingen**, Former Lineworker at Alaska Village Electric Co-op (Anchorage, AK)  
2 years of industry experience
- **Logan (L.J.) Miller**, Student in the power line program at Mitchell Technical College

considering a career in the field:

"We need linemen. It is an awesome profession to get into. Linemen live to restore power – that's their lifeblood. And, quite honestly, you will make a very good wage while doing that."

Travis was the last of the Miller brothers to attend line school. He decided milking cows wasn't his calling, so in 1991 at age 26, Travis followed the path started by his big brother Joe.

"I figured they all did it, so I could probably do it better," Travis joked. He is now the foreman at Southeastern Electric in Salem.

Wes and Dustin Wingen are the sons of Stacy (Miller) and Bob Wingen. They are nephews to the Miller brothers and have also been involved in the electric utility industry. Dustin was a lineworker in Anchorage, AK, before coming back home to farm. Wes is an engineer and manager of meter services at Black Hills Power in Rapid City.

### IT'S A MILLER THING

The Miller family had nine children: Sandy, Duane, Ed, Joe, Rollie, Stacy, Derrin, Travis and Corey. Marcella, mother of the youngest eight children,

passed away in 2011, and Duane "Stub" Miller, the family patriarch, currently resides in Howard. Stub shared, "People don't know it today, but having electricity is something we shouldn't take for granted."

The four Miller brothers share a combined 151 years of electric industry experience. When you add it all up, the Miller and Wingen men boast an impressive 177 years of electric industry experience.

They couldn't have worked in this profession without the support of their families, which are too large to list. All the storm jobs, dangerous assignments and family moves were worth it when they think about the people they serve. They all agree, "It's a Miller thing" and working with voltage is in their veins.

### THANK A LINEMAN

Please take time to thank lineworkers for all they do to brighten our lives. We thank the Miller family for their many years of service in the industry.

*Editor's note: Writer Tara Miller is Travis Miller's wife and works for Central Electric Cooperative near Mitchell.*

# CALL 8-1-1 BEFORE YOU DIG

April is National Safe Digging Month, and it's the perfect time to remind FEM Members to call 8-1-1 before the weather starts warming up, and we start planning our spring and summer projects.

Any project that requires you to break ground should have underground utilities marked. Calling 8-1-1 is free, easy, and just requires a little patience. Two days before you break ground, call 8-1-1, or go to [sdonecall.com](http://sdonecall.com) and request a locate. If you do not live in South Dakota, you can always request a locate online through [call811.com](http://call811.com). You will be able to select and use your state's 811 portal.

No matter the size of your project, you should call before you dig. That includes planting a garden, flowers, shrubs or trees, not just building fences, new construction or putting up a mail box.

Underground utility lines tend to shift over time. If you dig without having underground lines located first, you risk not only bodily harm, or even death, but the cost to repair any damage you may cause.

Homeowners should also remember that calling for locates does not mean that private lines are marked. You may have lines for sprinkler systems, a gas line to a grill, or services to other buildings on your property that will not be marked. If that's the case, you will need to hire for private locates. Keep FEM in mind if you ever need private locates done.

To have locates done properly, you should mark your project area in white spray paint, if it's a small area. White flags are handy for larger areas, and can be purchased at most home improvement stores. Marking your project out ahead of time

will help the team of utility companies quickly identify where they need to work, and make sure any underground lines are properly marked.

Once you've had underground utilities and lines located, remember to take your time, and respect the lines. If you can, avoid digging 18-24 inches away from any markers that have been left by utility companies. You may have to adjust your project to avoid lines, but your safety is more important.

## REMEMBER THESE QUICK TIPS WHEN YOU WANT TO DIG:

1. Mark your project area with white spray paint or white flags.
2. Call 8-1-1 or go online to request locates.
3. Make sure to have any private lines located, too.
4. Wait at least 2 days for utility companies to mark their lines.
5. Do not move any flags or marks left by utility companies.
6. Finally, take your time, and respect the lines by digging a safe distance from any marked lines.



**Know what's below.  
Call before you dig.**




**Digging into  
an Outdoor  
Project?**

Before you dig, dial 811 or visit [www.call811.com](http://www.call811.com) to protect underground utilities. Careless digging poses a threat to people, pipelines and underground facilities. Contact 811 first and help keep our community safe.







 **DO NOT use generic chargers** or cords. They could **overheat** or shock or burn you.

 **DO NOT** put your cell phone **under your pillow** or take it to bed with you.

 **DO NOT** use charging cell phones or other electrical devices **with wet or damp hands**.

 **DO NOT** bring a charging cell phone or other electrical devices **near water**, including a **bathtub or pool**.

 If you are in a car accident involving a downed power line, **DO NOT get out of the vehicle** unless you see smoke or fire.

**If you must exit a burning vehicle** near or on a downed power line, make a **clean exit from the car** and **land on both feet**; then **hop** with feet together, **DO NOT WALK**, to safety.





# THANK YOU LINEWORKERS

You may have noticed FEM Electric crews in your area the past few months as they work on projects and continue general maintenance. April 11th is Lineworker Appreciation day, and FEM crews deserve the appreciation that day brings.

The conditions they work in are tough, dangerous and essential. They climb poles up to 120 feet tall, carrying gear that ways upwards of 50 lbs to maintain line and power to your home, farm or business. Long hours may be required if there's an outage, storm damage, or downed lines.

FEM lineworkers have put in extensive hours of training, upwards of 7,000 hours to become a journeyman, and continue their training consistently throughout the year.

FEM Electric would like to recognize the 9 hardworking lineworkers who have sacrificed, and worked tirelessly to keep the power on for our members. Thank you for all of your hard work and dedication.



## LINWORKER APPRECIATION DAY

We thank lineworkers for their courage and commitment to powering our community.



**APRIL 16**  
Easter Egg Hunt at  
Reclamation Ranch, Mitchell, SD

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

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



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

**MARCH 25-26**

**Schmeckfest**  
748 S Main Street, Freeman, SD, 605-925-4237

**MARCH 26**

**Annual Ag Day**  
Washington Pavilion, Sioux Falls, SD, 605-367-6000

**MARCH 30**

**Elton John Tribute Concert**  
Performing Arts Center, Mitchell, SD, 605-770-7813

**APRIL 2**

**Watertown Coin and Currency Show**  
Elks Lodge, Watertown, SD, 605-882-4663

**APRIL 2-3**

**Youth & Family Services' 25th Annual Kids Fair**  
The Monument, Rapid City, SD, [youthandfamilyservices.org/kids-fair/](http://youthandfamilyservices.org/kids-fair/)

**APRIL 8-9**

**Forks, Corks & Kegs Festival**  
Various Locations, Deadwood, SD, [deadwood.com/event/forks-corks-kegs](http://deadwood.com/event/forks-corks-kegs)

**APRIL 8-9**

**Jackrabbit Stampede Rodeo**  
Swiftel Center, Brookings, SD, [swiftelcenter.com](http://swiftelcenter.com)

**APRIL 8-10**

**CAHF Spring Fling Eggstravaganza Series**  
Carroll Acres Hobby Farm, Rapid City, SD, [carrollacreshobbyfarm.com](http://carrollacreshobbyfarm.com)

**APRIL 8-16**

**The Passion and the Cross**  
Orpheum Theater Center, Sioux Falls, SD, [siouxfallsorpheum.com](http://siouxfallsorpheum.com)

**APRIL 9**

**Keystone Spring Fling Vendor Fair**  
1101 Madill Street, Keystone, SD, 605-786-3035

**APRIL 9-10**

**DGTCA Gun Show**  
Rushmore Civic Center, Rapid City, SD, 605-270-0764

**APRIL 16**

**Easter Egg Hunt**  
Reclamation Ranch, Mitchell, SD, 605-770-2867

**APRIL 22**

**River Rat ½ Marathon, 10K, and 5K**  
Gavins Point Area, Yankton, SD, [allsportscentral.com](http://allsportscentral.com)

**APRIL 22-23**

**Junkin' Market Days**  
W. H. Lyon Fairgrounds, Sioux Falls, SD, 605-941-4958

**APRIL 23**

**Lakota All Star Basketball Games**  
The Monument Summit Arena, Rapid City, SD, 605-342-41985

**APRIL 23**

**Martina McBride**  
Swiftel Center, Brookings, SD, [swiftelcenter.com](http://swiftelcenter.com)

**APRIL 23**

**Winefest Renaissance**  
1121 1st Avenue SE, Aberdeen, SD, 605-225-8714

**APRIL 23-24**

**46th Mobridge Area Art Show**  
Scherr-Howe Arena, Mobridge, SD, 605-845-2060

**APRIL 23-24**

**Brookings Quilt Guild Show**  
Swiftel Center, Brookings, SD, 605-690-3246

**APRIL 27-30**

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

**APRIL 28-30**

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

**APRIL 29-MAY 1, 5-7**

**Ordinary Days**  
Grand Opera House, Pierre, SD, [pierreplayers.com](http://pierreplayers.com)

**APRIL 30**

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

**MAY 7**

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

**MAY 14-15**

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

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