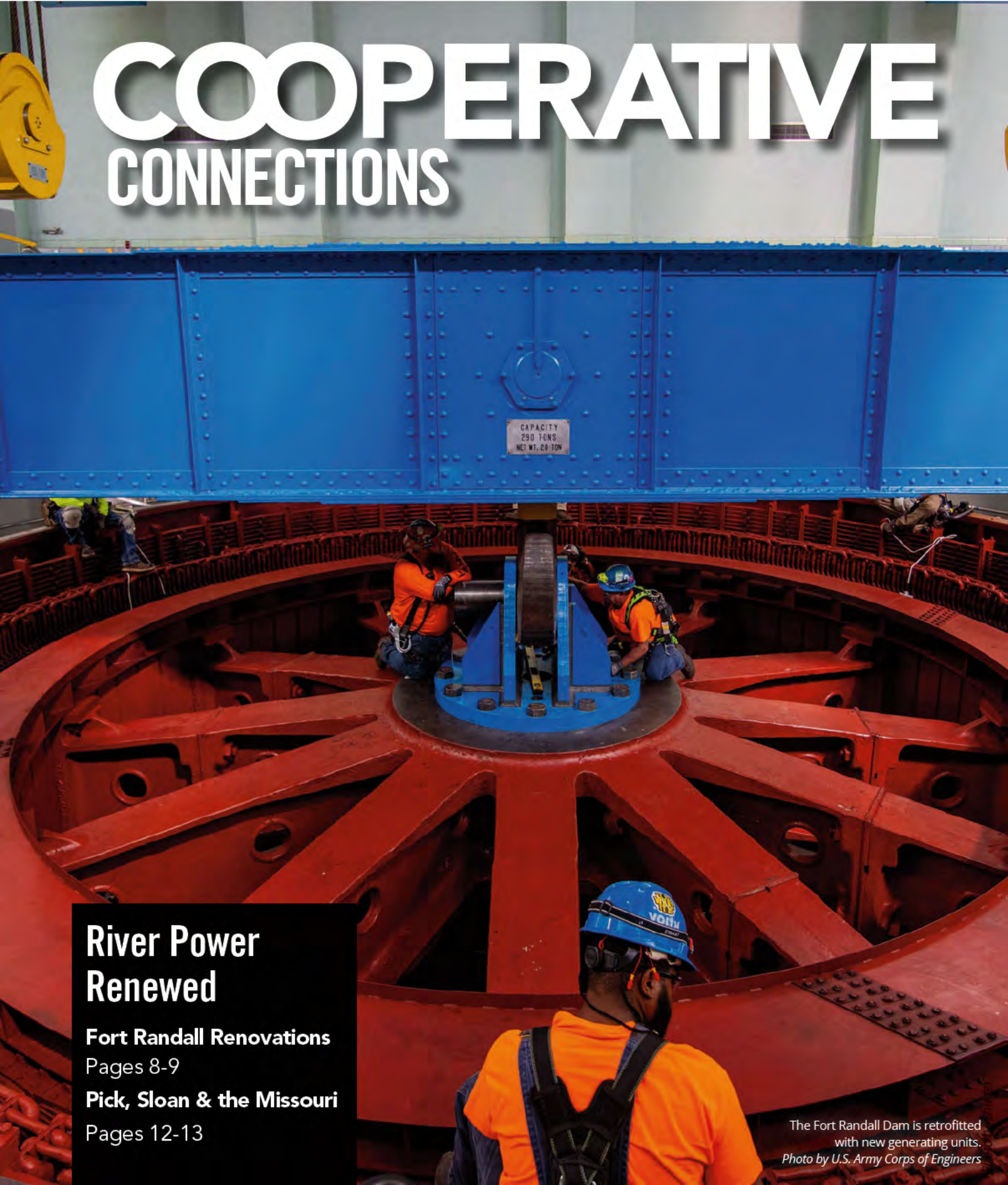


# COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS



## River Power Renewed

**Fort Randall Renovations**  
Pages 8-9

**Pick, Sloan & the Missouri**  
Pages 12-13

The Fort Randall Dam is retrofitted  
with new generating units.  
*Photo by U.S. Army Corps of Engineers*



# DISTRICT MEETINGS IN JUNE

## Retirement Open House for Ken Schlimgen on Friday, June 26, 2026

Central Electric Betts Road Office  
2:00-4:00 p.m. Coffee & Cookies

Highland Conference Center in Mitchell  
4:30-7:00 p.m. Light Appetizers

Members are welcome to join us in thanking Ken for 41 years of service to the cooperative.



**Ken Schlimgen**  
General Manager

### Attend Your District Meeting

If you're taking a few minutes to read this newsletter, thank you. I truly appreciate it. I know how full life gets. Between work, farming, family and everything else pulling at your attention, there never seems to be quite enough time in the day.

That's exactly why I want to personally ask you to consider attending your Central Electric District Meeting this year.

I get it. Adding one more meeting to your calendar isn't always appealing. Most of us naturally protect what little free time we have. It's easy to assume this is one of those things you can skip and not miss much. But this meeting is a little different.

Central Electric isn't just another utility, it's your cooperative. That means you're not just a customer, you're an owner. And the decisions we make about rates, reliability, future investments and new technology are decisions that directly affect you, your family and your operation.

We promise to keep things informal and straightforward. You'll hear what's ahead for your co-op, but just as important, you'll have the chance to speak up. Ask questions. Share concerns. Bring up ideas.

We will touch on topics like system upgrades, power supply, costs, rates and planning for the future, but you don't need to come with a list prepared. Just showing up and being part of the conversation matters more than you might think.

It's easy to feel like one voice doesn't carry much weight. But in a cooperative, it does. Every member-owner has a stake, and your input helps guide the decisions we make on your behalf.

And while technology makes it easier than ever to send us a message or pay your bill, there's still no real substitute for sitting down, having a conversation and hearing directly from each other. That's where trust is built and where better decisions start.

So, if it's been a while since you've attended a District Meeting, I'd encourage you to come this year. Join us for a good meal, some honest conversation and a chance to stay connected to your cooperative. The meeting schedule appears on page 10.

The 2026 District Meetings will be my last as your general manager, as I am retiring on July 1. You will have the opportunity

to meet Ryan Mueller, Central Electric's new General Manager.

There will be director elections at the Buffalo County, Brule County and Aurora County District Meetings. Watch for your postcard with meeting details. And if your scheduled night doesn't work, feel free to attend any of the other meetings listed in the newsletter. We'll also have a small attendance gift to thank you for your time. Please consider attending your District Meeting. I really hope you will join us.

### Capital Credit Allocations

Earlier this month, you should have received your annual capital credit allocation notice, which reflects your share of the cooperative's margins from 2025. This notice is not a bill, but a statement showing how much value has been assigned to your account based on your electric usage. Capital credits represent one of the unique benefits of cooperative membership. When the co-op performs well financially, those margins are returned to members over time. The allocation keeps members informed of their ownership in the cooperative and demonstrates our ongoing commitment to operating in a fiscally responsible manner.

Until next month, stay safe!



Pictured from left to right, Board President Duane Wolbrink, incoming General Manager Ryan Mueller and retiring General Manager Ken Schlimgen are preparing for the upcoming management transition. Members can talk to Ryan and Ken at their local District Meeting.

**CENTRAL ELECTRIC  
COOPERATIVE  
CONNECTIONS**

(USPS 018-963)

**Board of Directors**

Aurora County - Duane Wolbrink, President  
 Brule County - Bradee Pazour, Treasurer  
 Buffalo County - Donita Loudner  
 Davison County - Jeff Gustafson, Vice President  
 Hanson County - Mark Hofer, Secretary  
 Jerauld County - Mark Reindl  
 Miner County - Robert Banks  
 Sanborn County - Jeremy White  
 Director-At-Large - Merl Bechen



CENTRAL ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS is the monthly publication for the members of Central Electric Cooperative, PO Box 850, Mitchell, SD 57301. Families subscribe to Cooperative Connections as part of their electric cooperative membership. Central Electric Cooperative Connections' purpose is to provide reliable, helpful information to cooperative members on matters pertaining to their cooperative and living better with electricity. Also available at [www.centralelec.coop](http://www.centralelec.coop).

Subscription information: Central Electric Cooperative members devote 50 cents of each monthly electric payments for a subscription. Non-member subscriptions are available for \$12 annually. Periodicals Postage Paid at Central Electric Cooperative, PO Box 850, Mitchell, SD 57301, and additional mailing offices.

Postmaster: Please send address changes to Central Electric Cooperative, PO Box 850, Mitchell, SD 57301. Address all other correspondence to: Cooperative Connections, PO Box 850, Mitchell, SD 57301 Telephone: (605)996-7516; Fax: (605) 996-0869; e-mail: [cec@centralelec.coop](mailto:cec@centralelec.coop); website: [www.centralelec.coop](http://www.centralelec.coop).

**Contact Us**

Office Hours: Monday - Friday 8 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.  
 Phone: 800-477-2892 or 605-996-7516  
 Website: [www.centralelec.coop](http://www.centralelec.coop)

**Our Mission**

Provide reliable energy and services with a commitment to safety and member satisfaction.

**Non-Discrimination Statement:**

In accordance with Federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its Agencies, offices, and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, disability, age, marital status, family/parental status, income derived from a public assistance program, political beliefs, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity, in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA (not all bases apply to all programs). Remedies and complaint filing deadlines vary by program or incident. Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotope, American Sign Language, etc.) should contact the State or local Agency that administers the program or contact USDA through the Telecommunications Relay Service at 711 (voice and TTY). Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English. To file a program discrimination complaint, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, AD-3027, found online at [www.usda.gov/oascr/how-to-file-a-program-discrimination-complaint](http://www.usda.gov/oascr/how-to-file-a-program-discrimination-complaint) and at any USDA office or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by: (1) mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Mail Stop 9410, Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; (2) fax: (202) 690-7442; or (3) email: [program.intake@usda.gov](mailto:program.intake@usda.gov). USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender. Central Electric Cooperative, Inc. is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.

**Board Meeting Summary**

The board of directors met on March 16, 2026, at Central Electric Cooperative's headquarters for the regular board meeting. They reviewed reports by management including details on operations, member services, communications, service department and financials.

**Board Report**

General Manager Schlimgen updated the board of directors on the NRECA Power Exchange conference, High Plains Processing, East River Electric Managers' Advisory Committee, the Rural Electric Economic Development Fund, Basin Electric happenings, surplus property and other management activities.

The minutes of the February safety meeting were reviewed.

General Manager Schlimgen reviewed a service territory exception request from Southeastern Electric. Discussion followed.

General Manager Schlimgen presented resolutions to declare surplus property. Discussion followed.

Manager of Finance and Administration Uher summarized proposed revisions to Policy 402 – Collection of Electric Bills.

Directors Bechen, Gustafson and Wolbrink reported on the NRECA Power Exchange conference.

Director Wolbrink updated the board on the East River Electric board meeting and activities.

The board reviewed monthly director expenses.

**Board Action**

The board considered or acted upon the following items.

- A motion was made and seconded to declare the old Howard outpost building as surplus property. The motion carried.
- A motion was made and seconded to declare the following as surplus property: 1984 Komatsu Forklift and 2012 Advance Floor Scrubber. The motion carried.
- A motion was made and seconded to approve Policy 402 as revised. The motion carried.
- A motion was made and seconded to grant a service territory exception to Southeastern Electric while reserving the right to serve the location in the future if Central Electric builds three-phase service to the area. The motion carried.

There being no further business, President Wolbrink adjourned the meeting. The next board meeting was scheduled for April 20, 2026.

FINANCIAL REPORT	YEAR TO DATE MARCH 2026	YEAR TO DATE MARCH 2025
Kilowatt Hour (kWh) Sales	103,680,753 kWh	100,376,831 kWh
Electric Revenues	\$ 12,429,662	\$ 11,174,084
Total Cost of Service	\$ 11,891,821	\$ 10,617,450
Operating Margins	\$ 537,840	\$ 556,634

## NATIONAL SAFETY MONTH: PLUG INTO WHAT MATTERS

Safety is a word that shows up in mission statements, meetings and job sites across every industry. At its best, it reflects preparation, awareness and responsibility.

That's where the difference shows.

Electricity doesn't leave room for shortcuts. It demands attention, consistency and respect every day. For your local cooperative, that responsibility is built into the work.

The job goes beyond delivering power. It protects the people who build and maintain the system and the communities who rely on it. Reliable and affordable electricity matters, and so does making sure every crew member goes home at the end of the day.

That outcome takes focus, repetition and a culture where doing things right matters more than doing them fast.

### Built on the Right Habits

Linework is demanding and, at times, dangerous. It's also highly structured. Crews follow national standards designed for utility work. Protective equipment isn't optional. Procedures aren't suggestions.

Before a job begins, it's planned. Crews walk through the work, identify risks and make sure everyone is aligned. Communication stays constant.

What happens after the job matters just as much. Near-misses are tracked, reviewed and discussed to understand what happened and prevent it from happening again. Over time, those lessons build a stronger, more prepared workforce.

Everyone is expected to look out for each other. If something doesn't look right, it gets said. That accountability turns policies into habits.

Contractors working alongside cooperative crews are held to those same expectations.

### Extending Beyond the Jobsite

The work doesn't stop at the edge of a right-of-way. Because crews live in the communities they serve, that responsibility carries beyond the job.

Your local cooperative shares electrical safety information through schools, events and outreach. It's simple advice that helps prevent accidents.

June is National Safety Month. Most electrical injuries are preventable, and small decisions matter.

Leave electrical work to qualified professionals. Don't overload outlets. Stay clear of downed power lines and report them. If something looks off, whether it's a damaged transformer or an open substation, say something.

### Take the Extra Moment

Electricity is easy to take for granted. But the systems behind it, and the people maintaining them, depend on careful decisions.

When a task involves electricity, take a moment. Look twice. Think it through.

That pause can make all the difference.



**"Be safe, lineman!"**

**Renn Ronning, age 8**

Renn urges the line crew to stay safe on the job. Thank you for sharing your picture, Renn! Renn's parents are Justin and Katrina Ronning from Elk Point, S.D.

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.

# Easy & Delicious FAMILY MEALS

## TACO SOUP

### Ingredients:

- 1 lb. hamburger, cooked and drained
- 1 28 oz. can red or kidney beans
- 1 28 oz. can petite diced tomatoes
- 1 14 oz. can corn
- 1 pkg. taco seasoning

### Method

Put all ingredients into bean pot. Microwave for 20 minutes. Serve with shredded cheese and corn chips. Do not drain liquids.

**Marla Gilbert**  
Southeastern Electric

## QUICK PORK CHOP DINNER

### Ingredients:

- 4 pork chops
- 2 tps. prepared mustard
- 2 tbsps. flour
- 1/2 tsp. salt or Mrs. Dash
- Dash of pepper
- 2 tbsps. fat or oil
- 1 10 oz. can of chicken rice soup or chicken broth
- 1/2 cup water
- Add onion, potatoes, carrots, garlic powder to taste

### Method

Spread mustard over pork chops and sprinkle with flour, salt and pepper. Brown thoroughly in fat or oil in pressure cooker. Add chicken soup and water. Add vegetables and cover. Set control at 10 and cook 12 minutes or 35 minutes if you add vegetables. Cool pan for 5 minutes, then reduce pressure.

**Ruth Konechne**  
Central Electric

## CAMELIZED HAM & SWISS SLIDERS

### Ingredients:

- 12 Hawaiian dinner rolls, split
- 1/4 cup horseradish sauce, optional
- 12 slices deli ham (or 24 if it's thinly sliced)
- 6 slices Swiss cheese, cut in fourths (so you have 24 squares of cheese)
- Sauce**
- 1/2 cup butter
- 1/4 tsp. onion powder
- 2 tbsps. brown sugar
- 1 tbsps. Dijon mustard
- 2 tps. poppy seeds
- 1-1/2 tps. Worcestershire sauce
- 1/4 tsp. garlic powder

### Method

Spray a 9x9 or 9x13 glass dish with non-stick cooking spray. Set aside. Preheat oven to 325°. Spread roll bottoms with horseradish sauce (if using). Fold up pieces of ham to fit the rolls and place them on the bottom halves of the roll. Next, place 2 squares of cheese, replace roll tops and place in a single layer in the prepared pan.

In a small skillet, heat butter over medium-high heat. Stir in remaining ingredients. Pour over rolls. Cover with foil and bake covered for 20 minutes. Remove foil and bake 5 more minutes. \*These can also be made ahead of time. Just cover with foil and refrigerate for several hours or overnight. Bake as instructed.

**Jerald and Virginia Jensen**  
Sioux Valley Energy

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 2026. All entries must include your name, mailing address, phone number and cooperative name.

Picture by Shutterstock.



# A LEGACY OF SERVICE

## Schlimgen Retiring After 41 Years

General Manager Ken Schlimgen will retire on July 1, following an incredible 41 years of service to Central Electric Cooperative and its members. It marks the end of a long and meaningful career built on relationships, steady leadership and a deep belief in the cooperative way of doing business.

Ken's story with the cooperative started back in 1985, when he was hired as a Member Services Advisor at Intercounty Electric. At the time, the co-op had just installed a new load management system, and Ken's job was to help maintain it, troubleshoot power quality issues and work with members to better understand their electric use.

Early on, he admits it was unusual to be part of an organization that actively encouraged people to use less of its product. But it didn't take long for that to click. The cooperative model isn't about selling more electricity; it's about doing what's right for the members. That co-op mentality stuck with Ken and shaped how he approached his work for the next four decades.

In 1990, he stepped into the role of Manager of Member Services. That meant taking on a wider range of responsibilities, from communications and marketing to community

outreach. If you've been around Central Electric very long, chances are you've seen Ken at a district meeting, a safety demonstration or an event like Dakotafest. He made a point of showing up, listening and building relationships. Those connections became one of the most rewarding parts of his career.

He also helped create opportunities for members to learn more about where their power comes from. Over the years, Ken led more than 40 bus tours to Basin Electric Power Cooperative, giving members a firsthand look at power generation. He also facilitated trips to Washington, D.C., enabling students and employees to learn about leadership and public service while advocating for cooperative members.

One of the biggest moments during his early career came in 2000, when Intercounty Electric and Tri-County Electric merged to form Central Electric Cooperative. Ken played a key role in helping navigate that transition, keeping the focus on serving members and building a strong future.

In 2015, Ken was named General Manager. As he took on that leadership role, his goal was to leave the cooperative better than he found it. Over the past 11 years, that's exactly what he's worked to achieve.

One of his biggest priorities was

getting everyone involved in shaping the co-op's future. Ken worked closely with the board of directors and employees to make strategic planning an ongoing, team-driven process. That meant setting clear goals, updating policies and always looking for ways to improve.

That approach paid off. Central Electric has seen stronger power reliability and an impressive safety record, including nearly four years without a lost-time accident. Ken is quick to point out that those achievements belong to the entire team, from the crews in the field to the office staff behind the scenes.

Ken worked with leadership to develop a plan for replacing aging infrastructure across the eight-county service area, an investment that will help ensure reliable service for years to come.

Technology was another area of focus. During his time as general manager, the cooperative moved forward with updating the metering system, improving load management programs and adopting new tools like the NOVA Portal to better support distributed energy. These aren't always the most visible changes, but they play a big role in keeping the co-op protected and prepared for the future.

Ken pushed for improvements to safeguard the co-op's future, including the construction of new service centers

in Wessington Springs and Howard.

Even with the responsibilities of being general manager, Ken never hesitated to jump in where he was needed. He spent plenty of time outside the office attending meetings, helping with events and even pitching in during storm restoration efforts. It wasn't unusual to see him alongside line crews in his early days, doing whatever needed to be done to help get power restored for the membership.

Beyond the co-op, Ken has been a strong voice for rural electric cooperatives at the state and national level. He regularly participated in legislative events, including Co-op Day at the Capitol and the NRECA Legislative Conference in Washington, D.C., ensuring the needs of cooperative members were represented.

He also encouraged others to get involved, working with the board to support employees attending legislative conferences. When issues came up that could impact cooperative service territory, Ken was right there, building relationships, having conversations and advocating for the members.

His leadership hasn't just been felt within Central Electric. Over the years, Ken has taken on numerous roles in professional organizations, including serving as president of the East River Managers' Advisory Council and the Rural Electric Economic Development Fund.

Closer to home, he's been involved with the Mitchell Area Development Corporation, the Chamber of Commerce Ag Committee, United Way and Mitchell Technical College, to name a few. No matter the role, his focus has always been on strengthening the community.

That community-first mindset led to the creation of Central Electric's Operation Round-Up program. Launched in 2015, the program allows members to round up their electric bills

to support local projects. Since then, it has provided more than \$250,000 in financial support to projects across the service area, creating a lasting impact that will continue well into the future.

Ken has also supported hands-on volunteer efforts, like helping organize a bed build for Sleep in Heavenly Peace to benefit children from the Crow Creek Sioux Tribe, along with many other charitable initiatives.

Ask Ken what he's most proud of, and he won't point to a single project or accomplishment. He'll talk about the people. The employees who show up day in and day out to serve our members, the board members who guide the co-op and the members who trust Central Electric to serve them.

Behind Ken's 41-year career was a strong support system at home. He credits his wife, JoAnn, for her steady encouragement and the many sacrifices she made along the way. Together, Ken and JoAnn built a close-knit family, including a son Neil and his wife Shantel who have one child, and a daughter Kelli and her husband Kyle who have three children. As Ken enters retirement, he's especially looking forward to spending more time with all of them and enjoying the moments that matter most.

It won't be easy to step away after 41 years, but Ken leaves knowing the cooperative is in a stronger position, with a clear direction and a team committed to carrying that work forward.

Ken's impact will be felt for years to come, not just in the systems and programs he helped build, but in the culture of service and teamwork he leaves behind.

Board President Duane Wolbrink said, "Ken is known far and wide in the electric co-op world, and his leadership will be missed. He is leaving the co-op in a very strong position for the next generation of leaders to take Central Electric into the future."



Ken led more than 40 member bus tours to Basin Electric Power Cooperative.



Ken provided wiring services on one of President Jimmy Carter's Habitat for Humanity projects in the late 1980s.



Ken (right) is pictured here with board member Merl Bechen who was a lineman for East River Electric. They often taught kids about safety around electricity.



Ken started his co-op career as a Member Services Advisor in 1985.



The rotor is lifted out of the generator unit using two cranes. This component of the generator will be reused once other parts are replaced.  
Photo Submitted by USACE

# RENEWING RIVER POWER

## Fort Randall Dam Undergoes Multiyear Renovation

Jacob Boyko

[jacob.boyko@sdua.coop](mailto:jacob.boyko@sdua.coop)

A 72-year old hydropower dam in southeast South Dakota is the first of the state's four mainstream Missouri River dams to undergo a substantial retrofit to improve the facility's efficiency and reliability.

Fort Randall Dam, which began operating in 1954, was built near Pickstown, South Dakota, through the Pick-Sloan Missouri Basin Program. The program was included in the Flood Control Act of 1944 by Congress to dam the Missouri River at multiple points to improve the region's water management, irrigation, flood control and navigation while also generating much-needed hydropower. (See Pages 12-13 for more on how the program came to be.) A marvel at the time of its construction, the two-mile-long rolled-earth dam holds back 5.4 million acre-feet of water in Lake Francis Case. The dam's eight turbine generators have a maximum generating capacity of 320 megawatts – enough electricity to power about 245,000 homes.

Now, more than seven decades later, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is looking to boost those numbers and revitalize the aging dam with state-of-the-art, 21st-century technology to ensure the facility keeps up with the region's modern energy demands.

Overseeing the multi-year project is Maintenance and Operations Manager Michael Schenkel, who's spent the last 14 years at the Fort Randall Project overseeing the facility's maintenance, operation and planning. Schenkel says while the dam's eight original 72-year-old generators and turbines have served reliably, a renewal will improve the project's operation.

"Like many aging public assets, it's time for reinvestment," Schenkel said. "The turbine-generator units were installed in the

1950s and are beyond their expected service life. We're replacing them to ensure long-term energy and infrastructure resilience."

He pointed out that the USACE got its money's worth with the original generators, saying how rare it is for a generator to last over 70 years without needing a rewind – referring to the process of replacing the stators, or the copper windings and insulation that help convert the turbine's rotation into electricity. Over time, heat, vibration and age can weaken that insulation and increase the risk of failure. Schenkel noted that Fort Randall is the only Missouri River dam in South Dakota that has retained its original stators up to this point.

The scale of the units pose a significant challenge – each unit is 40 feet tall and weighs more than 400 tons, necessitating piece-by-piece transport, assembly and installation. Voith Hydro North America, the company awarded the contract to manufacture and install the new turbine runners and generator stators, began the decommissioning and replacement of the first generator in July of 2025. USACE expects that generator to be offline until November 2026 after installation is complete and engineers can inspect it for any issues. Once the first unit is back online and clears inspection, engineers will give the contractor the green light to proceed. To keep up with hydropower demand and allow adequate flow downstream, USACE's goal is to keep six units operating and two units offline for renovation at a time until the project is wrapped up in 2031.

Schenkel explained how the upgrade solves two problems at once: it replaces aging components in the dam and provides the opportunity to install new, highly efficient generators and turbines to produce more power with the same amount of water.

Fort Randall's original turbines generate hydropower most efficiently with 103 feet of head – the vertical distance between the water levels above and below the dam, determining the pressure at which water moves through the turbine. At 103 feet of head, each generator will produce about 31 megawatts of electricity.

However, due to the region's fluctuating power demands, water

management and other factors, operating in the efficient middle ground isn't always ideal. Schenkel says USACE often operates Fort Randall at 40 megawatts and 119 feet of head – about 4% below peak efficiency.

To solve this problem of lost efficiency, the new turbines being installed are highly-efficient, rated for 52 megawatts at 119 feet of head. This change raises the facility's total generating capacity from 320 megawatts to about 400 megawatts – enough electricity to power more than 300,000 homes.

“We expect to recover roughly 10% more energy output from the same water volume,” Schenkel said. “Essentially free power beyond the capital investment once the upgrade is complete.”

As part of the renovation, USACE also completed as-needed updates to the switch yard, which is the infrastructure that routes power to transmission lines for transport across the region.

Electricity generated at the Fort Randall Dam is managed, transported and sold by the Western Area Power Administration under the U.S. Department of Energy.

As a co-op member, part of your utility's energy mix is hydropower from the Missouri River dams, including Fort Randall, “so this work directly affects co-op members,” Schenkel added.

Looking at the dam's age and efficiency profile – and also being the only dam in South Dakota possessing its original stator windings – Schenkel said Fort Randall was the clear priority. The USACE has begun planning a similar renovation project for the Oahe Dam.

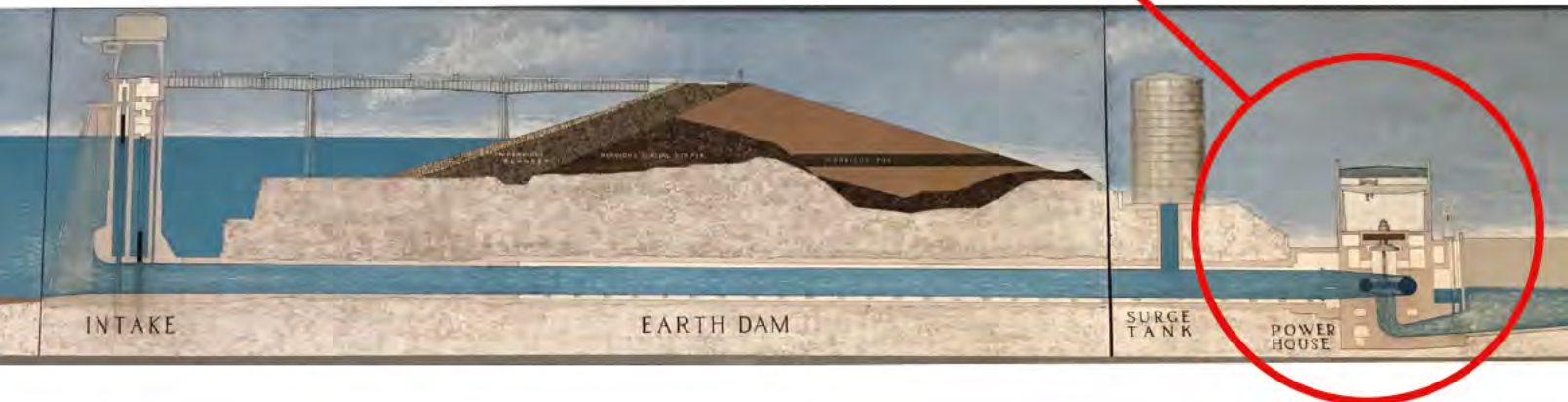
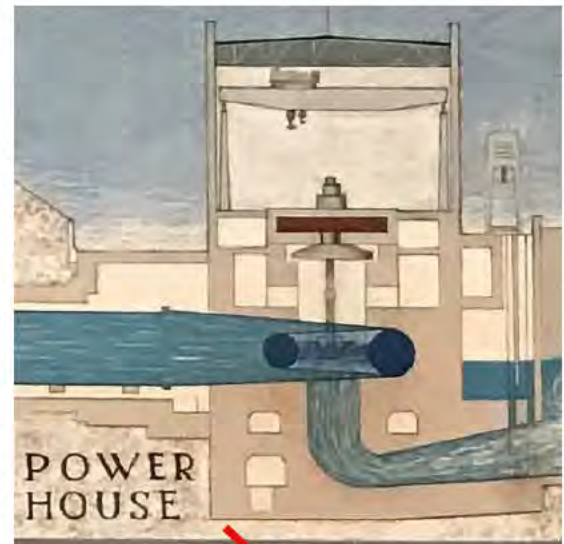
Work at the Fort Randall Project is scheduled to wrap up in 2031 once all eight generating units are replaced.



*Above:* The Fort Randall Dam is equipped with eight turbines. Unit 6 turbine is shown being removed for the first time since it went online in 1955.

*Below & Right:* A visual of Fort Randall Dam. Water flows into the powerhouse via the intake tunnel. As the water passes through, it spins the turbine. The rotor, connected to the turbine, spins inside the stator. As the rotor spins inside the stator, its magnetic field passes through copper windings and produces electricity.

*Photos Submitted by USACE*



# Mueller Named General Manager of Central Electric Cooperative



Ryan Mueller

Central Electric Cooperative’s Board of Directors has announced that current Information Technology (IT) Systems Manager Ryan Mueller will assume the role of general manager on July 1, 2026.

For 10 years, Mueller has led the cooperative’s technology operations, data governance and cybersecurity efforts. He holds bachelor’s degrees

in Business Administration and Marketing with a minor in Computer Information Systems from Dakota State University.

Outside of work, Mueller is active with the Knights of Columbus and volunteers as a youth sports coach, among other community activities. He is originally from Crofton, Nebraska. He and his wife, Kelli, who works for Dakota Wesleyan University, are raising four kids and have lived in the Mitchell area for 13 years.

“With technology playing an ever-increasing role in the utility industry, Ryan’s IT and business expertise position him well to serve as general manager,” said Central Electric Board President Duane Wolbrink. “He brings a strong work ethic and a high level of integrity. The board looks forward to working with Ryan and is excited for the leadership he will provide.”

Mueller will take the reins from current General Manager Ken Schlimgen, who is retiring after 41 years of service to the cooperative, including 11 years as general manager. Schlimgen and Mueller will work side by side over the next two months to ensure business continuity during the management transition.

“I am humbled by the opportunity to serve member-owners as their general manager,” Mueller said. “Central Electric has a strong foundation, and I look forward to working with our employees and board members to build on that success.”

## ATTEND YOUR DISTRICT MEETING AND MEET THE NEXT GENERAL MANAGER



**June 3, 2026**

**Brule County (District 2)**

Ag Building, Pukwana  
Doors Open 5:45 p.m.  
Meal 6:00–6:30 p.m.  
Question & answer session.  
\*Bradee Pazour filed the only director petition for Brule County.

**June 4, 2026**

**Aurora County (District 1)**

Ag Building, Plankinton  
Doors Open 5:45 p.m.  
Meal 6:00–6:30 p.m.  
Question & answer session.  
\*Duane Wolbrink filed the only director petition for Aurora County.

**June 10, 2026**

**Buffalo County (District 3)**

Tribal Gym, Fort Thompson  
Doors Open 11:30 a.m.  
Meal 12:00 p.m. until gone.  
\*Director election to be held.  
Boston Knippling and Donita Loudner filed valid petitions.  
Read more at [centralec.coop](http://centralec.coop).  
Voting registration closes at 12:30 p.m.

**June 11, 2026**

**Hanson County (District 5)**

At Al’s Pheasant Ranch, Emery  
Doors Open 5:45 p.m.  
Meal 6:00–6:30 p.m.  
Question & answer session.

**June 15, 2026**

**Davison County (District 4)**

Fairgrounds Activity Center, Mitchell  
Doors Open 5:45 p.m.  
Meal 6:00–6:30 p.m.  
Question & answer session.

**June 16, 2026**

**Jerauld County (District 6)**

Springs Inn Cafe, Wessington Springs  
Doors Open 5:45 p.m.  
Meal 6:00–6:30 p.m.  
Question & answer session.

**June 22, 2026**

**Miner County (District 7)**

4-H Building, Howard  
Doors Open 5:45 p.m.  
Meal 6:00–6:30 p.m.  
Question & answer session.

**June 23, 2026**

**Sanborn County (District 8)**

4-H Building, Forestburg  
Doors Open 5:45 p.m.  
Meal 6:00–6:30 p.m.  
Question & answer session.



## Employee Years of Service



**Rodney**  
Journeyman Electrician  
14 years on May 1



**Dusty**  
Line Superintendent  
31 years on May 8



**Dustin**  
Staking Technician  
19 years on May 16



**Paul**  
Plankinton Area Lineworker  
25 years on May 21



**Aaron**  
Lead Heating & Cooling Technician  
16 years on May 24



**Brian**  
Manager of Operations  
40 years on June 9



**Daniel**  
Kimball Area Lineworker  
7 years on June 10



**Gene**  
Wessington Springs Area Foreman  
9 years on June 12



**Tanner**  
Heating & Cooling Technician  
2 years on June 18

## Reasons to Celebrate

### NATIONAL ACCOUNTING DAY - MAY 19

This date was earmarked for the fine folks working hard and crunching the numbers to keep everything in check. When you do the math, it's clear they are major assets in our books. Pictured below is Manager of Finance and Administration Dean [redacted] and Accounting and Customer Service Supervisor DeEtte [redacted].



### NATIONAL HVAC TECHNICIAN DAY - JUNE 22

Shoutout our heating and cooling team for always keeping it cool. HVAC services are available to members and non-members. Pictured from left to right: HVAC Technician Rylee [redacted], HVAC Technician Tanner [redacted], Lead HVAC Technician Aaron [redacted], and Service Department Manager Lincoln [redacted].



### NATIONAL LOGISTICS DAY - JUNE 28

This is a great opportunity to recognize our warehouse logistics team, Evan [redacted] and Andrew [redacted]. They work behind the scenes to keep materials organized and readily available. Their attention to detail and industry expertise benefits the entire cooperative.



**CENTRAL**  
ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE  
Your Essential Energy Cooperative

*Office Closed on Monday,  
May 25, in honor of*  
**MEMORIAL DAY.**

*Remember And Honor*  
★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

# THE PICK-SLOAN PLAN

## Taming North America's Longest Waterway

Jacob Boyko

[jacob.boyok@sdrea.coop](mailto:jacob.boyok@sdrea.coop)

In the 1930s, both the upper Missouri River and its home in rural America looked notably different than they do today.

That was a period in which electricity was still a luxury enjoyed by townfolk lucky enough to have a municipal or investor-owned utility serving the community. As rural neighbors founded electric cooperatives to serve their homes, the once-primitive prairie quickly began to light up. And with that step into the modern age came the growing need for more electricity.

At this same time, the 2,300-mile-long Missouri River passing through seven states in the region was proving to be an untamable, destructive force for the communities and agriculture producers on its banks.

The floods would wreak havoc on riverside cities like Omaha, Kansas City, St. Louis, and Mississippi River communities like Memphis and New Orleans during swells, disrupting economic activity and trade. During low-flow years and toward the end of summer, the low water levels made navigation extremely difficult for barge traffic.

These problems had been ongoing. All the way back in 1933, President Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal constructed the Fort Peck Dam near Glasgow, Mont. There, the nearly 4-mile-



The Missouri River floods downtown Pierre in 1952 before the Oahe Dam is complete.

*Photo Courtesy of S.D. State Historical Society*

long and 250-foot high rolled-earth dam created Fort Peck Lake, stretching 134 miles across eastern Montana and generating up to 185 MW of electricity. Even so, the federal government understood more work was needed to fully rein in the power of the Missouri.

### Competing Visions: Pick vs. Sloan

Lewis A. Pick, an officer with the US Army Corps of Engineers, and William G. Sloan, an official with the Bureau of Reclamation, each had a vision for the future of the Missouri River Basin.

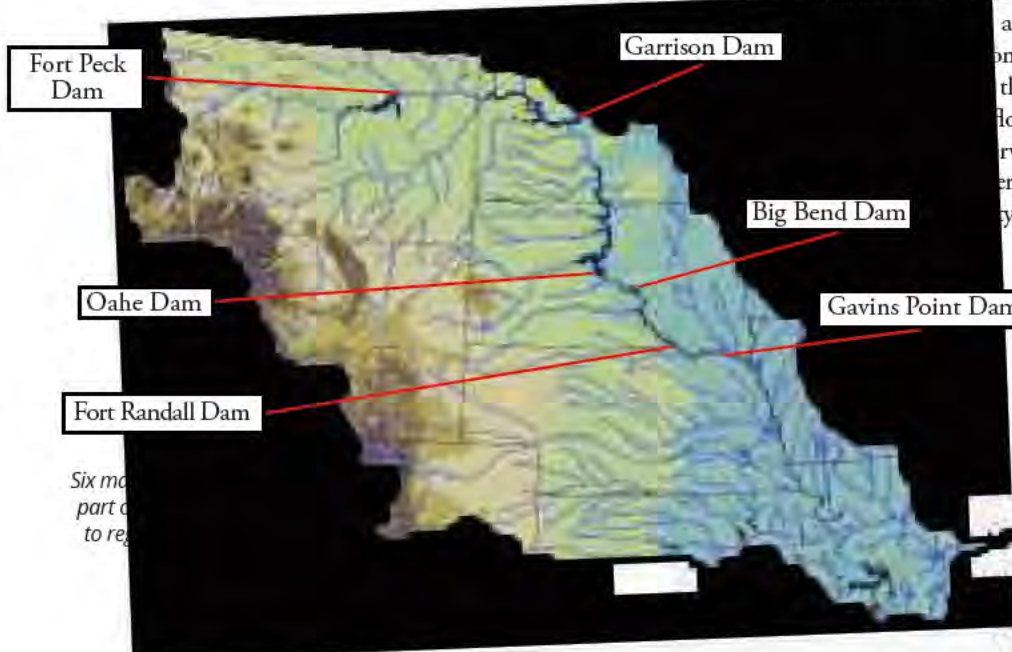
Pick envisioned large dams on the main channel of the Missouri River with a focus on flood control and navigation downstream in the lower Missouri River basin. His plan included five main-channel dams with levees from Sioux City, Iowa, to the river's confluence with the Mississippi River in St. Louis, Missouri.

Sloan, on the other hand, wanted the projects to benefit the upper Missouri River basin, with a focus on water storage for irrigation and agricultural development. Sloan recommended dozens of smaller dams with hydro-electric power plants.

The battle between the USACE and DOR was contentious, but it became clear that no side could garner enough support on its own to pass a project with price tags of about \$1 billion each.

Finally, in 1944, USACE and DOR released a joint engineering plan where both agencies' goals for the basin were represented.

The Pick-Sloan plan would benefit both the upper and lower Missouri River basin, with five hydro-power dams to control flood control and navigation past Sioux City, Iowa. Reservoirs would store water for uses in the upper basin, including irrigation, recreation, and hydroelectricity systems and hydropower generation.



Six major dams are part of the Pick-Sloan plan to regulate the Missouri River.



Oahe Dam during construction in 1958.

*Photo Courtesy of S.D. State Historical Society*

## Fort Randall Dam (1946-1954)

**Location:** Pickstown, S.D.

**Length:** 10,700 feet long – over 2 miles!

**Height:** 165 feet at highest point

**Generating Capacity:** 8 hydroelectric generating unites producing up to 320 MW. (See pp. 8-9)

Completed in the 1950s, Fort Randall was the first of South Dakota's mainstream Missouri River dams to come online, generating hydropower for the region and changing the river from a threat into a resource. The Fort Randall Dam creates Lake Francis Case, named for South Dakota's US Senator and Pick-Sloan advocate Francis Higbee Case. The reservoir can store about 5.3 million acre-feet of water (enough water to flood 5.3 million acres at a depth of 1 foot).

## Garrison Dam (1947-1955)

**Location:** Riverdale, N.D.

**Length:** 11,300 feet long – over 2 miles!

**Height:** 210 feet at highest point

**Generating Capacity:** 5 hydroelectric generating unites producing up to 583 MW.

Garrison Dam creates lake Sakakawea, which stretches across western and central North Dakota. The reservoir is the largest on the Missouri River, holding more than 23.5 million acre-feet of water. The dam is named after the nearby town, Garrison. Controversially, the lake flooded the homes of the Mandan, Hidatsa and Arikara tribal nations.

## Oahe Dam (1948-1963)

**Location:** Pierre/Fort Pierre, S.D.

**Length:** 9,360 feet long – about 1.8 miles!

**Height:** 245 feet at highest point

**Generating Capacity:** 7 hydroelectric generating units producing up to 786 MW.

Oahe Dam sits north of Pierre and Fort Pierre, forming Lake Oahe. The reservoir can hold about 23 million acre-feet of water. Oahe Dam has the highest generation capacity, producing enough electricity to power about 600,000 homes.

The dam and lake's name came from the Oahe Indian Mission established more than 70 years before. The mission's site, as well as other communities and tribal lands, were submerged beneath the reservoir.

## Gavin's Point Dam (1952-1957)

**Location:** Yankton, S.D.

**Length:** 8,700 feet long – about 1.6 miles.

**Height:** 74 feet at highest point

**Generating Capacity:** 3 hydroelectric generating unites producing up to 132 MW.

The farthest downriver dam on the Missouri, Gavin's Point is a dam essential for controlling the water levels for downstream barge traffic starting at Sioux City on the Missouri River and all the way down to New Orleans on the Mississippi River. The dam creates Lewis and Clark Lake on the South Dakota-Nebraska border, with a storage capacity of 492,000 acre-feet of water.

## Big Bend Dam (1959-1966)

**Location:** Fort Thompson, S.D.

**Length:** 10,570 feet long – about 2 miles.

**Height:** 95 feet at highest point

**Generating Capacity:** 8 hydroelectric generating unites producing up to 439 MW.

The final mainstream Pick-Sloan dam to be completed on the Missouri River, Big Bend Dam creates Lake Sharpe, holding about 1.7 million acre-feet of water.

## The Good and the Bad

A lot of good came from the Pick-Sloan Plan: affordable hydropower for communities throughout the region and water storage to mitigate drought and reduce flooding.

However, a project of such magnitude will also naturally have downsides. University of South Dakota Professor David Swanson says the disruption of

natural patterns has affected ecology for riverside habitats.

Cottonwood seedlings need wet, sandy soil to germinate – without spring floods, it's hard for new trees to establish. Today, there are fewer young cottonwoods growing.

In addition, birds like the least tern that nest on sand bars struggle to find suitable ground, affecting populations.

The reservoirs also flooded more than 1 million acres of land along the Missouri River, some held by private landowners and tribes, and displaced about 6,000 people from land where their families had lived for generations.

In South Dakota, several former communities lay beneath Lake Oahe, including parts of Polluck and Forest City.

Between Chamberlain and Oacoma, American Island was once a statewide destination for boy scouts, with its miles of forest, camp with cabins and bathhouse, racetrack. Today, it sits below dozens of feet of water in Lake Francis Case.



American Island's locally-famous animal statues were moved before Lake Francis Case flooded the island. Photo Courtesy of the Cozard Memorial Library



Tribal leader George Gillette wipes tears as land is seized for the Garrison Dam. Photo Courtesy of National Archives

## Notice of Capital Credit Allocations

Each spring, Central Electric Cooperative notifies members by mail of their capital credit allocation from the previous year. This allocation represents your share of the cooperative's margins for that year. It's important to note that this notice is not a bill credit or a refund. It simply shows how much equity has been assigned to your account.

As a member-owned cooperative, Central Electric operates differently from investor-owned utilities. After covering the cost of providing service, maintaining infrastructure, and meeting financial obligations, any remaining margins are not kept as profit. Instead, those margins are allocated back to members in proportion to how much electricity they used during the year. These allocations build your ownership equity in the cooperative.

Think of capital credits as your stake in the co-op. The more electricity you use and the longer you remain a member, the more equity you accumulate over time through these annual allocations.

Later in the year, the board of directors reviews the cooperative's financial health and determines whether a portion of previously allocated capital credits can be retired, meaning returned to members. This decision is based on factors such as cash flow, system needs, and overall financial stability.

When a retirement is approved:

- Active members receive a refund as a credit on their electric bill.
- Former members are sent a check to the mailing address on file.

Capital credit allocations and retirements are a key part of what makes cooperative membership unique. They reflect your ownership in Central Electric and demonstrate how the cooperative operates for the benefit of its members rather than outside investors.



## Outstanding Seniors Honored at Scholar of the Year Banquet

Touchstone Energy® Cooperatives in eastern South Dakota and western Minnesota honored some of the area's most impressive high school seniors on Saturday, April 18, during the 24th Annual Touchstone Energy Scholar of the Year Banquet held at the Dakota Prairie Playhouse on the campus of Dakota State University.

Plankinton senior Layce Bruns, daughter of Rustin and Kama Bruns, was one of 32 seniors chosen throughout the 2025-2026 school year as the Touchstone Energy Scholar of the Week. It's a program that recognizes students for academic achievement, extracurricular involvement and community service. The students are featured in weekly segments on Dakota News Now television and they each receive a \$250 scholarship.

Author and former S.D. Legislator V.J. Smith was the keynote speaker at the banquet. Dakota News Now multimedia

journalist Hannah Ekwall served as the master of ceremonies.

For information on the Scholar of the Week program, visit [yourcoopower.com](http://yourcoopower.com). Senior nominations are accepted from faculty each school year during the fall semester.



Plankinton senior Layce Bruns was recognized at the Annual Touchstone Energy Scholar of the Year Banquet.

# BUILDING A HOUSE, SHED OR BINS?

## Call Ahead To Avoid Delays



**Brian Bultje**  
Manager of  
Operations

If you're planning to build a new home, outbuilding or grain bin this year, please give Central Electric a call early in the process. Taking care of this up front helps set your project up for success and helps you avoid unexpected delays.

Some members are surprised to find that getting power to your building site is more difficult than simply running a line. For your benefit, we take the time to look at your location, determine your

electrical capacity needs and design a plan that will ensure safe, reliable power for years to come.

Part of that process is staking, when we come out to your property to map the line route, look for any obstacles and make sure everything is properly planned before construction begins. That planning and staking process takes time, especially during the busy season.

Besides staking, there may be additional steps required, such as securing easements, coordinating with contractors or scheduling crews and equipment for line construction. When you reach out early, it gives everyone the time needed to get those details right and helps avoid last-minute surprises or delays.

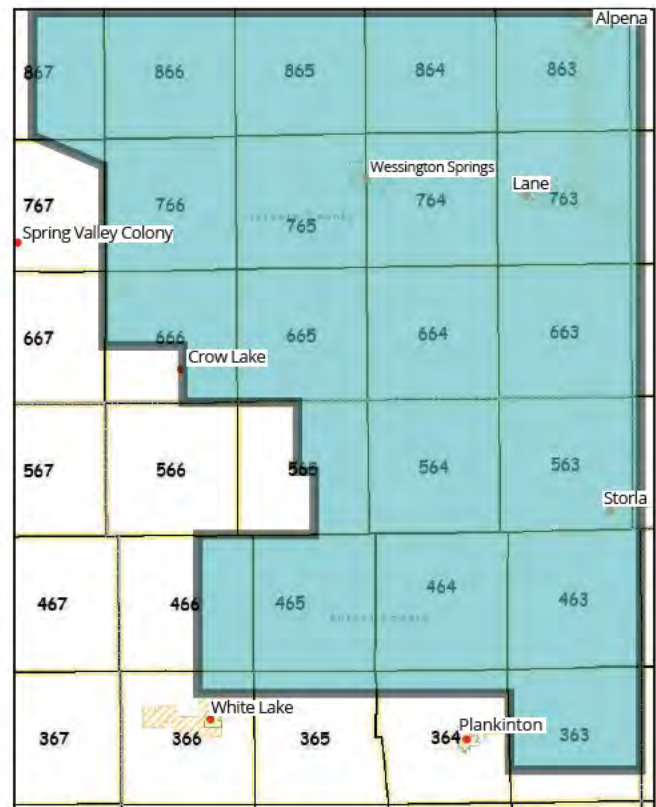
No matter the size of your project, we're here to help make sure we can meet your electrical needs today and into the future. Give Central Electric a call at 605-996-7516 to get the process started. A little planning up front goes a long way in making sure the power is there when you need it.



## ANNUAL POLE TESTING

Central Electric Cooperative's annual pole inspection program is scheduled to take place throughout June and July in the areas of Aurora County and Jerauld County outlined on the right. The cooperative contracted with SBS Power Pole Inspections to complete the testing. They will utilize a crew of three to five workers who have performed testing in our area in previous years.

The inspection program is intended to detect poles with potential faults and prevent future unplanned outages or damages. Approximately 5,000 poles will be tested. Members may notice the crews digging around poles or riding ATVs and pickups along power lines. Crews will identify themselves by using Central Electric magnets on vehicles and other possible means. If you have questions or concerns, please call Central Electric Cooperative at 605-996-7516.





**JUNE 19-20**  
**77th Annual Tabor**  
**Czech Days**  
 Food, Dancing, Parade  
 Tabor, SD  
[taborczechdays.com](http://taborczechdays.com)

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.

**JUNE 3-23**  
**Central Electric District Meetings**  
 See Schedule (Page 10)

**JUNE 4-6**  
**Black Hills Quilt Show**  
 Thurs. 5-8 p.m.  
 Fri. 9 a.m.-5 p.m.  
 Sat. 9 a.m.-4 p.m.  
 Rushmore Hall  
 at the Monument  
 Rapid City, SD

**JUNE 5**  
**2nd Annual 605 Day**  
 Vendors & Family Fun  
 The Smoking Mule  
 Chamberlain, SD

**JUNE 6**  
**Bulls 'n' Pulls**  
**Antique Tractor Pull**  
 Prairie Village  
 Madison, SD

**JUNE 12-14**  
**South Shore 125th Anniversary Celebration**  
 South Shore, SD  
 605-756-4130  
[www.southshore-sd.com](http://www.southshore-sd.com)

**JUNE 13**  
**Journey Into Historic Pickstown**  
 9 a.m.-5 p.m.  
 Ft. Randall Town & Museum  
 Pickstown, SD  
 605-487-7299

**JUNE 13**  
**Luce Pioneer Day**  
 10 a.m.-3 p.m.  
 Rope & Candle Making, Butter Churning, Dutch Oven Cooking  
 Lake Herman State Park  
 Madison, SD  
 605-880-5077

**JUNE 19**  
**Dalesburg Midsummer Festival**  
 A Celebration of Scandinavian & Rural Heritage  
 Dalesburg Lutheran Church  
 Vermillion, SD  
[www.dalesburg.org](http://www.dalesburg.org)

**JUNE 20**  
**Alexandria Car Show**  
 Registration:  
 10:30 a.m.-12 p.m.  
 Car Show: 12-4 p.m.  
 Alexandria, SD  
 605-770-4717

**JUNE 24-26**  
**Bruce Honey Days**  
 Bruce, SD  
 605-627-5671

**JUNE 24-27**  
**Crystal Springs Rodeo**  
 Clear Lake, SD  
 605-874-2996

**JUNE 25-27**  
**37th Annual Red Power Round Up**  
 South Dakota State Fairgrounds  
 Huron, SD  
 Contact: Dale Steffen  
 605-680-0011

**JUNE 26-27**  
**Donnie Days**  
 Stickney, SD  
 Facebook: Donnie Days-Stickney, SD

**JUNE 27-JULY 5**  
**Woonsocket Water Festival**  
 Red, White & Splash!  
 Woonsocket, SD  
[woonsocketsd.com/Water-Festival](http://woonsocketsd.com/Water-Festival)

**JULY 2-4**  
**USA 250th Celebration at Mount Rushmore**  
 Rapid City, SD  
[www.nps.gov](http://www.nps.gov)

**JULY 3-4**  
**Rockin' the Bluffs**  
 Music on the Missouri River  
 Celebrating America's 250th  
 Chamberlain & Oacoma, SD

**JULY 11**  
**40th Annual Spearfish Canyon Half Marathon & 5K**  
 Start: 7 a.m., Savoy, SD  
 End: City Park, Spearfish, SD  
 Register: [www.nhcaso.org](http://www.nhcaso.org)

**JULY 18**  
**SD MCC Relief Sale**  
 Helping Others 'Round the World  
 Museum: 10 a.m.  
 Food Court, Bake Sale: 11 a.m.  
 Pioneer Hall  
 Freeman, SD  
 605-925-7009  
[sdmccreliefsale.weebly.com](http://sdmccreliefsale.weebly.com)

**Note: We publish contact information as provided. If no phone number is given, none will be listed. Please call ahead to verify the event is still being held.**