



A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

SOUTHEASTERN ELECTRIC
JULY 2023 VOL. 24 NO. 3

COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS



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Members of Sioux Valley Energy's Beneficial Electrification Department install panels on a 50 kW community solar array at the Sioux Valley Energy Colman office.

THANK YOU!!!



Brad Schardin
General Manager

Good afternoon, Members of Southeastern Electric Cooperative, Inc. (Southeastern). This will be my last “Official” General Managers column that I will get to write to you the Member/Owners of our electric cooperative. **I have enjoyed my 33 years working with and for each of you!** We have worked together dealing with the challenges and issues impacting your electric cooperative, our area, the state, along with national

issues as well. It is hard to believe that this past year went by so fast since I informed your Board of my intentions to finish my duties in July of 2023 as your general manager one year ago at our June 2022 regular board meeting. Since that time, your elected Board of Directors went through an exhaustive search process and unanimously selected Chad Kinsley as my successor. Please take some time to review the announcement on the next page from your Board of Directors relating to this selection. I have had the opportunity to meet with Chad and look forward to getting him around and meeting all our Employees and as many Members as possible in the month of July. **Chad will do a great job leading our electric cooperative to where we need to go focusing on being the best electric cooperative we can be by working hard every day to meet our mission statement of “Member Focused, Member Driven”.**

I Thank the Good Lord for the opportunity to work with and for you, the members/owners of Southeastern over the past 33 years! We navigated our way through shared management agreements leading up to consolidating our two electric cooperatives (Lincoln-Union & Turner-Hutchinson) back in 2000 and then merging another electric cooperative (McCook) in with us back in 2006. Our history as a combined cooperative leads us back to the late 1930's with the mission of electrifying rural America. As a combined electric cooperative, it has taken our member/owners, board members, attorneys and most importantly our employees all working together to get us to where we are today which is one of the most effective, efficient, and productive electric cooperatives anywhere in the world. **Thanks to all of you for your vision, direction, and patience with your electric cooperative during my tenure as your general manager.**

As member/owners of your electric cooperative, I encourage you to keep yourself informed and educated on the challenges of providing you with affordable, reliable, and dependable electric service. Electricity is the fuel of technology, and it drives everything we do today, tomorrow

and in the foreseeable future. Your active involvement is vital to our continued success. That can be as simple as paying your monthly bill on time, coordinating payment arrangements, visiting with your area or statewide legislative representatives on key issues, attending our annual meeting like many of you did this year on June 8, 2023, or just reading the monthly newsletters, social posts, or our website materials from time to time. **Providing you with electricity is not something that just happens, it takes years and years of planning, financing, engineering, construction and, yes, from time to time, politicking to make sure it all happens for you at the flip of a switch.** Our efforts as your cooperative power supply system (generation at Basin, transmission at East River and distribution at Southeastern) are to make sure we are taken for granted, that we are there when you need us and are just a call away if something isn't working quite right. **Please remember to stay involved in your electric cooperative!**

Last, but not least, to all my fellow employees, managers, and friends that I have worked with and met in this vast electric cooperative world. **THANK YOU** so much for your hard work, dedication, friendship, tutoring, mentoring and guidance you have provided me over my past 40 years in this program. Thanks to the Douglas Electric Cooperative Board & Employees in Armour, SD for helping me get my feet wet at the ripe old age of 23 as their general manager. **That start along with the help of the Good Lord connecting me with thousands of experienced individuals that I have called upon daily over the years has helped me to be a better individual and general manager for all our member/owners and Board of Directors here at Southeastern.** By all of you sharing your knowledge, intellect, insight, and direction with me you have helped me work hard to do the best I can for our members, board, and employee group over the years. Always know that working together is progress even if it is cumbersome, frustrating, and awkward getting the best result. **Together as electric cooperatives we will always, always accomplish more for our member/owners!** Your voice is needed to help shape the future of our electric cooperatives. You have the avenue to use your voice, make sure you take the opportunity to do so and, in the forums provided.

Thank You again for the opportunity to work with and for you, the member/owners of Southeastern. God's Blessing on each of you today, tomorrow and in the future. I look forward to visiting with you sometime or somewhere down the road when our paths cross!

**COOPERATIVE
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Chad Kinsley named new CEO of Southeastern

The Southeastern Electric Cooperative, Inc., (Southeastern) Board of Directors are pleased to announce that they have selected Chad Kinsley as the next Chief Executive Officer/General Manager (CEO/GM) of your electric cooperative.

Southeastern has served the member/owners in their 5-county service area with affordable, dependable, and reliable electric service for the past 85 years. Kinsley has been tapped to lead the electric cooperative as Southeastern faces a rapidly growing and changing future.

According to Southeastern Board President, Don Heeren, "Kinsley possesses the leadership skills and experience to help our member cooperative navigate through an array of challenges such as our growth, system upgrades, supply chain issues, transmission constraints, environmental regulations and economic/market uncertainties." Southeastern provides electric service to over 22,000 different locations in one of the fastest growing regions of the United States.

"One thing that clearly stands out about Chad is his ability to work collaboratively with our member/owners and employee group to deliver quality service at the lowest cost possible for our members," Heeren said. "He has a terrific personality and an ability to relate to our member/owners. Chad has demonstrated his effectiveness as a leader throughout his career and I know he's eager to work with our member/owners, Board of Directors, Employees and our cooperative power supply systems of Basin Electric Power Cooperative, Inc. out of Bismarck, N.D. and East River Electric Power Cooperative, Inc., out of Madison, SD. to accomplish our individual and collective goals for our electric cooperative power supply system."

As a current resident of Springdale Arkansas, Kinsley served as the Vice President of Operations for Black Hills Energy serving over 187,000 natural gas customers with over 267 employees where he was responsible for providing safe and responsible service as a top priority. Kinsley is a registered professional



Chad Kinsley
CEO/GM

>> Cont. on page 6

Fireworks Safety Tips

Summer is synonymous with barbecues, parades and fireworks. The National Safety Council advises everyone to enjoy fireworks at public displays conducted by professionals, and not to use any fireworks at home. They may be legal but they are not safe.

In 2017, eight people died and over 12,000 were injured badly enough to require medical treatment after fireworks-related incidents. Of these, 50% of the injuries were to children and young adults under age 20. Over two-thirds (67%) of injuries took place from June 16 to July 16. And while the majority of these incidents were due to amateurs attempting to use professional-grade, homemade or other illegal fireworks or explosives, an estimated 1,200 injuries were from less powerful devices like small firecrackers and sparklers.

Additionally, fireworks start an average of 18,500 fires each year, including 1,300 structure fires, 300 vehicle fires and nearly 17,000 other fires.

Fireworks Safety Tips: If You Choose to Use Legal Fireworks

If consumer fireworks are legal to buy where you live and you choose to use them, be sure to follow the following safety tips:

- Never allow young children to handle fireworks
- Older children should use them only under close adult supervision
- Never use fireworks while impaired by drugs or alcohol
- Anyone using fireworks or standing nearby should wear protective eyewear
- Never hold lighted fireworks in your hands
- Never light them indoors
- Only use them away from people, houses and flammable material
- Never point or throw fireworks at another person
- Only light one device at a time and maintain a safe distance after lighting
- Never ignite devices in a container
- Do not try to re-light or handle malfunctioning fireworks
- Soak both spent and unused fireworks in water for a few hours before discarding

- Keep a bucket of water nearby to fully extinguish fireworks that don't go off or in case of fire
- Never use illegal fireworks

Sparklers Are Dangerous

Every year, young children can be found along parade routes and at festivals with sparklers in hand, but sparklers are a lot more dangerous than most people think.

Sparklers burn at about 2,000 degrees – hot enough to melt some metals. Sparklers can quickly ignite clothing, and children have received severe burns from dropping sparklers on their feet. According to the National Fire Protection Association, sparklers alone account for more than 25% of emergency room visits for fireworks injuries. For children under five years of age, sparklers accounted for nearly half of the total estimated injuries. Consider using safer alternatives, such as glow sticks, confetti poppers or colored streamers.



Call Before You Dig!

Dixie Koistinen

Dixie Koistinen advises diggers to call 811 before digging. This is a great tip for anyone doing construction or yard work this summer. Dixie is the daughter of Jerome and Lisa Koistinen from Lake Norden, S.D., members of H-D Electric.

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.



Summer DESSERTS

VICKY'S RHUBARB CAKE

Ingredients:

- 1 egg
- 1 cup sugar
- 1 cup cream (sweet or sour)
- 1 1/2 cups flour
- 1 tsp. soda
- 1/4 tsp. cinnamon
- 2 cups rhubarb (slice thin)

METHOD

Mix in order. Grease and flour pan. Pour batter into pan and sprinkle 1 cup brown sugar, 1/2 cup nuts, and 1/2 cup chocolate chips over the top. Bake at 350°F for 50 minutes.

Vicky Hoffman
South Dakota

CHERRY CLOUD 9 DESSERT

Ingredients:

- 1 white cake mix
- 1 (3 oz.) pkg. cherry jello
- 1 (8 oz.) carton of Cool Whip
- 1 (24 oz.) can cherry pie filling

METHOD

Bake 1 white cake mix in 9x13" pan according to directions. Poke holes in cake and pour in 1 (3 oz.) pkg. cherry jello made with only 1 1/2 cups water. Refrigerate.

When this is cool, cover with 1 (8 oz.) carton of Cool Whip. Gently spoon on 1 (24 oz.) can of cherry pie filling. Refrigerate and serve.

This is a pretty red and white dessert to serve during holiday gatherings.

Jane Ham
Rapid City, S.D.

EASY RASPBERRY MOLTEN CAKES

Ingredients:

- 4 oz. semi-sweet chocolate
- 1/2 cup (1 stick) butter
- 4 tsp. raspberry extract
- 1 cup confectioners' sugar
- 2 eggs
- 1 egg yolk
- 6 tbsp. flour
- Raspberry Sauce (recipe follows)

Raspberry Sauce:

- 1 package (10 ounces) frozen raspberries in juice, thawed
- 1/2 teaspoon raspberry extract

METHOD

Preheat oven to 425°F. Butter 6 (6 oz.) custard cups or soufflé dishes. Place on baking sheet.

Microwave chocolate and butter in large microwavable bowl on HIGH 1 minute or until butter is melted. Stir with wire whisk until chocolate is completely melted. Stir in raspberry flavor and vanilla. Stir in sugar until well blended. Whisk in eggs and yolk. Stir in flour. Pour batter into prepared custard cups.

Bake 10 to 14 minutes or until sides are firm but centers are soft. Let stand 1 minute. Carefully loosen edges with small knife. Invert cakes onto serving plates.

For the Raspberry Sauce, mix raspberries and raspberry extract until well blended. Serve with cakes.

mccormick.com

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

>> From page 3

engineer and grew up in Huron, SD. He and his wife Sundy have four children and are looking forward to the transition back to the Midwest. Kinsley will be working out of the Sioux Falls office when he begins his duties as CEO/GM in early July 2023, for Southeastern.

Kinsley will be replacing the current Southeastern General Manager, Brad Schardin, who has worked for the electric cooperative for over 33 years. Schardin will complete his role at Southeastern in the last week of July 2023. "I look forward to working with Chad in this transition process to make sure we keep all the balls in the air with our ongoing work activities, relationships with all our member/owners, and plans at your electric cooperative.

I have been Blessed over the past 40 years working in the electric cooperative industry and I have truly appreciated the opportunity to work for such an excellent group of member/owners, with your elected Board of Directors and with such a dedicated Management Staff/Employee group! Thanks everyone for helping make Southeastern a top-notch electric cooperative not only in South Dakota but throughout the nation as a whole!"

Kinsley states that "I'm truly humbled, honored and very excited to be able to join the Southeastern team. Southeastern has a strong legacy and a great reputation. I look forward to collaborating with the Southeastern Board and employee team to continue to serve our member/owners with safe, reliable, and affordable service while also partnering with our cooperative organizations and stakeholders across the region."

CAPITAL CREDITS

2022 Capital Credits Allocated

The 2022 financial audit has been completed, clearing the way for Southeastern to allocate the margins (revenues in excess of expenses) to members receiving service in 2022. The individual allocation amounts are determined using each member's total patronage for the year (total of the 2022 electric bills).

The exact amount of your 2022 patronage capital credit allocation and your total patronage capital credit balance with Southeastern was included on your May electric bill issued in June.

Your 2022 allocation and total patronage capital credit balance represents your equity investment in Southeastern which at some point in the future may be returned to you in the form of a patronage capital credit refund. Any refund of patronage capital credits must be authorized by the Board of Directors.

More information on capital credits can be found on our website - www.southeasternelectric.com.

This is one cooperative advantage that sets us apart from investor owned and municipal electric utilities. As always, if you have any questions, please let us know.

Board summary report

The Board of Directors of Southeastern Electric Cooperative met in Marion on Thursday, May 18, 2023, with all directors present except Carlos Hofer. Also, present were Manager Brad Schardin, Attorney Mike Nadolski and staff members John Euchner, Jon Wunder and Todd Nelson.

Manager Schardin in his report reviewed with the board the following items:

1. Reviewed the Basin financials, Basin's committee for large crypto mining and data processing loads and WAPA renewable energy credits.
2. Discussed carbon pipelines, large loads and the Sioux Falls office addition.
3. Reviewed the circulation folder and various member-related issues.

CFO Jon Wunder reviewed his written report, including the preliminary financial report, the quarterly budget report, results from the workers compensation audit, East River capital credit refunds and capital credit allocations.

Operations Manager John Euchner reviewed his written report, which included any close calls, recent safety meetings and outages. He also talked about the projected future services, the construction work plan, the distribution automation task force and material lead times.

Member Services and IT Manager Todd Nelson reviewed his written report, renewable energy credits, annual meeting planning, East River load control receivers, Verizon AMR conversion, disconnects, past due accounts, IT project, cybersecurity and load management.

Attorney Nadolski Attorney Nadolski briefed the Board on the commencement of eminent domain proceedings in certain counties throughout the state and how those proceedings may impact the interests of rural electric cooperatives operating within those counties.

The board acted on the following motions:

- A motion was made and seconded to approve the agenda, along with additions. Motion carried.
- A motion was made and seconded to approve the consent agenda. Motion carried.
- A motion was made and seconded to pay the Election and Credentials Committee a fee plus mileage for handling and counting ballots at the upcoming Annual Meeting. A motion was made and seconded to set June 8, 2023 as the Date of Record. Motions carried.

- A motion was made and seconded to adopt Board Resolution #2023-02 requesting a partial release of line. Motion carried.
- A motion was made and seconded to approve the budget variance related to the replacement of a basket truck.
- A motion was made and seconded to adopt the Board Resolution as presented to the board relating to RUS loan "H45". A motion was made and seconded to authorize the appropriate board officers to execute the RUS Loan Contract, the RUS Note, Mortgage and any other related documents on behalf of the cooperative. Motions carried.
- A motion was made and seconded to set the July board meeting for Thursday, July 20, 2023. Motion carried.

Next regular monthly meeting will be held on Thursday, June 15, 2023, at the Marion office.

SOLAR TRAILER



POWER ON WHEELS

West Central Electric Cooperative's solar trailer serves as an interactive exhibit showcasing solar power generation in action for members. Equipped with a built-in generator, battery storage unit, inverter, and six rooftop solar arrays, the trailer is a great resource for public outreach and education efforts in South Dakota.

Solar trailer takes renewable education on the road

Frank Turner

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Solar panels are creating a buzz in the energy industry. Every day, co-op employees around the state answer an ever-growing list of questions, such as “Can solar save me money on my energy bill?” and “Are solar panels a reliable source of energy?”

Addressing increasing public interest, West Central Electric Co-op, serving towns such as Murdo and Kennebec, has developed an innovative approach to public outreach regarding solar panels. Their solution: a solar trailer — a portable structure designed to inform the public about the efficiency, pros and cons of solar panels.

“West Central Electric has approxi-

mately 3,700 members and I get two or three calls a month from our members asking about solar power,” said Jessie Tucker, the co-op’s member services manager.

Tucker noted that the recent surge in solar power interest isn’t limited to West Central. Co-ops throughout the state have been fielding similar inquiries. So, when the concept of a solar trailer was introduced in 2021, several nearby co-ops, including Rushmore Electric Power, were quick to get on board.

“We thought, wouldn’t it be great if we had something that we could show to the membership and explain how solar panels work and go from there,” said Tucker. “We envisioned the trailer as a resource that could be utilized throughout western South Dakota, if not the entire state.”

With support from surrounding co-ops, the trailer was completed in June 2022. Although the trailer is a work in progress, it has already been showcased at several co-op outreach events over the past year, including Black Hills Electric’s Co-op Day and more.

The solar trailer serves as an interactive exhibit where members can step inside for a first-hand experience. Upon pressing a button, the six rooftop solar arrays activate and start generating a total of 1.92 kilowatts of energy directly from the trailer’s roof. Apart from solar panels, the trailer is equipped with a built-in generator, a battery storage unit, and an inverter that converts power from direct current (DC) to alternating current (AC).

The trailer, according to Tucker, highlights the benefits of a diversified approach to South Dakota’s energy mix. For a reliable and dependable energy grid, renewable sources such as solar need to be paired with other forms of power generation.

“What we are really trying to com-

municate is that you can't fully rely on distributed generation, whether it's solar or wind," Tucker explained. "For reliability and safety, it's important to consider all available energy sources. Solar power has its limitations, especially when the sun isn't shining or during the night."

The introduction of a solar trailer comes as co-ops across the state are in the midst of their own solar initiatives. Just last month, Sioux Valley Energy completed its own solar project that permits its members to purchase a 20-year subscription to the power output from a newly constructed 140-panel solar array located in Colman, S.D. The project allows members who are passionate about renewable energy a direct route to purchase solar power through their local co-op.

"A lot of people are very interested in solar power, but they don't want to go through the process of using up land and roof space," said Ben Pierson, manager of beneficial electrification for Sioux Valley. "Members aren't interested in constructing these projects themselves, so our solar

project offers those members an alternative way to get involved in solar."

More than 30 members participate in the subscription program, and because the project was entirely financed by the participating members, it won't impact other members of the co-op.

"This project was one hundred percent funded by the members that are purchasing the output of those panels," said Pierson. "This project allows these members to see a local, physical solar asset in their community that is working for them and is credited on their bill each. So really



The solar trailer has been featured at several co-op public outreach events.

our focus with renewable is really about member choice."

The landscape of renewable energy is vast and ever-changing and every co-op is planning their own approach, but with resources like the solar trailer, tools for education and engagement are within reach for members wanting to learn more.



The interior of the solar trailer is equipped with battery storage and outlets – powering everyday electrical appliances, such as a hairdryer.

Touchstone Energy Scholar of the Year Banquet held in Mitchell

Touchstone Energy® Cooperatives in eastern South Dakota and western Minnesota honored some of the area's most impressive high school seniors Saturday, April 29, during the 21st annual Touchstone Energy Scholar of the Year banquet and recognition on the campus of Mitchell Technical College.

The event honored the 32 high school students who were chosen each week throughout the school year as the Touchstone Energy Scholar of the Week. It's a program which recognizes students for academic achievement, co-curricular involvement, and community service. The students are featured in weekly segments which air on Dakota News Now television and each student receives a \$250 scholarship for being chosen as the Scholar of the Week.

Sydney Boersma, a senior at Elkton High School within Sioux Valley Energy's service territory, was selected during the banquet as the Touchstone Energy Scholar of the year and received a \$1,000 award. Juliann Seeley, a senior at Beresford High School, and Alison Nankivel, a senior at Parker High School, both within Southeastern Electric's territory, were chosen to receive \$500 awards.

The keynote speaker was U.S. Representative Dusty Johnson. Dakota News Now news anchor Alexandra Todd served as the master of ceremonies.



Students attending the 2023 Scholar of the Year banquet.



Juliann Seely, Alison Nankivel and Sydney Boersma pose with U.S. Representative Dusty Johnson at the Touchstone Energy Scholar of the Year banquet in Mitchell, S.D.



Southeastern Electric Employees at the 85th Annual Meeting.

85th Annual Meeting Review

The Southeastern Electric Board of Directors and the employees of Southeastern Electric would like to thank all Members who were able to make it to your 85th Annual Membership meeting in Lennox on Thursday, June 8, 2023. There were 465 Members registered and over 1,000 enjoyed the pork chop meal catered by Central Catering from Hawarden, IA.

The Membership unanimously approved authorizing the Board of Directors to file a certificate of change of principal office with the South Dakota Secretary of State. This changes the principal office location of Southeastern Electric Cooperative, Inc. from PO Box 388, 501 S Broadway Ave, Marion, SD 57043 to the new principal office location of 47077 276th St, Lennox, SD 57039.

Incumbents Carlos Hofer in District 1, Chris Hofer in District 4 ran unopposed and with only one petition filed in

District 7 by Donovan Kost, these three were elected to three-year terms to the Southeastern Electric Board of Directors.

Board President Don Heeren on behalf of the Member/Owners, Board of Directors, Management Staff, and the Employees, presented retiring General Manager, Brad Schardin with an outstanding service award in recognition of Brad's dedication and contributions to Southeastern Electric Cooperative.

Following the close of the meeting, prizes were given away and the winners of the six \$500 grand prizes, and the winners of other smaller drawing were announced.



Above, Board President Don Heeren presenting retiring general manager Brad Schardin with an award for outstanding service.

Left, Members registering to attend the 85th Annual Meeting in Lennox.

FLIPPING THE SWITCH



FLIPPING THE SWITCH

Third generation ranchers Ken and Kathleen Meier stand by one of the first electric utility pole installed on their ranch.

The Meier Family and Illuminating Rural South Dakota

Frank Turner

frank.turner@sdrea.coop

In the rural heartland of Firesteel, S.D., a transformational moment still echoes in the minds of third-generation ranchers Ken and Kathleen Meier. Over a span of 56 years on their farmstead, they have run cattle, reared horses, and even raised two children. After all

of those years, however, they still vividly remember the moment when electricity illuminated their rural community for the first time in the early 50s.

It's safe to say, their memories go back a long way. And yet, their bond with their home extends even further, reaching back a century to when their families were still

establishing roots in the frontier of the rural prairie.

Ken recalls the unlikely story which brought his grandpa, Anton Meier, from Iowa to the captivating, rolling landscape near Timber Lake, S.D., in 1923.

“Well, my grandpa was ornery when he had a bit too much to drink,” said Ken. “Anyway, after a night of drinking, they threw him out of a bar in Iowa, so he crawled into a train car for a nap. When he woke up, he was in South Dakota.”

According to Meier, his grandpa Anton quickly fell in love with the state and decided to relocate his

family to a new frontier near Timber Lake. In a coincidental twist of fate, Kathleen's family also settled in the same area around the same time. Unlike Anton's serendipitous journey,

Kathleen's grandfather, Frank Holzer, had a more traditional approach.

"My grandpa didn't get a free ride," laughed Kathleen. "He came down with our family from North Dakota with a horse and a milk cow tied to the back of the family's covered wagon."

When their families first settled the area, it was the era of kerosene lamps, horses and hard work. Yet in their childhood, both Ken and Kathleen witnessed the transition from kerosene lamps to electric light bulbs, a change that would propel their families and their communities forward.

"I must have been 9 or 10, but I remember when Moreau-Grand put our line up," Ken reminisced. "The memory of those first poles being driven into the ground by a couple of guys with an old International Truck has stuck with me. It was just something you don't forget."

Today, those original poles placed in the ground more than 70 years ago still stand tall on their ranch. Kathleen, too, recalls the transformative impact they had.

"I was about the same age when we first wired our house," said

Kathleen. "I remember how fun it was to just turn the lights on and have bright lights."

However, the electrification of their neighborhood brought more than just the novelty of flipping a switch. Kathleen's family promptly modernized their home. Their stove and fridge transitioned from kerosene to electric, and they even invested in a milking machine. The arrival of electricity didn't just bring about change; it revolutionized daily life on the ranch, making it cleaner and more efficient.

"Our old washing machine ran on a gas engine," said Kathleen. "You had to stomp on a pedal to get that motor started. It smoked up the entire house. Once we had electricity all we had to do was plug it in."

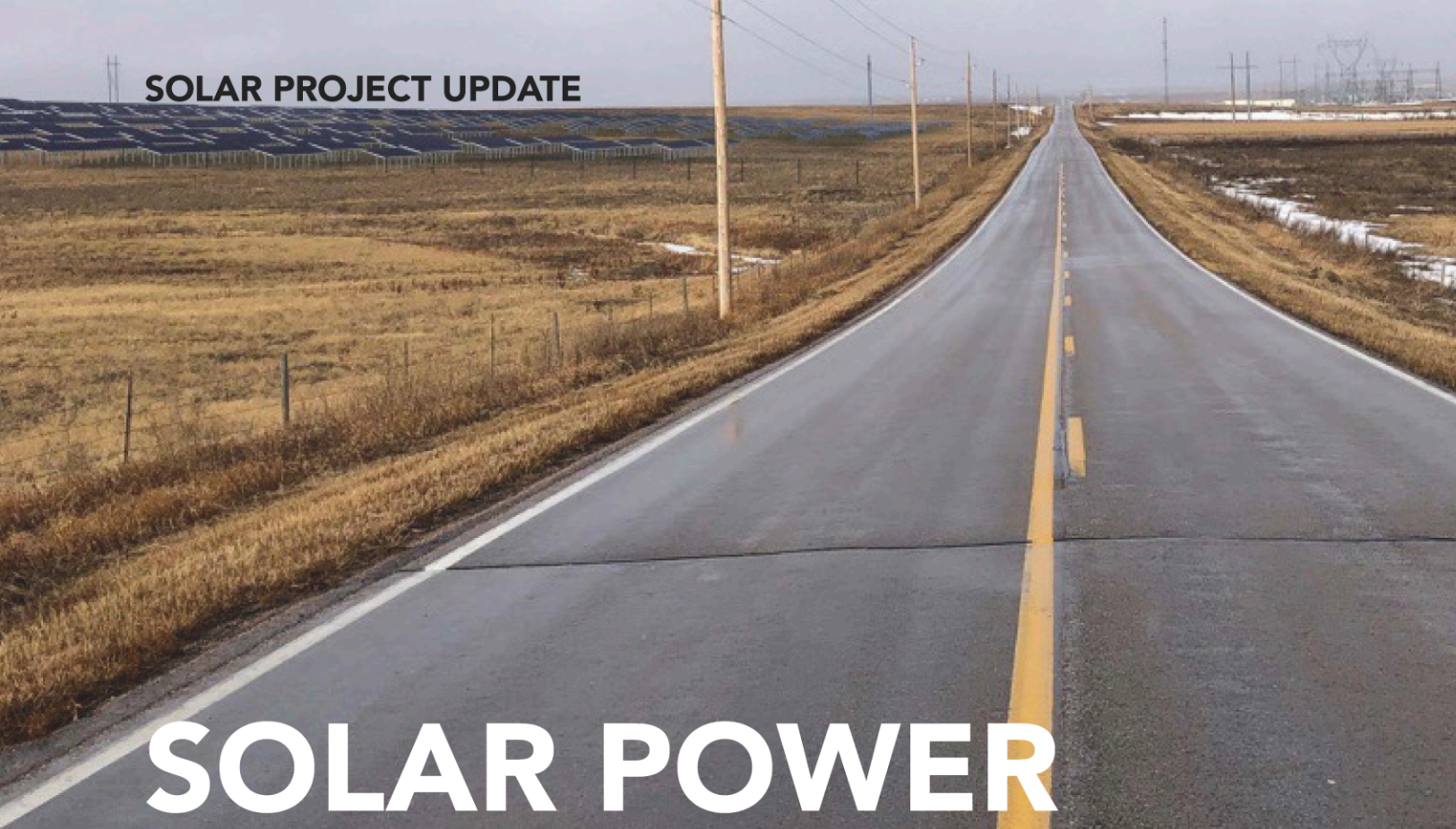
Progress didn't stop at the washing machine. "It didn't take long for things to change," added Ken. "I remember when I was about thirteen, my neighbor purchased the first television in the neighborhood, so everything happened fast. We would all go to watch whatever was on."

The transition has continued to benefit the Meier family. Today, their son, Kent Meier, works in the power industry with Border States Electric, a company that sells electrical equipment, tools and appliances. Their daughter, Cindy Lindskov has carried on the family tradition as a fourth-generation rancher in Isabelle, S.D., a town conveniently located just a stone's throw away from her parents.

It's amazing how much has changed over the years," said Ken. "Since the day we first got electricity, Moreau-Grand has done a great job of keeping our light on and burning bright."



One of the original utility poles on Ken and Kathleen Meier's land was created in 1950, yet it still functions to this day.



SOLAR POWER

National Grid Renewables is building a solar farm next to an existing substation near New Underwood. Photo courtesy of Western Area Power Administration

New Underwood Solar Power Update

Scott Waltman

Next year, a new solar farm near New Underwood should be providing power for homes and businesses in South Dakota and beyond.

Wild Springs Solar is being developed by Minnesota-based National Grid Renewables. The same company already operates a wind farm in Clark County, so it might already be familiar to some residents.

The solar farm is projected to be the biggest one in the state, according to National Grid Renewables. It's being built on roughly 1,000 acres.

Plans call for it to produce 128 megawatts a year. That could power 16,000 South Dakota homes, though some of the electricity will also be sent

out of state.

The solar farm is being built near an existing Western Area Power Administration substation, making for easier power distribution to groups like Basin Electric Power Cooperative, one of the largest providers of electricity in the Dakotas.

“When determining where to site renewable energy projects, things we consider include but are not limited to accessibility to transmission, land availability, resource, customer demand and community support,” a Wild Springs Solar representative. “The Wild Springs project area was selected for proximity to the electrical transmission system, New Underwood substation, land suitable for a solar project from an environmental, regulatory/permitting,

design perspective and cooperative landowners.”

Construction on the solar farm began in January.

Basin Electric, which is based in Bismarck, N.D., is a transmission cooperative that serves about 3 million customers in nine states. It has an agreement with National Grid Renewables to purchase 114 megawatts of electricity.

For Basin Electric, the agreement amounts to the first time it has agreed to buy solar power on a large scale. The cooperative has plans to bring on more than 150 megawatts of solar capability in the next two years.

Andy Buntrock, Basin Electric's vice president of strategic planning and communications, said stressing reliability is a priority for the cooperative this year.

“When we communicate on renewables we emphasize that they are just part of an all-of-the-above energy strategy that ensures reliable and

affordable power for our membership,” he said. “It’s important that we maintain dispatchable generation that has a reliable fuel source, while taking advantage of non-dispatchable generation like our first-ever solar project in South Dakota.”

Coal and natural gas are examples of dispatchable generation. They are fuels that are highly dependable because they are in constant supply.

“The construction of the Wild Springs Solar Project in South Dakota represents our commitment to bringing clean, renewable energy and economic development to the state of South Dakota. The project will contribute significantly to the tax base, as well as the local communities,” the National Grid Renewables spokesperson said.

In 2020, the South Dakota Public Utilities Commission approved a construction permit for Wild Springs Solar. That procedure set out what’s being built near New Underwood, including:

- 340,000 solar panels.
- A tracking system.
- Access roads.
- A substation.
- An operation and maintenance building and parking lot.
- Electric collection lines.

The plant will use solar panels that have been developed by First Solar.

National Grid Renewables is establishing a charitable fund for the New Underwood School District with plans to donate more than \$500,000 in the

first plant’s first two decades.

“Our National Grid Renewables onsite team has also worked closely with the school board and district to provide additional education about solar energy and the Wild Springs Solar project to some of the local high school classes, including a personalized tour of the site,” the company representative said.

But National Grid sees benefits that extend far beyond the Pennington County community. The upside, according to National Grid Renewables, will also include:

- Offsetting 193,000 metric tons of carbon dioxide emissions each year.
- A \$22 million economic impact in the project’s first 20 years of operation.
- \$12 in new tax revenue in the first two decades.
- 225 new construction and operation jobs.

And when the plant is producing power, that should equate to the removal of 41,000 vehicles from roads in a year’s time.

WAPA helped clear the way for the project in 2021, finding the solar farm would have no significant impact on environmental resources or humans, said Eric Barendsen, public affairs specialist for WAPA.

That’s also when WAPA entered into an agreement with Wild Springs Solar and the Southwest Power Pool allowing the solar farm to be connected to WAPA’s New Underwood Substation.

Ultimately, that will help Basin Electric power South Dakota.

The cooperative transmits power to two generation and transmission cooperatives in the state – Rushmore Electric Power Cooperative and East River Electric Cooperative. Those co-ops then send electricity to their distribution cooperatives, which provide electricity to homes, schools and businesses across South Dakota.

The Clark County wind farm uses 77 turbines to create 200 megawatts of power, the National Grid Renewables representative said. It began operation in 2019 and employs 10 people.



Construction began earlier this year on a large solar farm near New Underwood in Pennington County. Some of the power will be purchased by Basin Electric and be distributed to cooperatives in South Dakota.

REGISTER TO WIN!

Bring this coupon and mailing label to the Touchstone Energy® Cooperatives booth at Dakotafest or the South Dakota State Fair to win a prize!

Your Phone Number: _____

Your E-mail Address: _____



July 14-16
Badlands Astronomy Festival
25216 Ben Reifel Road
Interior, SD
605-433-5243

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 23-25
46th Annual Main Street Arts & Crafts Festival
Centennial Park
Hot Springs, SD

JULY 1
Hill City's Annual Star-Spangled Celebration
8 a.m.
Hill City, SD
605-574-2368

JULY 2
Sioux Falls American Legion Post 15 Pancake Breakfast
8:30 a.m.
1600 West Russell St at the SD Military Heritage Alliance Building
Sioux Falls, SD

JULY 7-8
Buffalo Gap Blow Out Rodeo
6 p.m.
Buffalo Gap, SD
605-890-1533

JULY 8-9
Brookings Summer Arts Festival
Brookings, SD
605-692-2787

JULY 12
Tracy Area Gardens & Quilts Tour
2 p.m.
Tracy, MN

JULY 13-16
Danish Days
Extended hours at the Daneville Heritage Museum
200 1/2 W Park Ave
Viborg, SD

JULY 14-16
Burke Stampede PRCA Rodeo
Burke, SD

JULY 15
Huron MS Walk/Run
8 a.m.
Lake Byron
Huron, SD

JULY 15-16
Charles Mix Saddle Club SDRA Rodeo
Geddes, SD

JULY 22
SD MCC Relief Sale - Helping Others Round the World
Museum opens 9 a.m., food court at 11 a.m., live auction and silent auction
Pioneer Hall on Freeman Academy Campus
Freeman, SD
605-925-70009

JULY 30-AUG 3
Lincoln County Open Class
4-H Building, North Room
27711 SD Hwy 17
Lennox SD

AUG 13-14
Twin Brooks Threshing Show
Featuring Allis Chalmers
Twin Brooks, SD

AUG 21
30th Annual Bishop's Cup Golf Tournament
Minnehaha Country Club and The Country Club of Sioux Falls
Sioux Falls, SD
605-988-3765

SEPT 4
Hidewood Valley Stream Threshing Show
Steam Whistle Blows
1 p.m.
47236 183rd St
Clear Lake, SD

SEPT 16
Health Connect Festival
11 a.m.
Sioux Falls Arena
Sioux Falls, SD

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