

COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS



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

South Dakota 4-H Shooting

Shooters Prepare for
the State Competition
Pages 8-9

Wild Horses Roam at
Black Hills Sanctuary
Pages 12-13

A Message to Our Members

Powering Possibilities



Matt Hotzler
Manager



Bert Rognes
Board President

We invite you to attend your cooperative's annual meeting on Tuesday, March 25, 2025, at the H-D headquarters building at 18240 SD Hwy 15, Clear Lake, S.D. (Approximately 1/4-mile South of the intersection of SD Hwy 22 and Hwy 15 in Clear Lake, S.D.) Registration begins at 6:30 p.m. The business meeting will start at 7 p.m. Join us for cookies and coffee; each membership that registers will get a \$20 bill credit. We will continue to give ten \$100 and two \$500 bill credits to those drawn from those in attendance at the end of the meeting.

Here are some 2024 highlights.

- **Rates** – We were able to keep rates the same in 2024. The last rate increase was in 2018, a 2% increase. Unfortunately, on April 1, 2025, we will have a rate increase. The overall increase will be 8% for general service, irrigation, and heat and 5.8% for three-phase services. Nobody likes to increase rates, but it has become necessary after seven years. The causes of the increase are general inflation of materials and increased power costs; H-D's power costs increased by 3.7% from 2023 to 2024, and an additional 8.5% increase from 2024 to 2025. When nearly 60% of expenses come from power costs, a 12.5% (about \$1 million) increase over two years makes a rate increase necessary.
- **Operations** – We installed 23 miles of new underground lines, 13 of which were three-phase and 10 of which were single-phase lines. Of the 23 miles installed, 7 miles replaced existing underground, 8.5 miles replaced overhead, and the remaining 7.5 miles were for new services. We built 54 new services and disconnected or retired eight active services for a net gain of 47 services.
- **Member Services** – The member services department completed 1091 service orders, 662 of which were wiring service orders including 30 standby generator installations. Three hundred nineteen service orders include water heater issues, secondary locations, heat meters and irrigation. In the fourth quarter of 2024, we began changing out load control receivers (mostly for water heaters). One hundred ten were completed in the last few months of the year. We will continue to change our load control receivers to the updated system over the upcoming years. Our existing system has served us well for over 40 years but is soon coming to its end of life.
- **SmartHub notifications** – H-D upgraded our notification system to allow members to receive text or email notifications of planned power outages, including information on time off and estimated restoral time. It also allows members affected to receive notifications when power is restored. It may also be used for unplanned power outages, but this requires a manual process, so as of now, it would only be used during office hours or in a major storm event. Go to SmartHub to set your notification options.

Once again, I hope you will consider attending your cooperative's annual meeting on Tuesday, March 25, 2025. Who knows, you may even win a nice bill credit! For more information on the annual meeting, check out this link on our website: <http://www.hdelectric.coop/annual-meeting>.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR! Annual Meeting Has Been Set

Tuesday March 25, 2025
H-D Electric Headquarters
Clear Lake, S.D.
Registration: 6:30 p.m.
Meeting: 7 p.m.

Registration gift plus \$20 bill credit!
Plus, we are giving away ten \$100 bill
credits and two \$500 bill credits!
Must be present to win.

COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS

H-D ELECTRIC

(USPS No. 018-905)

General Manager: Matt Hotzler

Headquarters Employees:

Annie Aberle – Finance and

Administration Manager

Michelle Prins – Billing Clerk

Heidi Brewer-Grimlie – Accounting Clerk

Jami Bolden – Receptionist/Cashier

Roger Cutshaw – Engineer

Darren Matthies – Building Property

Worker

Operations:

Troy Kwasniewski – Operations Manager

Todd Sprang – Line Foreman

Line Crew:

Pat Kirby – Operations Support

Kevin Holida – Lead Lineworker

Joe Raml – Lead Lineworker

Cody Scarrott – Lineworker

Derek Bille – Lineworker

Eric Page – Lineworker

Joseph Jordan Jr. – Apprentice Lineworker

Matt Miller – Lead Equipment Operator/

Mechanic

Brady Mellendorf – Equipment Operator/

Mechanic

Member Services:

Tom Lundberg – Member Services

Manager

Noah Reichling – Electrician Foreman

Jim Thompson – Lead Electrician

Deaven Boots – Apprentice Electrician

Jon Zirbel – Meter/Load Management

Board of Directors:

President Bert Rogness – Astoria

Vice President Terry Strohfus – Hazel

Secretary Roxanne Bass – Castlewood

Treasurer Steven Hansen – Clear Lake

Dale Williams – Estelline

Casper Niemann – Lake Norden

Kevin DeBoer – Clear Lake

Calvin Musch – Revillo

Todd Moritz – Clear Lake

H-D ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS is published monthly by H-D Electric Cooperative, Inc., PO Box 1007, 18240 SD Hwy 15, Clear Lake, SD 57226-1007 for its members. Families subscribe to H-D Electric Cooperative Connections as part of their electric cooperative membership. H-D Electric Cooperative Connections' purpose is to provide reliable, helpful information to electric cooperative members on matters pertaining to rural electrification and better rural living. H-D Electric Cooperative is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

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Design assistance by SDREA.

Notice of 2025 Annual Meeting

Dear Member:

February 18, 2025

The regular annual meeting of the members of H-D Electric Cooperative, Inc. will be held at the H-D Electric Headquarters in Clear Lake, SD on the 25th day of March 2025 at 7:00 p.m. pursuant to the provisions of Section I, Article VI of the Bylaws of said cooperative to act upon the following matters:

1. To elect Directors
2. Pass upon reports for the previous fiscal year
3. Transact such business as may come before the meeting.

REGISTRATION OPENS AT 6:30 p.m.

The meeting begins at 7 p.m.

Your registration card will be located on the back cover of this newsletter. Please cut it out, sign, and present the card at the registration table. Your registration card will entitle you to an Official Ballot, a \$20 bill credit, a registration gift, and a chance to win a prize. Prizes include ten \$100 energy credits, two \$500 energy credits. You must be present to win.

If you are disabled and need a reasonable accommodation to have full and equal enjoyment of this program, please notify the business office at 605-874-2171 or 1-800-358-7233.

Dated this 18th day of February 2025

Roxanne Bass, Secretary

H-D ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE, INC.

Operating Statistics

	December 2023	December 2024
Customers	3,831	3,878
Amount Collected	\$1,140,748	\$1,390,254
Average Bill	\$297.77	\$358.50
Average Kilowatt-Hour	2,929	3,513
Kilowatt-Hours Purchased	11,853,759	14,360,637
Kilowatt-Hours Sold	11,220,304	13,622,546

Falls Are Preventable

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

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



Fall Hazards at Home

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

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

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

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

Source: National Safety Council



"Don't cut trees near power lines."

Remington Welsh, Age 11

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

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

Hearty FAMILY MEALS

EASY CREAMY HAMBURGER PASTA

Ingredients:

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

Method

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

Lyndell Todd
Rapid City, S.D.

MINI BBQ BACON CHEDDAR MEATLOAF

Ingredients:

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

Method

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

Kayla Beaner
Centerville, S.D.

SKILLET CHICKEN POT PIE

Ingredients:

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

Method

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

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

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

McCormick.com

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

Minutes of the 2024 Annual Meeting

MINUTES OF THE 81ST ANNUAL MEETING OF THE MEMBERS OF H-D ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE INC., HELD ON TUESDAY, MARCH 19, 2024 AT 7:00 O'CLOCK P.M. AT THE HAMLIN EDUCATION CENTER, HAYTI, COUNTY OF HAMLIN, STATE OF SOUTH DAKOTA.

The 81st annual meeting of the members of H-D Electric Cooperative, Inc. was held at the Hamlin County High School, Hayti, Hamlin County, South Dakota, on Tuesday, March 19, 2024, at 7:00 o'clock p.m., pursuant to the notice of the annual meeting duly mailed to all members.

The President of the Board, Mr. Bert Rogness, called the meeting to order at 7:00 o'clock p.m. following refreshments in the Hamlin High School Gymnasium. Prior to the call to order, a video from East River Electric was played for the members.

The President of the board, Mr. Rogness, led the members in the Pledge of Allegiance and the singing of the National Anthem. Mr. Rogness gave the invocation.

The President of the board, Mr. Rogness, acted as the Chairman of the meeting and reported a quorum of 146 memberships registered at the time. A quorum being present, Mr. Rogness, Chairman, announced the meeting was duly convened.

Mr. Rogness introduced the former directors who were present, Doyle Thompson and Alvin Kangas. He thanked the former board members for attending the membership meeting. Mr. Rogness introduced the special guest from East River Electric Cooperative, Mike Jasper. Mr. Rogness then introduced each of the current Board members for H-D Electric Cooperative, Inc. In addition, he introduced the Manager, and the Project Attorney.

Ms. Roxanne Bass read the notice and proof of mailing for the annual meeting.

Mr. Bert Rogness referred the members to the minutes of the 80th annual meeting of the members on March 21, 2023, printed in the H-D Electric Cooperative Connections and mailed to the members. On motion duly made, seconded and carried, the minutes of the 80th annual meeting held on March 21, 2023, were approved.

The panel consisting of Mr. Bert Rogness, President, Mr. Matthew Hotzler, Manager, and Mr. Steve Hansen, Treasurer, presented the H-D Electric Cooperative, Inc. Annual Report with the aid of a power point presentation.

Mr. Matthew Hotzler, General Manager, advised the membership that there is no increase in rates planned for 2024. The last increase was in 2018.

Mr. Steven Hansen, treasurer, reviewed the financial reports, which were available to the members in the Cooperative Connections Publication. Mr. Hansen reported that 2023 showed a clean audit. There was growth during 2023. Mr. Hansen discussed revenue and expense with the margin stabilization funds, operating and non-operating margins, and capital credits from generation and transmission entities.

Mr. Bert Rogness, director from East River Electric Cooperative, Inc. presented a report from East River. Mr. Rogness discussed transmissions through East River, the Dakota Energy case and the effect upon H-D Electric Coop, Inc. Mr. Rogness discussed reliability and market rates. Due to the structure of coops, H-D Electric is insulated from drastic market rate jumps in many cases.

Mr. Bert Rogness discussed youth events. Coops to Classrooms is active this year. He announced the scholarship

recipients to area students.

Mr. Hotzler discussed SDREA. He discussed the investment made in the monthly safety meetings of H-D Electric. Including having SDREA conducts three safety meetings with H-D Electric each year. Mr. Hotzler then introduced the employees.

Mr. Bert Rogness advised the membership that the financial report of 2023 needs to be approved by a resolution. On motion duly made, seconded and carried, it was resolved that the financial report for H-D Electric Cooperative, Inc. for 2023 is approved.

Mr. Bert Rogness then introduced the Project Attorney, Craig D. Evenson for instruction on the voting process. Mr. Craig D. Evenson advised the membership that candidates filing a petition in 2024 are the following:

District 5 – Steve Hansen

District 7 – Bert Rogness

District 8 – Dale Williams

On motion duly made, seconded and carried, the following directors were elected as the directors for H-D Electric Cooperative, Inc. for a term of three years:

District 5 – Steve Hansen

District 7 – Bert Rogness

District 8 – Dale Williams

Mr. Rogness asked if there was any old business. There was none.

Mr. Rogness asked the members if there was any new business. There was none.

Mr. Rogness then introduced Troy Kwasniewski and Heidi Grimlie to draw for door prizes.

Mr. Rogness then asked for a motion to adjourn. On motion duly made, seconded and carried the meeting was adjourned.

Final memberships registered were 151 with approximately 240 in attendance.

Independent Auditor's Report

Report on the Audit of the Financial Statements

Opinion

We have audited the financial statements of H-D Electric Cooperative, Inc., which comprise the balance sheets as of December 31, 2023 and 2022, and the related statements of operations, patronage capital and other equities, and cash flows for the years then ended, and the related notes to the financial statements.

In our opinion, the accompanying financial statements referred to above present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of H-D Electric Cooperative, Inc. as of December 31, 2023 and 2022, and the results of its operations and cash flows for the years then ended in accordance with accounting

principles generally accepted in the United States of America.

Basis for Opinion

We conducted our audits in accordance with auditing standards generally accepted in the United States of America (GAAS) and the standards applicable to financial audits contained in Government Auditing Standards, issued by the Comptroller General of the United States. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Statements section of our report. We are required to be independent of H-D Electric Cooperative, Inc. and to meet our other ethical responsibilities, in accordance with the relevant ethical requirements relating to our audits. We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our audit opinion.

Responsibilities of Management for the Financial Statements

Management is responsible for the preparation and fair presentation of these financial statements in accordance with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America; and for the design, implementation, and maintenance of internal control relevant to the preparation and fair presentation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial statements, management is required to evaluate whether there are conditions or events, considered in the aggregate, that raise substantial doubt about H-D Electric Cooperative, Inc.'s ability to continue as a going concern for one year after the date that the financial statements are available to be issued.

Auditors Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Statements

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement,

whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance but is not absolute assurance and therefore is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with GAAS and Government Auditing Standards will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. The risk of not detecting a material misstatement resulting from fraud is higher than for one resulting from error, as fraud may involve collusion, forgery, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal control. Misstatements are considered material if there is a substantial likelihood that, individually or in the aggregate, they would influence the judgment made by a reasonable user based on the financial statements.

In performing an audit in accordance with GAAS and Government Auditing Standards, we:

- Exercise professional judgment and maintain professional skepticism throughout the audit.
- Identify and assess the risks of material misstatement of the financial statements, whether due to fraud or error, and design and perform audit procedures responsive to those risks. Such procedures include examining, on a test basis, evidence regarding the amounts and disclosures in the financial statements. Obtain an understanding of internal control relevant to the audit in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of H-D Electric Cooperative, Inc.'s internal control. Accordingly, no such opinion is expressed.
- Evaluate the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of significant accounting estimates made by management, as well as evaluate the overall presentation of the financial statements.
- Conclude whether, in our judgment, there are conditions or events, considered in the aggregate, that raise substantial doubt about H-D Electric Cooperative, Inc.'s ability to continue as a going concern for a reasonable period of time.

We are required to communicate with those charged with governance regarding, among other matters, the planned scope and timing of the audit, significant audit findings, and certain internal control-related matters that we identified during the audit.

Supplementary Information

Our audit was conducted for the purpose of forming an opinion on the basic financial statements taken as a whole. The Schedule of RUS,

FFB, and CFC Long-Term Debt is presented for the purposes of additional analysis and is not a required part of the financial statements. Such information is the responsibility of management and was derived from and relates directly to the underlying accounting and other records used to prepare the financial statements. The information has been subjected to the auditing procedures applied in the audits of the financial statements and certain additional procedures, including comparing and reconciling such information directly to the underlying accounting and other records used to prepare the financial statements or to the financial statements themselves, and other additional procedures in accordance with auditing standards generally accepted in the United States of America. In our opinion, the information is fairly stated in all material respects in relation to the financial statements as a whole.

Other Reporting Required by Government Auditing Standards

In accordance with Government Auditing Standards, we have also issued a report dated April 25, 2024 on our consideration of H-D Electric Cooperative, Inc.'s internal control over financial reporting and on our tests of its compliance with certain provisions of laws, regulations, contracts and grant agreements, and other matters. The purpose of that report is to describe the scope of our testing of internal control over financial reporting and compliance and the results of that testing, and not to provide an opinion on the effectiveness of H-D Electric Cooperative, Inc.'s internal control over financial reporting or on compliance. That report is an integral part of an audit performed in accordance with Government Auditing Standards in considering H-D Electric Cooperative, Inc., internal control over financial reporting and compliance.

Report on Other Legal and Regulatory Requirements

In accordance with the Rural Utility Service's requirements set forth in 7 CFR Part 1773, we have also issued a report dated April 25, 2024, on our consideration of H-D Electric Cooperative, Inc.'s compliance with aspects of contractual agreements and regulatory requirements for electric borrowers. The purpose of that report is to describe the scope of our testing of compliance and the results of that testing, and not directed primarily toward obtaining knowledge of noncompliance. That report is an integral part of procedures performed in accordance with Rural Utility Service's requirements in considering H-D Electric Cooperative, Inc.'s compliance with certain regulatory requirements.

Eide Bailly

Sioux Falls, South Dakota
April 25, 2024



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

SOUTH DAKOTA 4-H SHOOTING

Shooters Prepare for the State Competition in April

Jocelyn Johnson
jocelyn.johnson@sdrea.coop

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



Sophie Wolf takes aim during a weekly practice.

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

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

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

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

than we have in anything else.”

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

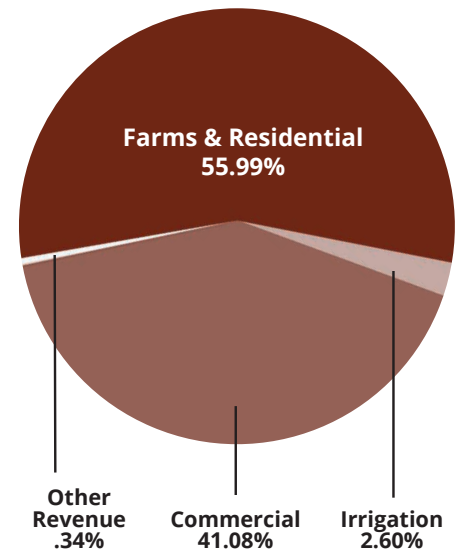


Archers stand on the line at South Dakota’s spring state competition.

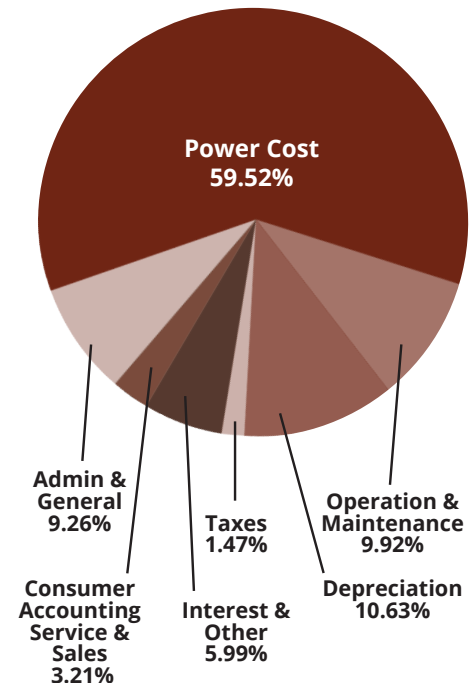
CO-OP FINANCES

Operating Summary	2023	2024
Income		
Farms and Residential	\$7,851,380	\$7,736,647
Commercial	\$4,794,881	\$5,676,257
Irrigation	\$529,717	\$359,328
Other Operating Revenue	\$56,213	\$46,827
REVENUE FROM ELECTRIC SALES	\$13,232,191	\$13,819,059
Margin Stabilization	(237,240)	379,248
TOTAL REVENUE	\$12,994,951	\$14,198,307
Expense		
Cost of Purchased Power	\$7,411,603	\$8,242,510
Operation of Lines	746,440	848,487
Maintenance of Lines	516,093	525,701
Consumers Accounting & Collecting	173,107	207,720
Customer Service Expense	171,774	230,952
Sales Expense	5,187	6,248
Other Administrative & General Expense	1,155,890	1,282,593
Depreciation	1,412,405	1,471,896
Taxes	194,848	203,220
Interest Expense	774,450	819,175
Other Misc. Expense	8,670	9,692
TOTAL EXPENSE	\$12,570,467	\$13,848,194
Operating Margins for the Year	\$424,484	\$350,113
Non-Operating Margins for the Year	\$266,914	\$345,486
G & T Capital Credits & Other	\$815,733	\$773,542
TOTAL MARGINS FOR THE YEAR	\$1,507,131	\$1,469,140
Balance Sheet	12/31/2023	12/31/2024
Assets		
Lines, Office Bldg, & Operating Equipment	\$49,312,568	\$52,000,052
Construction Work In Progress	122,299	178,349
Less: Reserve for Depreciation	(19,253,519)	(20,305,910)
TOTAL ELECTRIC PLANT LESS DEPR	\$30,181,348	\$31,872,492
Cash on Hand	\$22,576	\$45,759
Patronage Capital & Investments in Related Organizations	9,042,055	9,442,409
Working Capital, Member Loans & Investments in Other Organizations	4,530,084	4,288,592
TOTAL CASH AND INVESTMENTS	\$13,594,715	\$13,776,760
Receivables from Electric Consumers	\$1,174,682	\$1,422,224
Interest & Others	266,792	259,348
TOTAL RECEIVABLES	\$1,441,474	\$1,681,572
Material & Supplies	\$2,611,733	\$2,702,828
Prepaid Insurance & Dues	48,658	53,761
Deferred Debits	1,053,398	225,902
TOTAL MATERIAL & OTHER ASSETS	\$3,713,789	\$2,982,491
TOTAL OF WHAT WE OWN	\$48,931,326	\$50,313,314
Liabilities		
Amount borrowed from RUS and CFC	\$50,852,985	\$52,352,985
We paid back on Principal	(21,751,594)	(22,832,628)
Advance Payment to RUS	-	-
TOTAL LONG TERM DEBT	\$29,101,391	\$29,520,357
We Owe East River (Consumer Loans)	\$48,141	\$44,753
We Owe Consumers (Deposits)	35,908	33,783
Deferred Credits	415,100	411,187
Regulatory Liabilities	2,571,372	2,192,124
Accounts Payable & Other Liabilities	1,349,430	1,598,377
TOTAL OTHER LIABILITIES	\$4,419,951	\$4,280,224
TOTAL AMOUNT WE OWE	\$33,521,342	\$33,800,580
Patronage Capital & Other Equity	\$15,409,984	\$16,512,734
TOTAL LIABILITIES AND EQUITY	\$48,931,326	\$50,313,314

2024 Revenue Dollar



2024 Expense Dollar



2024 Financial Statements have not been audited.

Director Candidate Profiles

As of the Jan. 29 magazine deadline, H-D Electric has received a completed petition for District 1 for the 2025 Director Elections. If more petitions are received on or before the Feb. 28 petition deadline, a candidate profile will be posted on the H-D Electric website at www.h-delectric.coop.

District 1

Terry Strohfus has served on the H-D Electric Board of Directors since 2001.

Terry and his wife, Naomi, have four children, three daughters, one son and 12 grandchildren. Terry and Naomi live west of Thomas in Oxford Township of Hamlin County and operate a farming and cattle operation. Terry also operates a custom silage



Terry Strohfus
District 1

chopping business and serves Oxford Township as supervisor.

Terry comments: "I have enjoyed representing the members of District 1. I believe our electric system improvements have given us a dependable source of electricity. New technology and great employees will keep H-D providing reliable service to our homes, businesses and future growth. I would appreciate your vote for another term."

District 2

H-D Electric has not received any completed candidate petitions for District 2 on or before Jan. 29, 2025, the deadline date to be featured in the Cooperative Connections. If one or more petitions are received, on or before the Feb. 28, 2025, petition deadline, a candidate profile will be posted on the H-D Electric website at www.h-delectric.coop.

District 6

H-D Electric has not received any completed candidate petitions for District 6 on or before Jan. 29, 2025, the deadline date to be featured in the Cooperative Connections. If one or more petitions are received, on or before the Feb. 28, 2025, petition deadline, a candidate profile will be posted on the H-D Electric website at www.h-delectric.coop.

2025 Rate Increase

An 8.0% overall rate increase on General Service, Irrigation and heat and 5.8% on Three-phase will go into effect on April 1, 2025.

The chart details the increases in some of the more common rate classes. Other lesser-used rates will see similar increases.

Rate Class	Current Rates			Rates Effective April 1, 2025		
	Customer Charge	Energy Charge	Demand Charge	Customer Charge	Energy Charge	Demand Charge
General Service	\$36.50	\$0.1255/first 1000kWhs \$0.087/ remaining kWhs		\$39.50	\$0.1355/first 1000kWhs \$0.094/ remaining kWhs	
Electric Heat Discount		\$0.032			\$0.035	
Three Phase	\$105.00	\$0.0839 / first 2000kWhs \$0.056/ remaining kWhs	\$14.60/kW	\$115.00	\$0.09/first 2000kWhs \$0.059/ remaining kWhs	\$15.40/kW
Irrigation	\$18.90/kW x (highest yearly demand)	\$0.068 / kWh	\$ 6.70/kW controlled \$20.15/kW uncontrolled	\$20.42/kW x (highest yearly demand)	\$0.0734/kWh	\$7.23/kW controlled \$21.75/kW uncontrolled



RUNNING FREE

Photos by Alvis Uptis

Wild Horses Roam at Black Hills Sanctuary

Jacob Boyko

jacob.boyko@sdrea.coop

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Since 2020, the Bureau of Land Management has reported

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

and the inextinguishable spirit of the wild west.

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

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



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

Photos by Alvis Uptis





CATALYST FOR COMMUNITY

The Vinyl Record Club at the Custer County Library meets once each month.
Photo submitted by Custer County Library

Fun Awaits At Your Local Library!

Jacob Boyko

jacob.boyko@sdrea.coop

In honor of Dr. Seuss's birthday, March is National Reading Month – and the best place to celebrate is at your local library. Whether you are into reading or are just looking for a fun weekday activity, your local library is sure to have something that interests you and your family. Stop in at your local library to learn about fun activities like the ones below!

Custer County Library – Vinyl Record Club, Seed Library, Letterboxing

As the snow melts and the first leaves of spring begin to unfurl, the Custer County Library transforms into a hub of inspiration for community gardeners of all skill levels. With engaging seminars and resources for everyone to enjoy, Custer's library is the perfect place for community members of all ages to cultivate a love for gardening.

One of the library's most beloved initiatives is the seed library, made possible by the contributions of the Custer Mile

High Garden Club. This unique resource invites visitors to explore a collection of seeds that they can use whether they're growing vegetables in their garden or flowers on the kitchen counter.

Seeds are sorted by type, Myers explained, with sections dedicated to seeds you start indoors, seeds you start outdoors, root vegetables, leafy greens, flowers, herbs and so on.

The library also hosts educational seminars covering topics including hydroponics and sowing seeds in the wintertime.

"Master gardeners come to talk on related topics and we'll have free plant clippings and free seed packets available for people to pick up," Myers explained. "It just kind of kicks off our gardening season."

Gardening isn't the only thing bringing people together at the Custer County Library. The Vinyl Record Club transforms the library into a relaxing lounge where community members connect over their shared love of music.

"Everyone brings their favorite albums,

and you can play a song or two to share," Librarian Sarah Myers explained. "We just saw it as a potential to bring people together and capture that interest of vinyl. It's kind of fun to see different generations of people interacting together."

Myers also promotes outdoor opportunities through a scavenger hunt activity called letterboxing.

Similar to geocaching – just without the coordinates – letterboxing requires players follow hints and clues about their surroundings. Myers prepares clues in a similar fashion to the one below that guides players to a cache on the Mickelson Trail.

"Park near search and rescue, ready for a quest. Walk toward Hill City, following the rest. From the little stop sign, take 220 steps on track. Search high and low for a quartz throne, no looking back. If you see the football field sign, you've gone too far. Take a seat on the throne, reach down, and there's your star."

From under benches to tucked between rocks, players scour the area for the hidden stamp to ink their logbooks and continue to the next step of their adventure.

"We love getting people outside," Myers continued. "This was a way for families to have little mini adventures. Libraries

are more than just books – they're a place where you can build community and find community.”

Madison Public Library – Chess Club, Trivia Night

In Madison, Librarian Lisa Martin keeps her community sharp with brain-building activities and clubs for people of all ages.

The library's reach extends beyond its rows of books and walls; On Thursday nights, The Office Bar & Grill in downtown Madison transforms into a bustling trivia hotspot where the community tests their knowledge on an array of topics to lead their team to victory.

The library hosts five rounds of trivia. Participants can count on a round focused on current events, but the rest remain a surprise to keep everyone on their toes.

“Sometimes we do a theme to go along with a month,” Martin explained. “Last January, we decided to do “Dry January” where you try and go without drinking, but it was really just an excuse to have trivia about soda pop!”

The night's winner receives a gift card to The Office Bar & Grill, but at the end of the year, the team with the most points walks away with a trophy.

The library also hosts a chess club, which Martin says attracts community members of all ages.

“It's hard to get the boys in sometimes because they might not want to sit through things,” Martin said. “Chess club attracts that crowd, and we'll have 10 guys sitting here anywhere from sixth grade to retirement talking to each other and teaching each other – sometimes smash talking – and it's a lot of fun.”

Martin strives to offer something for everyone. Whether it's inviting Lake Herman State Park rangers to demonstrate outdoor skills, holding puzzle competitions or hosting talented musicians, Madison Public Library will have something to get you involved.

Gregory Public Library – STEAM Club

At the Gregory Public Library, the Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Math (STEAM) Club, is working to spark children's imaginations and show them opportunities for new

hobbies, or even future careers.

The after-school club focuses on hands-on lessons where students often have an active role in the experiment.

“We started off by inviting Sanford in and the kids were able to do an experiment where they extracted DNA from strawberries,” Librarian Tara Engel said of the early days of the club. “We've also used our LEGOs to introduce engineering, we've used a lot of art supplies, we'll do chemistry experiments with microscopes – Our STEAM Club is really getting kids thinking and doing things in a different manner.”

One of the most popular initiatives has been the bridge construction lab, where students use recycled materials like cardboard tubes to construct different bridges and learn basic engineering concepts.

“We use some of our bridge and construction books in our nonfiction section as examples,” Engel explained. “Then we have them use cardboard, construction paper, straws and strings to try and hold their bridge up.”

The moment of truth comes when the bridge's structural soundness is tested by the weight of a Matchbox car driving across the deck.

The library also makes use of challenge cards for LEGOs, where students draw a card with a creation challenge and students ranging from making the tallest tower to building a musical instrument that makes a sound.

“It's fun to see how the students come together to form teams and work together,” Engel said.

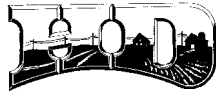




MARCH 14-15
St. Patrick's Day
Weekened
Fri. 5 p.m., Sat. 9 a.m.
 Deadwood, SD
 605-578-1876

*Photo courtesy of
 Travel South Dakota*

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

Please bring this page with you	
 Electric Cooperative, Inc.	MARK YOUR CALENDAR! Attend H-D Electric's Annual Meeting Tuesday, March 25, 2025 6:30 p.m. Registration 7 p.m. Meeting Begins

Meeting Location:
H-D Electric Headquarters
 Clear Lake, SD
REGISTRATION CARD

Voter Registration Form
 To be used only by:
 Churches, Halls, Public Entities
 Corporations or Partnerships.
 Please present this form to receive a ballot.

(Name of Organization)
delegate and appoints:

(Name of Voting Delegate)
 as the person authorized to vote on behalf
 of the above entity at the 2025 annual
 meeting of H-D Electric Cooperative, Inc.

(Signature of Member)

(Signature of Officer)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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