



Rural Montana

Montana Electric Cooperatives' Association Magazine | SEPTEMBER 2026

DECIPHERING Data Centers a five-part SERIES

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About our cover: ERock Chief Commercial Officer Allan Schurr and Edgar Quintero, operations manager O&M West for ERock stand in front of modular generators that could be used to power data centers. **Photo by Ryan Hall.**

Rural Montana

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CEO | Viewpoint

Data centers in Montana: Power and cost considerations

MARK LAMBRECHT, CEO of Montana Electric Cooperatives' Association



THERE are many serious considerations surrounding data centers, including their impacts on the electric grid and who pays for the power they require to operate. Data centers have the potential to fundamentally change Montana's power supply and demand, and could affect ratepayers if development is not carried out strategically.

At any given moment, Montana's residential, commercial and industrial sectors consume between 1,200 and 2,500 megawatts (MW) of electricity, depending on the season, weather conditions and time of day. For perspective, one MW of electricity can supply approximately up to 1,000 homes.

Proposals for data centers in Montana range from facilities requiring 20 to 25 MW to others needing several hundred MW. At least one proposed project could require more than 1,100 MW upon completion, following phased construction over several years. How will Montana meet that demand? Utilities will either have to dramatically increase electricity generation to serve both existing consumers and data centers, or data centers will have to provide some or all of their own power.

Montana law allows data centers to construct their own electricity generation behind the meter. This means data centers can produce electricity specifi-

cally for their facilities, with the power used on-site rather than necessarily being connected to the grid. They can also build more generation than they need and sell up to 20 percent of their excess power to a public utility or electric cooperative at no more than the cost of producing it.

MECA's research into data centers demonstrated they can benefit the communities where they are located. They can also benefit utilities by providing a consistent, large demand for electricity, offsetting costs for other consumers. In addition, excess power generation from data centers could enhance grid reliability.

Of course, data centers also present potential drawbacks that must be considered, including water consumption for cooling, noise, air-quality and land use. These concerns will be examined in future issues of this magazine.

When it comes to data center power supply and demand, the priority of electric cooperatives remains providing safe, affordable and reliable electricity to their residential, agricultural, commercial and industrial consumers. Co-ops maintain data centers can and should pay their own way — without being subsidized by members or placing them at financial risk. 

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Powering data centers

THEY NEED TO PROVIDE A LOT OF POWER QUICKLY



STORY AND PHOTOS BY **RYAN HALL** | RURAL MONTANA EDITOR

ONE of the biggest concerns and challenges when it comes to data centers, both generative AI and traditional computing centers, is how to power them — and how to do so with little to no impact to electric cooperative members, if not providing a benefit.

In public and industry forums on data center development throughout the Northwest, this has been a recurring theme. Data centers need power, lots of it, and they need transmission lines and infrastructure to bring that power to them.

Montana, like many states, does not have many spare megawatts, let alone spare gigawatts, waiting for new customers. And even if it did, there isn't the capacity on existing lines to deliver it to those customers.

Data center advocates will point to communities where electric rates have stabilized or even dropped due to a large electricity customer, a large load in industry terms, such as a data center coming online. Opponents of data centers have examples of rates increasing, such as one highlighted by a *CBS Evening News* report in April showing residential electric bills nearly doubling in the past two years in a part of Georgia due to data centers locating in the region. Similar increases have also been reported in Virginia.

There are many different options for powering data centers, each with varying costs, timelines and degrees of reliability and availability. There are also many approaches to constructing and paying for the infrastructure needed, varying the impact on ratepayers.

DECIPHERING Data Centers

A FIVE-PART SERIES

PART 3: POWERING DATA CENTERS

This is the third in a five-part series on data centers. We have already looked at What is a Data Center and the community benefits. Future issues will look at concerns with data centers and the prospects of data centers in Montana, particularly in electric co-ops' service areas. See previous stories in the July and August magazines or online at www.mtco-ops.com/rural-montana/data-centers/

next month: THE CONCERNS WITH DATA CENTERS

Benefiting members

One example of an area that has been able to provide power without negatively impacting public power members' rates is Grant County, specifically the Quincy area, in Washington. Grant County Public Utility District (PUD) Vice President of Customer Experience Andy Wendell said that utility has had a great experience with its eight large data centers.

"We love our data center customers," Wendell said, adding that they pay their bills, and pay for the equipment and capital investments required to serve those loads.

When data centers came to the area in 2006, power wasn't a problem. Grant County PUD had built two dams along the Columbia River, called the Priest Rapids Project, in the early 1960s. In 1952, Grant County PUD's system was about 25 megawatts. Now it is more than 2,100 MW, with a majority of power coming from the two dams, along with wind and solar projects.

That made the area appealing to data centers.

Wendell said the PUD structured its large load rates to help utility members recoup the costs of the dams, which its members initially paid through rates, while keeping data centers' rates competitive compared to other areas.

That structure means data centers pay about 150 percent of the cost to serve these centers through their Grant County PUD rates, while residential rate customers pay about 60 percent of the cost to serve their homes.

Additionally, in Washington state public utilities are prohibited by law from entering into economic development activities by offering better rates to any particular class, such as large loads.

"We have to treat all classes fair and equitable," he said.

Wendell said that when it comes to any new data centers, or requests for additional power from existing ones, Grant County PUD doesn't have all of the same challenges as Montana and elsewhere, but there are some similarities.

"Access to energy is not an issue for us. Distribution lines and substations

are not a barrier. It's really the transmission and transmission capacity that is our bottleneck," he said.

He noted that data centers have offered to fund additional infrastructure. However, they want increased speed to power, an industry buzz term for how quickly power generation can be built or secured and delivered to a prospective site.

"Really the cost is the easy part," Wendell said. "We were never built to meet the speed-to-power needs of today."

He said that if a Montana cooperative is approached about a data center, the key is communicating directly with the end customer if possible, not a developer, to ensure there is a relationship with the eventual end user.

"Be eyes wide open, ask the questions, but don't be afraid of data centers," he said. "There's tremendous opportunity, and tremendous risk."

Powering a Montana center

Quantica Infrastructure and its subsidiary, Big Sky Digital Infrastructure (BSDI) are siting a data center near Broadview, a town of about 140 people near Billings. Quantica purchased 5,100 acres to site the data center and potential power sources, and as of May 2026 is leasing 45,000 acres for additional generation development, currently planned for firming power and renewables such as wind and solar on portions of that land, said Charlie Baker, chief accounting officer for Quantica.

The proposed data center would be built in two phases, each being more than 500 MW, for around 1,100 total MW, divided amongst a few buildings, Baker said.

"One misconception I've heard is we are going to fill this 5,100 acres with buildings. That's not true," Baker said. He added that any generation built on site would require a fair amount of land and setbacks, in addition to the data center campus itself.

One key to the site is that a North-Western Energy substation, with a 230-



Charlie Baker, accounting officer for Quantica Infrastructure, and Taylor McCarthy, director of communications for Quantica, stand in front of a substation with two incoming 5 kilovolt transmission lines that make this property near Broadview optimal for a data center. | PHOTO BY RYAN HALL

and a 500-kilovolt transmission line, is adjacent to the property.

"That is one of the reasons the site is attractive," said Taylor McCarthy, director of communications for Quantica.

Baker and McCarthy said generation and transmission capacity are the major barriers to constructing data centers in Montana. Essentially, any potential data center developer needs to plan to pay for and/or bring its own generation.

"The only way to power this site is to pay for our own power and have our own generation," Baker said.

In May, it was reported that Quantica filed interconnection applications with NorthWestern Energy covering about 7,235 MW of maximum additional capacity, including renewable and firming generation, plus battery storage. That prompted speculation that the data center may grow much larger than initially proposed.

Baker said that isn't the case, noting that in addition to an undecided

firming source, such as a natural gas plant, Quantica plans to build a large amount of solar and wind generation, and utilize batteries. They are expecting to operate at a 20 to 30 percent capacity factor, meaning the site will generate on average only about 20 to 30 percent of the total size of the renewable portion of the project. That means 5 gigawatts of renewable generation could only be counted on to consistently supply about 1 gigawatt of power. However, Quantica must apply for an interconnection that covers the full potential of all of the power generation on site, or the maximum combined output of the solar, wind, batteries and firming generation, even if the site will rarely generate that much power.

"The data center is still projected to be 1,100 megawatts," Baker said. "The hope is it will be heavily renewable based."

He stressed that Quantica doesn't

See DATA CENTERS, next page

DATA CENTERS

Continued from page 3



These 123 natural-gas-powered engines enclosed in these modular units provide 50MW of on-demand power.. | **PHOTO BY RYAN HALL**

want ratepayers to be saddled with any additional costs related to the proposed data center or the new generation.

“As a developer we want to pay our own way. We don’t want ratepayers to have increased costs in power rates,” Baker said.

“We don’t want ratepayers to subsidize the project,” McCarthy said. “We want there to be a community benefit.”

A possible alternative

Though not yet utilized in Montana, there are methods to meet speed-to-power demands for large loads and provide reliable power, without burdening utilities and or residential ratepayers.

One such technology is deployed by ERock, a generation company with sites in multiple states.

ERock Chief Commercial Officer Allan Schurr said its projects have been done for many reasons, from providing reliable backup power to hospitals, to on-demand power when regional heatwaves or wildfires increase usage or knock out resources. It also provides solutions for data centers.

Schurr used a project in El Paso as an example. A local utility only had about 200 MW of power available, but a new data center needed 1,000 MW.

“It would take five years to get 800 megawatts (traditionally),” Schurr said. “We stepped up to provide Phase 2.”

ERock provides ready built, kitted modular low-pressure natural gas generators. A base arrives for every five units, with all of the cabling pre-run. Each of the five generators is set on top of that. Everything is trucked to the site from Houston.

The El Paso project will run 24/7 for five years to power the data center “behind the meter,” meaning the utility will not be responsible for it and the

power is largely dedicated to the data center. Once the new generation, transmission and substation needed for the data center are operational, all power will come from the local public utility, and the modular plant converts to a dispatchable firming or peaking plant in front of the meter and owned by the El Paso utility, purchased at essentially no cost through a lease agreement with the data center, or it can be dismantled and repurposed elsewhere.

ERock projects take up about one acre per every 50 MW, due to the compact vertical construction — much less than a traditional gas-powered turbine power plant.

It takes about 123 21.9-liter natural gas modular generators, each putting out about 450 kilowatts, to make 50 MW, which helps with reliability. Five generators can be out for maintenance without significantly impacting the total output. Each bank of five generators can be shut down, or any individual engine can be taken offline for maintenance or repair, without impacting the others.

“We can deliver five 9s (99.999 percent reliability) from the generation site,” Schurr said, walking through a site that provides dispatchable power.

“In about 10 seconds we have power out to the grid,” said Edgar Quintero, operations manager O&M West for ERock, adding it takes about 30 seconds for the grid to accept that power.

The modular engines are no louder than a truck engine, with normal volume conversations being able to occur right next to them. They are certified by the California Air

Resources Board, which has the strictest air emissions standards in the country, and have no stacks.

Schurr said that once a data center or utility places an order, up to a gigawatt of power is typically operational on site within a year.

Schurr and Quintero noted the engines are self contained so any fluid leakages stay in the container housings, and the generators use no water.

“The only water we use on site is the bathrooms,” Schurr said.

He added that the modular design is considered a minor source, so typically the emissions permitting process is around two months.

Co-ops and data centers

We will explore how electric cooperatives would deal with powering a data center in the fourth and fifth parts of this series. However, it is important to note that several co-op managers have previously stated in *RM* that any large load would have to pay its own way for any additional generation and infrastructure, and that co-op members would not subsidize data centers, preventing the rate increases seen in Georgia and Virginia.

In a December column, Beartooth Electric Cooperative Manager Pat Patterson wrote, “As a cooperative, we have an obligation to serve, but the cooperative’s management and board also have a responsibility to ensure that our member-owners are not adversely impacted by the addition of a large data center. Any new data center must pay 100 percent of the costs required to serve it, including all necessary infrastructure upgrades.” **RM**

NATIONAL VETERANS GOLDEN AGE GAMES

Missoula Electric trustee represents Montana

By **MARK HAYDEN** | Manager, Missoula Electric

MISSOULA Electric Cooperative is proud to recognize District 7 Trustee Collin Rose, who recently represented the state of Montana at the 2026 National Veterans Golden Age Games in Tampa, Florida. As a special honor, Collin carried the Montana state flag during the Opening Ceremonies, proudly representing veterans from across our state.

Established by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) in 1985, the National Veterans Golden Age Games are the nation's premier athletic competition for veterans age 55 and older. The games were created to promote healthy lifestyles, rehabilitation and lifelong wellness while celebrating the strength, determination and camaraderie shared by those who served in our nation's armed forces.

The games are built around the theme "Fitness for Life," emphasizing that regular physical activity can improve overall health, reduce the effects of chronic illness, increase confidence and enhance quality of life. Throughout the year, veterans train with the support of VA recreation therapists and clinicians, using sports as an important part of their rehabilitation and wellness.

This year, the games welcomed approximately 1,000 veteran athletes from across the United States and its territories. Competitors participated in events ranging from swimming, cycling, golf and pickleball, to precision sports such as air rifle and air pistol. While medals are earned, the true spirit of the games is found in the friendships, encouragement and shared commitment among veterans who continue to demonstrate that service does not end when military careers conclude.

Competing in the air rifle and air pistol events, Collin proudly represented the state of Montana. His dedication and skill earned him a silver medal in the air pistol competition, bringing home an impressive national accomplishment for Montana.

We are incredibly proud of Collin's achievement and grateful for the leadership he brings to our cooperative as a member of the Board of Trustees. His participation in the National Veterans Golden Age Games reflects the values of dedication, discipline and service that continue long after military careers have ended.

More importantly, Collin's participation reminds us that the National Veterans Golden Age Games are about much



Missoula Electric Cooperative District 7 Trustee Collin Rose carries the Montana state flag during the Opening Ceremonies of the 2026 National Veterans Golden Age Games in Tampa, Florida. The honor recognizes his leadership and role in representing Montana's veterans at this national celebration of fitness, fellowship and service. |

COURTESY PHOTO

more than athletic competition. They are a celebration of the men and women who answered our nation's call, whose sacrifices protected the freedoms we enjoy today, and who continue to strengthen their communities through service long after leaving the military.

At Missoula Electric Cooperative, we believe in the values of service, integrity, commitment and community. Those same values are embodied by our nation's veterans every day. We congratulate Collin on his outstanding achievement, thank him for representing Montana with honor, and extend our deepest gratitude to every veteran whose service has made our communities, and our country, stronger. **RM**

DIANA ROEN

Local artist paints the beauty of the Judith Basin landscape and wildlife

STORY BY **CATHY MOSER** | FOR **FERGUS ELECTRIC**

WITH paint, brush and even dabs of soil, Diana Roen paints pictures of the Judith Basin landscape and the wildlife that lives there, the vestiges of its history and ranching heritage. Her passion to paint these scenes on canvas came later in life and, incidentally, on the heels of near tragedy.

She was born in Gillette, Wyoming, and lived there until age 5 when her parents moved the family to Roundup.

"Our new home was a fixer-upper, and I mean a real fixer-upper," Roen told me during our conversation at the Basin Gallery, located inside the Basin Trading Post on Central Avenue in Stanford. She became a dental assistant and married Dave Roen before he left for basic training in the U.S. Army Reserve in 1971, at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri. Upon returning to Montana, Dave was hired as foreman for the XZ Ranch in the Judith Basin. The couple worked hard on the ranch and raised three children in a two-room cabin.

The trajectory of their lives shifted violently in 1980. A serious automobile accident hospitalized Dave and their two daughters. Roen stayed with them as they convalesced in Great Falls. Meanwhile, the Roens' friends Chuck and Marie Ridgeway had stepped in to temporarily manage the XZ Ranch. Roen had to return to the ranch occasionally, and on one such trip her sister Gailene traveled with her. Chuck and Marie were both talented painters. They encouraged Gailene to paint a



Diana Roen likes the high-energy challenge of Quick Finishes. At the 2025 C.M. Russell Stampede Quick Finish in Stanford, she finished and framed *By Still Waters*. | **PHOTO COURTESY OF DIANA ROEN**

picture. She whispered to Roen, "I'm afraid to paint." Roen assured her. "I'll do one, too, and we'll do one together." The sisters painted — the medium was oils — and that is how Roen discovered her love for painting.

While balancing ranch work and raising a family, she purchased an art business from a Joliet, Montana, artist and relocated it to the XZ Ranch. She renamed her newly acquired business *Reflections by Roen*.

She took a few painting classes but is mostly self-taught. The intricate

work of painting Western- or Montana-themed pictures on small smooth cuts of agate or metal honed Roen's skills as an artist. Backing each piece with a magnet, she sold these as refrigerator magnets. In time, she could paint 100 pieces a day, and made good money selling them.

Roen eventually transitioned to canvas and paper. The people who visited the XZ Ranch liked Roen's oils and watercolor works, which captured the essence of the sprawling Judith Basin and reflected her Western real-

ism style. At this stage of her career, she sold the magnet-making business but kept ownership of the *Reflections by Roen* name. She continues to paint Montana-themed pictures on agate and metal magnets and sells them in the Basin Gallery, which is operated by the Montana Mid-State Art Society (MMAS).

Founded in 2001, MMAS promotes the work of visual fine artists in the Judith Basin. Member artists take turns staffing the Basin Gallery.

One day when Roen was on duty, her friend's young grandnephew brought in his conservation service soil collection kit. It so happened that Roen's artist friend, Teresa Wilhelmf, had introduced her to painting with soil. Scooping a bit of soil from the kit, she mixed it with transparent acrylic gesso and water. They painted with soil, and thereon Roen delved into experimenting with soil. Rich in earthy color tones, soil paintings have a slightly three-dimensional texture.

That she has mastered the medium is evident in her painting of iconic Square Butte thrusting upward from the Judith Basin floor. She used soil to build the butte and then switched to watercolor to paint the sky. She has embraced painting with soil, but it is monochromatic and, after a while, Roen returns to the vibrant colors of oils and watercolors.

Roen welcomes commissions. She likes the versatility they offer, and she likes the challenge of repurposing "old stuff," or as she explained, "I pull out one of my old paintings and rework it by adding something new. That is what I like about art, it's so diverse, and I appreciate every time I sell a painting to somebody who wants to look at it and enjoy it."

Roen exhibits her work at the Judith Basin County Fair. She is also a regular during Western Art Week at the Legends of the West show in Great Falls. That event, which honors artists who create Western art, is one of the nation's largest.

Another favorite event is the Quick



Roen and other Montana Mid-State Art Society artists greet Basin Gallery visitors who are drawn to the legacy and living tradition of Western Art. | CATHY MOSER PHOTO



Finish at the C.M. Russell Stampede Weekend in Stanford. In a Quick Finish, artists have one hour to finish a painting and frame it. When last year's Quick Finish neared, Roen found herself perplexed about a subject until she asked, "Lord, what should I paint?" Inspiration struck.

"The phrase 'by still waters' came to my head. I visualized sheep and water," Roen said.

She began researching Judith Basin history, steeped in thousands of sheep and the sheepmen who cared for the flocks. She packed up her brushes, paint and soil. During the Quick Finish, Roen finished and framed her soil painting, *By Still Waters*.

Whether she's in sync with a leisurely day of painting in her studio or the fast pace of a Quick Finish, stroke by stroke, dab by dab, Roen illustrates her deep reverence for the people and animals who make the Judith Basin their home. RM



FOR INFO

Reflections by Diana

For information about Diana

Roen's art, contact her by phone, (406) 566-2336, or email her at reflectionsbydiana@yahoo.com.

The Basin Gallery in Stanford is open Tuesday through Friday from 10:30 a.m. to 4 p.m.

GOLDENWEST ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE HI-LINES

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SEPTEMBER 2026



78th
Annual Meeting

Goldenwest Electric Cooperative holds 78th annual meeting

Goldenwest Electric Cooperative (GWEC) held its 78th annual meeting on July 15, with Chair Dale Schweigert welcoming members and officially calling the meeting to order.

After confirming a quorum was present and the meeting notice had been properly distributed to all members, Schweigert introduced the cooperative's other directors: David Franz (District 1), Robert Makelky (District 2), Kent Kahl (District 3) and Lana Maychrzak (District 4). Schweigert serves District 5.

Strong financial position

CEO Jason Brothen reported the cooperative remains in strong financial standing, receiving an "unmodified opinion" from auditors Summers,

McNea and Company. This is the highest level of assurance available. The cooperative's total utility plant is valued at \$28 million, with long-term debt of \$10.3 million and net margins of \$631,000.

GWEC plans to retire \$200,000 in capital credits from 2026, bringing the total capital credits paid over the past decade to \$2.6 million.

Rising wholesale power costs

Schweigert explained wholesale power costs have increased due to infrastructure upgrades by the Western Area Power Administration (WAPA) along the Missouri River dam system and additional generation needs from Basin Electric Power Cooperative.

Basin Electric brought its Pioneer Station

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online in 2025, adding 580 megawatts (MW) of generation capacity, for a total of 803 MW. Construction also began on the Bison Generation Station near Epping, which will feature two 745-MW units when completed in 2030, making it one of the largest electric generation projects in cooperative history.

Brothen clarified the new generation is intended for general growth in the Basin Electric footprint and resource adequacy during extreme weather, not for data centers or technology loads.

A rate adjustment was implemented at the start of 2026 to account for increased wholesale power costs, which represent 75% to 85% of the cooperative's expenses.

Continued system improvements

Brothen reported outage numbers remain low outside of extreme weather conditions, thanks to prioritized system maintenance and upgrades. Recent improvements include ongoing pole testing and replacement, new underground and overhead line installations, substation equipment updates and implementation of a fire mitigation plan with new overhead construction standards.

Shared services partnership

Directors from three cooperatives, including GWEC's Maychrzak, Greg Rauschendorfer, from Lower Yellowstone Rural Electric Cooperative, and Tim Fulton, with Mid-Yellowstone Electric Cooperative, reported on their shared services

partnership established in August 2020. The agreement, which expanded in 2023 to include the CEO position, allows the cooperatives to collaborate on projects, share equipment, leverage joint purchasing power and exchange ideas.

Election results and scholarships

Schweigert was reelected by acclamation to represent District 5, following the Nominating Committee's recommendation.

Maychrzak announced five scholarship recipients totaling \$5,000, which were funded through GWEC's unclaimed capital credits, Basin Electric and the Montana Electric Cooperatives' Association. Recipients include Maciah Heckaman, Kailee Tescher, Leah Davidson, Caleb Nicholls and Abraham Oech, who received the Marvin Robinson Memorial Scholarship for trade school students.

Three additional luck-of-the-draw scholarships were awarded during the meeting, and prize drawings were conducted.

Schweigert thanked attendees and adjourned the meeting, noting questions and answers, and the meeting video, would be posted on the cooperative's website at gwec.coop.

GWEC extends our sincere gratitude to the Tastee Hut, Wibaux, for serving delicious food, the Wibaux County fairgrounds for graciously providing its facility, and Basin Electric for its outstanding livestreaming and visual support. Your contributions made this event a success. ■

ENERGY EFFICIENCY TIP OF THE MONTH

September kicks off the fall shoulder season, when cooler mornings and milder evenings often mean you can give your heating and cooling system a break. Open windows, use ceiling fans and enjoy the fresh air whenever temperatures allow. It's also the perfect time to schedule annual HVAC maintenance before colder weather arrives. Because demand is typically lower during the fall, heating and cooling professionals often have greater availability, making it easier to book an appointment. Regular maintenance can improve your system's efficiency, help prevent unexpected breakdowns and keep your home comfortable all year long.

Source: U.S. Department of Energy





Montana cooperatives share resources to better serve members

Goldenwest Electric Cooperative, Mid-Yellowstone Electric Cooperative and Lower Yellowstone Rural Electric Cooperative are showing how much electric cooperatives can accomplish when they work together. With Jason Brothen serving as CEO of all three cooperatives, they have built a shared services model that saves money and provides better service to their members.

The idea is simple: Instead of each cooperative having separate departments and staff, the three share resources across their service areas. That includes information technology (IT), engineering, line crews and office staff, who support all three cooperatives instead of just one.

“By working together, we’re able to provide our members with services and expertise that would be tough for any one of our cooperatives to afford

on its own,” Brothen said. “This is cooperation at its core.”

When storms hit or outages happen, line crews from all three cooperatives can respond together, bringing more people and equipment to restore power faster. Engineering staff helps with projects across all three systems, IT teams keep technology operating throughout the network and office staff handles administrative work that supports all three member bases.

The benefits are easy to see. By sharing resources, the cooperatives avoid duplicating positions and equipment that may not be needed full time at each location. Members get access to a larger team of skilled people and when one cooperative needs help, the other two are ready to assist.

A good example is the advanced metering

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infrastructure project. The three cooperatives installed 3,800 new smart meters across the territories of Goldenwest Electric and Mid-Yellowstone Electric. By teaming up on purchasing and installing the technology, they saved money in ways that would have been more difficult to achieve separately.

“The shared services model isn’t just about saving money, though we certainly do that,” Brothen explained. “It’s about being good stewards of our members’ resources while still delivering strong service. Each cooperative keeps its own board and local governance. Shared services doesn’t mean losing your identity. It means getting stronger by working together.”

Brothen’s role as CEO of all three cooperatives keeps the shared services effort coordinated. His leadership supports consistent operations,

smart use of resources and better communication across the three organizations. At the same time, each cooperative keeps its own identity and local board leadership.

The partnership shows cooperatives don’t have to be large to operate efficiently. By sharing IT, engineering, line crews and office support, these three utilities can offer the kind of capabilities often associated with larger systems while still staying local and responsive. Members benefit from better service, modern technology and the savings that come from working together.

For electric cooperatives looking to manage costs and improve operations, shared services can be a practical option. It’s cooperation in action, with three independent cooperatives choosing to share resources, so each one can better serve its members. ■

TIPS TO AVOID ENERGY SCAMS



Your smart thermostat, security camera, video doorbell and other connected devices make life more convenient, but they can also be targets for cybercriminals if they’re not properly secured. Change default usernames and passwords, use strong, unique passwords for each device and enable multi-factor authentication when available. Keep your devices up to date by installing software and firmware updates, which often include important security fixes. Secure your home Wi-Fi network with a strong password and modern encryption. A few simple steps can help keep your personal information and smart devices safe from scammers.

Source: CISA



A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

GOLDENWEST ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE INC.

P.O. Box 177, Wibaux, MT 59353

Phone: 406-796-2423

OFFICE HOURS:

Monday through Thursday 7 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.

DIRECTORS

Dale Schweigert President
Kent Kahl Vice President
Bob Makelky Secretary-Treasurer
David Franz Director
Lana Maychrzak Director

EMPLOYEES

Jason Brothen CEO
Travis Bakken Operations Manager
Dwayne Van Vleet Line Foreman
Casey Begger Lineman
Cole Olson Lineman
Garrett Johnson Lineman
Travis Wojahn Lineman
Carter Sarsland Lineman
Patti Goroski CSR
Lisa Tousignant Billing Clerk
Tori Wyman CFO
Albert R. Batterman Attorney
Summers, McNea and Co, PC. Auditor
Jessica Welch Local Pages Editor

Reporting outages

Trouble calls may be placed to the office 24 hours a day. After normal working hours, the phone will be forwarded to one of our on-call lineworkers. Before calling Goldenwest Electric Cooperative, please check whether your neighbors have power and reset the breakers below your meter.

Energy Detective Challenge

School is back in session, and it's time to put your observation skills to work! Complete the challenges below and earn points by finding ways your family can save energy.



Goal:
Score 20 points to become an Energy Detective! After you've earned 20 points, cut out the badge below and display it for all to see!



SCAVENGER HUNT

COMPLETED

- A light is left on in an empty room (2 points) ☐
- A smart or programmable thermostat (4 points) ☐
- A ceiling fan spinning in a room where no one is spending time (2 points) ☐
- A charger plugged in with nothing connected to it (2 points) ☐
- An ENERGY STAR® label on an appliance (3 points) ☐
- A window or door left open or cracked when the heating/cooling system is on (3 points) ☐

MISSIONS

COMPLETED

- Turn off the lights when you leave a room (3 points) ☐
- Open blinds or curtains during the day instead of turning on a light (3 points) ☐
- Unplug a charger that isn't being used (3 points) ☐
- Remind family members to close the refrigerator door quickly (3 points) ☐
- Help your family create a "lights out" check before bedtime (4 points) ☐

VALUE OF ELECTRICITY

Despite recent hikes, power rate increase behind other goods

By **RYAN HALL** | Editor, Rural Montana

THERE'S no other way to say it, life has gotten expensive. Across Montana, a gallon of milk and a dozen eggs could run you \$12 or more. Add bacon, and it's close to \$20.

Electricity is not immune to that trend. There is no doubt you are paying more for your electricity than your parents or grandparents did when they were your age.

However, electric cooperatives have worked hard to keep those rising costs under control. Looking back to 1940, shortly after many Montana electric cooperatives were founded, the average cost of a kilowatt-hour of power in Montana, including both cooperatives and investor-owned utilities, was 5 cents. Today, it's 12 cents, a 140-percent increase.

Looking at other goods that were similarly priced in 1940, as we do on these pages, while electricity has substantially increased in the last 85 years, it pales in comparison to the increase of those other goods. In addition to the comparisons you see here, we looked at other goods and compared them as well, including milk, bacon, bread and gas.

You will see these comparisons on the Montana Electric Cooperatives' Association social media pages, on the social media account of your electric cooperative and maybe in your co-op's newsletter that appears monthly in this magazine.

There is no doubt that life has gotten pricier over the years and decades, but your cooperative is looking out for you by providing safe, affordable and reliable electricity. RM

Sources: *in2013dollars.com; cheesereporter.com; National Rural Electric Cooperatives Association.*

PRICE INCREASE COMPARISON

one dozen
EGGS

1940: \$0.26 2025: \$4.71

1,711.54%
increase



ELECTRICITY
price per kwh in Montana
1940: \$0.05 2025: \$0.12

140%
increase

PRICE INCREASE COMPARISON

one pound
GROUND BEEF

1940: \$0.15 2025: \$6.22

4,046.67%
increase



ELECTRICITY
price per kwh in Montana
1940: \$0.05 2025: \$0.12

140%
increase

THE RACE FOR U.S. SENATE



THIS MONTH'S QUESTION: *If elected, what would your energy priorities be for your term as U.S. senator?*

THE SAME QUESTION WAS ASKED TO MONTANA'S U.S. HOUSE CANDIDATES IN LAST MONTH'S EDITION



Kurt Alme

almeforsenate.com

WE need to make life more affordable. That's what I hear from Montanans all across the state, and that's why making life more affordable and lowering energy costs will be among my highest priorities as Montana's next U.S. senator.

The best way to reduce energy costs is to increase supply by unleashing all forms of American energy. Producing more energy not only reduces gas and utility bills for families and businesses, but also reduces the cost of goods on our shelves for all Montanans.

The previous administration's war on energy canceled responsible projects, imposed burdensome regulations, increased the cost of energy and all goods, killed Montana jobs, hurt rural Montana communities and made us more dependent on foreign countries.

We must take an all-of-the-above approach to responsibly develop energy and ensure Montana is a national energy leader. When I was in high school in Miles City, I saw firsthand the positive impact energy development brought to neighboring communities like Baker and Colstrip. Pro-energy policies help make life more affordable, create good-paying jobs, generate critical tax revenue for Montana's rural communities and schools, and make America more secure.

Energy security is national security. We should produce more of the energy we need here at home for affordable, reliable power. With advancing technology, we can increase production while protecting our environment.

As your senator, I will fight to unleash energy production right here in Montana, remove burdensome red tape tying up needed, responsible energy development, make America energy dominant, and support those who power our state and fuel our economy. RAM



Alani Bankhead

alaniformt.com

MONTANA'S electric cooperatives were built on a simple idea: neighbors banding together to power the places big utilities wouldn't. That same spirit should guide our energy future.

My first priority is keeping power affordable and reliable. Rural families and farmers already stretch every dollar, and no energy plan is worth much if it raises your bill or leaves you in the dark.

I'm a strong believer in alternative energy — done the Montana way. Out here, where the grid is thin and the distances are long, on-site solar, battery storage and charging can be a real lifeline for a ranch or a remote home. My job is to make it easier — through tax credits and low-cost financing for folks who choose to set it up — never by mandating it from Washington or blowing a hole in the budget.

Choice is the whole point. If you want to add solar, we should help you do it — and if diesel and gas are what keep your operation running, no one in Washington should be forcing you off them.

Here's the good news: Montanans are already leading. Flat-head Electric now pairs its community solar with battery storage, Ravalli Electric just won a federal grant for a big battery, and Yellowstone Valley's community solar sold out every panel — because members want it. When a co-op can generate and store its own power for less than it pays to buy off the grid, that helps hold rates steady; and a homeowner who adds their own panels simply buys less. That's lower costs, not higher, and I'll help more Montanans do it. And I'll keep big power users like data centers from driving up costs or straining the grid Montanans depend on.

Affordable, reliable, Montana-made energy — with real choices for the families and farmers who live here. That's what I'll bring to the Senate. RAM

THE RACE FOR U.S. SENATE CONTINUED



Seth Bodnar

www.sethformontana.com

MONTANA is blessed with both natural resources and natural beauty, and we must work to expand our energy production while protecting our public lands. America needs to produce more energy, and Montana deserves an energy plan that's genuinely all-of-the-above. In the military, we were taught that you should never depend on one supply line. Our energy policy shouldn't either.

Unfortunately, we've let ideology creep too far into this conversation, and Montanans are the ones paying higher costs because of it. Utility bills are through the roof. Some believe we can simply turn off our reliance on fossil fuels. That's not realistic. Others believe we must halt development of renewables because it's become a convenient culture-war target. That's not serious, either.

Meanwhile, we're falling behind competitors like China, which now draws a substantial share of its electricity from renewables and is less exposed to energy shocks like the ones we've seen from Iran's closure of the Strait of Hormuz. At the same time, many of our allies have capitalized on emerging technologies to significantly lower costs for ratepayers. In Australia, for example, citizens enjoy free electricity during certain parts of the day. We cannot continue to let the rest of the world pass us by when it comes to energy development.

As Montana's U.S. Senator, I'll fight to:

- Invest in additional power generation and electricity transmission infrastructure.
- Enact a true "all-of-the-above" energy strategy.
- Ensure full transparency and community involvement on data center development and construction, ensuring Montanans don't pay more.
- Require energy companies, fossil fuel or alternative, to pay royalties for energy produced on public lands.
- Require private industry, not taxpayers, to clean up environmental sites. RM



Join Youth Tour

Enter your essay today

HIGH school sophomores and juniors whose parents are electric co-op members can win a free trip to Washington, D.C., to learn about history and our nation just by writing an essay (students in Ravalli Electric Cooperative's service area do not need to be co-op members).

This past summer, 29 students from across the state took part in the NRECA Electric Cooperative Youth Tour to Washington, D.C. Montana's electric cooperatives are hoping to send even more students at NO COST TO THEM in 2027.

Contact your electric cooperative for its specific requirements, but for most co-ops, a simple application and short essay is all that is required. From there, each participating co-op will choose at least one winner, and a statewide winner will be chosen as well.

This year's essay topic is: *If you could build a monument in Washington, D.C., who would you honor and why?*

Please note that all submissions will be run through AI detection software, and the results may impact eligibility.

Those students who are selected by their co-ops will travel to D.C. June 17-24 for a week of activities. Every Montana Electric Cooperative Youth Tour includes meetings with Montana's U.S. senators and representatives, as well as seeing many of the famous monuments and memorials, and the Smithsonian Museums. Past Youth Tours have also included a Washington Nationals baseball game, the International Spy Museum, a river boat cruise, Ford's Theater, the Gettysburg Battlefield, the U.S. Naval Academy, the Marine Corps Museum, a meal at the famous Ben's Chili Bowl and countless other stops and attractions.

Contact your local electric cooperative today, and start work on that essay! Visit www.mtco-ops.com/youthtour for more information. RM



THE ASK A MANAGER PANEL



MATT
HAGGERTY
PARK ELECTRIC
COOPERATIVE



TREVOR
PARKE
VIGILANTE ELECTRIC
COOPERATIVE



BRAD
BAUMAN
SUN RIVER ELECTRIC
COOPERATIVE

SEND US YOUR QUESTIONS

If you want to ask a question for a future edition of *Ask a Manager*, email your question to ryanh@mtco-ops.com, or call the editor at 406-761-8333.

ASK A MANAGER:

Our manager panel discusses laminated poles

Every other month we ask our electric co-op manager panel a question, many of which are provided by our readers.

Our panel for 2026 is Matt Haggerty, manager of Park Electric Cooperative in Livingston; Trevor Parke, manager of Vigilante Electric Cooperative in Dillon; and Brad Bauman, manager of Sun River Electric Cooperative in Fairfield

This month's question is:

Q: *"Here in the Bitterroot, we have laminated poles, some of which are huge."*

Does your co-op use them? When does a laminated pole make sense? What are the advantages and disadvantages of these poles?

- Inspired by a letter from Tom Elbert, Victor, Ravalli Electric Cooperative member



BRAD BAUMAN SUN RIVER ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

WE do use laminated poles at Sun River Electric.

The advantages of these engineered poles are the ability to use them in tight right-of-way locations. These poles do not require down guys because of the engineered camber that is built into them. This makes them a safer choice in areas frequented by vehicles, four-wheelers, side-by-side vehicles or snowmobiles.

The lack of down guys also makes these poles attractive in areas where farming activities would place the down guys in fields that are needed to be

cultivated. Another benefit is the condition referred to as pole rot. Laminated poles are less likely to experience pole rot versus a wood pole.

The downside of these poles is the cost. Laminated poles cost about five times the amount of a similar-sized wood pole.

The added cost of a down guy, anchor plate and associated hardware brings this price gap closer, but it is still significantly different. The pole size is considerably larger, but the benefits outweigh the negatives under most conditions. RM

TREVOR PARKE VIGILANTE ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

VIGILANTE Electric uses laminated poles for specialized applications where limited access and higher structural demands make traditional poles less practical. These engineered poles provide exceptional strength and stability, making them an ideal solution for powerlines with sharp angles or heavy tension loads, where guying is not feasible.

Their modular design also offers significant logistical advantages. Larger laminated poles are easier to transport than comparable one-piece traditional poles, especially in remote or hard-to-reach locations. Unlike conventional wood poles, laminated poles use multiple layers of wood bonded together to create a pole that resists cracking, twisting and warping. This design ensures consistent performance throughout their service lives. In areas with limited rights-of-way or challenging terrain, laminated poles — or even steel structures — may be the only practical solution.

Another key advantage is their preservation process. Laminated poles are treated throughout the entire structure rather than just the outer shell, providing enhanced resistance to rot and decay. This comprehensive protection extends the pole's service life, making laminated poles an excellent long-term investment for locations where construction or future replacement would be difficult and costly.

While laminated poles offer clear performance benefits, they are best suited for specific applications. They typically cost more than traditional wood poles and require specialized installation procedures that crews must carefully follow. Because each pole is engineered for specific height and loading requirements, utilities must also maintain matching replacement poles in their inventory to ensure compatibility if a pole is ever damaged and needs to be replaced. 

MATT HAGGERTY PARK ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

PARK Electric does use laminated poles in certain locations on our system. Laminated poles are typically used where additional strength is needed, such as at sharp angles or dead-end structures, or where there is limited space for guy wires. To provide the best answer, I reached out to our engineering firm to learn more about when and why they recommend these poles.

Unlike a standard utility pole, a laminated pole is designed to be self-supporting, meaning it doesn't require guy wires and anchors for stability. While these poles are often larger at the base, their overall footprint is actually smaller because they eliminate the need for guy wires, which can extend a considerable distance from the pole, depending on its height, and require ground anchors. A standard pole may require anywhere from one to six guy wires, and if a guy wire is damaged or fails, it can affect the stability of the pole and potentially cause

an outage.

Advantages of laminated poles:

- Require less easement because no guy wires or anchors are needed.
- Improve reliability by eliminating guy wires that can be damaged or fail.
- Are sometimes the only practical engineering solution for a specific location.

Disadvantages of laminated poles:

- Cost more than standard poles with guy wires.
- Often require heavier equipment to install.
- Can be more noticeable because they are typically larger.

Every pole installed on our system is selected based on engineering standards, safety, reliability and the conditions at that specific location. While laminated poles aren't needed everywhere, they provide an effective solution where traditional guyed poles aren't the best fit. 

SEND IN YOUR RECIPES

Recipes for *RM* magazine are submitted by cooperative members across the state. First, second and third place monthly winners are awarded \$30, \$20 and \$10 prizes, respectively. Send your recipes to *RM* Recipes, Box 3469, Great Falls, MT 59403, or email rural@mtco-ops.com. **Please include your name, hometown and an address. If you do not include this information, your submission will not be accepted.** For October send your favorite German-inspired recipes by September 16. Please send in November recipes anytime: Your favorite Roast or Oven-roasted Recipes. Try to limit the ingredients and length of directions for space. Please include a photo, if possible.

Photo submitted
by Teresa Gaylord

1st
PLACE

Bacon Pimento Cheese Spread

Teresa Gaylord | KALISPELL

INGREDIENTS

4 slices of bacon,
cooked and
crumbled, optional
1 jar (4 oz.) diced
pimentos, drained
and rinsed
2 cups (8oz.) mild
cheddar cheese,
shredded
1 cup (4oz.) colby-
jack cheese,
shredded
1 cup (4oz.) Swiss
cheese, shredded
1 T Worcestershire
sauce
1/8 tsp. ground red
pepper
1/2 cup mayo
1/2 tsp. salt
1/8 tsp. black pepper
Crackers of choice
for serving

DIRECTIONS

Mix and refrigerate up
to 1 week.

2nd
PLACE

Fried Potato Balls

Pam Forrest | ROUNDUP

INGREDIENTS

4 golden potatoes, peeled
and cubed
4 T cornstarch
4 T butter
1/2 cup heavy cream
1 tsp. salt
1 tsp. pepper
3 T dried parsley,
divided
Avocado oil

DIRECTIONS

Boil cubed potatoes in
salted water until fork
tender, then drain.

In a large bowl, mash
potatoes slightly and mix
with cornstarch, butter,
heavy cream, salt, pepper
and 2 T of parsley.

Cool for 10 minutes, scoop
into spheres, and roll
smooth.

Fry in 1 inch of oil at 350°F
until golden brown. Drain
on a wire rack, sprinkle
with the remaining parsley,
and serve with fry sauce
or ketchup.

3rd
PLACE

After School Turkey Pinwheels

Melissa Friess | KALISPELL

INGREDIENTS

4 extra-large flour
tortillas (burrito size)
9 oz. sliced turkey
8 slices sharp cheddar
cheese
4 oz. cream cheese,
softened
1 T mayonnaise
1/2 tsp. Dijon mustard
1 cup fresh lettuce
leaves
1 cup thinly sliced
English cucumber
Salt and pepper

DIRECTIONS

In a small bowl, mix
together the softened
cream cheese, mayon-
naise and Dijon mustard
until well combined.
Season with salt and
pepper to taste.

Lay out a tortilla and
spread a thin layer of the
cream cheese mixture
evenly over the tortilla.

Place a few slices of
turkey breast on top
of the cream cheese
mixture, covering the
tortilla evenly. Repeat
the process with the

cheddar cheese slices.

Layer some lettuce and
sliced cucumber on top
of the turkey.

Starting from one end,
tightly roll up the tortilla,
forming a pinwheel
shape.

Repeat this process with
the remaining tortillas
and filling.

Once all the tortillas are
rolled up, use a sharp
knife to slice each rolled
tortilla into 1-inch thick
pinwheels.

NORTHWEST

September

Bigfork Summer Playhouse celebrates 67th season — *Newsies, Young Frankenstein, The Music Man, Mean Girls*, 8 p.m., and 2 p.m., for info go to bigforksummerplayhouse.com, 837-4886 | **BIGFORK**

September 2

History Book Club — NW Montana History Museum, 2 p.m., 756-8381 | **KALISPELL**

September 5-7

End of Summer Yard Sale — 365 Dunwoody Ln, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., 425-785-1057 | **COLUMBIA FALLS**

September 8

Northwest Montana Photographers meeting — Fellowship church, 1025 7th Ave. W, 7 p.m., 260-0086 | **KALISPELL**

September 9

Feeding the Frontier: A History of Chinese Vegetable Gardens in Montana — NW Montana History Museum, 6 p.m., 756-8381 | **KALISPELL**

September 11

20th Annual BBQ Fundraiser — Friends of Bigfork Fire Department, Harbor Village Pavilion, Marina Dr., 5 to 8 p.m., 692-6050 | **BIGFORK**

September 11-12

12th Annual Flathead Celtic Festival — Centennial Farm, Fri: 3 to 7 p.m., Sat: 9 a.m. to 6 p.m., 282-4478 | **KALISPELL**

September 12

Community Yard Sale — Bigfork Senior Center, 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. | **BIGFORK**

September 12

Oh My Pie! — Homemade pies and dinner, live music and quilt raffle, historic Mountain Brook Community Center, 4 to 7 p.m., 314-8232 | **KALISPELL**

September 12

Volunteer Fire Department Annual Fundraiser — Music, auction, raffle, Dew Drop Inn, 5 to 11 p.m., 249-4034. | **CORAM**

September 12-13

Seize the Day Flathead presents Craft and Vendor Event — Flathead County Fairgrounds Grandstand Building, Sat: 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., Sun: 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. | **KALISPELL**

September 15

Kalispell Women's Connection Book Exchange — Guest speaker is Darlene Incando, 1830 Hwy. 35, 11:30 a.m., call 261-9894 for reservations or information | **KALISPELL**

September 16

Columbia Falls Women's Connection Luncheon — Guest speaker is Darlene Incando, 827 9th St. West, 11:30 a.m., call 892-3621 for reservations | **COLUMBIA FALLS**

September 18-19

Flathead Quilters' Guild Quilt Show: Under the Stars — Flathead County Fairgrounds Expo Building, Fri: 9:30 a.m. to 5 p.m., Sat: 9:30 a.m. to 4 p.m., 892-4117 | **KALISPELL**

September 18-20

Hi Line Quilt Guild Festival of Quilts — Havre Holiday Village Mall, Fri: noon to 5 p.m., Sat: 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., 390-1819 | **HAVRE**

September 18-20

43rd Annual Threshing Bee 2026 — Raffle, kids tractor pulls, band and more, 2 blocks south of the city park, Fri: noon to 5 p.m., Sat/Sun: 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. | **CHOTEAU**

September 18-20

Friends of Flathead County Libraries Annual Book Sale — Kalispell Center Mall, Fri/Sat: 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., Sun: 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. | **KALISPELL**

September 21

Westerners Int'l present Scott Tanner on Follow the Glacier Trail — NW Montana History Museum, 6:30 to 8 p.m., 309-0958 | **KALISPELL**

September 22

Movie Night at the Museum — NW Montana History Museum, 7 p.m., 756-8381 | **KALISPELL**

September 25-26

16th Annual Mountain Brook Crafters Co-op Handcraft Market — 795 Mennonite Church Rd., Fri: 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., Sat: 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., 250-8657 | **KALISPELL**

September 26

Kootenai Forest Fair — Riverfront Park, 2 to 5 p.m., 291-3609 | **LIBBY**

October 3

Trego Heritage Day — Blarney Ranch, 191 Ant Flat Road, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., www.thehalltfs.com/heritagadays, 307-699-5026 | **LIBBY**

October 10

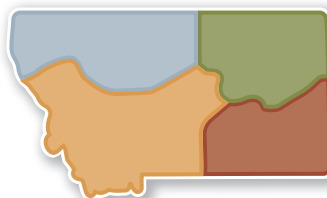
Stayin' Alive Celebration — A disco fundraiser to celebrate 50 years of Abbie Shelter services in Flathead County, Wachholz College Center on the FVCC campus, 5 to 9 p.m., abbieshelter.org, 752-4735 | **KALISPELL**

October 22-24

NRA Finals Rodeo — Majestic Valley Arena, 7 p.m., 252-1122 | **KALISPELL**

SUBMIT YOUR EVENTS

To list an event, send it to: RM Events, PO Box 3469, Great Falls, MT 59403 or email us at: rural@mtco-ops.com — Submit items by September 15 for October events. Include date, time, site, city and contact number with your event. **Events without such info will not be used.** Some items may be cut for space concerns.



NORTHEAST

September 19

Circle Town and Country Appreciation Day — 6 to 2 a.m., www.circle-montana.com | **CIRCLE**

SOUTHEAST

September 12

Shepherd Jamboree — Family-friendly fundraising event benefiting Shepherd Lion's Club, food and drink, live auction at noon, Shepherd Community Center, 11 a.m. to 3 p.m., 855-5875 | **SHEPHERD**

September 17

8th Annual Calves to Cure DMD — Proceeds benefit research for Duchenne muscular dystrophy, Billings Livestock Commission, 1 p.m., enter the beef raffle at www.cureduchenne.org/calvestocure, 860-4279 | **BILLINGS**

October 25

Night at the Museum — O'Fallon Historical Museum, 4 to 9 p.m., 778-3265 | **BAKER**

SOUTHWEST

September 5-6

Wrangler Team Roping Championship — Three Forks Rodeo Arena, 95691 MT Hwy 2, Visit www.threeforksrodeo.com, 272-3716 | **THREE FORKS**

September 11

Ladies of Love on Day of Service (9/11) — Cultivating Connections MT at Homestead Organics Farm campus, 11 a.m. to 2:30 p.m., CultivatingConnectionsMT.org | **HAMILTON**

September 11-13

Rapelje Bike Festival — Fri: Cynde's Memorial Sunset Ride, dinner, Sat: 80-mile start, 40-mile start, 20-mile start, kids races, live music, dinner, see www.rapeljebikefest.com for more information, 208-220-6608 | **RAPELJE**

September 12-13

Bridger Mountain Youth Rodeo — Three Forks Rodeo Arena, 95691 MT Hwy 2, 9 a.m., Visit www.threeforksrodeo.com, 272-3716 | **THREE FORKS**

September 19

15th Annual Arts on Fire Festival — Art activities, performances, food trucks, artist alley vendor market, art demonstrations and more, Paris Gibson Square Museum of Art, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., 727-8255 | **GREAT FALLS**

September 25

Dinner in Doig Country — Ivan Doig Center fundraiser and auction, North Bridger Bison Ranch, 5:30 to 8:30 p.m., www.montana.edu/doig/fundraiser.html, 994-4288 | **GREAT FALLS**

September 26

Bitterroot Heritage Civic Group Annual Chili Contest — Darby MT Club House, 10 a.m., chili contest starts at 11 a.m., 531-4172 | **DARBY**

October 2-3

Stevensville Scarecrow Festival — Family event, Main Street, Fri: 3 to 9 p.m., Sat: noon to 9 p.m., stevensvillescarecrowfestival.org 224-4880 | **STEVENSVILLE**

October 2-4

Townsend Rotary Fall Festival — Live music, food and craft vendors, car show, Heritage Park, Fri: 4 to 9 p.m., Sat: 10 a.m. to 10 p.m., Sun: 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., www.TownsendFallFest.com, 918-914-2055 | **TOWNSEND**

October 3

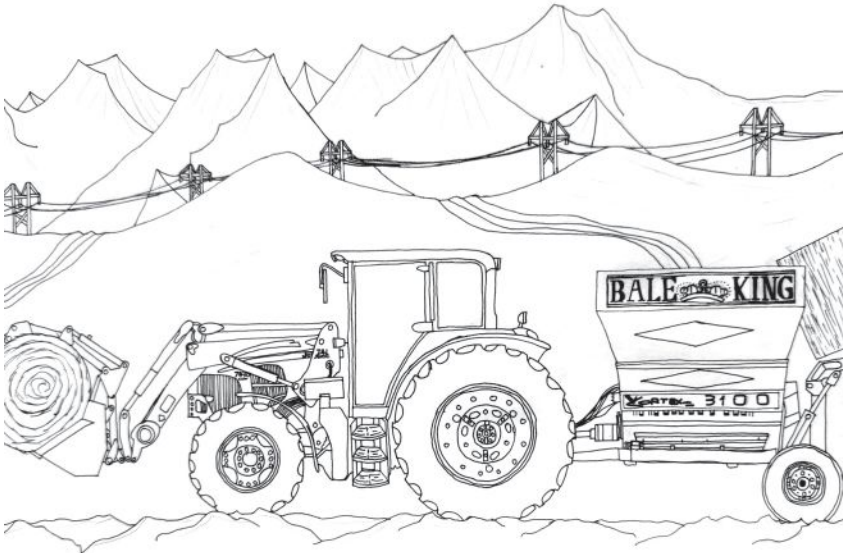
Mountain Valley UMC Annual Harvest Sale — 2470 East River Rd., lunch at noon, auction at 1 p.m., 222-4897 | **LIVINGSTON**

YOUNG MONTANANS

RM invites youngsters to send in original art and poems. If we use it, we'll pay you \$10. **Mail to:** Young Montanans, P.O. Box 3469, Great Falls, MT 59403.

Email: rural@mtco-ops.com. **Include:** Your name, age, address and your cooperative. *If you do not include this information, your submission will not be accepted.*

**SEND US YOUR WINTER
DRAWINGS AND POEMS**



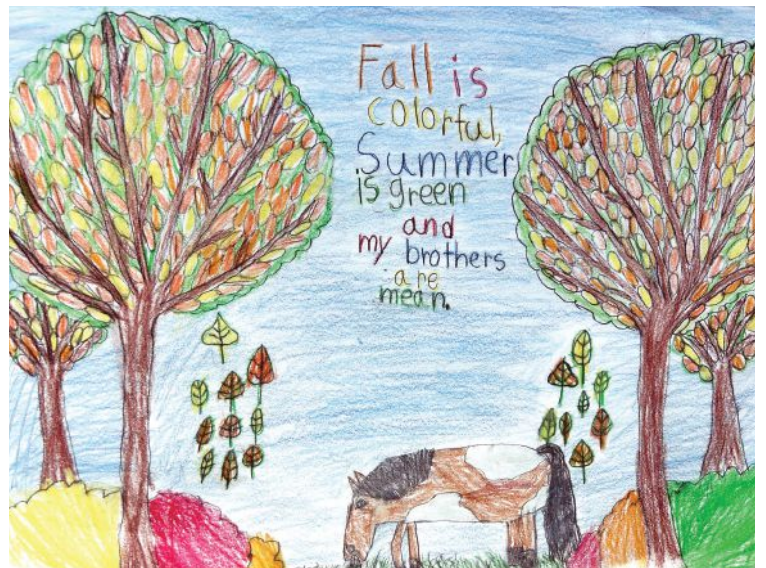
Brantley Moyer, 13, Cardwell | **VIGILANTE ELECTRIC**



Solomon Lentz, 8, Victor | **RAVALLI ELECTRIC**

Ella Schulke, 12, Billings | **YELLOWSTONE VALLEY ELECTRIC**

Amaris Kovalovszki, 8, Nye | **BEARTOOTH ELECTRIC**

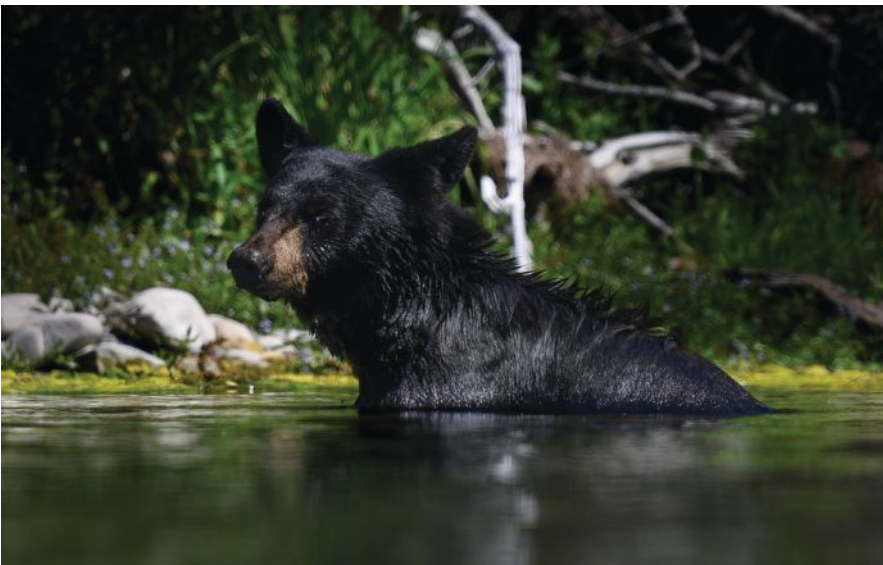


READER PHOTOS

SEND US YOUR FAVORITE PHOTOS/ARTWORK

Please include: the photographer's/artist's name, address and hometown in the entry. *If you do not include this information, your submission will not be accepted.* If we use your entry we'll pay you \$25-\$100 (depending on size and location).

Send entries to: rural@mtco-ops.com. No more than 20 MB at a time. No prints please.



Bear Bath

A black bear goes for a swim in the Bighorn River. **Photo by Cole Hoffman of Shepherd.**

A Montana Scene

Horses along a river are depicted in this **painting by Ellie Chin of Kalispell.**

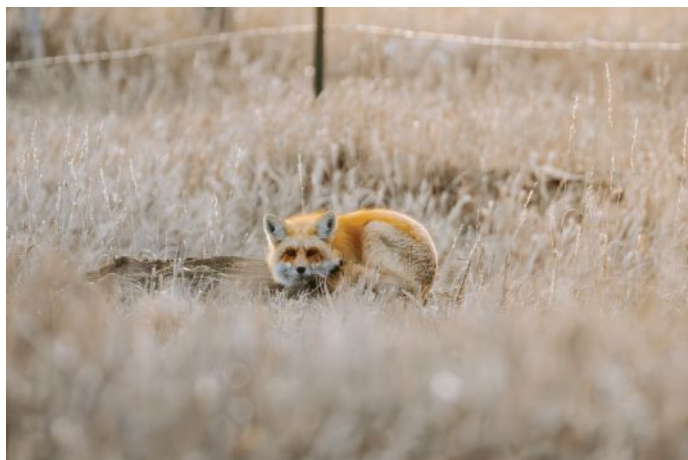


In Bloom

Wildflowers grow in a field. **Photo by Kaida Ragsdale of Hamilton.**

What You Looking At?

A fox watches a visitor closely. **Photo by Sierra Rowden of Wilsall.**





The Magazine of the
Montana Electric Cooperatives'
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