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## MANAGER'S MOMENT

# So far, so good!

BY MARK DOYLE, GENERAL MANAGER



**Mark Doyle**

I would appreciate a moment of your time...

Spring arrived early with some ridiculously warm temperatures accompanied by some rain – finally! We were concerned the dry conditions were going to persist. Wildfires are always a concern.

The board of directors approved a wildfire hazard mitigation plan this spring. The plan is designed to mitigate any

risks associated with dry conditions across our system, whether due to outages or crew members in the field. The plan is posted on our website.

Work is moving along here at McLean Electric Cooperative (MEC). We are busy, but not as busy as we have been in recent years. This is actually good. We needed some time to catch up and slow down. We have experienced some supply chain issues over the past few years, and this year will enable us to utilize our existing resources and hopefully return to a more normal level of inventory.

We have been busy reviewing our rate structure. This has been an ongoing process for the past few years. First, we needed to upgrade our metering system, so we could accurately analyze our load profiles. We contracted with a consultant to assist with the

analysis and provide us with a cost-of-service study, so management and the board can make informed decisions on what our rate structure should be. The endgame is to ensure everyone pays for what they use. We hope to have the study completed and reviewed by the end of July or August.

We have hired a new employee at MEC. Angie Carr has joined us as a customer service representative and billing coordinator. We are pleased she has joined our family! If you call or stop by, please be sure to say hello.

As always, please notify us of any service changes as soon as possible, so we can accommodate your needs. Some materials remain unavailable for months or years, while others are readily available. We certainly do not want to squelch your growth or ours.

Again, we appreciate the cooperation and patience members provide in completing these projects. As for cooperation, easements are always an issue, and we ask the landowners for continued support in putting our infrastructure in place to enhance our reliability. As for patience, we have contractors working for us, along with the MEC crew, who are installing this infrastructure. We appreciate you understanding we cannot complete everything in a day, even though we make every effort to do so.

Be sure to check our website and social media for updates on what's happening at your cooperative.

As always, feel free to reach out to me with any questions or comments. My door is always open. ■

**830**

Distribution  
co-ops are the  
foundation of  
the cooperative  
network.



**64**

G&T co-ops  
provide  
wholesale power  
to distribution  
co-ops.



*Boating on McLean County lakes and the Missouri River comes in watercrafts in a variety of sizes, from kayaking on the Missouri River or elsewhere to large sailboats and fishing boats. Recreation, like agriculture and energy, plays a large role in the county's economy and is a large part of the accounts McLean Electric Cooperative serves.*

## CELEBRATING 80 YEARS GROWING TOGETHER: McLean Electric Cooperative and recreation

STORY AND PHOTOS BY PATRICIA STOCKDILL

**C**elebrating 80 years of McLean Electric Cooperative (MEC) providing electricity to rural McLean County wouldn't be complete without celebrating the joy an abundance of recreational opportunities brings to residents and visitors alike.

MEC has been a part of the county's recreational journey ever since a visionary group of rural residents officially incorporated the cooperative in August 1945.

Together, recreation and MEC helped each other grow.

They share the benefits each brings to the other.

As recreation grows, so does MEC, which benefits its member-owners.

Much of the county's recreational growth stems from opportunities afforded by having electricity available to power water and communications needs.

Electricity made it possible to establish recreational areas, such as Fort Stevenson State Park near Garrison. Electricity energizes the Turtle Lake Sportsmen's Club's trapshooting facility and its clubhouse. It means the Audubon National Wildlife Refuge can perform its wildlife and habitat mission as a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service national wildlife refuge, which also means recreational opportunities for the public for everything from wildlife viewing to winter ice fishing access.

Golfers reap the benefit of electricity in rural McLean

County. For example, MEC serves the county's only 18-hole golf course, Painted Woods near Washburn.

With thousands of acres of public land along Lake Sakakawea and Lake Audubon and other public lands, such as N.D. Game and Fish Department wildlife management areas, hunters and wildlife enthusiasts have ample opportunities to take in the county's great outdoors.

For many residents and visitors, McLean County's recreational opportunities begin at "the lake," which almost begs the question of "which one?"

While Lake Sakakawea and Lake Audubon garner the most attention – and the most use – recreation at "the lake" really began in the 1950s on Strawberry Lake in eastern McLean County.

Electricity's arrival via MEC meant folks could buy a small parcel of land along its shoreline. Many built a cabin – most likely a two-room structure with a bedroom and combined living room and kitchen. It was likely powered by a 70- or 100-amp meter, says MEC Engineering Manager Lucas Schaaf. People didn't need anything large back then.

"You didn't spend time in them (cabins), you were outside at the lake," MEC Operations Manager Keith Thelen adds.



MEC served 10 accounts when Strawberry Lake's cabin site was established in 1955. That number grew to 192 by 1965. After 30 years, 649 cabin owners had a place on Strawberry Lake. By 2018, that number grew to 955.

Meanwhile, another lake was getting attention – a lot of attention. MEC began serving cabin sites and recreation areas on what is the largest Missouri River impoundment, Lake Sakakawea, when the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers opened bids on lots in the 1960s at Garrison Creek Cabin sites 1 and 2, along with Deepwater Bay south of Parshall.

With recreation as part of six authorized purposes of the Garrison Dam project and the creation of Lake Sakakawea, the Corps also established locations for recreation areas.

In McLean County, they now include the Sportsman's Centennial Park and Fort Stevenson State Park, among others.

Lake Audubon – Snake Creek Reservoir in its beginning – also saw its share of recreational interest and cabin sites, beginning with the Totten Trail cabin site on the lake's west end.

Another facility, Totten Trail, became a go-to destination for both diners and horse enthusiasts with its roots deep in horseback riding opportunities in its indoor Totten Trail Arena. Fast-forward several decades, and the Totten Trail now offers dining, motel facility, camping, and even bait and gas.

Another cabin site was developed on the east side of Lake Audubon and a larger rural residential development was most recently built on adjacent private land.

Like other recreational destinations, Indian Hills Resort on Lake Sakakawea has grown. Built on private land adjacent to Good Bear Bay, it started with a bait shop, boat ramp, campground and four-unit condominium. It now offers large and small group lodging, cabins, and electrical and primitive camping to meld with fishing and hiking opportunities.

Indian Hills owners Dale and Kelly Sorge celebrated 40 years of operation in 2024. Kelly's parents, Byron and Tolly Holtan, created the facility, bringing Tolly's vision of sharing a slice of their outdoor heaven with guests to reality.

It's also an example of the number of outdoor recreation-related businesses that grew in MEC's service area. Some examples include North Country Marine near Garrison, a large number of rural storage facilities throughout the county, and even the Lewis and Clark Interpretive Center/Fort Mandan Historic Site near Washburn, which takes history enthusiasts outdoors on its walking trails.

McLean County's recreational growth also means increased electrical demand and increased growth for MEC.

Electricity is a commodity just like agricultural crops are commodities, MEC Manager/CEO Mark Doyle explains.

Increased demand – everything from increased use at recreational facilities to new rural residential developments – spike electrical use, especially in the summer, to provide additional revenue for the cooperative.

That benefits MEC member-owners by helping keep

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*The Garrison Dam tailrace chutes may be somewhat quiet on this day, but it's not unusual to see boat anglers trying their luck at night when walleye success is often the best.*



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down costs.

"We have a significant sales increase from recreation in the summer months, everything from the east end of McLean County at Brush Lake and Blue Lake to the west end at Deepwater Bay (on Lake Sakakawea)," Doyle describes.

MEC works to meet increased electrical demands by making service upgrades, Thelen adds. For example, Garrison Creek Cabin is now served with three-phase line to serve adjacent new developments or meet increased demand at existing facilities, whether it's a rural housing development along the lake or recreation areas such as Fort Stevenson State Park.

Just as the agricultural sector has experienced increased electrical demand to power irrigation systems and grain dryers, gone are the days when a 70- or 100-amp meter could power a cabin or structure on a lot at Strawberry Lake, Lake Audubon or Lake Sakakawea.

Today, many rural homeowners are asking for 200- or 400-amp meters to power residential buildings, outbuildings and other amenities. That's comparable to what an average-sized business uses, Doyle says.



*A young family enjoys pier fishing on Lake Audubon. McLean Electric Cooperative provides electricity to the lake's adjacent rural residential sites, businesses, nearby Audubon National Wildlife Refuge and area agricultural producers irrigating from the McClusky Canal.*

The upfront cost to install a larger service is cheaper with new construction, Schaaf explains, rather than installing an upgrade later. The cost of bringing the main electrical service to a new rural residential subdivision is covered by the developer, he adds, so MEC and its member-owners don't incur upfront expenses.

Member-owners are responsible for MEC's costs to their meter and own everything from the meter into and in buildings.

Rural McLean County's recreational opportunities complement the county's economic agricultural and energy-related job opportunities.

"People want to live where they have amenities," Doyle adds. Recreation is an amenity that helps businesses of all types attract employees with outdoor interests.

It also adds to the quality of life, Doyle describes. It's "one leg of the table" in the quality of life, he says, as an amenity that attracts people to visit and move to an area, as well as stay in an area.

Doyle simply has to point toward MEC itself when contemplating the tie that binds employer, employee and outdoor recreation.

Lineworkers tend to enjoy both working and recreating in the outdoors. For many lineworkers, outdoor recreation interests come as second nature, whether it's hunting, fishing, golfing or other interests.

"From an employee to employer aspect, we don't have a problem getting (lineworker) applicants," Doyle says with a smile.

Rural McLean County families no longer need to haul water by hand to the farmhouse or ring a bell to call folks inside for supper, as today's rural families work and play with the amenities of water and communications right in their homes.

The concept of having recreational opportunities in one's backyard appeals to many and can account as one reason for growth in rural McLean County. Another reason for the demand for larger electrical services is people have learned it's possible to work from home or work remotely, therefore increasing their electrical usage, Doyle says.

Rural living and recreational demands are trends that go hand-in-hand. Doyle feels it's a lifestyle people still desire, and he projects continued growth for both rural residential and recreational electrical needs.

In rural America, people drive a distance to get to their destination, Doyle says.

"The rural lifestyle, rural living is a trend, so driving to cities for additional amenities is acceptable," he says.

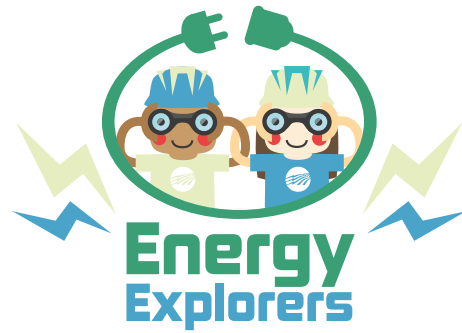
Given an opportunity to work in town or at a business location, people are trending toward working at their "lake" home – whether or not it's actually next to a body of water – as long as it's in the country.

It's the idea of being near their recreational opportunities of choice.

And it's helping MEC grow into its next 80 years. ■

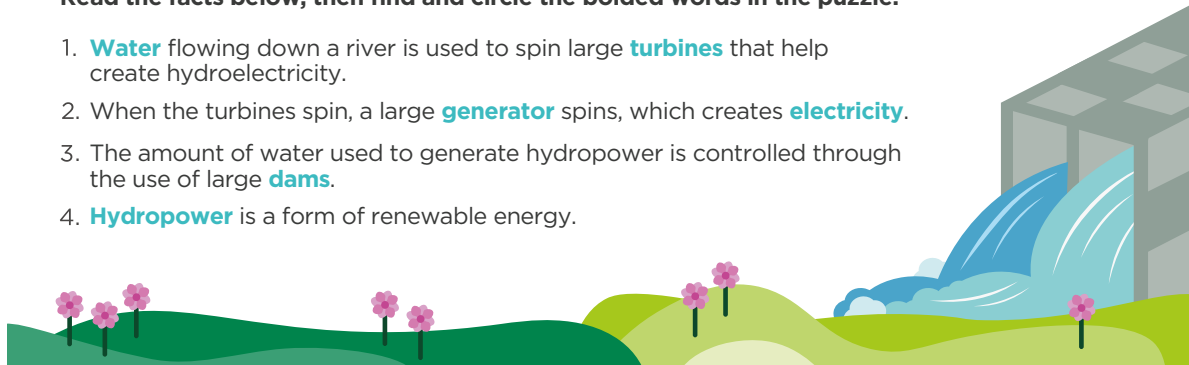
# HYDROPOWER WORD SEARCH

You know that it's never safe to mix water and electricity at home, but did you know that large amounts of flowing water can be used to create electricity? This process of generating electricity from the movement of water is called hydropower.



Read the facts below, then find and circle the bolded words in the puzzle.

1. **Water** flowing down a river is used to spin large **turbines** that help create hydroelectricity.
2. When the turbines spin, a large **generator** spins, which creates **electricity**.
3. The amount of water used to generate hydropower is controlled through the use of large **dams**.
4. **Hydropower** is a form of renewable energy.



J	R	E	E	R	Y	R	L	L	R	S	W	Z	M	H
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V	T	R	C	T	E	P	U	N	N	F	L	U	D	V
R	A	I	M	L	Q	C	I	G	H	X	C	S	A	E
A	W	A	K	E	R	B	T	Y	V	W	D	L	M	P
K	B	Q	J	K	R	D	D	R	M	N	N	H	S	R
Q	Q	V	U	U	R	R	V	N	I	O	Y	O	R	K
N	G	Y	T	P	O	Z	L	Q	S	C	Y	E	R	Q
T	G	E	I	P	Z	S	M	X	X	Y	I	F	E	O
M	K	G	O	R	A	B	N	K	H	K	P	T	H	U
V	N	W	P	Q	L	Y	P	A	D	J	S	Z	Y	O
X	E	A	K	J	A	Z	T	Q	P	O	P	I	B	X
R	B	W	A	B	D	O	K	C	I	Q	C	T	K	O
S	Y	B	B	P	Y	S	D	O	F	D	H	B	R	D
W	X	E	D	W	U	G	N	V	H	D	Q	W	P	S







# Vacation Mode

**A** vacation is a great way to get away from it all. While you're away, put your appliances and electronic devices in vacation mode as well. With a few simple adjustments before you leave, you'll come home to a lower energy bill.

## **WATER HEATER**

If you have a tank unit, your water heater will continue heating water while you are away. Adjust the temperature setting as low as possible to reduce standby heat loss.

## **REFRIGERATOR**

Your refrigerator is one of the biggest energy users in your home. If you are leaving for a short period, conserve energy by adjusting the thermostats on your refrigerator and freezer to a higher setting. For trips lasting four weeks or more, consider emptying your refrigerator and unplugging it.

## **AIR CONDITIONER**

Why cool an empty house? Turn off your air conditioner or set the thermostat to 85 degrees or higher. If you have a programmable thermostat, set it to vacation mode; it will

conserve energy while you are away and cool your house shortly before you return.

## **LIGHTS**

Install timers on indoor and outdoor lights and set them to turn the lights on for a few hours each night. This will conserve energy and provide added security by creating the illusion someone is at home.

## **ELECTRONICS**

While turning off electronic devices saves energy, digital displays and instant-on features continue to use energy whether you are at home or not. Unplug all electronic devices before you leave. Advanced power strips make it easy. They will automatically shut off power to plugged-in devices whenever they are not in use.

## **AT YOUR DESTINATION**

Conserving energy is important no matter where you are. If you are staying in a hotel, turn off the lights and adjust the thermostat when you leave your room. To conserve energy and water, reuse bath towels whenever possible. ■



# WHY ELECTRIC COOPERATIVES TRIM TREES

**T**rees may seem harmless on a calm, sunny day. But add a bit of wind or ice on a stormy night and those towering pillars may threaten your home's electric supply.

## **STORM OUTAGES**

Storm outages can occur when tree branches break and fall across power lines or when trees tumble onto the lines, so regular trimming of trees and brush along power lines helps prevent outages.

## **POWER INTERRUPTIONS**

When strong winds blow, limbs growing too close to power lines may sway and touch wires, causing those annoying "blinks" in power.

## **DANGER LOOMS**

When a tree touches an overhead power line, danger looms. Children climbing that tree can get shocked or killed.

## **LEAVE IT TO PROFESSIONALS**

To fight these potential problems, electric cooperatives

clear growth away from power lines as a way of reducing potential outages and safety risks.

McLean Electric Cooperative is committed to providing safe, reliable and affordable power, and a tree-trimming program is key to fulfilling that promise.

Crews look for foliage growing under lines, overhanging branches, leaning or other types of dangerous trees that could pull down a power line if they fall. As a rule of thumb, 25 feet of ground-to-sky clearance should be available on each side of utility poles to give power lines plenty of space.

If a tree is growing underneath or near a power line, it should be cut down completely.

McLean Electric Cooperative also advises members to consider where they plant new trees. While a sapling may seem fine where it's planted, consider what the tree will look like at maturity.

And remember: When power lines are involved, always leave the trimming to professionals. If trees in your area are growing into power lines, please call your local electric cooperative. Crews will trim as soon as their work schedule allows. ■



## McLean County community calendar: Events and activities to see and do

McLean Electric Cooperative summer hours: 8 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Monday through Thursday and 8 a.m. to noon Friday.

### McLean County area food pantry July distribution and donation thrift store dates, times and locations:

- **Garrison: Garrison Area Resource Center & Food Pantry:** Noon-2 p.m. and 5-7 p.m. July 24.
- **Makoti, Parshall, Plaza, Roseglen, Ryder, White Shield and others in need: Community Food Pantry:** 10 a.m.-1 p.m. July 26, 181 Ellsworth St., Makoti. Community Thrift Store, 3-6 p.m. Tuesday, 4-7 p.m. Thursday and 10 a.m.-1 p.m. Saturday, except holidays, 181 Ellsworth St., Makoti.
- **Max: Our Savior Lord's Food Pantry:** Noon-3 p.m. and 5-7 p.m. July 21, Max City Hall, 215 Main St.
- **Turtle Lake: The Lord's Pantry:** 2-4 p.m. July 10, and 10 a.m.-noon July 26, Trinity Lutheran Church, 515 Kundert St.
- **Turtle Lake: Free Community Clothing Share & Exchange Store:** every Thursday, noon-6 p.m., 221 Main St.
- **Underwood: Community Cupboard of Underwood food distribution:** 4-6 p.m. July 17, 208 Lincoln Ave. Like us on Facebook (Community Cupboard of Underwood) for distribution and thrift store updates.
- **Underwood: Community Cupboard of Underwood Thrift Store:** 1-5 p.m. every Tuesday.
- **Washburn: McLean Family Resource Center:** McLean County residents can contact the center, 701-462-8643, for an appointment to pick up baskets along with more information or assistance through the center's services, 205 Seventh St.
- **Washburn: McLean Family Resource Center Clothing Outlet:** 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday, 205 Seventh St.
- **Wilton: Wilton Food Pantry mini distributions:** every Friday, 11:30 a.m. until gone. Full food distribution,

4-6 p.m. July 17, Wilton Senior Citizens Center, 42 Dakota Ave.

- **Wilton: The (free) Clothes Closet:** 3-5 p.m. July 17, First Presbyterian Church, 401 Dakota Ave.

Area food pantries often experience high needs for the following items: baked beans, pork and beans, canned fruit, tuna, chicken, vegetables, cereal, oatmeal, granola and breakfast bars, juice, macaroni and cheese, hamburger and tuna helper, pancake mix, syrup, pasta, spaghetti, Alfredo and pasta sauce, peanut butter, jelly, rice side dishes, soups and chili, and household items, such as body wash and soap, dish soap, laundry detergent, shampoo and conditioner, toilet paper, toothpaste and toothbrushes. Contact local food pantries for drop-off locations, information or a list of additional needs in your community.

### July and early August events:

- **July 4:** McLean Electric Cooperative closed.
  - **July 11:** Mercer All-School Reunion, Brush Lake Pavilion.
  - **July 11-13:** Turtle Days, Turtle Lake.
  - **July 18-19:** 50th annual N.D. Governor's Cup Fishing Derby. Boats launch from Fort Stevenson State Park beginning 7 a.m. each day; weigh-in at Garrison City Park beginning at 3 p.m. each day.
  - **July 19:** Annual N.D. Junior Governor's Cup, 10 a.m., Fort Stevenson State Park, Garrison.
  - **Aug. 5:** Harvest Market on Main begins with vendors every Tuesday evening through August with make it, bake it and grow it vendors, Garrison Main Street.
  - **Go to McLean County Speedway,** Underwood, Facebook page, Facebook.com/McLeanCountySpeedway, for race schedule updates.
- Nonprofit organizations and communities throughout McLean County can contact Patricia Stockdill at stockdill.patricia@gmail.com or 701-337-5462 to submit community events. ■

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS:

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