

# COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS

## Old Spink New Spink

**SD restaurants roll  
with the changes**  
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**Dealing with  
drought**  
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Joyce Schermer,  
Karisma Tripp and Brad  
and Lori Johannsen are  
shown at Spink Family  
Restaurant in Elk Point



# COOPERATIVE UPDATE

## As of Aug. 3, 2021



**Melissa Maher**  
Manager

There will not be a director election at this year's annual meeting. Petitions were available from June 18 through July 20. The following incumbents were the only petitions received: Clint Clark, District 1 (Morristown); Larry Hieb, District 3 (Timber Lake); and Robert Keckler, District 4 (Eagle Butte).

The October issue of *Cooperative Connections* will be the official annual meeting publication and will include the 2020 annual report. The annual meeting and celebration of our 75th year as a Cooperative will be Wednesday, Oct. 6, at the Isabel Community Center. This year's meeting theme is "Lighting Your Way for 75 Years." Mark your calendars and come help us celebrate this historic milestone.

At the July meeting, the board approved a \$500,000 general capital credit retirement for a December payment schedule. This payment will complete retirement for years 1994 and 1995 with the balance distributed on a percentage basis to all members up through 2020 who are eligible for a capital credit payment. All current rate payers will once again see their credit applied to their account. Total capital credit retirement since Moreau-Grand's inception will surpass \$9.5 million by the end of this year. Returning

capital credits is the 'cooperative' way of doing business.

Your board voted to combine their director scholarship money this year, totaling \$2,500, and award it to an individual in our service area who will be attending electrical lineman school. A couple years ago the board started this scholarship fund with each of them donating \$250, then ultimately awarding a \$500 scholarship to a student from each of our five districts. Be watching for further details on this new lineman scholarship.

Please think about safety and remember to watch for power lines. These lines become part of the landscape; we can forget they are there. Electricity doesn't care who you are – how old you are – or how much experience you have; being in the path of an electric current can be deadly whether it is overhead or underground line.

Until next month... Keep safety a priority with everything you do and continued prayers for rain.

**Moreau-Grand Electric will be closed on Sept. 6 to celebrate Labor Day. Our office will re-open during normal business hours on Sept. 7.**



Comparative Report	Current (June 2021)	1 year ago (June 2020)	10 Years Ago (June 2011)	% Change in 10 years
Number of Meters	7,048	6,967	6,456	9%
Kilowatt Hours Sold	7,864,229	7,166,453	5,595,178	41%
Cost of Purchased Power	\$504,753.34	\$ 492,936.51	\$316,562.03	59%
Overall Ave. Rate / kWh Per Member	0.1209	0.119	0.103	17%

## COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS

### MOREAU-GRAND ELECTRIC

(USPS No. 018-951)

**Manager:** Melissa Maher

**Editor:** Roger Lawien,  
Member Services & IT Director

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**Attorney:** John Burke

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Design assistance by SDREA



Moreau-Grand Electric is blessed to have so many wonderful members. None of what we do would be possible without you.

During July and August, directors and staff had the opportunity to join with other businesses at local appreciation days and celebrations to thank our members for their patronage. To the First Financial of Dupree, Timber Lake Rodeo Association, Community of Isabel and the Corson County Fair – we thank you so much for letting us join you. It is greatly appreciated. Moreau-Grand is pleased to be part of the communities we serve.



## Money For College or Trade School

The scholarship opportunities listed below will be available at our offices in Timber Lake and Eagle Butte, online at [www.mge.coop](http://www.mge.coop) or simply give us a call at 1-800-952-3158 or locally at 605-865-3511. Check with your guidance counselors at local schools.



### #1 Director's Scholarship

Our board of directors have decided once again to donate a portion of their compensation to the Director's Scholarship. We are working out the details for this scholarship so stay tuned. Scholarship requirements are:

1. Student's parent/guardian is a member of Moreau-Grand Electric Cooperative.
2. The application must be filled out in its entirety.

### #2 Basin/Moreau-Grand Scholarship

Each year Moreau-Grand Electric offers a \$1,000 scholarship to one area student, chosen by our power supplier Basin Electric Cooperative. We have not received the 2022 Basin application yet. The specific date and details will be released later. The deadline for this opportunity will be **mid-February**.

### #3 Resource Conservation Speech Contest

Each year the South Dakota Department of Agriculture, Resource Conservation and Forestry Division sponsors a resource conservation-oriented speech contest. Any South Dakota student in grades 9-12 is eligible to enter. This includes public, private and home-school students.

- **First Place:** \$1,100 Scholarship
- **Second Place:** \$750 Scholarship
- **Third Place:** \$450 Scholarship

The contest is sponsored by the Touchstone Energy Cooperatives of South Dakota. The deadline for this opportunity is **March 27, 2022**.

### #4 S.D. Association of Cooperatives Scholarship

SDAC is awarding two \$1,000 scholarships to **second year higher-education students** who are pursuing a degree relative to the cooperative business and who are members or whose parents/guardians are members of a SDAC member cooperative, including Moreau-Grand Electric.

# Be aware of overhead power lines on farms

Powerlines pose a major hazard for South Dakota farmers. Lines over roads and rural areas have a minimum clearance of 18 feet but just 12.5 feet over residential private property.

Before working in a field or around shops or grain bins, always take the time to note the location of your cooperative's power lines so that you can make sure to remain a safe distance from them and stay free from harm. To stay safe around overhead power lines, farm operators and workers must:

- Always use a spotter when operating large machinery near utility power lines.
- Use extra caution when raising augers or grain truck beds around co-op power lines.
- Keep equipment at least 10 feet from power lines - at all times, and in all directions.
- Inspect the height of farm equipment to determine the proper clearance.
- Always lower extensions to the lowest setting when moving loads.
- Never attempt to move a power line out of the way or raise it to get added clearance.
- Call your electric cooperative immediately if a power line is sagging or is

hanging too low.

- If contact is made with a power line, remember that it is almost always safest to stay on the equipment. Make sure to warn others to stay away and call the cooperative immediately.

- The only reason to decide to make an exit is if the equipment is on fire. If this is the case, then remember to jump off the equipment with both of your feet together, avoiding touching the ground and vehicle at the same time.

Then, still keeping your feet together, "bunny hop" away from the vehicle until you reach a safe distance.

If you see someone else's equipment that has come in contact with a power line in your area, the best help you can give will be from a safe distance.

Make sure to yell out to, signal or call the equipment operator to make sure he or she remains in the vehicle, and notify your local cooperative immediately.

Please remember to follow these tips to avoid accidents during the harvest season.

## TIPS FOR A SAFE HARVEST



The Upper Midwest Agricultural Safety and Health Center offers this useful checklist for farm safety called Stop-Think-Act. Take these steps to minimize injury risks during harvest season.

### Stop

- What could go wrong?
- How bad could it be?
- Has anything changed?

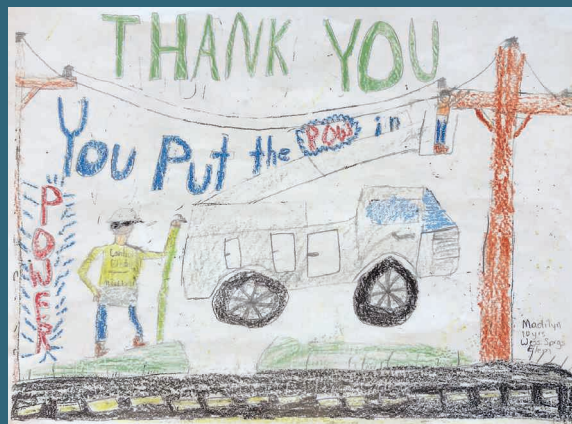
### Think

- Do I clearly understand the task?
- Am I physically and mentally ready?

- Do I have the right equipment and tools for the job?

### Act

- Make it safe.
- Use the right tools.
- Follow proper procedures.
- Reduce risks.
- Stop the task if it cannot be done safely.



## You put the 'pow' in power!

### Madilyn Gaikowski

Madilyn sends out a special note of appreciation for line workers across the state of South Dakota. She is the daughter of Gene and Loree Gaikowski. Gene serves as the Wessington Springs line foreman at Central Electric in Mitchell.

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.



# CROCKPOT CRAVINGS

**CROCKPOT APPLE BUTTER**

## Ingredients:

4 cups of sugar (more or less depending on sweetness of apples)  
4 tsp. cinnamon  
¼ tsp. cloves  
¼ tsp. salt

**METHOD**

Fill a 5 quart crockpot full of chopped apples (quartered or smaller), no need to peel, but do remove seeds. Tart apples are best. Top with the ingredients above. Lid won't fit at first but settles down as apples cook. Begin cooking on high and when bubbling, put heat on low and cook all night, or until thick and dark color. Stir occasionally. If need be, blend a few seconds to soften peels. Pour into jars and seal.

**Cherie Leibel, Timber Lake**

**SLOW COOKER BEEF STEW**

## Ingredients:

3 cups water  
1 package McCormick® Classic Beef Stew Seasoning Mix Packet  
2 lbs beef stew meat, cut into 1-inch pieces  
1/4 cup flour  
2 cups potato chunks  
1 1/4 cups carrot chunks  
1 medium onion, cut into thin wedges  
1/2 cup sliced celery

**METHOD**

Mix vegetables, water and Beef Stew Seasoning Mix in slow cooker. Coat beef with flour. Stir into ingredients in slow cooker. Cover. Cook 8 hours on low or 5 hours on high until beef is tender.

[mccormick.com](http://mccormick.com)

**CROCKPOT BUTTERNUT SQUASH WITH APPLES**

## Ingredients:

1 ½ to 2 lbs. butternut squash, peeled and chopped (about 5 cups)  
2 to 3 tart apples, chopped (about 2 cups)  
¼ c. dried cherries or cranberries  
1 ½ tsp. grated fresh ginger  
½ tsp. salt  
1/8 tsp. pepper  
½ tsp. cinnamon  
¼ tsp. nutmeg  
½ c. apple cider  
¼ tsp. salt

**METHOD**

Combine all ingredients in your slow cooker and stir together. Cover and cook on low 3-4 hours or until squash is tender, then turn to warm until serving. Can also be baked in conventional oven at 325 degrees until fork tender. Sweet potatoes can be used instead of butternut squash if desired.

**Linda Sherry, Sioux Falls**

**Please send your favorite dairy 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 2021. All entries must include your name, mailing address, phone number and cooperative name.**

### Dear Pat: I was an electric vehicle skeptic, but I just saw an announcement of the all-electric Ford F150 Lightning. I didn't realize electric pickups could be this compelling or competitive. Are there other electric pickups or SUVs coming out soon? - Mike



**Pat Keegan**  
Collaborative  
Efficiency



**Brad Thiessen**  
Collaborative  
Efficiency

Electric SUVs are available now and pickups will be soon. This development has been anticipated for years. Electric vehicle (EV) sales are about 24 times higher than they were 10 years ago, with several factors driving demand:

- The instant torque from electric motors boosts acceleration.
- The low center of gravity improves handling and reduces rollover risk.
- The superior traction control of electric motors can increase off-road capability and safety in winter.
- The upfront cost of an EV purchase is now more competitive with similar internal combustion models, and most EVs qualify for a federal tax credit of up to \$7,500.
- The cheaper operating fuel cost per mile (for electricity) compared to gasoline or diesel is another attractive feature for drivers.

Ford's electric F150 Lightning is scheduled to arrive in spring 2022, starting under \$40,000 for the commercial trim package (230-mile range model). A 300+ mile battery is an option, and all models are 4X4 with respectable towing and payload capacities. The Lightning is also equipped to provide 9.6kW of home backup power or portable power for a jobsite.

Tesla has more than a million preorders for their new Cybertruck, which will likely arrive in 2022. The 250-mile range 2WD model starts under \$40,000 and steps up to \$50,000 for the 300-mile range 4WD model. Tesla plans to offer a 500+ mile range version

for \$70,000 that can tow more than 14,000 pounds.

GMC has announced a late 2021 release of an electric Hummer with 1,000 horsepower and additional features for off-road performance.

Rivian, a startup backed by billions of dollars from Ford and Amazon, is planning to unveil their R1T electric pickup later this year.

Crossover SUVs (CUVs) are one of the most popular types of vehicles, and a number of manufacturers say they'll have electric models available soon. Ford's Mustang Mach-E is actually available now with a range up to 305 miles, starting at \$45,000. Volkswagen's ID4 CUV starts at \$40,000 and is available with AWD options. More electric SUVs are coming, including Rivian's R1S, Nissan's Ariya and Volkswagen's six-passenger ID6.

### Tesla has more than a million preorders for their new Cybertruck, which will likely arrive in 2022.

And it's not just vehicles that are shifting to electric. Electric snow machines and jet skis are arriving soon. Even large construction equipment like excavators, backhoes and heavy-duty trucks will have electrically fueled models.

One remaining hurdle for increased EV adoption in rural areas is fast, sufficient charging for longer trips. Most EV owners charge at home, but more fast-charge stations on rural highways will be helpful.

If you're interested in an EV, talk to your electric co-op. They may offer special EV rates or rebates.

# REZA BURNS

## Brookings native and rising magician puts SD on the entertainment map

Billy Gibson

[billy.gibson@sdrea.coop](mailto:billy.gibson@sdrea.coop)

While most of his peers at Brookings High School were playing sports, hunting and entering rodeo events, Reza Borchardt was venturing off in a completely different direction.

He was pursuing his childhood dream of becoming a magician and master illusionist in the style of his idol David Copperfield. From the time Reza (pronounced ray-zuh) got his first magic kit, he was determined to make a life and a living in the world of entertainment.

Today, Reza is on the tail end of a 140-day stretch captivating audiences at Branson's Famous Theater and making a big name for himself across the globe. In addition to touring extensively to more than 30 countries, Reza has made appearances on A&E's popular Duck Dynasty show and the CW network's Penn & Teller: Fool Us.

It all began for Reza in elementary school when he was asked to go on stage during a magic act. When he saw the response the magician was getting from the audience, that's when he caught the bug. By the age of 14, Reza was performing magic acts of his own and was inspired after meeting Copperfield in person on several occasions during his youth. By the time he was in college at SDSU, Reza was already touring across the region performing at corporate events and concert halls.

"When I got asked to go on stage and the guy was doing a simple trick with rings, it seemed like a really big deal. The kids were into it," Reza remembered. "That laid the groundwork for me. My parents bought me a magic kit and took me to see professional shows in Branson. I started building props and putting together an act in a warehouse in Brookings and started traveling and having some success."

When he was able to sell 200,000 tickets over 40 shows at a theater in Acapulco, that's when he had a hunch he could make it as a pro.

But Reza is savvy enough to know that the key to sustaining success in the business is reinventing his act and conceiving new ways to keep and hold the attention of audience members. That's how Copperfield was able to reach legendary status, he said.

"You have to find a way to keep making your brand relevant and keep your show exciting. People have so much sensory overload and the ways we receive information is moving so fast. So, I'm constantly updating the show and elevating the art form," he said. "I still film every show and watch it and critique it and look for ways to improve."

On stage, Reza carves out time to mention his South Dakota background and share stories of growing up in Brookings on the "cornfield side of the state." In some ways, he sees himself as an ambassador for South Dakota.

"I want to always remember my humble beginnings and how excited I was to be that kid who had dreams and plans," he said. "It's a vision that I saw happening, and now it has come true. And to think it all started in South Dakota...that's insane."





Rhonda Otten, along with her husband and three sons, has worked to keep Spink Family Restaurant open for business.  
*Photos by Billy Gibson*

## Spink restaurant emerges strong from hardships brought by fire and pandemic

**Billy Gibson**

[billy.gibson@sdrea.coop](mailto:billy.gibson@sdrea.coop)

Old Spink. New Spink.

That's how Rhonda Otten variously refers to her restaurant, depending on whether she's alluding to the Spink Café that burned down in 2019 or the Spink Family restaurant that was throttled by the pandemic but is thriving today.

For more than 20 years, the Spink Café was a big draw in the township located in Union County. The eatery was known for its Friday night fish fries during Lent, Sunday dinners and its famous Spinkburger. The 80-year-old structure had recently been re-decorated with a 50s theme, featuring old LPs, vinyl album covers on the wall and pictures of Elvis Presley.

But life for Otten and her husband Sam changed in November of 2019 when the area's most

popular attraction was totally consumed by fire.

The way the Ottens saw it, there was no option but to rebuild. But the planned resurrection of the business wouldn't occur in the confines of Spink. The new iteration, renamed Spink Family Restaurant, would be located in the old American Legion hall in downtown Elk Point.

By all accounts, the "new Spink" wasn't so easy to bring forth from the ashes. Two weeks after working hard to get the new facility ready for business in Elk Point, the pandemic hit and threatened to dash the Ottens' hopes for good.

"The fire was in November, we made the decision to keep going in December, and we re-opened in March. We were open for two weeks when the pandemic hit, Rhonda said. "Those two weeks were very, very busy. It was a madhouse in

here. We had a lot more space and we were finally getting in the groove."

Facing the same problems as just about every restaurant owner in the state and nation, the Ottens were forced to hit the pause button and try to figure out the next step to take. They closed for a month, regrouped, and then returned to offer carry-out service only.

Members of the community rallied to support the restaurant, including employees at Union County Electric located just two blocks away.

According to Union County Electric General Manager Matt Klein, the cooperative always strives to support other local businesses that help the community thrive.

"At lunchtime you're likely to see some of our guys eating there," Klein said. "When they had carry-out, we ordered food for meetings and just did what we could to help – just like we do with other members of the community. We help whenever and wherever we can."



Server Karisma Tripp tends to another satisfied customer at Spink Family Restaurant in Elk Point.

Rhonda said it was inspiring to see the town pull together to face the impact of the pandemic, and also to help the business survive after the back-to-back calamities.



Cody Olson, center, enjoys lunch with his co-workers from Valley Ag Supply.

“The community really supported us and we’re very grateful for that,” she said. “But we’ve seen this many times before; people watching out for each other and helping when there’s a need. That’s what really pushed us through.”

One regular patron who is happy to see the new Spink succeeding is Joyce Schermer. She occupied a table in the restaurant one recent lunch hour along with her son Brad Johannsen and his wife Lori. The Johannsens are regular visitors to the

area from Sedona, Ariz., and always make a point to stop at Spink, preferring the hot beef sandwich and the prime rib sandwich.

“It’s always good every time you come,” said Schermer, a resident of Akron who opted for her go-to French Dip. “You’re never disappointed in the food or the service. It’s wonderful.”

Also enjoying a lunchtime meal were several employees of Valley Ag Supply. The company is located a half mile from the old Spink building that was destroyed by fire.

“We used to go there all the time and we were disappointed when it burned down. You could see our fertilizer plant from there,” said Cody Olson while noshing on the French Dip. “Now there’s no place to go. So, we just drive into town because it’s so good. It’s great that they came back and are still operating.”

As for “old Spink,” the Ottens are still trying to figure out what to do with the heap left in the wake of the conflagration. The building had an upstairs apartment where several members of the family lived at



various times through the years.

“It’s going to have to be torn down eventually, but we just don’t want to let it go,” Rhonda said. “There are so many memories attached to that place; both of our parents were such a big part of it.”

She emphasized that while the restaurant is in a new location, the food is the same as before. The Ottens, who have always used family recipes, depend on all three of their sons – ages 17 through 23 – to handle the cooking to maintain consistency on a daily basis.

“The secret to our success is that the five of us do all the cooking here. We use time-proven family recipes that have been popular for decades,” Rhonda said.



**Roger Lawien**

rlawien@mge.coop

Recently, I received a call from one of the parishioners at my church. I could tell by the panic in their voice that something was deeply concerning him, and he wanted to visit with me. I went to his home shortly after I hung up, and yes, they were quite distressed. They had received what truly appeared to be a legitimate email notifying them of the auto renewal of their antivirus software.

The email instructed them to call a toll-free number for further instructions. The smooth-talking well-spoken representative successfully talked them into allowing him to access their computer remotely and he ended up with their bank and credit card information. In the end, the bank and the credit card companies'

security protocols stopped access to the accounts. New cards and account numbers were issued and within a few days they restored all of the automatic monthly

payments they had set up. Life was back to normal for them.

The reason I shared this tale of woe with you is not to scare you from using online payment processes like the one here at Moreau-Grand Electric Cooperative, but to reassure you that we work everyday to make sure your account and information is securely stored and kept private. Your cooperative has spent a considerable amount of time and money securing equipment and providing ongoing security training for your employees.

An example of that is when a company calls me wanting to know member usage information for generator or equipment sizing, I do not release the information without the consent of the member. You play an important role in keeping your information secure. We have gotten reports of bad people calling members pretending to be Moreau-Grand employees demanding payment right now over the phone or they'll disconnect your power. If that happens to you, hang up the phone and call our offices at 1-800-952-3158 in Timber Lake or 605-964-2977 in Eagle Butte. Make sure the call is legitimate.

More than 1000 members just like you and I use our secure Moreau-Grand Electric SmartHub app to access current and prior billing information or make payments. I go to my SmartHub account to track my usage. Recently, I noticed a significant uptick in my energy usage starting on a particular day. After doing some exploration, I discovered a short in the wiring going to my well. Cha-ching, there was \$30 I saved on my monthly electric bill!



You can securely sign up day or night for this free service. Simply go to [www.mge.coop](http://www.mge.coop) and click on the new user link at the top of the page. Provide your name and account number from your bill and you are set to go or call us we are here to help. SmartHub – safe, secure, private.



# July 2021 Board Minutes and May 2021 Financial Information

The July 20, 2021, board of directors' meeting was held at the Timber Lake office with the following directors present: Bartlett, Clark, Hieb, Keckler, Landis, Lawrence, Maher, McLellan, Walker and Wall, and others present: Manager Maher, and Finance Officer Dahlgren (Delegated Recorder of Minutes).

The Large Power Users monthly report was given by Sue Sherwood, which included topics on large power usage and payments. The Member Services report was given by Roger Lawien, which included annual meeting, display at Timber Lake Museum for MGEC 75th Anniversary, ice cream socials, fall teacher newsletter and scholarship information, large meter testing, SDREA Editors Workshop, distributed director candidate interview sheets, annual meeting meal discussion, SmartHub, and interviewed Kelsie Haskell and Kasey Maher on their coffee shop businesses.

The Operations report was given by Kent Larson, which included SDREA conducting onsite visits, the Parade 3-phase UG line about complete, new services, substation mowing and spraying, RAM Utilities are finished testing poles, transformers are currently 40 weeks out on delivery, and oil and infrared testing on substations. Kent reported to the Board that Miller Construction has been contacted to remove debris and level the site for the new headquarters.

Manager Maher gave the Managers report that included Federated assigned new Safety and Loss Prevention Consultant, SDREA Board meeting report, Basin board report, Load Management report, processed RUS loan AF48 drawdown, CFC approved the headquarter loan, Upper Deck will have a design prepared for the August meeting, Rushmore board meeting update, Basin DGC offer, Board Leadership Summit, and Basin CEO manager search update.

The Board reviewed the Director candidate petitions received in Districts 1, 3 & 4. The Board discussed and registered for the NRECA Region 6 meeting.

Director McLellan gave the SDREA Board meeting report that included updates from RESCO, Health Insurance Partnership proposal, SD Value-Added, member cooperative issues, Black Hills Electric presentation, H-D Electric presentation, Bylaw and Policy Committee report, SD One Call discussion, Youth Connect Con event update, discussed meeting facilities, approved contribution to the International Fund and approved contribution to the CFC Integrity Fund.

Manager Maher gave the SDREA Managers/Legal Seminar report that included a FEMA presentation, Federated presentation on legalized marijuana, RESCO presentation, Health Insurance Partnership, Touchstone Energy presentation, discussed arbitration language in Bylaws, CoBank update, SDREA Safety Accreditation update, upcoming postal increase and the affects on the monthly magazine, 811 presentation, and a discussion on the Mutual Aid Agreement.

Manager Maher gave the Rushmore Managers meeting report that included the NRECA Health Insurance Partnership, member cooperative issues, discussed insurance and the wildfires, Basin CEO search, and DGC.

Director Lawrence gave a Rushmore update on the CEO search timeline and plans. Board approved the following: the agenda, the minutes from the June meeting, new members, refunds, line extensions, financial statistics, disbursements, safety report, request bids for a carry out style annual meeting meal like in 2020, Director scholarship to one individual attending lineman school, a general capital credit retirement of \$500,000, Director Maher as the delegate and Director McLellan as the alternate for the NRECA Region 6 meeting, Director McLellan as the delegate for the NRECA Director election, and Special Equipment Summaries 421-424 in the amount of \$40,451.68.

The next board meeting was scheduled for August 17, 2021, at 8:30 a.m. in the Timber Lake office.

## May 2021 Financial Information

	May 2021	May 2020	YTD 2021
<b>Operating Revenues</b>	\$833,611	\$868,781	\$5,315,097
<b>Cost of Power</b>	\$371,526	\$398,305	\$2,506,644
<b>Cost of Electric Service</b>	\$815,003	\$977,640	\$4,945,259
<b>Margins</b>	\$19,656	\$(106,606)	\$393,180
<b>kWh Purchased</b>	6,945,680	7,156,237	46,936,090
<b>kWh Sold</b>	5,775,419	6,167,860	42,681,518

# LEARNING FROM ADVERSITY

The Dakota Lakes Research Farm produces information helpful to farmers and ranchers dealing with drought. *Photos by Billy Gibson*

## SDSU agriculture researcher Dwayne Beck looks for better ways to gain higher yields through crop rotations and other techniques

**Billy Gibson**

[billy.gibson@sdrea.coop](mailto:billy.gibson@sdrea.coop)

The drought conditions that gripped the state through the summer months caused difficulty for farmers and ranchers. The drought in 2012 also made it difficult to grow and harvest a productive crop.

But it's the drought that occurred in 1988 that Dwayne Beck remembers most. Beck, 70, is a researcher with SDSU who runs the Dakota Lakes research farm near Canning.

According to the National Integrated Drought Information System, as of June 23 more than 97 percent of South Dakota and all of Minnesota were categorized as "abnormally dry."

As someone who considers himself a seasoned investigator and problem solver, Beck looks at the current drought conditions as an

opportunity to learn.

So, what exactly did the farming and ranching community learn in 1988 when adverse weather conditions caused an estimated \$60 billion in agricultural damage across the U.S.?

"We learned not to do tillage," Beck responds without hesitation. "This drought is about the worse I've seen since 1988, and we learned then that in this part of the country if you till, you're screwed. No-till gives you a chance to have a decent crop and run a viable farming operation."

And the key to succeeding without tilling is proper crop rotation. That's what keeps Beck and other researchers busy.

On a recent afternoon, Melanie Caffe and her assistant Nick Paul were operating a small combine to gather their test crops laid out in strips measuring five feet wide by 20

feet long. Caffe, a native of France, is an ag professor at SDSU, while Paul is a local farmer and research technician.

The two-member team moved from section to section, cleaning out the collection bin as they went to keep the samples from being contaminated and corrupting the research data. The samples were



Dwayne Beck runs the Dakota Farms research facility near Canning.



Melanie Caffé and Nick Paul collect samples from a field at the Dakota Farms Research Station near Canning.

bagged and taken into the lab where Caffé and Paul planned to perform fertility experiments with the goal of developing varieties with higher yield, higher quality and stronger drought resistance.

Much of the research centers around maximizing yields through effective crop rotations. Beck has spent much of his career considering the ways farming was conducted 100 or more years ago and how it can be improved.

"The Natives grew crops before the Spaniards came and brought horses. They were all no-tillers because they didn't have cows and horses to pull the plows. They grew 13 different kinds of corn, beans, squash and sunflowers. They were very successful. The settlers never asked anyone how to grow crops here, they just got out their plow and started turning over the soil."

Beck has seen the wonders of crop rotation in his research. Some of his fields are rotated five ways.

"Good rotations can produce a lack of disturbance in places where you don't have a lot of water. Our research shows 99 percent of resistance issues could be solved with better crop rotations. There are fields where we haven't used insecticides for 18 years."

Beck said his methods aren't always adopted by industry but he continues to gather data and push out the information obtained through research.

"The nice about being a research guy is you always have more things to learn," he said. "The more you research, the more you don't know, but we're always looking for answers."

## HOPS GROWERS NAVIGATING THEIR WAY THROUGH CHANGING INDUSTRY

**Billy Gibson**

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In many ways, Ryan Heine is like the average South Dakota farmer. He frets about the weather, plans for the future, worries about finances, watches the markets and is constantly trying to find a buyer for the crop he hopes will make.

But his crop is unlike most of the others that emerge from the South Dakota soil. Heine is owner of 6th Meridian Hop Farm near Yankton. His is one of six such farms left in the state growing hops for brewers to transform into craft beer.

Heine also sees his work as different compared to most farmers – he relies on his nose a lot.

"There's a lot of experimenting with different aromas. There are so many flavor profiles and varieties of hops that are used in creating craft beer," he said. "There's a vast palette of different aromas, and the market will dictate what consumers prefer."

Ryan and his wife Michelle launched their hop operation in 2014, leaving Omaha and returning to the small family farm near Yankton in pursuit of a more grounded lifestyle for their five children.

"We wanted to get out of the city and back to our farming roots," said Ryan, who works remotely as an electrical engineer for a company out of Minneapolis.

Ryan's interest in growing the essential elements of craft beer began when he was a student at Parks College in St. Louis, Mo. He went out with his friends and found most of what was offered at bars, pubs and restaurants was bland and uninspiring. He knew he liked the flavor of beer and he knew he liked the simplicity of the farming lifestyle.

"So I started doing some home brewing and found that it was a fun hobby to pursue. Now we have one of the biggest operations in the state," he said.

Heine's time on the farm is spent fussing over flavor and aroma profiles, acid levels, yeast growth, oil content, insect invasions, disease infections and more. He and Michelle do all the growing, harvesting, processing, drying, pulverizing, preserving, pressing and packaging.

He finds markets by visiting with brewers, forging relationships across the region and even keeping in touch with his college buddies.

"There are some college roommates I've kept in touch with who are brewers and we're always talking about how to improve our products," he said. "Hops growers are down to just a handful in the state, but for those who have survived, I think the outlook is good."



# BULLISH ON BEES

## Beekeeping industry struggles with drought and other obstacles along with overall agriculture sector

**Billy Gibson**

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Becoming a beekeeper wasn't something Chad Holbrook dreamed about back when he worked as a farm loan officer in Texas.

But he decided it might be an interesting hobby, so about 10 years ago he bought himself a hive just for the fun of it.

As things sometimes tend to go, one hive led to two, two hives led to four and before he knew it, Holbrook was giving his day job the boot. Goodbye business suit, hello beekeeping suit.

These days, Holbrook manages about 3,000 hives out of his main headquarters in Fairfax, MN, although he still has some hives back in Texas. A member of Renville-

Sibley Co-op Power, he ships his hives for pollination purposes all across the Midwest and to other regions as well to help growers gain higher crop yields.

"After I got my first bee hive I just really enjoyed doing it, and it snowballed and just kept increasing every year," Holbrook said. "I finally quit my day job to run the business in January of 2017, which is something I never thought I'd do."

That's a move that took some courage because Holbrook knew from his brief experience that while bees can be tough buggers, they also have plenty of obstacles threatening their place in nature and their very existence.

After all, some of the boxes, frames, pallets and extraction equipment he purchased to start

his own operation were acquired from beekeepers making a bee-line straight out of the business.

The list of real and potential apiary antagonists is long. Apiculturists are constantly trying to protect their colonies from various types of threats including several species of mites, insecticides, pesticides, extreme weather and destruction of their habitat.

One pitfall not often discussed in the public discourse is the attrition that takes place from merely moving colonies from one patch of farmland to the next, and in some cases, moving hives from one spot to another to protect them during the inclement non-pollinating months.

Holbrook figures the attrition rate can be up to 10 percent anytime hives are loaded onto a truck and hauled to different locations. It's a significant loss considering an estimated one-third of the world's food supply depends on the pollination work performed by



Honey bees pollinate roughly one-third of the world's agriculture crops.

honey bees. Since 2010, beekeepers in South Dakota, Minnesota and across the country have experienced historically high colony loss rates of nearly 30 percent a year impacting roughly 90 different agricultural crops ranging from almonds and apples on the West Coast to cotton and cranberries in the East.

"Keeping them alive is the hardest thing," Holbrook said. "There are substances farmers use to manage vegetation and help their crops, but it's causing a reduction in the forage area for bees. But everybody has to make a living and I don't fault the farmers...if I were them I'd probably be doing the same thing. But we can all look for ways to be more environmentally friendly because we're all making a living off nature."

Holbrook, who describes himself as a migratory commercial beekeeper, typically transports bees to California every January to pollinate that state's almond crop and then heads to his facility in Texas to extract honey. July is the slowest month of the year, then there's a short fall season before the bees head to an indoor storage facility in Idaho for protection against the cold.

Despite the drought conditions that have caused stress for farmers, ranchers and apiculturists across the region, Holbrook is bullish on the beekeeping industry. He noted that the city of Sioux Falls recently approved an ordinance that allows residents to maintain hives on their property. Would-be beekeepers must

apply for a permit, take an online class, inform their neighbors of their intentions and adhere to other prescribed guidelines.

Holbrook reports that through the spring and summer seasons - and despite the drought - honey prices have seen an upward shift. For instance, he said the price for honey in the region last year was about \$1.70 per pound but has climbed to more than \$2.25. The international market is expected to expand from \$9.2 billion to \$19 billion by 2028.

"We were fortunate that we've had some timely rains and the hot, dry weather hasn't caused problems for my business. It has been an average crop for me. But you don't ever really know for sure until the honey is extracted," he said.



According to owner Kiah Crowley, Sunrise Hives in Spearfish maintains about 400 bee colonies. *Photo by Sunrise Hives*

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605-226-3441

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Eagle Butte, SD, 605-964-4155

**SEPTEMBER 2-6**  
**South Dakota State Fair**  
State Fairgrounds, Huron, SD,  
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**SEPTEMBER 9-12**  
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**Mickelson Star Trail**  
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Main Street, Vermillion, SD,  
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**Annual Antique Car &  
Tractor Parade**  
Main Street, Farmer, SD,  
605-239-4498

**SEPTEMBER 17-18**  
**Deadwood Jam**  
Main Street, Deadwood, SD,  
605-578-1876

**SEPTEMBER 18**  
**Health Connect Fair**  
Sanford Pentagon, Sioux Falls,  
SD, 888-761-5437

**SEPTEMBER 18-19**  
**Northeast South Dakota  
Celtic Faire and Games**  
37925 Youth Camp Road,  
Aberdeen, SD, 605-380-5828

**SEPTEMBER 23-25**  
**Custer State Park Buffalo  
Roundup & Arts Festival**  
13329 US Highway 16A,  
Custer, SD, 605-255-4515

**SEPTEMBER 25**  
**Great Downtown Pumpkin  
Festival**  
526 Main Street, Rapid City,  
SD, 605-716-7979

**SEPTEMBER 25-26**  
**Menno Pioneer Power Show**  
Menno, SD, contact Daniel at  
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