

JULY 2026

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ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE LIVING



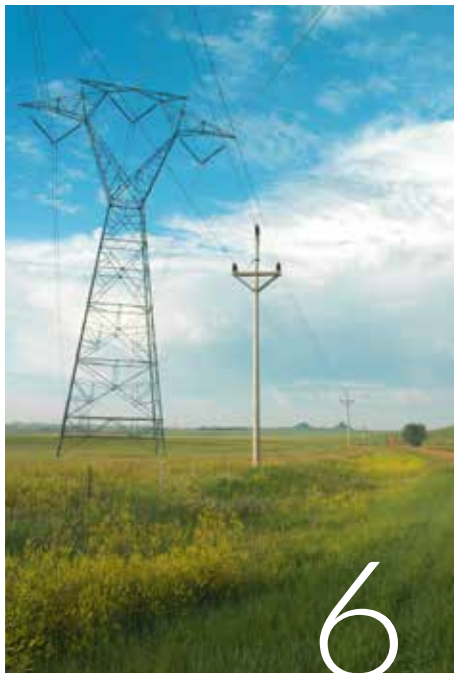
Easing the summer peak

**Big energy demands, smart
protections for members**

Ice cream recipes

Attend PECO's Member Appreciation Day ► See Page 5

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ON THE COVER

Special thanks to Lacey Miller, a Clarke Electric Cooperative, Inc. member-consumer, for supplying this month's cover image. Submit high-resolution photos for consideration to editor@ieclmagazine.com. You could receive \$100!

PROTECTING CO-OP MEMBERS' INTERESTS DURING THE 2026 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

BY HALEY MOON



With new majority leaders in both chambers, new committee leadership and major issues, such as property tax reform and eminent domain, on the agenda, Iowa lawmakers entered the 2026 legislative session facing a full workload. After extending 12 days beyond the scheduled adjournment date, the General Assembly concluded its work with a marathon weekend of negotiations and final votes.

For Iowa's electric cooperatives, energy policy remained a central focus throughout the session. As lawmakers considered a wide range of proposals affecting the energy sector, electric cooperatives worked closely with policymakers to ensure the voices of Iowa's rural communities and member-consumers were part of the conversation. We are always focused on protecting affordable and reliable electric service, and we do so at the Statehouse by supporting various legislative proposals and preventing harmful policies from advancing.

Key energy issues under consideration

One harmful proposal would have established a third-party solar program in Iowa. While supporters viewed the proposal as a way to expand solar development, electric cooperatives and other stakeholders raised concerns about potential cost shifts to consumers and impacts on grid reliability. Ultimately, the legislation did not advance, helping preserve Iowa's balanced approach to energy policy and protecting consumers from potential increases in electricity costs.

Another priority during the session was legislation aimed at strengthening protections for utility employees.

The proposal would have increased criminal penalties for individuals who assault, threaten or harass public utility workers while they are performing their duties. These employees play a critical role in keeping the lights on and restoring service during emergencies, often working in difficult and hazardous conditions. The bill received broad support in the Senate but ultimately stalled in the House. We remain encouraged by the strong bipartisan recognition of the issue and look forward to continuing efforts to advance these important protections in the future.

Advocating for co-op members

Lawmakers also considered a large economic development package that included a proposal to require a statewide load forecasting and transmission report. Because utilities already conduct extensive forecasting through existing planning processes, we had concerns about the necessity

and scope of information requests and the cost that could ultimately affect ratepayers. Although the legislation passed, electric cooperatives were actively engaged throughout the process to advocate for practical implementation and to help protect the interests of member-consumers.

As Iowa's political landscape continues to evolve, particularly with the upcoming elections in November, electric cooperatives remain committed to working collaboratively with policymakers, community leaders and industry partners to address the challenges and opportunities ahead. By advocating for sound energy policy and protecting the interests of the communities we serve, we will continue our mission of delivering safe, reliable and affordable electricity while helping Iowa communities thrive for generations to come.

Haley Moon is the senior manager of policy and advocacy for the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives.

EDITOR'S CHOICE CONTEST

WIN A BOSE PORTABLE OUTDOOR SPEAKER

Take your favorite music wherever summer adventures lead with the Bose SoundLink Flex Portable Speaker. Delivering rich, high-fidelity sound in a compact, durable design, this Bluetooth speaker is waterproof, dustproof and even floats, making it perfect for the lake, campground or backyard gathering. With up to 12 hours of battery life, it's built to keep the music playing long after the sun goes down.

Visit our website and win!

Enter this month's contest by visiting www.ieclmagazine.com no later than July 31. You must be a member of one of Iowa's electric cooperatives to win. There's no obligation associated with entering, we don't share entrant information with anyone and multiple entries from the same account will be disqualified.

The winner of \$100 in beef certificates from the May issue was **Travis Meester**, a **Grundy County REC** member-consumer.



ENTER ONLINE BY JULY 31!

BIG ENERGY DEMANDS, SMART PROTECTIONS FOR OUR MEMBERS

BY TIM MARIENAU



Across the country, electric utilities are facing a surge in demand from large, non-traditional energy users – including data centers,

artificial intelligence operations and cryptocurrency facilities. These projects bring opportunity, but they also come with a reality: they require massive amounts of power and significant investment in infrastructure.

At Prairie Energy Cooperative (PECO), our responsibility is clear. We have an obligation to serve – an obligation we're proud to fulfill. We must support growth where it makes sense but never at the expense of the families, farms and businesses that make up our cooperative membership.

That's why, in collaboration with our power suppliers, Basin Electric Power Cooperative and Corn Belt Power



Cooperative, PECO developed a Large Load Program designed to protect our existing members from bearing the costs and risks of serving these new, energy-intensive operations.

Large loads are fundamentally different from traditional growth. A single data center or crypto operation can require as much electricity as thousands of homes. Serving that level of demand often requires new generation resources, transmission upgrades and long-term infrastructure investments. Without the right measures and protocols in place, those costs could easily be spread across all members – driving up electric rates for households and local businesses.

PECO's Large Load Program ensures that doesn't happen.

Under this program, those requesting service for large, non-traditional loads are required to bear the financial responsibility for the infrastructure and resources needed to serve them. In simple terms, the costs are assigned to the large load – not shifted onto our existing membership.

Protecting members from risk

Why did we do this?

Occasionally, these types of projects can be volatile. Markets shift, technologies evolve and facilities can scale down or shut off more quickly than traditional loads. Without proper planning, utilities can be left with stranded assets – infrastructure that still must be paid for, even if

the original electric consumer is no longer there. This program helps protect our members from that risk.

At the same time, the program does not shut the door on growth. In fact, it does the opposite. By creating a clear, consistent and responsible framework, we are able to evaluate and serve large load opportunities in a way that supports economic development while maintaining reliability and financial strength.

The program also provides consistency when navigating large load requests in our service territory. It ensures every project is evaluated through the same disciplined process. This process is one that prioritizes fairness, system reliability and long-term affordability.

Growth with accountability

PECO's mission hasn't changed.

We are here to provide reliable, cost-effective power to our members – not just today, but for years to come. As new industries and technologies emerge, we will continue to adapt. But we will do so in a way that keeps our commitment to our members at the center of every decision.

We know growth is coming. We're ready for it. And most importantly, we're making sure you, our members, are protected.

Tim Marienau is the CEO of Prairie Energy Cooperative.



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JOIN US JULY 15 FOR FOOD, FUN AND APPRECIATION!

Mark your calendars for Wednesday, July 15, and join us for an evening of food, fun and fellowship at the Red Shed Event Center located at 908 2nd St NW in Clarion.

As a thank you to our members, Prairie Energy Cooperative (PECO) is hosting its fifth-annual Member Appreciation Day, and you're invited. Enjoy a free meal served by Smokee Heights, cool off with a sweet treat from The Olde Creamery ice cream truck and take part in activities the whole family can enjoy.

There will be kids' activities, giveaways, bucket truck rides and plenty of opportunities to connect with your cooperative neighbors and co-op employees.

Be sure to keep an eye on your mailbox for a brightly colored registration card! Bring the card with you to Member Appreciation Day for your chance to be entered into our prize drawings. Winners will be announced the following day.

We look forward to celebrating with you and saying thank you for being part of the PECO family!

Prairie Energy Cooperative
A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

MEMBER APPRECIATION DAY

Wednesday, July 15
4-7 p.m.
The Red Shed Event Center
908 2nd St NW Clarion

SMOKEE HEIGHTS
THE OLDE CREAMERY
HOMEMADE ICE CREAM & GIFT SHOPPE
Gift Card \$100
And more!

Free meal & ice cream treats, bucket truck rides, giveaways

Fun for the whole family!

WORKING TOGETHER FOR A SAFER COMMUNITY

One of the cooperative principles we live by is Concern for Community, and we're proud to put it into action whenever we can.

Recently, Prairie Energy Cooperative partnered with Corn Belt Power Cooperative to help support Clear Lake Classical's efforts to purchase new Automated External Defibrillators (AEDs) for their school buildings. These devices play a vital role in emergency situations and help provide peace of mind for students, staff, families and visitors.

By working together, cooperatives can make a meaningful difference in the communities we serve. We're honored to support projects that promote safety and strengthen the places we call home.



WHAT IS FERC AND WHY DOES IT MATTER TO ELECTRIC CO-OPS?

BY CATHY CASH

FERC has a role in how co-ops can best serve their members by upholding grid reliability and safety, and in keeping costs affordable.

Electric cooperatives were formed to serve members with affordable, reliable and safe power. But what role, if any, does the federal government play in ensuring that happens?

The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) is an independent agency in Washington, D.C., with authority over the transmission and wholesale of electricity in interstate commerce.

The commission also regulates the interstate commerce of natural gas and oil and the siting of natural gas and hydropower facilities. Basically, FERC oversees how energy moves across the country by high-voltage power lines or large pipelines.

Definitely big-picture stuff.

The federal role in the power grid

FERC doesn't regulate your local distribution co-op. But it does exert authority over five generation and transmission co-ops and all the wholesale electricity markets where co-ops buy their power supply. By setting the markets' transmission rates that electric power companies and utilities, including co-ops, must pay, the federal agency can ultimately influence retail prices.

Mary Ann Ralls, senior director, regulatory counsel for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA), notes that while state utility commissions have more immediate control over co-op operations and building power lines, the federal agency's influence fills in the gaps.

"State regulation over co-ops is like Swiss cheese – there are many holes where states don't regulate," she said. "FERC's authority is akin to a buffet – a handful of co-ops are subject to the entire scope of regulation, while the vast majority of co-ops must focus on a few items."

The commission's regulations aim at maintaining fair prices within the wholesale electricity markets run by six regional transmission organizations (RTOs) and independent system operators (ISOs). These FERC-regulated RTOs and ISOs manage parts of the national electric grid.

FERC also monitors these markets for energy supply manipulation that can hike prices. When things go wrong,

the commission can investigate and levy penalties.

Overall, FERC sides with conserving energy and encourages utilities to find ways to reduce demand, which eventually can place downward pressure on monthly bills.

The commission largely lacks authority over electric transmission in terms of siting and construction. That falls under state and local authorities.

FERC's authority over building generation is also limited to approving, licensing and inspecting hydropower plants.

Regarding natural gas, FERC has the final say in the construction and operation of liquefied natural gas terminals, pipelines and storage facilities. It reviews gas projects in terms of their impact on the environment, land use, geology and the economy.

And, being a public agency, all FERC's final decisions can be challenged in court.

Keeping the lights on across America

When it comes to grid reliability, the buck stops with FERC. The commission directs the national grid watchdog – North American Electric Reliability Corporation (NERC) – and enforces its mandatory reliability rules and requirements on grid operators and owners of the U.S. bulk power system, including utilities and energy producers.

The commission tasked NERC as the electric reliability organization for the continental U.S. after Congress called for a single point of contact following the historic blackout of Aug. 14, 2003, which left more than 50 million people in the Northeast and parts of the Midwest without electricity for periods ranging from several hours to several days.

FERC can require NERC to set new reliability standards or update current rules as needed to protect the grid's ability to serve today's increased demand.

Who makes the decisions at FERC?

The body is made up of five commissioners appointed by the president and confirmed by the U.S. Senate for five-year terms. The chair presides over open, public meetings on the third Thursday of the month, where the commission votes on orders to act on or approve projects or set precedents. You can even watch these meetings at home from the live link on the FERC website.

While its regulatory influence may not have a hand directly in co-op operations to serve consumers, FERC does have a role in how co-ops can best serve their members by

upholding grid reliability and safety and keeping costs affordable.

“Irrespective of the level of regulation FERC has over a co-op, it is incumbent upon NRECA, working with its members, to impress on the commission that ultimately the co-op's obligation is that the consumer-member at the end of the line has affordable, reliable and safe electric service,” said Ralls. “And it is FERC's responsibility through its regulations to support the co-op's achievement of this goal.”

Cathy Cash writes on consumer and cooperative affairs for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.



FERC exerts authority over five generation and transmission co-ops and all the wholesale electricity markets where electric co-ops purchase their power supply. Photo Source: Basin Electric Power Cooperative



FERC's authority over building generation is also limited to only approving, licensing and inspecting hydropower plants. Photo Source: NRECA



HOMEMADE BUTTER PECAN ICE CREAM

- 3 cups pecans
salt, to taste
- 2 tablespoons butter, plus additional for a drizzle
- 1 cup brown sugar
- 1½ quarts plus up to ¼ cup milk
- 4 eggs
- 2 cans sweetened condensed milk
- ½ pint whipping cream
- 1 tablespoon vanilla
ice
ice cream salt

Salt pecans to taste and drizzle with butter. Bake at 350 degrees F for 10 minutes. Melt brown sugar with 2 tablespoons butter. Add a small amount of milk, less than ¼ cup. Set aside to cool. Mix eggs, sweetened condensed milk, whipping cream, 1½ quarts milk and vanilla. Add to the brown sugar mixture, then add pecans. Pour into ice cream maker and use ice cream salt to melt ice. *Serves 20-24*

Natalie Herrington • Nevada
Consumers Energy

POPSIE'S ICE CREAM PIE

- 1¼ cups graham cracker crumbs
- ¼ cup sugar
- 6 tablespoons butter, melted
- 1 quart vanilla ice cream, softened
- ¼ cup corn syrup
- ¼ cup peanut butter
- ¼ cup salted peanuts

Mix graham cracker crumbs, sugar and melted butter; press into a 9-inch pie pan. Spoon softened ice cream into crust. Mix corn syrup and peanut butter; drizzle on top of ice cream. Sprinkle salted peanuts on top. Freeze at least 2 hours. *Serves 8*

Betsy Jess • Alden
Franklin Rural Electric Cooperative

OATMEAL CRÈME PIE DESSERT

- 1 box Little Debbie oatmeal crème pies
butter
- ½ gallon vanilla ice cream, softened
- 1 8-ounce container whipped topping, thawed
chocolate syrup
nuts, optional

Press oatmeal crème pies to cover the bottom of a buttered 9x13-inch pan to make a crust. Mix ice cream and whipped topping. Spread over pie crust and freeze. Cut into squares when ready to serve and top with chocolate syrup and nuts of your choice. *Serves 12*

Mark Martens • Wellman
T.I.P. Rural Electric Cooperative

STRAWBERRY DELIGHT

- 1 sleeve graham crackers, crushed
- 1 cup sugar, divided
- ¼ cup margarine, melted
- 8 ounces cream cheese, softened
- 2 eggs
- ½ teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1 3-ounce package strawberry Jell-O
- 1 cup boiling water
- 2 cups unsweetened strawberries, crushed
- 2 cups vanilla ice cream

Mix graham cracker crumbs, ½ cup sugar and margarine. Press into 9x13-inch pan. Beat cream cheese, ½ cup sugar, eggs and vanilla extract together. Pour over crust and bake at 375 degrees F for 15 minutes. Cool thoroughly. Dissolve gelatin in boiling water. Chill until it begins to thicken. Add strawberries and ice cream and stir until smooth. Pour over filling and freeze until firm. You can use fresh or frozen strawberries. Let stand at room temperature 10 minutes before serving. *Serves 12*

Molly Depping • Dike
Grundy County Rural Electric Cooperative

CHOCOLATE TOFFEE DESSERT

- 1 cup oatmeal
- ½ cup coconut
- ¼ cup brown sugar
- ¼ cup butter, melted
- ½ cup butter, softened
- 3 tablespoons cocoa
- 2 cups powdered sugar
- 1 egg
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- ½ gallon vanilla ice cream, softened

Mix oatmeal, coconut, brown sugar and melted butter together well. Bake in a shallow pan at 350 degrees F for 10 minutes. Toss lightly with a fork and cool. Put half the mixture in a 9x13-inch pan. In a small bowl, cream softened butter, cocoa and powdered sugar, mixing well. Add egg and vanilla, beat until light colored. In a large bowl, place softened ice cream and stir until smooth. Add chocolate mixture and beat until well blended. Pour ice cream mixture over crumb mixture in pan and top with remaining crumbs. Freeze. *Serves 12*

Linda Korver • Orange City
North West Rural Electric Cooperative

APPLE PIE ICE CREAM

- 16 oatmeal cookies, crushed
- 4 tablespoons butter, melted, divided
- 4 large apples, peeled, cored and sliced
- 2 cups and 6 tablespoons white sugar, divided
- 1 tablespoon and 2 teaspoons ground cinnamon, divided
- 3 cups half and half
- 1 tablespoon vanilla bean paste
- 8 large egg yolks
- 3 cups heavy whipping cream
- caramel ice cream topping, optional

Mix the crushed cookies with 2 tablespoons melted butter and press into a baking sheet. Bake at 375 degrees F for 5 minutes. Remove and cool completely, then crumble. Heat remaining 2 tablespoons melted butter in a skillet over medium heat. Stir in apple slices, 6 tablespoons sugar and 2 teaspoons cinnamon. Cook until apples have lightly browned and the sugar has begun to caramelize, about 10 minutes. Remove from the pan and allow to cool completely. Pour half and half into a saucepan, add 2 cups sugar and the vanilla bean paste, stir to combine. Bring mixture to a simmer over low heat, stirring occasionally. Measure egg yolks into a separate bowl and beat until light yellow in color. Temper egg yolks by very slowly drizzling in about 2 cups of hot half and half mixture into the bowl with the egg yolks while whisking quickly. Then, pour the tempered egg yolk mixture back into the saucepan, whisking gently as you add it back in. Simmer over low heat for 5-7 minutes, until it thickens. The mixture should just barely start to stick to the back of a wooden spoon. Remove from heat, add heavy cream and 1 tablespoon cinnamon. Stir to combine, then cover and refrigerate until cool. Once completely cool, freeze the mixture in ice cream maker according to manufacturer's directions. Stir in cooled oatmeal cookie crumbles and caramelized apple mixture and transfer to a freezer container. You can also add a caramel ice cream topping, if desired. Freeze and enjoy! *Yields 1 gallon*

Emily McDowell • Paullina
North West Rural Electric Cooperative

SALTED CARAMEL SAUCE

- 1 cup sugar
- ½ cup water
- ¼ cup butter
- ½ cup heavy cream
- 1½ teaspoons vanilla
- ¼ teaspoon salt

Heat sugar and water in a saucepan until sugar is dissolved. Add butter and let melt. Bring to boil over medium heat. Do not stir until it's a deep golden color, about 10-15 minutes. Remove from heat and add cream in a slow, steady stream, whisking quickly until well combined. Add vanilla and salt and stir again. Allow to cool. Store in refrigerator for up to two weeks. This sauce is great on ice cream, cheesecake, crepes or for dipping soft pretzels. *Yields 1½ cups*

Marcy Gherian • Alvor
Lyon Rural Electric Cooperative

STRAWBERRY ICE CREAM

- 2 boxes frozen strawberries, thawed
- 2 cans sweetened condensed milk
- 6 cans strawberry pop

Thaw strawberries and stir together by hand with strawberry pop and sweetened condensed milk. As the pop fizzes, put in an ice cream freezer and freeze in usual manner. *Yields 1½ gallons, approximately 48 4-ounce servings or 32 6-ounce servings*

Darlene Thomas • Somers
Calhoun County Electric Cooperative Association

WANTED:

TWISTS ON TURKEY

THE REWARD:
\$25 BILL CREDIT FOR EVERY ONE WE PUBLISH!

Deadline is July 31

With Thanksgiving in mind, we're looking for your "twists" on turkey for our November issue. Think beyond the full bird to brines, casseroles, appetizers and your favorite ways to use turkey leftovers. Please include your name, address, telephone number, co-op name, recipe category and number of servings on all submissions.

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Visit www.ieclmagazine.com and search our online archive of hundreds of recipes in various categories.





HOW YOU CAN HELP DURING PEAK DEMAND

BY MIRANDA BOUTELLE

Your electric utility works hard to ensure safe, reliable power is delivered to homes and businesses 24/7. To make sure everyone has the power they need, generation must match consumption and have the capacity to adapt to changing energy demands.

Why peak demand matters

Peak demand is the period during a day, month or year when electricity use is highest. It's caused by many people using energy-consuming equipment at the same time. It differs based on geography, weather and time of year. For example, demand is typically highest on hot summer afternoons and cold

winter mornings. Most utilities also experience daily peaks when people are getting ready in the mornings and returning home in the evenings.

When everyone uses more energy at the same time, it puts more stress on the electric grid and requires more expensive electricity to meet the need. Electricity pricing is based on supply and demand. Electricity prices are higher when demand is higher, which costs the utility more.

Shift your use, reduce the strain

To reduce energy use and strain on the grid during peak times, we can adopt habits in our homes.

Let's look at two examples.

Joe and John arrive home from work at 5:30 p.m. They both turn on the oven to make dinner.

While John waits for the oven to preheat, he throws in a load of laundry. He finishes dinner, cleans up and starts the dishwasher. Then, he moves the clothes to the dryer.

Joe finishes dinner, loads the dishwasher and sets it to start at 10 p.m. He puts a load of laundry in the washing machine and later that evening switches it over to the dryer.

Although they use the same appliances and amount of energy, John uses it all at once, running multiple appliances during peak

hours, creating higher demand and more strain on the electric grid while using more expensive energy.

To lower your demand, spread electricity use throughout the day and avoid peak times whenever possible. This will reduce the utility's cost of supplying electricity to your home. Another benefit of shifting your use to midday is the integration of renewable energy, such as solar, which produces power when the sun is shining.

Large appliances, including washers, dryers, ovens, water heaters and air conditioners, have the biggest

impact. Using them during off-peak hours or one at a time can help.

Let technology do the work

Automate as much as possible. Most electric vehicle chargers can be set to charge during scheduled hours with built-in timers or apps. Most modern dishwashers have delay-start features. If you have a pool, set the pool pump to run in the middle of the day, especially if you live in a region with high solar output.

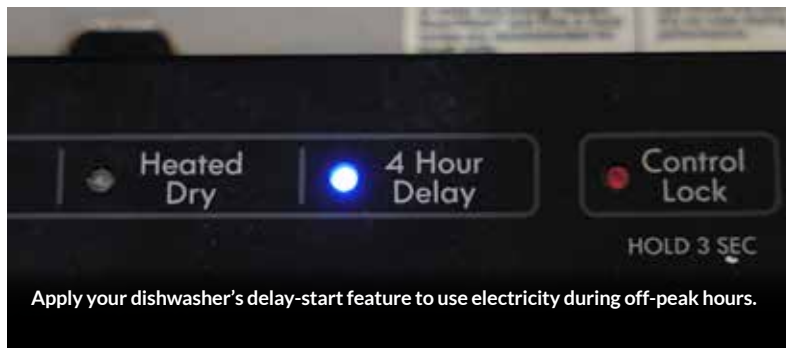
You can also automate air conditioning. Some utilities offer programs that pre-cool homes during off-peak hours to reduce

demand during peak times. Simple, free adjustments, such as closing your curtains on hot afternoons and evenings, can help, too.

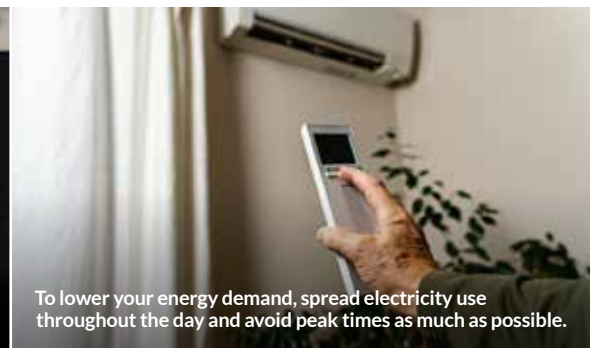
Keep in mind that extreme weather, whether freezing temperatures or a heat wave, puts extra stress on the grid. Conserving energy during extreme weather events can help prevent outages.

Spreading out your energy use helps your utility keep costs down and benefits your local energy grid.

Miranda Boutelle writes on energy efficiency topics for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.



Apply your dishwasher's delay-start feature to use electricity during off-peak hours.



To lower your energy demand, spread electricity use throughout the day and avoid peak times as much as possible.

7 WAYS IOWANS CAN SAVE ENERGY THIS SUMMER

Summer is in full swing across Iowa, and so is the season of higher energy use. Air conditioners work harder during hot, humid weather, but a few simple steps can help keep your home comfortable while managing energy costs. Try these energy-saving tips for the remainder of the summer season.



1. Block the sun's heat.

Keep blinds, shades or curtains closed during the hottest parts of the day, especially on south- and west-facing windows. This can help reduce heat gain and lessen the workload on your air conditioner.



2. Adjust your thermostat.

Set your thermostat at the highest comfortable temperature when you're home and raise it a few degrees when you're away. A programmable or smart thermostat can make these adjustments automatically.



3. Use ceiling fans wisely.

Ceiling fans can help you feel cooler, allowing you to rely less on air conditioning. Use ceiling fans in a counter-clockwise rotation in the summer. Be sure to turn fans off when you leave a room since they cool people, not the room itself.



4. Maintain your cooling system.

A clean, well-maintained air conditioner operates more efficiently. Check or replace air filters regularly and make sure vents and registers are not blocked by furniture, rugs or curtains.



5. Seal leaks and keep cool air inside.

Small gaps around windows and doors can allow cooled air to escape and hot air to enter. Adding weatherstripping or caulk can improve comfort and reduce energy waste.



6. Limit heat-producing activities.

Appliances and lighting generate heat that can make your air conditioner work harder. Use LED light bulbs and consider grilling outdoors or using smaller appliances instead of turning on the oven during the hottest parts of the day.

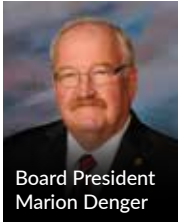


7. Save on water-heating costs.

Water heating is one of the largest energy expenses in many homes. Setting your water heater to 120 degrees F can reduce energy use while still providing plenty of hot water for most households.

Even small changes can make a difference. By adopting a few energy-saving habits this summer, you can stay comfortable and help keep energy costs under control.

PECO HOLDS 2026 ANNUAL BUSINESS MEETING



Board President
Marion Denger



Board Director
Ryan Eekhoff

Prairie Energy Cooperative's (PECO) bylaws require an annual meeting of the membership and the election of directors each year. This year, a brief business meeting was held on June 3, 2026, at 1 p.m. to fulfill those requirements.

The meeting focused solely on the election of directors. In 2026, board seats in District 2 and District 5 were up for election. Incumbent directors Ryan Eekhoff (District 2) and Marion Denger (District 5) each ran unopposed and were elected to serve new terms. Because no contested races existed, director ballots were not required or mailed to members this year.

"Our annual meeting may look different than it has in the past, but our commitment to serving and connecting with our member-owners remains the same," said PECO Board President Marion Denger. "We appreciate the continued support of our members and look forward to seeing many of them at our Member Appreciation Day on July 15."

While the format of PECO's annual meeting has evolved, the cooperative remains committed to keeping members informed and engaged.

Members can view a recording of the annual business meeting on PECO's website and Facebook page.

CELEBRATING STUDENTS, ONE HIGH FIVE AT A TIME

As students at Clarion-Goldfield-Dows Elementary wrapped up the 2025-2026 school year, Prairie Energy Cooperative (PECO) linemen and staff joined in the fun for the school's popular High 5 Friday tradition.

High 5 Friday is designed to end the week on a positive note, greeting students with high-energy smiles, words of encouragement and plenty of high fives as they arrive at school. PECO employees were proud to help kick off the morning and celebrate the students' accomplishments as they headed into summer break.

Supporting local schools and communities is an important part of PECO's cooperative spirit, and our team enjoyed the opportunity to help make the last day of school a memorable one for local students.



REA AT 90 YEARS: CELEBRATING THE LANDMARK LAW THAT BIRTHED RURAL ELECTRIFICATION

In May, the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) and other electric cooperative leaders joined officials from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to celebrate the 90th anniversary of the Rural Electrification Act (REA), the law that helped bring power to rural America.

The REA was a New Deal-era effort that provided low-cost federal loans to build electric distribution systems in rural areas as part of the nation's recovery from the Great Depression.

The law spurred the creation of electric cooperatives across the country and laid the foundation for the USDA's Rural Utilities Service (RUS), which continues financing co-op infrastructure today. That support remains crucial as co-ops meet growing demand while maintaining reliable, affordable service.

"I'm thankful every day for the work that you all do," Agriculture Secretary Brooke Rollins said during the event at USDA headquarters. "The work of co-ops together with RUS is the best of us, and that is what will keep America strong and the American dream available for all moving forward."

That partnership "is more important today than it's ever been. These investments in rural America still matter greatly," NRECA CEO Jim Matheson said. "They're critical to promoting reliability, affordability, economic opportunity and quality of life in rural America."

History of the REA

Signed into law on May 20, 1936, the REA was one of the most significant pieces of President Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal.

When the REA was enacted, only 10% of U.S. farms and rural homes had electricity. Today, about 99% of the nation's farms have electric service.



NRECA CEO Jim Matheson talks about the tremendous, rich legacy of the REA at a May 27 event marking the law's 90th anniversary at the USDA's headquarters in Washington, D.C.
Photo Source: Erin Sutherland, NRECA

The law transformed the Rural Electrification Administration, the predecessor to today's RUS, from a relief agency into a long-term loan program that supported the creation and growth of electric cooperatives.

"The REA allowed us to truly stitch our country together," Agriculture Deputy Secretary Stephen Vaden said. "It was our quick adoption of electric power throughout rural America that helped create the innovation and economic growth our country experienced throughout the 20th century."

Today, more than 900 electric co-ops serve 42 million Americans and continue modernizing their systems to improve reliability and control costs.

In 1994, Congress reorganized the Rural Electrification Administration into RUS, which carries out the REA's mission through programs supporting electric, telecommunications and water infrastructure.

"Investment in rural utility infrastructure ... is as important to rural life and the national economy today as it ever was," said Chris McLean, assistant administrator for the RUS Electric Loan Program.

"I dare say that few federal programs have been as successful as the Rural Electrification Act."

Some co-ops have been RUS borrowers since the 1930s, while others are among the newest borrowers in the country, McLean said.

The partnership continues

Even after decades of progress, the partnership between RUS and electric cooperatives remains essential, speakers said at the USDA event.

"Having the USDA support rural America through utility programs for electric, broadband, water and telephone service is very important because it allows us to borrow money at a cheaper rate to keep America rolling," said Troy Amoss, CEO and general manager of Chariton Valley Electric Cooperative in Albia.

The RUS electric loan program helps co-ops build and upgrade the infrastructure needed to power a changing rural America while keeping rates affordable. The program also benefits taxpayers because co-ops repay the loans with interest.

Source: NRECA

SEE IOWA'S BEST LINEWORKERS IN ACTION AT THE STATE FAIR

If you've ever wondered what it takes to keep the lights on, the second annual Iowa Electric Utilities Lineman Rodeo offers a front-row seat to one of the most skilled and essential professions in the utility industry.

The rodeo will take place Friday, Aug. 21, at Elwell Family Park on the Iowa State Fairgrounds. The event begins at 8 a.m., with gates opening at 7 a.m. Admission is free with paid fair admission.

Organized by the Iowa Utility Association and the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, the rodeo is supported by MidAmerican Energy, Alliant Energy, ITC and Prairie Energy Cooperative. The competition showcases the precision, expertise and commitment to safety required of lineworkers who build and maintain the electric grid.

Putting skills to the test

Journeyman and apprentice teams will compete in four challenging

events designed to test the skills they use every day in the field. Competitions include pole climbing, cutout changes and simulated rescue scenarios. Contestants will be judged on safety, accuracy and efficiency as they complete each task.

Several Iowa electric cooperatives will be represented, including Prairie Energy Cooperative, T.I.P. Rural Electric Cooperative and Eastern Iowa Light & Power Cooperative. The event provides an opportunity for cooperative lineworkers to demonstrate their expertise while connecting with fairgoers from across the state.

Scott Meinecke, director of safety and loss control for the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives, and Don Kelchen of ITC will serve as event emcees.

More than a competition

In addition to the rodeo events, visitors can explore vendor and utility



exhibits throughout the day. Electric utilities, sponsors and industry partners will host tent spaces where attendees can learn more about careers in the utility industry, pick up promotional items and visit with lineworkers and other professionals.

Students and young people interested in a career in linework are especially encouraged to attend. Lineworkers will be available to answer questions about training, apprenticeships and career opportunities in this high-demand field.

Whether you're interested in utility careers or simply want to see some of Iowa's best lineworkers in action, the rodeo offers an entertaining and educational experience for the whole family.

WANTED: RURAL IOWA PHOTOS

We're always looking for stunning images for the cover of *Iowa Electric Cooperative Living* magazine. If we select your photo for a cover, we'll award you \$100.

RECEIVE \$100 FOR A PUBLISHED PHOTO

How to enter:

- 1 Snap a photo capturing rural Iowa (image must be high quality, at least 1MB large; if taken on a phone, send us the largest version – bigger is better!).
- 2 Send us the original, high-resolution image file in an email to editor@ieclmagazine.com with "Cover Submission" in the subject line.
- 3 Include your **name**, **service address** and the **name of your electric cooperative** in the email body to ensure you qualify for our contest. A **phone number** is also appreciated in case we need to contact you.

All eligible entries are reviewed and considered for each edition of *Iowa Electric Cooperative Living*. Keep an eye out for next month's winner!



FOUNDING FARMER: HOW GEORGE WASHINGTON SHAPED AMERICA AND AGRICULTURE

BY DARCY DOUGHERTY MAULSBY

As our nation celebrates 250 years, few figures embody the promise and hope of America more than George Washington. I've always appreciated how he considered himself a farmer first and a statesman second.

I shared some stories about Washington when I was invited to give Memorial Day speeches at two local cemeteries this year. I wasn't sure if people would find this history as interesting as I do. Turns out the answer is yes!

Washington viewed agriculture as the backbone of a successful nation. While he proclaimed he'd "rather be on my farm than be emperor of the world," he was away from home for nearly nine years during the American Revolution. Then, he was gone again for another eight years (1789-1797) to serve as America's first president.

He always harbored a deep desire, though, to return to his beloved Mount Vernon. There, he could study and implement farming innovations and devote his life to the improvement of American agriculture. "Agriculture is the most healthful, most useful, and most noble employment of man," Washington stated.

"Freedom and property rights are inseparable"

Washington's rural roots ran deep. He was born on a Virginia plantation in 1732. By the time he was 17, he pursued a lucrative career as a surveyor. He surveyed tens of thousands of acres during the next 50 years, from Virginia's western frontier to Mount Vernon itself.

Washington understood the importance of private property and its unique place in American society. "Freedom and property rights are inseparable," Washington wrote. "You can't have one without the other."



His favorite property was Mount Vernon, which came into the Washington family in 1674. He inherited the estate in 1761. The land was divided into five farms that encompassed nearly 8,000 acres of land during Washington's lifetime.

Washington was an exceptional farm manager. Mount Vernon included a diverse array of enterprises, from a grist mill to a whiskey distillery. It's interesting to note that whiskey-making was far and away Washington's most profitable ag business. By 1799, the year he passed away, his distillery was one of the largest in America.

He also had the mind of an accountant. He was a stickler for detailed records. "I shall begrudge no reasonable expense that will contribute to the improvement and neatness of my farms – for nothing pleases me better than to see them in good order, and everything trim, handsome and thriving about them," Washington wrote.

Crop rotations to composting

For decades, tobacco was the main cash crop at Mount Vernon. By the 1760s, however, Washington knew this labor-intensive crop was an unsustainable option, due to the way tobacco plants depleted the soil and hastened erosion.

As he studied alternatives, Washington focused on crop rotations and soil

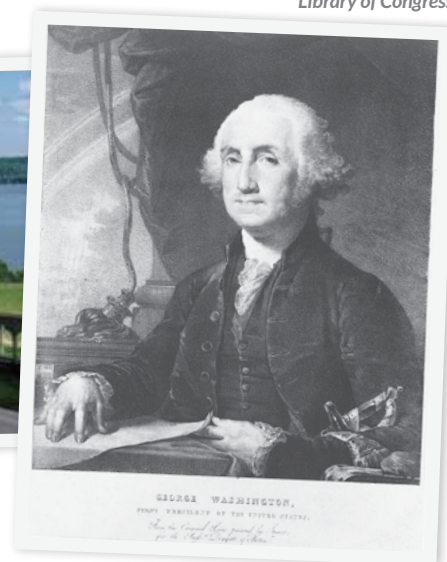


Photo Source:
Library of Congress

regeneration – two things that are near and dear to my heart. He implemented a seven-year crop rotation of wheat, grains, pasture and other crops on Mount Vernon's farms.

Washington also focused on finding a fertilizer that would invigorate the lackluster soils at Mount Vernon. Nothing seemed to work as well as a mixture of manure and plant material that he allowed to "brew" together in a simple structure strategically located next to his stables.

Constructed around 1787, this was likely the first building in America devoted to composting.

Washington's switch from ineffective, old farming practices to new solutions was emblematic of America's pivot away from an eroding relationship with England. It's also symbolic of freedom and progress – things that continue to define the American spirit.

To Washington, America's success relied on advanced agricultural science, the sustainable harvest of the land's natural resources and a strong rural foundation. These are all worth celebrating as we honor America 250.

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