



OCTOBER 2020

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An atypical annual meeting

Northern Plains Electric Cooperative’s rescheduled annual meeting that was first set for April 16 was held on Aug. 19 at the Foster County Fairgrounds in Carrington.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, this year’s meeting agenda was kept to essential business only to streamline the program.

To ensure the safety of all in attendance, social distancing was practiced, hand sanitizer stations were easily accessible, and masks were encouraged.

President Tracy Boe led the meeting and presented the proposed bylaw amendments, which was approved by the membership.

The co-op’s board of directors

authorized voting for this year’s proposed bylaw amendments to be conducted by mail-in ballots or in-house vote at the meeting. A staggering 684 ballots were returned by the Aug. 17 deadline. Mail-in ballots were first opened and tallied at the start of the annual meeting by a five-person committee, who were all members of Northern Plains Electric. Voting in-person at the annual meeting was still permitted by those who had not yet voted.

Secretary Randy Simon presented the co-op’s 2019 financials. After no other business was presented, the meeting was adjourned.

A to-go supper was prepared by TJ’s Catering of Cleveland for members to take with them

if they chose after the meeting was adjourned.

“Although the annual meeting was condensed this year, I want to thank each member who attended, braved the heat and cast their vote. Also, a big thank you to the members who voted on the bylaw changes by mail. Your vote is your voice in your cooperative,” General Manager Seth Syverson said. ■



Then. Now. Always.
We're proud to power your life.
October is National Co-op Month.



#PowerOn

Power On: October is National Co-op Month

BY SETH SYVERSON, GENERAL MANAGER

As an electric cooperative, our top priority is always to provide reliable, affordable energy to you, the consumer-members we serve. Because we are a co-op, our mission is to enrich the lives of our members and serve the long-term interests of our local community, and this mission has never been more critical than in recent months. One of the seven principles that guides all co-ops is “concern for community.” To me, this principle is the essential DNA of Northern Plains Electric

Cooperative, and it sets us apart from other electric utilities.

October is National Co-op Month, and electric cooperatives across the country are highlighting the many ways we “Power On.” Keeping this theme in mind, I recognize the essential role we play in the communities that we serve.

Who would have fathomed in March that the COVID-19 virus would amount to a test of our community and our nation? The changing circumstances due to the pandemic have created both

challenges and opportunities. Over the past several months, we’ve all been challenged to operate differently, and Northern Plains Electric Cooperative has stepped up to help our members and strengthen the safety net for our more vulnerable neighbors.

As an essential service, and to ensure reliability of your power supply, we modified our operations to safeguard business continuity. Our line crews and other employee work practices were revised to follow distancing guidelines. Some

of the cooperative's employees worked remotely. In the office, we limited and modified meetings and gatherings to allow for safe separation. We also adjusted our walk-in office availability and in-person service calls to ensure the health and safety of our employees and our valued members. For the health and safety of everyone, we think these measures were the prudent course of action for the times.

For our members impacted by COVID-19 who needed help with their electric bills, we waived late fees and worked with those hardest hit to make special payment arrangements.

I tell you about all of these efforts to explain how much we care about the communities we serve, because we are a part of them, too.

We've seen other local businesses rising to meet similar challenges during this time, because that's

what communities do. While the challenges caused by COVID-19 have been daunting, I'm heartened to see how everyone is pulling together.

Northern Plains Electric Cooperative was built by the community to serve the community, and we'll continue to "Power On." ■

Gift Card Giveaway!



This October to celebrate Co-op Month, one way Northern Plains Electric is giving back is by sending out gift cards from our local businesses to our members-owners to boost our local economy. Northern Plains will be disbursing ten gift cards totaling \$500. This is just one way to say thank you to our members and a way to help out the businesses in our community that may have been affected by COVID-19. Members can enter the contest by filling out the form below.

ENTER TO WIN!

10 winners will be drawn at random for a \$50 gift card to a local business in their area.

Mail in the completed form with your October bill or send to:

**NPEC
PO BOX 608
Cando, ND 58324**

Entry deadline: October 20, 2020

NAME: _____

NPEC ACCOUNT #: _____

ADDRESS: _____

PHONE NUMBER: _____

*Winners names will be published in the NPEC center pages of *North Dakota Living* magazine.

What should I report to my local co-op?



- **If you see a downed power line or utility pole, contact Northern Plains Electric Cooperative immediately.**
- **If you see broken wires, crossarms or other equipment that may be damaged.**
- **If you hit any electrical equipment, such as poles or guy wires, while farming.**



- **If a tree is growing into a power line.** Report it to Northern Plains Electric Cooperative so we can investigate the situation. We are committed to working collaboratively with our members to address any concerns regarding trees.

Refer to page C5 for more information.

To report an outage

Because power outages can't be totally eliminated, Northern Plains Electric Cooperative offers these steps to follow if an outage occurs:

- **Confirm the outage.** Check your own fuses and circuit breakers first.
- **Check with a neighbor to confirm if he or she is also experiencing an outage before you call the cooperative.** This will help your cooperative determine the extent of the outage.
- **Call the cooperative.** If the outage is widespread, the phone lines may be busy, but keep trying. Your cooperative will send a line crew to find the problem and restore power as quickly as possible.



Remember: We do not monitor our Facebook page 24/7. If you are experiencing an outage or have something to report, please contact the cooperative by phone.

TREE TRIMMING

Cooperative vs. member responsibilities

Northern Plains Electric Cooperative performs constant maintenance on the electrical system to provide safe, reliable electricity to its members. Right-of-way clearing is one of many maintenance activities that helps improve both safety and reliability. This involves tree trimming, removal of underbrush and removal of potential dead and dangerous trees away from power lines.

A properly maintained right-of-way helps reduce or eliminate blinks or extended outages due to trees falling into lines during thunderstorms, high winds or ice/frost events. The cooperative regrets the need to cut trees, but we hope members understand that trees growing too close to power lines are dangerous for the line crews and members who may be working near trees.

In most cases, the cooperative has a 30-foot right-of-way, 15 feet on each side of the power line, in which trees or brush are to be maintained to prevent outages and to allow adequate access for line crews to perform work. The cooperative will work in collaboration with our members to address concerns with trees.

Members can also help with the right-of-way efforts by being conscientious about where you plant trees on their property. Trees should never be planted directly under overhead power lines. A graphic has been provided displaying a guide for planting trees. Members can also inspect trees carefully to determine if there are signs of decay or dead limbs and prune trees when they are young and regularly thereafter.

Below are common tree questions the cooperative receives from members:

Q. A member has a tree that they want cut down, but has concerns because it is near a high-voltage power line. Will the cooperative cut it down for the member?

A. The cooperative will only consider cutting down trees that threaten the integrity of the electric system within the right-of-way. When a member requests to have a tree(s) trimmed or removed, the cooperative will determine if the tree is a danger to cooperative facilities and if it can be taken down safely.

The cooperative will not cut down a tree if there is any danger of it falling on a structure or causing any kind of damage to the member's property (buildings, landscaped areas, permanent yard ornaments). The cooperative will also not cut down a tree if it is too large or overgrown. If this is the case, we can schedule a

time to have the power line dropped or de-energized, free of charge, while your tree contractor performs the work. Cleanup of debris and site restoration is the responsibility of the member.

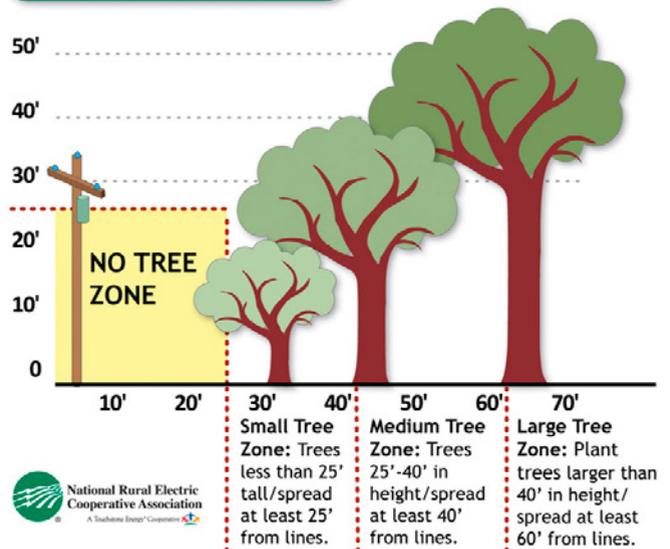
Q. The trees in a member's yard are starting to touch the secondary power lines to my home. Will the cooperative trim the trees away from the secondary lines?

A. Yes. The cooperative focuses the majority of its efforts on the primary, high-voltage side of the transformer, but if a member calls to have trees trimmed away from secondary power lines, the cooperative will perform this work at no charge when a crew is in the area and as time permits. The crews will trim only what is necessary to remove the danger to cooperative facilities. Cleanup of debris and site restoration is the responsibility of the member.

Q. What happens with the debris for right-of-way clearing activities for large corridors?

A. Smaller debris is generally spread or piled along the cleared area. If available, a tree grinder may be used to grind smaller tree debris into mulch and left in the right-of-way. ■

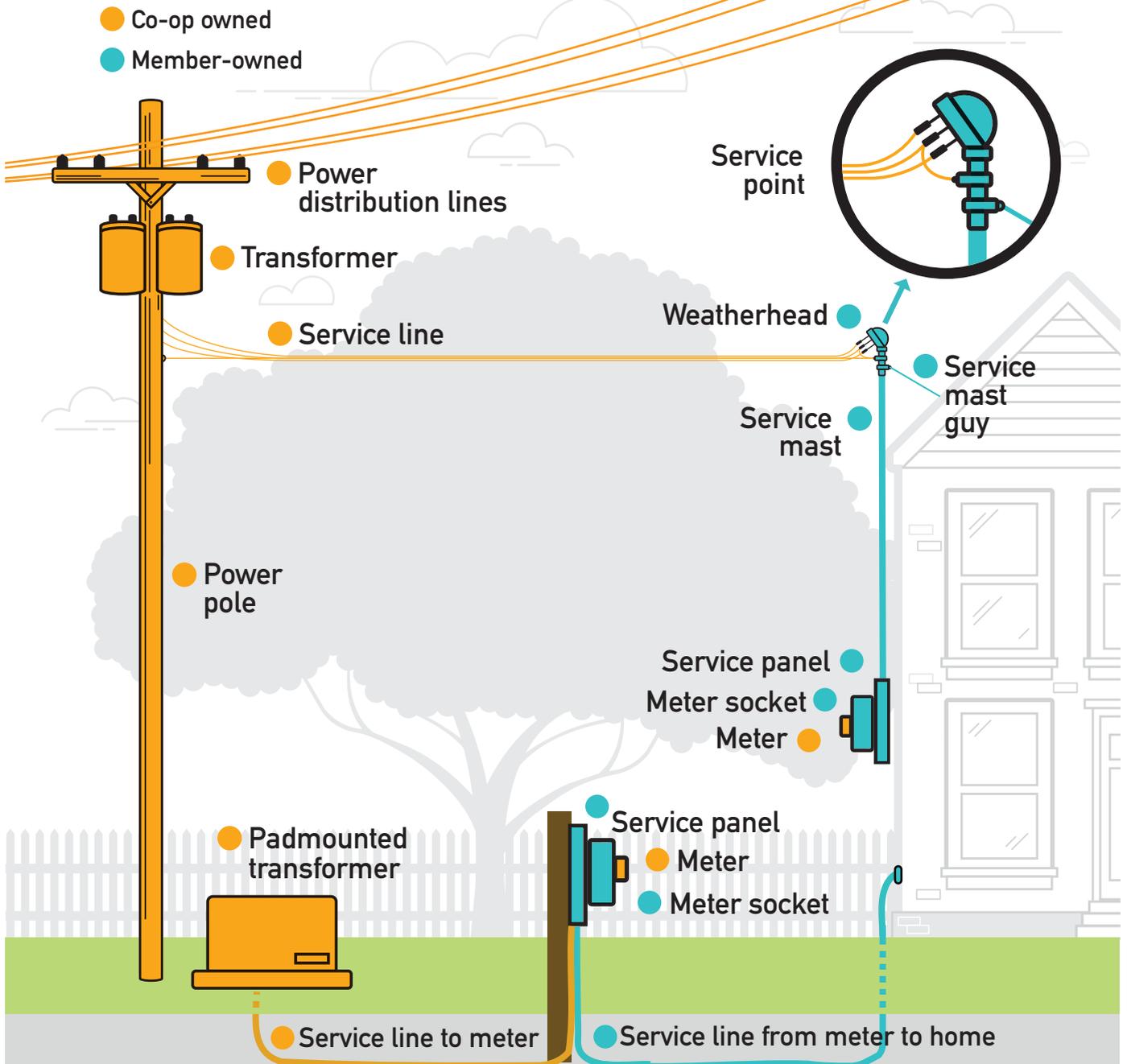
Tree Planting Guide



Who Owns What?

Electric Co-op Owned Equipment vs Member-Owned Equipment

This graphic depicts equipment owned by the co-op (in gold) and the member (in blue). If a storm damages any equipment owned by the co-op, we are responsible for repairs. If a storm damages any member-owned equipment, the member is responsible for repairs. Members should hire a licensed electrician when making any repairs to member-owned equipment.



Note: This graphic depicts overhead and underground service. Please be aware of which type of service you receive at your home or business.



Left to right are past REC Tournament co-chairs, **Doug Beck** and **Kevin Larson**, with current tournament co-chairs, **Kristi Hoff** and **Jarret Baur**.

Passing the torch

BY BRITTNEE WILSON

It's been a longtime tradition for many electric cooperative employees to participate in the Rural Electric Cooperatives (REC) Fishing Tournament. The tournament in its 27th year is hosted annually at beautiful Indian Hills Resort on Lake Sakakawea.

Northern Plains Electric employees Doug Beck and Kevin Larson have fished in the tournament for 25 years, and together they also have co-chaired the tournament for 15-plus years.

The tournament is a time when individuals from the same industry have the excuse to get together once a year and to relax while taking in some friendly competition. In addition, it brings retired employees, people in North Dakota's telecommunications industry and others associated with the state's rural electric cooperative industry together as family and friends.

Held in the first weekend in August, the REC

Tournament is also an opportunity for family time. With the rule of two-person teams, Larson has chosen his son as his fishing partner for the past four years and before that he fished with his brother.

As 2020 approached, Beck and Larson thought it was time to pass the torch from their years of chairing the annual tournament. They both said even though they are no longer chairing the tournament, they still plan to participate for years to come and help the new co-chairs, Kristi Hoff of Verendrye Electric Cooperative and Jarret Baur of Reservation Telephone Cooperative, in any way they can.

Larson, who has never missed a year of fishing for 25 years commented, "It is just fun. It's fun to go to a different lake with bigger water, do a different style of fishing than I'm used to and to get to see all the people from all over the state every year." ■



Northern Plains Electric Director **Curtis Wiesz** presents a check to **Sarah Henne**, owner of Fessenden Mini Miracles.

Northern Plains Electric makes donation

Fessenden Mini Miracles, a child care center located in Fessenden, is one of the few licensed centers in their area. Caring for 23-24 children daily, the center employs five staff members in addition to owner/director, Sarah Henne.

“Our goal is to give parents the opportunity to be in the workforce while their children are cared for in a safe and educational environment,” she said.

The seventh cooperative principle, “concern for community,” encompasses much of what Northern Plains Electric Cooperative (NPEC), and more than 800 other electric cooperatives around the United States represent.

“No matter the size of community, child care has become a very important issue for parents across the state of North Dakota. Without child care being available in a community, the economy can

feel negative effects. The need for child care is an important factor to keep communities running. Fessenden needs the services that child care provides,” said NPEC Director Curtis Wiesz.

At its July meeting, the Northern Plains board of directors approved a donation of \$1,000 to Fessenden Mini Miracles. The donation will be used to purchase a much-needed washer and dryer for their facility.

Fessenden Mini Miracles has never had an in-house washer/dryer set, having employees take turns bringing home a week’s worth of laundry every Friday. Since the pandemic of COVID-19, extra sanitation and precautions has led to extra laundry for their employees to bring home, ramping up their need to get an in-house washer/dryer set.

Although the price of a new set plus installation will exceed the \$1,000 donation, it gets them one step closer.

“I’m just super grateful to Northern Plains and to Director Curtis Wiesz who went above and beyond to help us receive this money,” Henne said. ■



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