

Sun River Electric Cooperative

Ripples



Office Hours: 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Mon.-Fri.
Phone Numbers: 406-467-2526 or 1-800-452-7516

Website: www.sunriverelectric.coop

After Hours & Weekend Dispatch:
406-467-2526 or 1-800-452-7516

If calling from a local number or cell phone –
please use: 406-467-2526 or 406-467-2527

Be sure to check your breakers before reporting outages.

AUGUST 2022

Wildfires cause lasting concerns

THE topic of wildfire brings a variety of pictures to mind. The devastation of states around us and the past experiences of our own state leave us with marked visuals as to what can happen when a fire gets started.

The issue is deeper than just the event itself. The related concerns are many; let me share a few.

Insurance and reinsurance. Whenever insurance companies get hit with big claims because of disastrous events, they will recover their losses with premium increases. For the insurance companies, the same is true of the companies that provide reinsurance for these entities. They too will raise their rates to the insurance company, and we all understand who the final payer ends up being. In the past there were upwards of 25 reinsurance options for the insurance companies, but today regarding wildfire insurance there are two. Those two

MESSAGE

FROM THE CEO

COLUMN BY **BRAD BAUMAN**



are going to make sure they cover the risk, so the cost of this coverage continues to accelerate. Sun River Electric Cooperative sees the same cost increase for this insurance rider, and it is concerning.

So, what can we do? One aspect the cooperatives in Montana are working on is a statewide template for a “Wildfire Mediation Plan”. This template would create a uniform plan for all 25 electric cooperatives in the state. Each cooperative would have the ability to

modify the plan to fit their needs and special concerns. The one thing about such a plan is that if you put a plan together, you had best execute the plan. The upside would be the commitment and focus on doing everything possible to reduce the potential of a wildfire. The plans would create a master plan for things such as: consistent line inspection, pole testing with a benchmark, equipment upgrades in high-fire-potential areas, right of way (ROW) clearing to the full boundaries of the right of way, updated contact information for emergency response agencies, and more safety-focused operational practices.

Cooperatives with powerlines that cross Forest Service lands have special-use permits that come with rules and guidelines. The permits require permissions for tree removal

See MESSAGE, page 8

HIDDEN NUMBER

If you find your account number hidden in this issue, it is worth a \$50 credit on your next statement. There is one number hidden in every issue. Give us a call if you are the lucky consumer.

**406-467-2527 or
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ALWAYS **CALL** | BEFORE YOU **DIG**



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YOUTH TOUR 2022

AFTER a long, two-year hiatus due to the worldwide pandemic, the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) Youth Tour to Washington D.C. has resumed.

Out of hundreds of applicants, electric cooperatives from across the state of Montana chose 26 students for the all-expense paid trip to D.C. Representing Sun River Electric were Avery Schubarth and Shea Ostberg. They each submitted winning essays and were awarded the trip in December 2021.

NRECA Youth Tour brings together cooperative kids from across the United States to learn about cooperatives, meet their state legislators and tour our nation's capital.

The day before the trip began the delegates from Montana met in Great Falls for an orientation meeting with the director, chaperones and their parents. Early the next morning they headed to the airport. 306212

Upon arrival in D.C., they were greeted by an amazing man named Michael. Michael has been the Montana/North Dakota group tour bus driver for more than 15 years. He said he requests this group every year because they have always been such amazing kids. When not driving Youth Tour kids around, he drives a bus carrying the Marine Corps Band to their performances. Michael was, and always will be, a United States Marine. It is always a special honor to visit the Marine Museum with him. Every student who has ever been on the trip will tell you, Michael is the best!

On Sunday, the North Dakota group arrived and joined the tour. After visiting the Marine Museum, monuments,



Out of hundreds of applicants, electric cooperatives from across Montana chose 26 students to participate in the Youth Tour. | **SUN RIVER ELECTRIC PHOTO**

the Smithsonian museums, and the Holocaust Museum, the kids attended a Co-op 101 class to learn about electric cooperatives. Next on the agenda was the All States Event. Here, kids listened to speakers and met other co-op kids from across the country.


The next couple days included more monument tours, a visit to the National Archives, the U.S. Naval Academy, Arlington Cemetery, and a trip to Baltimore to see Fort McHenry, the National Aquarium and attend a Baltimore Orioles/Washington Nationals baseball game.

Wednesday the group met with the Montana congressional delegation. Senators Steve Daines and Jon Tester and Representative Matt Rosendale met with the kids at the Capitol. They were then treated to a special guided tour of the Capitol building. Thursday and Friday included visits to Gettysburg and Mount Vernon.

Then, before they knew it, they were back at the airport headed home.

This trip is not only educational and memorable, but it has also given many students the opportunity to work with state legislators, earn national scholarships and pursue careers in the electric utility industry.

The annual essay contest for this once-in-a-lifetime trip is held every fall. Students who live on the Sun River Electric system and are sophomores or juniors are encouraged to apply.

Watch the SREC website and this newsletter for details, or contact Leanne at 406-467-2526. 



The Sun River Electric contingent to the Youth Tour was from left, Avery Schubarth, student participant; Leanne Hall, chaperone; and Shea Ostberg, student participant. | **SUN RIVER ELECTRIC PHOTO**

SUN RIVER ELECTRIC GOLF SCRAMBLE

24TH ANNUAL EVENT
SET FOR JULY 30

THE 24th Annual Sun River Electric Golf Scramble will be held in Fairfield at the Harvest Hills Golf Course on Saturday, July 30th. This year the proceeds will be donated to the Choteau Chamber of Commerce to help it purchase and install new Christmas decorations for their main street.

Thank you so much to the generous hole sponsors who donate each year, and to the golfers who return year after year to help support the tournament! RM



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FREE children's books in the SREC service area

Dolly Parton's Imagination Library is a 60-volume set of books. Each month a new book will be mailed in your child's name directly to your home.

- Preschool children ages birth to 5, who are residents of Sun River Electric Cooperative's service area, are eligible. (You don't have to be a member, just live in SREC's service area.)

- Register one of two ways:

1. Online at <http://imaginationlibrary.com/>

2. Fill out the registration form to the right, and send to SREC, Attention: Leanne Hall, PO Box 309, Fairfield MT 59436 or contact Leanne at SREC at 406-467-2526.

- Eight to 10 weeks after registration, your first book will arrive at your home and will continue until your child turns 5, or you move out of the SREC service area.



Dolly Parton's Imagination Library Official Registration Form

1st Preschool Child's FULL Name _____
 Child's Date of Birth ____/____/____ Sex: M F Phone _____
 2nd Preschool Child's FULL Name _____
 Child's Date of Birth ____/____/____ Sex: M F Phone _____
 Authorized Adult Name _____
 Child's Mailing Address _____
 ADDRESS _____
 CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP CODE _____
 Email Address _____

I hereby explicitly consent to allow the Dollywood Foundation, Inc. to use the information provided herein for the purposes of participating in Dolly Parton's Imagination Library book gifting program. To measure the benefits of this program we may create datasets with the information provided herein and share them with research and educational advancement partners. You agree to review our full Terms & Conditions and Privacy Policy by visiting imaginationlibrary.com. By signing and submitting this form you expressly consent to the terms set forth herein.

SIGNATURE OF AUTHORIZED ADULT _____

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY: Date Received: _____ Group Code: _____

MESSAGE

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and for travel off roads in the case of needed work. These rules have special permissions. If it is an emergency, the permit allows for the work to be accomplished and then reported as a follow-up report. Sun River Electric is fortunate to have a good relationship with the local federal agencies, others in the state are not so fortunate. The unfortunate part of bureaucracies is that getting things done quickly or timely is not easily accomplished. The mediation plans I discussed earlier will serve as an additional plan to try and get the agency actions/responses to come a little more promptly.

Another potential savings to the cooperative would be a legislative consideration in the protection of utilities in the settlement of non-negligence claims following a fire event. The property following an event should not be worth more than it was prior to the event. Unreasonable claims with a sympathetic jury/judge


could potentially bankrupt cooperatives since they operate as non-profits and do not have deep-pocket savings accounts to draw on. The members, as the owners, take on the financial implications of such an event.

Tree trimming is always a touchy subject with members and environmental entities. The need to trim trees is real and the potential to create a spark that ignites a fire are real as well. The utility does not like being the bad guy when it comes to clearing the right-of-way, but many members and agencies are more concerned about the beauty of the tree than the risk. An added concern is not just the trees in the ROW, the trees 100 feet away that are dead and leaning toward the powerline will create an issue at some point. Removing those in a timely manner is important as well.

It has become clear that living in the forests and wooded areas comes with some added homeowner risks and responsibilities. One of those risks is the potential loss from fire damages. One method of reducing those potential losses is to clear the area around

the buildings so that the fire does not have as much fuel near the structures. The local fire departments and forest management groups have many ideas on how this can be accomplished to the highest levels.

The ignitor of the fire could be one of many. Loose trailer chains, a hot wheel bearing, farm equipment failures, discarded cigarette butts, unmonitored burn piles, lightning strikes, car/power pole accident, weather (wind) event, electrical equipment operation — the sources are numerous. When a fire starts, the consequences can be devastating. Doing all we can to prevent fires should be a concern and focus of all of us. The costs of fire events are substantial, so let's work together to reduce the risks in whatever ways we can. Preparation, planning, diligence, commitment and forethought can help us reduce the chances of a fire event as well as the financial impacts; let us each do our part.

Best of luck with the harvest season, and please be safe and mindful of the fire potentials around us. 


REMEMBER SREC HAS APPLIANCE REBATES

DON'T forget that Sun River Electric Cooperative (SREC) has rebates for household appliances. SREC offers \$25 rebates on a clothes washer or dryer, dishwasher, refrigerator and freezer that are Energy-Star compliant. Just download the rebate form from SREC's website, www.sunriverelectric.coop, fill it out, attach a copy of the receipt and send it to SREC. SREC will then review the rebate form and credit your account \$25 per compliant appliance. Energy Star rated-appliances can be

found at www.energystar.gov.

Also remember that SREC offers a \$100 rebate on electric water heaters. To be eligible, the water heater has to be at least 90 percent efficient. The water heater rebate form is also on SREC's website, download it and fill it out, send it in with a copy of the receipt, and get the \$100 credit. The water heater must be at least 40-gallon capacity.

All rebates must be submitted within 90 days of purchase.

If you have any questions about rebates, call Sun River Electric at 467-2526 or 1-800-452-7516. 



REMINDER:

Bills not paid by the 10th of the month will be charged a \$10 late fee.

Pay as you go with
prePAY
electricity from SREC. It is easy!
Call SREC to get started.

