

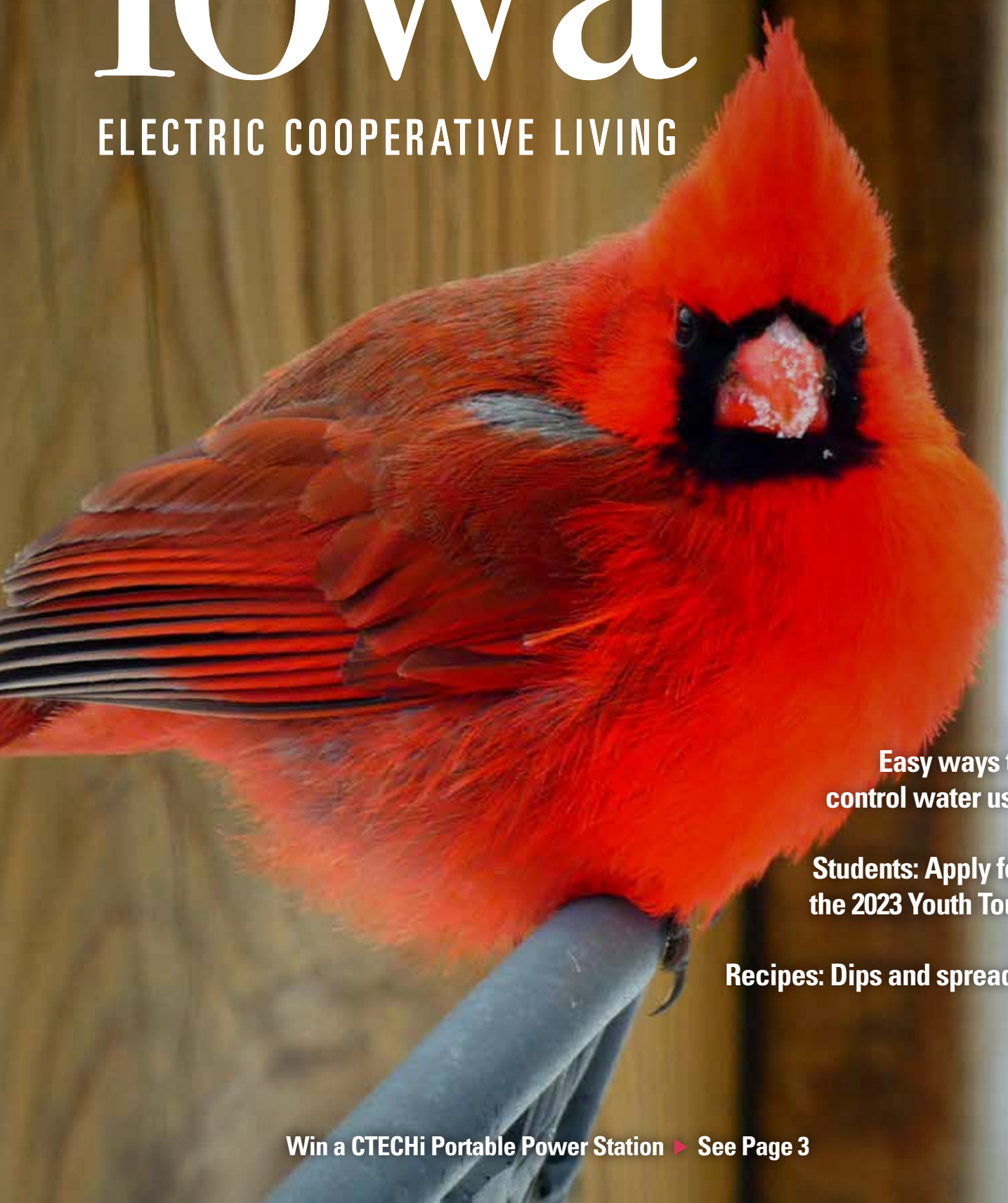


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FEBRUARY 2023

iowa

ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE LIVING



**Easy ways to
control water use**

**Students: Apply for
the 2023 Youth Tour**

Recipes: Dips and spreads

Win a CTECHi Portable Power Station ▶ See Page 3

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EDITOR
Ann Foster Thelen

ART DIRECTOR
Joel Clifton

IAEC EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT
Chuck Soderberg

IAEC DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS
Erin Campbell

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ON THE COVER

Special thanks to Tricia Hart, a Guthrie County REC member-consumer, for supplying this month's cover image. Submit high-resolution photos for consideration to editor@ieclmagazine.com. You could receive \$100!

AN ATTEMPT TO FIX SOMETHING THAT ISN'T BROKEN

BY KEVIN CONDON



On Jan. 9, 134 state legislators were sworn into office at the start of Iowa's 90th General Assembly. Our citizen legislature looks a lot different following the

redistricting process that follows our country's decennial census. It is a year of new beginnings, with about one-third of the representatives and senators starting their first term. Iowa's electric co-ops welcomed our lawmakers back to Des Moines at various events last month. We look forward to continuing our advocacy on March 15 with our annual "REC Day on the Hill" event in the Capitol Building Rotunda.

Electric service territories provide stability

We hope that Iowa lawmakers don't have the wool pulled over their eyes as some special interests attempt to fix something that isn't broken this session. In Iowa, electric utilities work within defined service territories; where you live determines who provides you with electricity. If you live in rural Iowa, you are most likely a member-owner of your local electric cooperative. Nearly 90 years ago, when for-profit power companies provided service in cities across America, they refused to serve rural areas because it wasn't profitable. Farmers and ranchers in Iowa and across America worked together to form locally owned electric cooperatives to power their lives and communities.

In the 1970s, Iowa set boundaries for electric service territories to provide stability for all consumers. Energy providers still adhere to those rules today, which are governed by the Iowa Utilities Board. Every so often, there are calls to "deregulate" the service territories in Iowa. So far, Iowa policymakers haven't fallen for the "competition is good" tagline. That's

fortunate, and here is why: Rural Iowa can't risk what's at stake in a "free-for-all" energy market.

Today, one mile of municipal electric line will connect to nearly 60 meters. Investor-owned utilities will connect to nearly 30 meters over the same distance. Electric co-ops will only connect to four meters per mile on average. A lot has changed since the 1930s, but rural areas continue to be sparsely populated, which means the revenue received per mile of power lines is extremely low compared to towns and cities. Remember, it was this low revenue that prevented investor-owned utilities from serving rural areas so many decades ago in the first place.

Electric service deregulation is bad for Iowa

Full or even partial deregulation of

electric service territory is bad for rural Iowa. Period. And if you don't believe me, look at deregulated states like California, Illinois, Nevada and Oregon. The promises of lower energy bills haven't come to fruition. In fact, deregulated states are seeing rates rise faster than in states like Iowa, which are territory protected. A recent investigation by *The New York Times* concluded that on average, residents living in a deregulated market pay \$40 more per month for electricity.

We hope lawmakers won't be fooled by secretive groups that wrap their arguments in a "free market" flag when their proposals will leave rural Iowans holding the bag.

Kevin Condon is the director of government affairs for the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives.

EDITOR'S CHOICE CONTEST

Win a CTECHi Portable Power Station!

The specs of this CTECHi Portable Power Station include 200W, 320Wh LiFePO4 battery backup power supply, fully charged within 3.5 hours, PD 60W quick charge, solar generator for outdoor travel and camping, plus emergency charging of devices at home.



ENTER ONLINE BY FEB. 28!

Visit our website and win!

Enter this month's contest by visiting www.ieclmagazine.com no later than Feb. 28. 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 the Tovola Smart Oven from the December issue was Annalee Buffington, Consumers Energy.

75 YEARS AGO IN RURAL IOWA

This year marks an important milestone for this publication! In 1948, the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives (IAEC) published a statewide newspaper for member-consumers, titled “IRECA News.”

Sharing news and happenings from when IAEC was known as the Iowa Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the monthly tabloid quickly became a trusted and



valuable source for information as more rural Iowa homes and businesses were receiving electricity through rural electric cooperatives.

The following headline was making news 75 years ago in February 1948 (verbatim content from our archives):

Chariton Valley Connects One Thousandth Consumer

Number 1,000 on the rapidly growing Chariton Valley line was the Delbert Foster farmstead near Centerville.

Describing the installation the Albia Union-Republican says:

“Electricity was given a smiling welcome by Foster and his wife. They had lived on an energized farm for five years before moving to the Stites farm last month, and as a result until Tuesday had a refrigerator, radio and other electrical appliances idle in their home.”

According to the Union-Republican Mrs. Foster declared, “... it is doubtless difficult enough to get along without electricity on the farm when one has never had it, but it is even more difficult after you’ve been accustomed to it.”

The revived hum of the refrigerator was like music to her ears, the newspaper states, and she revealed her homemaker sights are set on an electric stove.

MARY DID EVERYTHING RIGHT

On a stormy night, 17-year-old Mary Gehrig was driving home and torrential rains made it hard to see. Mary was almost home when she saw some small white lines.

As she got closer, she realized the lines were massive and lying across the road. She slammed on her brakes and came to a stop. Mary had hit a high-voltage transmission line.

Luckily, Mary called her parents, who told her to stay put and call 9-1-1.

If there is a downed power line due to an accident, stay inside your vehicle or cab until the utility arrives and deenergizes the line.

Your instinct might be to flee from the vehicle, but the inside of your car or cab is often the safest place to be. Tell



others to stay away and call 9-1-1 to report the situation.

Doing the right thing could save your life. To learn more, visit [SafeElectricity.org](https://www.SafeElectricity.org).

5 TIPS FOR HIRING AN ELECTRICIAN

A licensed electrician can help with a variety of home projects from lighting upgrades to full renovations. Keep the following tips in mind if you’re looking to hire an electrician.

1 Hire a licensed, qualified electrician for the job.

Look for a master electrician to manage the project. Master electricians have the most experience and will often oversee the work of a journey-level electrician or apprentice.

2 Make sure the electrician is insured.

Seasoned electricians know the importance of protecting themselves in case of an accident.

3 Read all the reviews.

Hire an electrician who has several positive reviews – not just one or two. Read reviews on different sites, like Nextdoor, Yelp and HomeAdvisor, and



consider asking your neighbors for recommendations.

4 Determine your budget. Get two quotes.

Knowing your budget upfront helps move the process along. Prices can greatly vary, so get multiple quotes (at least two).

5 Talk timeline.

Some electricians accidentally overbook projects. If your job is time-sensitive, convey that early on and discuss a realistic timeline with the electrician.

HEATING ASSISTANCE AVAILABLE FOR ELIGIBLE IOWANS

The Iowa Utilities Board (IUB) reminds consumers that limited financial heating assistance is available to income-eligible utility customers through the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP). The annual application period runs from Nov. 1, 2022, through April 30, 2023. The application period for homes with elderly or disabled residents began Oct. 1, 2022.

LIHEAP is designed to help low-income homeowners and renters pay a portion of their primary home heating costs through a one-time payment made directly to the utility or heating fuel vendor. Under LIHEAP or the weatherization assistance program, Iowa law protects qualified applicants who are the head of a household from being disconnected from natural gas or electric service from Nov. 1 through April 1.

Although qualified applicants cannot be disconnected during the annual winter moratorium, the IUB urges all LIHEAP-certified customers to continue paying toward their energy



bills through the winter to avoid accumulating high debt and facing potential utility service disconnection in the spring.

Eligibility for the federally funded LIHEAP program is based on household size and income, type of fuel and type of housing. Interested applicants should review the federal income guidelines then apply at the community

action agency serving their area. Heating assistance dollars for LIHEAP and the weatherization assistance program are limited.

Member-consumers who are having trouble paying their electricity bills are encouraged to contact their local electric cooperative. More information is also available on the LIHEAP webpage at <https://bit.ly/3rvUoQQ>.

SEND US YOUR RURAL IOWA PHOTOS!

RECEIVE \$100 FOR A PUBLISHED COVER PHOTO

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 with \$100. The photos must be clear, of an Iowa place served by an electric cooperative and in high resolution. To be considered, email photos to editor@ieclmagazine.com with "Cover Submission" in the subject line.



COBANK: FORCES THAT WILL SHAPE THE U.S. RURAL ECONOMY

At the end of 2022, CoBank – one of the largest private providers of credit to the U.S. rural economy – released its 2023 Year Ahead report, “Forces that will Shape the U.S. Rural Economy.” While the financial services firm does not predict an immediate recession, it notes that historically, “inflation above 5% has never been tamed without incurring a recession.”

“As financial conditions continue to tighten, we expect the U.S. economy will steadily soften through the first half of 2023, ushering in a brief, modest recession,” says Dan Kowalski, vice president of CoBank’s Knowledge Exchange. “The unemployment rate could rise as high as 5%, indirectly leading to a decline in consumer spending. Without this softening in the labor market and the associated slowing of wage gains and spending, it will be difficult to stabilize prices.”

The CoBank 2023 outlook report examines several key factors that will shape agriculture and market sectors that serve rural communities throughout the U.S.

1 Global economy: No escaping this slowdown

After two years defined by a strong economic rebound from the pandemic, the global economy will sputter in 2023. A persistent energy crisis in Europe, China’s messy exit from zero-COVID and higher interest rates globally will reduce world economic growth to a crawl. Europe, likely already in recession, will muddle through the winter with sufficient energy supplies. China, much less impacted by Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, will continue to struggle with the impacts of COVID. Greater Asia will be negatively affected by sliding global demand for goods. Emerging markets will keep the global economy growing in 2023 as advanced economies collectively will be stagnant and could even shrink.

2 U.S. economy: Some pain is necessary

The labor market remains very tight, consumers are still spending aggressively and corporate profit margins have hit record levels despite

high inflation. If a recession is coming, it will take several months for these factors to reverse course, delaying any potential recession until at least second quarter 2023. Even then, it is unclear how readily businesses would lay off workers after experiencing such extreme staffing challenges over the past two years. The structural loss of more than 2 million workers since 2020 is contributing to higher inflation for both goods and services. However, the void their exit left could also cushion the economy from the worst of a downturn in 2023.

3 Monetary policy: More tough decisions ahead

The Federal Reserve’s job will not get any easier in 2023. In nine months, it has raised its federal funds rate from zero to more than 4%. As some economists argue that inflation is falling and the Federal Reserve has done enough, Chair Powell and the Federal Open Market Committee will make even tougher decisions about when to halt rate increases. The trickiest aspect of its inflation

fight is that there is no playbook or rule of thumb to tell when to pause rate hikes. The Federal Reserve's preferred inflation measure, the personal consumption expenditures index, has fallen from its peak of 7% to 6%. That's still much too high for comfort and Chair Powell has said there is greater risk in stopping too early than raising rates for too long.

4 U.S. government: Unique midterm results muddy Farm Bill's path

The 118th Congress convened in January, marking the official beginning of the Farm Bill reauthorization effort. With a Sept. 30 sunset for the current Farm Bill, Congress will have just nine months to pass the next bill. Some interest groups are lined up to address consolidation in farming and agribusiness. Other groups will push policies to direct more resources to small and beginning producers. Ultimately, the Senate will have the upper hand in this debate and the policies that arise in the bill will impact agriculture for the next decade to come.

5 U.S. agricultural economy: Farm margins will tighten

Despite the global pandemic and a steady barrage of disruptive challenges, the U.S. agricultural economy has fared quite well for the last three years. However, in 2023, producers and related industries will begin to show financial strains. A relentless series of adversities, including skyrocketing production costs, steeply higher interest rates and weakening demand, will increasingly pressure farm income and margins. The ongoing drought and increasing political tensions with China – the U.S.'s largest agricultural export market – present additional risk.

6 Grain, farm supply and biofuels: Momentum builds for biofuels

Grain elevators and merchandisers face a mixed picture for the year ahead. The good news for U.S. farmers is that global grain and oilseed supplies are exceedingly tight. Ukrainian grain production and exports are still below average, providing underlying support for grain prices. Ag retailers begin 2023 on strong financial footing but face several challenges. Labor shortages and rising wages will negatively impact margins. Wholesale fertilizer costs will rise during the first half of 2023 as cooperatives absorb higher barge and rail costs and compete with export markets for limited supply. The outlook for biofuels is very strong, supported by positive policy and demand tailwinds from 2022. Ethanol will benefit from greater usage of E15 and growing demand for corn oil.

7 Animal protein: Production to moderate despite a tailwind of enthusiasm

Most U.S. animal protein industry segments have posted phenomenal financial performance over the past three years. However, this era of broad profitability will likely come to an end in 2023. The high costs of feed, labor and construction support the prevailing cautionary attitude toward expanding animal production. On the demand side, consumers are reeling from rapidly declining real wages, a trend that's likely to continue well into 2023.

8 Dairy: Milk supplies to gradually grow as demand base shifts

After a year of stronger profits that allowed producers to pay down debt,

dairy producer margins will come under pressure in 2023. Despite record-high milk prices earlier in 2022, herd expansion has been minimal among the major exporting countries and this trend is expected to continue in 2023. Dairy product prices will eventually moderate in response to the gradual growth in global milk supplies. Domestic demand for U.S. dairy products, particularly higher-priced brands, will face headwinds as consumers trim grocery spending.

9 Specialty crops: Drought, labor shortages, strong U.S. dollar among headwinds

Specialty crop growers and processors face a multitude of headwinds in 2023. Costs of water, labor, fertilizer and other inputs are rising while a strong U.S. dollar and weakening global economy drag on the U.S.'s ability to sell products abroad.

10 Rural communications: Crosscurrents set the stage for the rural communications market

The rural communications market is heading into 2023 with numerous crosscurrents. The increasing importance of broadband helps insulate the industry against economic weaknesses. However, new headwinds are emerging from a weakening economy, tightening capital markets and aggressive network-build activity across a wide range of market actors. The biggest risk to network builds in 2023 will be the tight labor market and ongoing supply chain issues. This is of particular concern for smaller broadband operators competing against larger national telecommunications companies for resources.



Dip & Spread

RECIPES

GAME TIME/HOLIDAY CHILI DIP

- 1 bunch green onions
- 1 30-ounce can chili with beans
- 2 small cans green chilis, chopped
- 1 8-ounce package sour cream
- 1 8-ounce package cream cheese
- 1½ cups cheddar cheese, grated
- 1½ cups Monterey Jack cheese, grated
- tortilla chips

Chop green onions and set green tips aside. In a 9x13-inch pan, layer chili, green chilis and green onions. Mix sour cream and cream cheese together then spread over the chili layers. Combine grated cheese and add to top of other layers. Cut green onion tips into small pieces and sprinkle over the cheese. Bake at 350 degrees F for 30-45 minutes or until heated through. Serve with tortilla chips of your choice. Reheats nicely. *Serves 10-15*

Natalie Herrington • Nevada • Consumers Energy

CORN BEEF LOG

- 1 8-ounce package cream cheese, softened
- 2 tablespoons milk
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 tablespoon Worcestershire sauce
- ½ teaspoon hot pepper sauce, optional
- 1 can corned beef
- ¾ cup parsley, finely chopped
- crackers

Mix cream cheese, milk, garlic, Worcestershire sauce and hot sauce. With a fork, crumble the corned beef and add to cream cheese mixture. Refrigerate for a couple hours. Divide mixture in half and form into two logs, then roll in parsley. Spread on crackers. Can substitute ½ teaspoon garlic powder for minced garlic.

Dode Westendorf • Waverly
Butler County Rural Electric Cooperative

VEGGIE DIP

- ½ cup carrots, diced
- ½ cup celery, diced
- ½ cup green peppers, diced
- ½ cup onion, diced
- 1 8-ounce package cream cheese, softened
- 2 teaspoons lemon juice
- crackers

Mix all ingredients together and chill. Serve with your favorite crackers. Switch it up by using any of your favorite veggies for a total of 2 cups.

Karen Heiden • Dows • Prairie Energy Cooperative

PINEAPPLE CHEESE BALL

- 2 8-ounce packages cream cheese
- 2 tablespoons green peppers, chopped
- 2 tablespoons onion, diced
- 1 tablespoon Lawry's salt
- 1 small can crushed pineapple, drained
- 1 cup pecans, chopped

Mix all ingredients except nuts. Roll into a ball, then roll into nuts. Chill several hours or overnight. Serve with crackers.

Carole Ristau • Eagle Grove • Prairie Energy Cooperative

EASY PINEAPPLE SPREAD

- 2 16-ounce packages cream cheese, softened
- 1 small can crushed pineapple, drained
- ½ teaspoon garlic salt
- 2 teaspoons onion salt
- walnuts or pecans, crushed
- crackers or raw vegetables

Mix cream cheese, pineapple and seasonings together with an electric mixer. Form into one large ball or two smaller balls and roll in pecans or walnuts. Refrigerate for several hours before serving so ball will hold its shape. Serve with crackers of your choice or raw veggies.

Dianne Riley • Osceola • Clarke Electric Cooperative, Inc.

SPUN HONEY

- 1 pound butter, salted or unsalted
- 1 cup honey
- 1 cup sugar
- 1 8-ounce container heavy whipping cream (1 cup)
- dash vanilla
- dash salt, if using unsalted butter

Place butter in blender. In saucepan, combine honey, sugar and whipping cream. Bring to a boil just long enough to dissolve, stirring constantly. Pour hot honey mixture over butter in blender. Add vanilla and salt, if needed. Puree only until smooth. Pour into storage containers. Let it set up before covering and then place in refrigerator. Enjoy on toast, rolls, crackers, pancakes and popcorn. Makes great gifts! Keep refrigerated. *Yields 5 cups*

Theresa Hays • Redfield
Guthrie County Rural Electric Cooperative

SPICY HEALTHIER BEAN DIP

- 7-8 ounces canned kidney beans, rinsed and drained
- 7-8 ounces canned black beans, rinsed and drained
- 1 15-ounce can spicy chili beans, with sauce
- 3 ripe tomatoes, diced, divided
- ½ red onion, peeled and chopped
- fresh cilantro, chopped
- 1 package taco seasoning
- ½ cup water
- 1 2.25-ounce can sliced black olives, rinsed and drained
- 1 cup cheddar cheese, shredded
- 1 cup Monterey Jack cheese, shredded

In a food processor, add beans, a handful of tomatoes, a handful of onion, ¾ of cilantro, taco seasoning and water, pulse until chunky. Fill serving dish with bean mixture; top with the remaining ingredients. Serve with unsalted tortilla chips. To lower sodium level, use no-salt or low-salt beans and taco seasoning. *Serves 8-10*

Sue Madsen • Galva
North West Rural Electric Cooperative

BAKED SPINACH DIP

- 1 10-ounce package frozen chopped spinach, thawed
- 1 8-ounce package cream cheese, softened
- ½ cup mayonnaise
- 8 slices bacon, fried and crumbled
- ⅓ cup Parmesan cheese
- 2 teaspoons lemon juice
- 1 cup mozzarella cheese, shredded
- chips or crackers

Drain spinach well. Mix all ingredients and place in a baking dish. Bake at 350 degrees F for 20-25 minutes or until heated through. Serve with chips or crackers. *Serves 10*

Joanna Schaefer • Larchwood
Lyon Rural Electric Cooperative

SLOW COOKER DIP

- 2 pounds hamburger, browned
- 1 large bottle mild or hot taco sauce
- 1 box Velveeta cheese, cut up
- 2 cups cheddar cheese
- 2 tablespoons Worcestershire sauce
- crackers or chips

Place all ingredients in slow cooker on high until cheese is melted, then mix. Keep slow cooker on low and serve with your favorite crackers or chips. Dip is also a good baked potato topping.

Ardith Evenson • Archer
North West Rural Electric Cooperative

WANTED:

PICNIC AND POTLUCK RECIPES

THE REWARD:

\$25 FOR EVERY ONE WE PUBLISH!

Deadline is Feb. 28

Please include your name, address, telephone number, co-op name and the recipe category on all submissions. **Also provide the number of servings per recipe.**

EMAIL: recipes@ieclmagazine.com

(Attach your recipe as a Word document or PDF to your email message.)

MAIL: Recipes

Iowa Electric Cooperative Living • 8525 Douglas Ave., Suite 48, Des Moines, IA 50322-2992



OPPORTUNITY OF A LIFETIME: WIN A TRIP TO WASHINGTON, D.C.!



SOME OF THE THINGS STUDENTS WILL DO AND SEE ON YOUTH TOUR:

- Albert Einstein Memorial
- Arlington National Cemetery
- Boat cruise on the Potomac River
- Ford's Theater
- Franklin Delano Roosevelt Memorial
- Holocaust Memorial
- Iwo Jima Sunset Parade
- Korean War Veterans Memorial
- Lincoln Memorial
- Mount Vernon
- The National Mall
- U.S. Capitol tour
- Vietnam Veterans Memorial
- Washington Monument
- Washington National Cathedral
- White House
- World War I Memorial
- World War II Memorial

Enter the contest
by March 25



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[iowayouthtour](https://www.tiktok.com/@iowayouthtour)

THESE ELECTRIC COOPERATIVES ARE SPONSORING THE 2023 YOUTH TOUR

All of the electric co-ops on this list are offering one or more all-expenses-paid Youth Tour trips this year, so check your co-op's website or call the office for more details.

Access Energy Cooperative
Allamakee-Clayton Electric Cooperative
Butler County REC
Calhoun County Electric Cooperative
Assoc.

Chariton Valley Electric Cooperative, Inc.
Clarke Electric Cooperative, Inc.
Consumers Energy
East-Central Iowa REC
Eastern Iowa Light and Power Cooperative



ONE IOWA YOUTH TOUR STUDENT WILL RECEIVE A \$1,000 COLLEGE SCHOLARSHIP!

During the 2023 Youth Tour this June, a student from each state that participates in Youth Tour will be chosen to serve on the national Youth Leadership Council (YLC). The Iowa YLC representative will be selected during the Youth Tour trip and will receive a \$1,000 college scholarship.

These young leaders will meet virtually throughout 2023 and participate in leadership training, practice their public speaking skills, attend co-op forums and engage in community activities like voter registration drives.

The Youth Leadership Council experience will culminate at the 2024 NRECA Annual Meeting, held in San Antonio, Texas. Here, the group will spend a few days reflecting on the experiences they've had throughout the year, attend informational and entertaining conference sessions alongside electric cooperative leaders from throughout the country, and solidify lifelong friendships and connections!

To enter, you will be required to submit an official entry form plus a short (250-word maximum) essay in response to this statement:

Tell us about an issue that impacts the quality of life in your community.

Entry forms are available at www.iowayouth.com. You can submit your essay at this website or email it to youthtour@iowarec.org. Entries must be received by March 25.

Iowa's local electric cooperatives are just getting started on their selection process for high school sophomores, juniors and seniors from their areas to earn an all-expenses-paid trip for the June 17-23 Youth Tour to Washington, D.C. Unfortunately, there always are more qualified student candidates from these co-ops (as well as deserving students from co-ops that aren't participating in the Youth Tour program) than there are openings on the trip. However, one of those students, for the ninth year in a row, will have the opportunity to win a trip through the *Iowa Electric Cooperative Living* 2023 Youth Tour Contest!

Of course, students at participating co-ops first should apply for the Youth Tour through their electric co-ops.

However, students can increase their chances of winning a trip by entering the magazine's contest right after they enter the one for their electric co-op.

More than 1,800 students from across America take part in the weeklong educational trip to the nation's capital. Participants will travel to Washington, D.C., meet their U.S. representatives and senators, and watch history come alive as they explore museums, memorials and monuments. They'll also meet student leaders from nearly every state and hear dynamic speakers during Youth Day. Best of all, students will make friendships that last a lifetime and become part of a group that has more than 50,000 alumni in every walk of life, including U.S. senators and CEOs.

OFFICIAL CONTEST RULES

Our 2023 Youth Tour Essay Contest is open to any Iowa high school sophomore, junior or senior whose family is served by an Iowa electric cooperative AND to any Iowa high school sophomore, junior or senior who attended all three virtual sessions of the Iowa Youth Leadership Academy in Oct. 2022. *Iowa Electric Cooperative Living* magazine will award one all-expenses-paid Youth Tour trip to Washington, D.C., in addition to the Youth Tour trips sponsored by local electric cooperatives. Students at participating co-ops first should apply for the Youth Tour through their electric co-ops. Then, to enhance your chances of earning a trip, we encourage you to enter this contest too. If you're chosen as the winner of a trip sponsored by your local electric cooperative, you'll become ineligible to win the trip sponsored by *Iowa Electric Cooperative Living* magazine.

Iowa Electric Cooperative Living magazine and IAEC staff will judge all essays anonymously. The decision of the judges will be final. The winner of the *Iowa Electric Cooperative Living* Youth Tour Contest will be announced on April 4, which is after all sponsoring local electric cooperatives will have chosen their 2023 Youth Tour participants.

Farmers Electric Cooperative (Greenfield)
Franklin REC
Grundy County REC
Harrison County REC
Heartland Power Cooperative

Iowa Lakes Electric Cooperative
Lyon REC
Midland Power Cooperative
MiEnergy Cooperative
Nishnabotna Valley REC

North West REC
Pella Cooperative Electric Association
Prairie Energy Cooperative
Raccoon Valley Electric Cooperative

Southern Iowa Electric Cooperative, Inc.
Southwest Iowa REC
United Electric Cooperative

THE HISTORY OF HYDRO – A COMPLICATED TALE OF THE NATION’S ENERGY INDUSTRY

BY PAUL WESSLUND

Electricity generated from hydropower tells an interesting story about today’s energy trends that’s deeper than just water flowing over the dam. It’s a story about a renewable resource that once generated nearly one-third of the nation’s electricity; a share that has declined dramatically over the decades with the rise of nuclear power, natural gas, and even wind and solar.

It’s also a story about diversity in fuel sources. Although hydropower is less a part of our energy picture than it was historically, it’s still a useful part of today’s energy mix. And in certain areas of the country, it’s one of the most important parts of a strong regional economy.

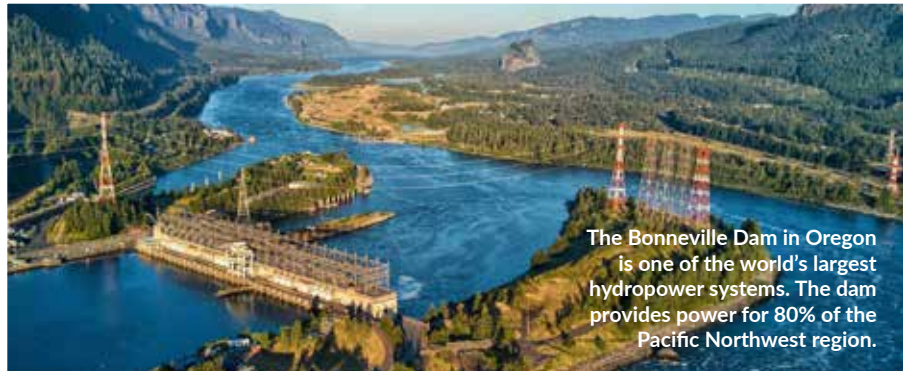
Hydro-based regional economies

Hydropower works by converting falling water into energy. That could come in the form of a water wheel turned by a flowing river at an old New England grain mill, or from a giant dam built on a river both for flood control, as well as to channel the water through a large turbine that generates electricity.

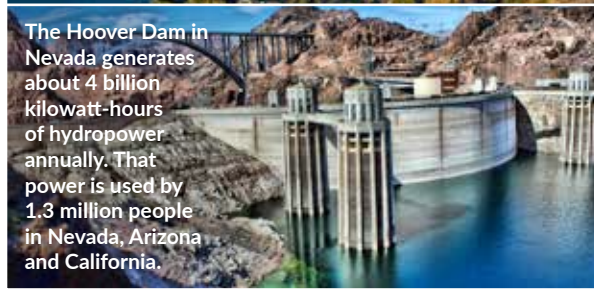
Hydropower generates about 6% of the nation’s electricity. That’s not much compared to fuels like natural gas at 38%, but those averages hide its local importance. All but two states receive at least some of their electricity from hydropower. In the 1930s, dams went up across the Tennessee River valley and in the western states. Today, Washington receives two-thirds of its electricity from hydropower.

While flowing water might seem to be an endless energy source, hydropower has a complicated relationship with the environment.

Some question the claims of hydro as a provider of clean energy since the larger projects involve building a huge dam that floods a river valley to create a reservoir. But the Environmental



The Bonneville Dam in Oregon is one of the world’s largest hydropower systems. The dam provides power for 80% of the Pacific Northwest region.



The Hoover Dam in Nevada generates about 4 billion kilowatt-hours of hydropower annually. That power is used by 1.3 million people in Nevada, Arizona and California.



Protection Agency classifies hydro as a renewable resource, and U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) figures list hydroelectricity as the source of 31% of the nation’s renewable electricity.

Cost-effective, renewable energy

Hydro is one of the cheapest forms of energy, especially after the initial investment costs. Its normal operations don’t produce greenhouse gases. And utility grid operators like its flexibility as a source of electricity that can be turned on and off relatively easily, especially compared with fuels like coal, nuclear, solar and wind.

Those assets have raised interest in adding new hydro projects. Some \$8 billion has been invested over the past 15 years to add enough capacity to power 1 million homes. While many hydro dams have been around a long time and are ready to be retired, new projects are planned, including modernizing older hydro facilities. The DOE reports proposed projects that could generate enough electricity to power yet another 1 million homes.

In addition to upgrading existing sites, DOE reports at least 200 “non-powered dams” could have generators added. Out of about 90,000 dams in the U.S., only about 2,200 generate electric power. Those efforts will be getting a boost from the federal infrastructure law passed in 2021. That measure includes more than \$2 billion in hydropower incentives for river restoration and dam rehabilitation.

Hydropower doesn’t always get the attention of flashier advancements like wind and solar technologies. But it’s been around for 2,000 years, when the Greeks used it to turn wheels that ground wheat into flour.

Only the future will tell how much of a role hydro will play, but its time-tested techniques and green energy benefits promise it will still be providing some level of power 2,000 years from now.

Paul Wesslund writes on consumer and cooperative affairs for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the national trade association representing more than 900 local electric cooperatives.

IOWA-BASED ELECTRIC COOPERATIVES INFORM CONTRACTORS AND BUILDERS AT ANNUAL CONFERENCE

BY ANGELA CATTON

Energy efficiency is hot. For a myriad of reasons – more affordable renewables, the increase in extreme weather events and lower electricity bills – interest in building energy-efficient homes and upgrading older, inefficient homes is growing.

With more people working from home in recent years, it's not surprising that many homeowners focus on containing their energy costs. A recent National Association of Home Builders survey found that green efficiency was at the top of the list of consumer preferences. In fact, survey respondents said they would be willing to pay more than \$9,000 for more efficient homes.

Sharing efficiency expertise

Iowa's electric cooperatives work to serve as a source of information and expertise to help member-consumers save energy and lower their electric bills. Educating Iowa home builders and contractors about the latest energy-efficiency innovations is another way to help Iowans reach their energy goals.

For more than 30 years, the annual Momentum is Building (MIB) Conference, sponsored and organized by the Iowa Cooperatives for Energy Efficiency, connects Iowa's construction industry with the local services and resources available from Iowa-based electric cooperatives, who serve nearly 650,000 Iowans across 99 counties.

The MIB conference serves as a resource for area contractors to learn how to design and improve homes that are energy efficient, healthy, comfortable and affordable. Electricians, plumbers and HVAC professionals can also earn Continuing Education Unit credits at the conference.

Upcoming conference

During this year's event, held Feb. 16-17 at The Meadows Events



Center, MIB attendees will have opportunities to network with industry professionals, hear from recognized energy efficiency and building trades experts and gain insight into trending technologies. Registration is open at www.momentumisbuilding.com.

Tolu Omotoso, director of energy solutions at the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, will kick off the conference by covering the evolving relationship between utilities and their members and how to leverage member-owned smart devices in the home for grid services.

Other topics include sessions on promoting the value of home certifications and how to prepare contractors for large, new federal home improvement subsidies to come online, and employee management best practices for small businesses.

For more information about the conference, visit www.momentumisbuilding.com or call your electric cooperative.

Angela Catton is the manager of member relations and development for Northwest Iowa Power Cooperative.

EASY WAYS TO CONTROL WATER USE

BY KATHERINE LOVING

Conserving water at home can result in several downstream benefits and savings. Being mindful of home water use helps preserve the amount of water in our local reservoirs and reduces costs associated with water and wastewater treatment, including the cost of delivering it to the home (for those using a public water service).

Indoor and outdoor water-saving practices

Leaky toilets, showerheads and dripping faucets can waste up to 2,700 gallons of water annually. Home water conservation can simply start by checking your house for any leaks and drips. Another way to conserve water is to limit running water when it isn't necessary. For example, turn off the faucet while brushing your teeth, and defrost food in the refrigerator or in the microwave instead of placing frozen food under running water.

Home gardens are another potential area for water conservation. Thoughtful planning can transform your home garden from a water drain to a water-efficient oasis. This spring, start by planting drought-resistant plants or those with minimal water needs. Group the plants by similar water needs to avoid waste by watering from plant-to-plant. Additionally, a drip irrigation system for plants that require more water can boost efficiency by using less water over a longer period. Alternatively, set lawn sprinklers on a timer to limit water use and place them where the water will only reach plants, not pavement.

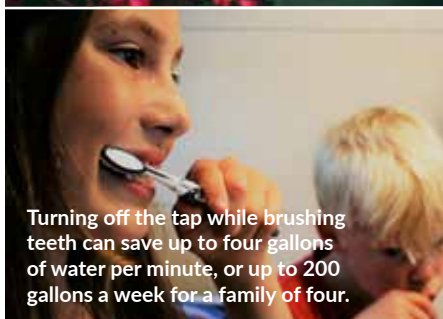
Harvesting rainwater with a rain barrel is an excellent option for watering ornate gardens and washing cars.

Energy conservation benefits

Reducing water use at home can also help lower your energy use. The Department of Energy estimates that water heating accounts for about 20%



Harvested rainwater is an excellent option for watering ornate gardens and washing cars.



Turning off the tap while brushing teeth can save up to four gallons of water per minute, or up to 200 gallons a week for a family of four.



Leaky toilets, showerheads and dripping faucets can waste up to 2,700 gallons of water annually.

of a home's energy bill. Switching to an energy-efficient heat pump water heater can save considerable money on electric bills. Heat pump water heaters have higher upfront costs than storage tank models, but tax incentives and potential rebates can offset this cost. Check with your local electric cooperative to see if they offer rebates or a load management program.

If upgrading your water heater isn't an option, there are small changes you can make to increase water heating efficiency. Reduce hot water use by switching to low-flow faucets and showerheads. You can also turn down the water heater thermostat to 120 degrees and insulate hot water lines to increase energy savings.

Additional ways to conserve both water and electricity in the home include upgrading clothes washers and dishwashers to newer, more energy-efficient models. Running these appliances only when full or selecting a "light wash" setting reduces water and electricity use. Washing dishes by hand uses more water than an energy-

efficient dishwasher, so avoid this method when possible.

Well water considerations

If your home uses well water, it's important to be mindful of water conservation. Well pumps run on electricity and can be a source of higher energy bills. Dry, over-pumped wells can cause the pump to run continuously, using excess energy in the process. Malfunctioning well pumps also lead to spikes in energy use. Regular maintenance can help identify problems, such as leaks and faulty intake, which can lead to increased use of both water and electricity.

There are a variety of changes – some large, some small – that can help you conserve water at home. Regardless of how you do it, thoughtfully managing water use can protect our water supply and make significant changes on energy bills.

Katherine Loving writes on consumer and cooperative affairs for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the national trade association representing more than 900 local electric cooperatives.

HISTORY HIDDEN IN A HILLSIDE

BY DARCY DOUGHERTY MAULSBY

Just about the time I say nothing surprises me anymore, something catches me completely off guard. I had one of those “wow” moments recently, thanks to an archaeologist at the Sanford Museum in Cherokee.

I heard that Mark Anderson was giving a program in November about an 1850s-era sod dugout house and farmstead in Sac County. My schedule didn't allow me to attend, so I asked Mark if I could interview him over the phone a few days later.

Not only did he agree, but after a fascinating conversation, he said he'd be happy to meet me at the dugout site for a tour. This was too good to pass up, especially since Mark had special access to this property, which isn't open to the public. He conducted an extensive archaeological survey in 1996-97 on a 49-mile stretch from Moorland to Early (including this site), in preparation for the expansion of four-lane Highway 20.

Awe-inspiring experience

I just couldn't get over how the visible remains of an 1850s pioneer dugout and claim shanty were right here in the North Raccoon River Valley – an area I've driven by many times through the years.

Even more mind-blowing was the fact that people had inhabited this area for centuries.

“Prehistoric people hung out here 2,000 years ago when they were in the area to hunt, fish and gather other provisions, including edible plants, fibers for making baskets and other woven items, and rocks for tool making,” Mark noted when we visited the site in late November.

As we stood on a knob above the point where the land slopes down to the river, just west of the 1850s-era dugout, I couldn't believe I was here, right where those pioneers and prehistoric people had been. Mark's excavations had revealed debris from



Mark Anderson, the archaeologist at the Sanford Museum in Cherokee, and his dog are shown here in front of what used to be an 1850s-era dugout house in Sac County.

ancient chipping stone tools, as well as Sioux quartzite, at this spot.

“This was the hearthstone the prehistoric people used,” he explained as his mini-Australian Shepherds, Marley and Bruce, roamed nearby. “This choice was no accident. Sioux quartzite absorbs heat well without shattering.”

Realities of archaeological artifacts

What's especially fascinating when you hang out with archaeologists is how straightforward they are about their work.

“We dig up other people's garbage,” Mark said. “We're glorified garbage people.”

Karl Pilkington, an author and host of a travel documentary series, summed

it up this way: “It's interesting to see that people had so much clutter even thousands of years ago. The only way to get rid of it all was to bury it, and then some archaeologist went and dug it all up.”

To an archaeologist like Mark, a river crossing like the one in Sac County can be a jackpot of archaeological artifacts (a.k.a. “old garbage”). This makes me wonder if my garbage will ever interest someone far in the future.

In any case, I'm fascinated by the “hillside history” we explored that remarkable afternoon in Sac County.

“This site is just awesome,” Mark said. I couldn't agree more.

Darcy Dougherty Maulsby lives near her family's Century Farm northwest of Lake City. Visit her at www.darcymaulsby.com.

Visit our website at www.ieclmagazine.com

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