

F E R G U S

FEATURES

Member Newsletter ♦ Fergus Electric Cooperative, Inc., Lewistown, MT ♦ www.ferguselectric.coop



MANAGER'S MESSAGE

From Carson Sweeney

Looking forward to a productive and exciting new year

RECENTLY, I have heard from several members who have seen our line crews changing poles within their area. We spend a lot of time and effort planning these projects, and I appreciate it when members get to see our team in action. We have an excellent employee group that is committed to effectively and efficiently improving our system each working day.

Toward the end of 2024, our crews replaced poles in the Grass Range area. Throughout 2025 you may see them around your place as they work near Moccasin, Carter's Pond and Winnett.

The replacement of approximately 400 poles in 2025 is part of our long-term strategy to consistently invest in our system. This plan helps us provide stable and consistent rates for our membership so that we aren't behind on maintenance or system integrity in the future.

In just a few short years I am eager to share the results of our consistent investment efforts to reduce outage duration and frequency.

2025 Montana Legislature

Our 2025 Montana legislative session is in full swing, and we are actively participating to support affordable and reliable electricity for all electric cooperative members.

We have been fortunate for many years to have Fergus Electric Cooperative members as our representatives



at the state Capitol and this year is no different. Shane Klakken from HD 37 is a Representative from the Grass Range area. Shane has met with our Board of Directors and myself several times, and I look forward to seeing him at work in Helena.

I will be traveling to Helena several times this month to provide information and feedback to our legislators. I am grateful to have the opportunity to participate in this democratic process, and will be sure to keep our membership informed of the issues important to your electric cooperative.


To Washington, D.C.

In the next few days, I will be traveling to Washington, D.C., to visit with

our four delegates, two of which are new to their roles.

I look forward to working with them and their teams on long-term solutions to the great benefit of our membership.

I anticipate that the new administration will be receptive to supporting a reliable and affordable electric grid for all Americans, and I expect our four Montana delegates to help us do just that.

With a fresh blanket of snow outside my window, the start of another Montana legislative session, a new presidential administration and a full 2025 work plan at Fergus Electric, I am optimistically excited about what the new year will bring. Here's to being an active participant in that future. 

THE EVER-GROWING NEED FOR ELECTRICITY

By **SCOTT FLOOD** | For *Fergus Electric*

WHEN rural electric cooperatives first strung powerlines from farm to farm, across coulees, and through remote forests less than a century ago, most members had but a handful of light bulbs to power. With time, they added appliances such as refrigerators, but we're sure they couldn't begin to imagine the number and variety of electrical devices in today's homes and garages.

The demand for electricity increased by 2.5 percent in 2024, and is expected to grow by 3.2 percent this year. That was after co-ops saw a 4.8 percent increase in 2022. Through 2029, the nation's peak demand is projected to grow by 38 gigawatts. That would be like adding another California-sized state to our nation's power grid.

The rapid growth of artificial intelligence (AI) is driving the development of massive data center facilities, often placed in electric co-op service territories to take advantage of inexpensive land and fewer neighbors to complain. By 2022, these facilities accounted for 2.5 percent of the nation's consumption of electricity – and by 2030, they'll use 7.5 percent of all electric power.

Data centers and facilities such as warehouses require a large, steady supply of electricity 24 hours a day. That means the electric co-ops supplying them can't rely on intermittent sources of electricity such as solar or wind energy to handle the additional load. Instead, they need more of what's known as baseload, or always-available power, much of which is currently generated by burning fossil fuels. The more we depend on technology, the more we'll need reliable baseload generation.



By 2022, data centers accounted for 2.5 percent of the nation's consumption of electricity, and by 2030, they'll use 7.5 percent of all electric power. | **PHOTO CREDIT: PEXELS**

Yet that's a problem, because at the same time Americans are using more electricity, power providers are being forced to shut down reliable sources of baseload power such as coal and nuclear power plants. Many large coal plants have been converted to use cleaner-burning natural gas, but others have been deemed too costly to convert and are prematurely being shut down. More than 110 gigawatts of always-available generation – enough to power about 35 million homes – is forecast to retire by 2033.

The U.S. Energy Information Administration's forecast expects coal-fired generation to drop to half of today's levels by 2030. Renewable energy will capture a growing share of the supply, but as noted, much renewable energy is not reliable enough to provide baseload power.

As electricity powers a growing share of life's tools and conveniences, overall demand is expected to continue its steady growth through 2050. A great example is the efficiency of electric heat pumps. Federal and other subsidies and tax advantages are powering significant growth in their share of the home-heating market.

In other words, at the same time everyone is using more electricity than

ever, the supply of the most reliable source is drying up. Add in the uncertainty created by public-policy debates around energy and climate change, and you can begin to understand why 19 states face a high risk of rolling blackouts between now and 2028.

The energy industry studies demand closely because construction of all types of generation is costly and lengthy – often longer than a decade from groundbreaking to entering service.

As renewables become more efficient and cheaper to produce, their share of the power mix will only continue to grow. Someday soon, battery technology may reach the point where large-scale storage of renewable generation becomes possible, but until then, we'll need more of those always-available power sources.

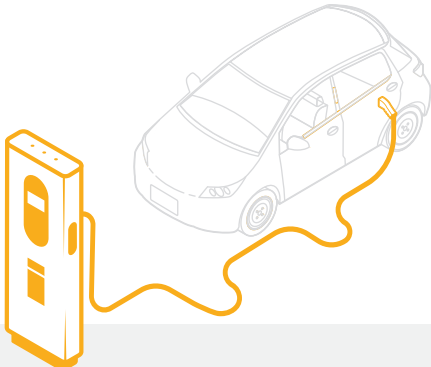
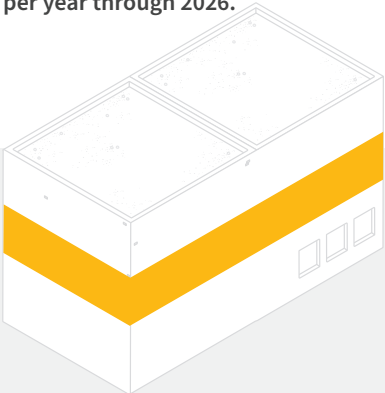
One more factor plays a key role in the ability of co-ops and the rest of the nation's power industry to keep up with demand. That's the supply chain, in which the dwindling number of U.S. suppliers simply can't keep up with the nation's needs for power equipment. When a co-op orders new transformers, it may have to wait two years or more for delivery – and pay a significantly higher price. RM

SOARING DEMAND

After decades of flat or declining electricity demand, the United States is in the midst of a boom in power use. Recent government data shows that power consumption nationwide is set to increase by at least 38 gigawatts between now and 2028. This trend would ordinarily be great news for the power industry. But government policies aimed at shutting down fossil-fuel-based generation and years-long delays in permitting and siting for new transmission lines are turning this power boon into a capacity crisis. Here are the primary demand drivers:

Electrification

Electric vehicle adoption, electrification of home heating and industrial electrification are expected to increase overall U.S. energy consumption by 1% per year through 2026.



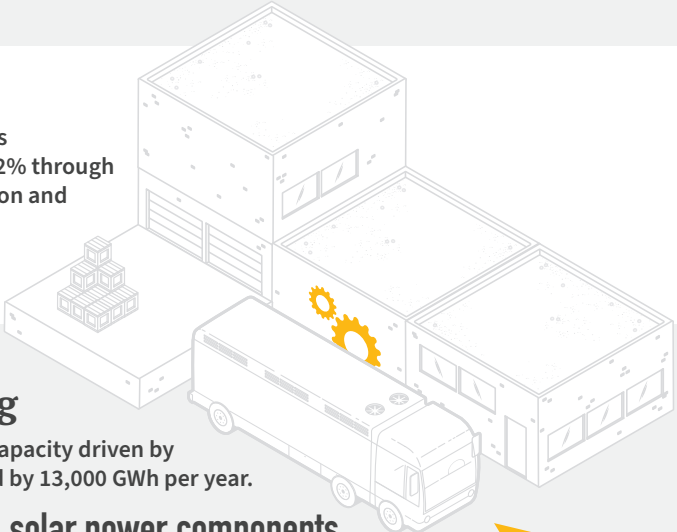
Data Centers

Driven by explosions in artificial intelligence, cryptocurrency and cloud computing, total U.S. data center load is projected to increase by 65% by 2050.

↑
65%

Economic Growth

Residential power consumption is expected to increase by 14% to 22% through 2050 due to increases in population and steady economic growth.



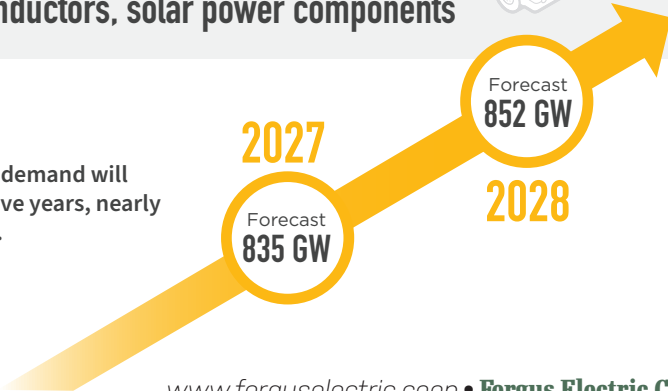
Manufacturing Growth/Onshoring

New, expanding and “onshored/reshored” manufacturing capacity driven by federal incentives is expected to increase industrial demand by 13,000 GWh per year.

Key products: EVs, batteries, semiconductors, solar power components

Total Demand

Analysts predicted in 2023 that U.S. peak demand will increase by at least 38 GW over the next five years, nearly double the growth rate predicted in 2022.



2025 ANNUAL MEETING

Committee seeking director candidates

Nominations from districts 1 and 6 needed, FEC Annual Meeting is set for June 5

In accordance with Fergus Electric Cooperative Bylaws, Article IV, Section 4.3, the committee for selecting board candidates will be appointed, and will meet to nominate candidates for the Board of Trustees.

In addition to candidates nominated by the committee, any 15 or more members acting together from District 1 (Rural Lewistown area) and District 6 (Ryegate, Judith Gap, Shawmut areas) may make other nominations by petition not less than 30 days prior to the annual meeting. Such nominations are to be posted where the committee list is posted. No other method of nominating candidates for trustees is permitted.

In accordance with Fergus Electric

Cooperative Bylaws, Article III, Section 3.6, each member shall be entitled to only one vote upon each matter submitted to a vote at a meeting of the members. In the absence of the member holding a single membership, the spouse may vote.

Directors serve a term of three years and are elected by ballot at the annual meeting of the membership.

Candidates must have their principal residence in the district from which they are selected.

If you are interested in running for a position on the board, watch for meeting dates and places in local newspapers, or call the office (406) 538-3465 for more information. RM

IDENTIFY ACCOUNT NUMBER*

WIN A \$34.00 CREDIT

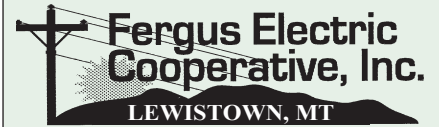
If one of the following account numbers is yours, call Fergus Electric (406-538-3465) and identify yourself and your account number, and you will receive a \$34.00 credit on next month's statement.

**Account 392558, Account 382441
Account 321856, Account 394321
Account 398517, Account 398370**

CONGRATULATIONS!

Percy Slattum of Winifred, **James & Lisa Heinrich** of Roundup and **Linda Schmitt** of Custer were last month's winners.

*NUMBERS ARE DRAWN MONTHLY



Your Touchstone Energy® Partner

FOR OUTAGES

First: Check the fuses or breakers in the building in which the electricity is off.

Second: Check the breaker below the meter.

Third: If electricity is still out, call a neighbor to see if they have electricity.

Fourth: Call 406-538-3465 day or night or:

- Dale Rikala 406-366-3374
- Bret Ophus 406-366-7523
- Bret Nellerhoe (Roundup)..... 406-939-0636
- Carson Sweeney 406-366-0971
- Melanie Foran..... 406-462-5650
- Scott Olson..... 406-366-5822
- Dan Balster..... 406-366-0975

FERGUS ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE, INC.

84423 US Hwy. 87, Lewistown, MT

59457-2058

Tel: 406-538-3465

Office Hours: 7 a.m. - 5:30 p.m. M-Th.

Website: www.ferguselectric.coop

E-mail: ferguselectric@ferguselectric.coop

Facebook: www.facebook.com/ferguselectric

Carson Sweeney.....General Manager

Dale Rikala..... Line Superintendent

Sally Horacek Office Manager

Janine Rife Didier..... Editor

Fergus Electric is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

- District 1: Paul Descheemaeker, President, Lewistown, 428-2417
- District 2: Brett Maxwell, Lewistown, 538-9002
- District 3: Brad Arntzen, Hilger, 462-5555
- District 4: Cathy Kombol, Roundup, 428-2202
- District 5: Terry Frost, Vice President, Roundup, 323-3415
- District 6: Jason Swanz, Sec./Treas., Judith Gap, 473-2462
- District 7: Bob Evans, Jr., Geysers, 735-4476

Fergus Features is an award-winning newsletter.



PRESIDENTS' DAY CLOSURE

Fergus Electric Cooperative's office will be closed on Monday, February 17



**Know what's below.
Call before you dig.**