

F E R G U S

FEATURES

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

A DAY ON THE ICE

Why Curt Olson prefers fishing in the winter

Story and photos by

Charlie Denison
Contributing Writer

Driving his snowmobile through the endless amounts of uncharted snow covering East Fork in January, Curt Olson smiled, amazed to have the place to himself for a day of ice fishing, his favorite recreational activity.

Olson parks his Ski-Doo snowmobile in front of his “thermal hub” tent. The large, family friendly hut makes for a comfortable, warm fishing experience, especially on a frigid day such as this one. Olson said this is not ideal ice-fishing weather.

“I like it to be between 30 and 40 degrees, no wind and sunshine, but you don’t get that very often,” he said. “When you do, and you’re able to go fishing, that’s a good day.”

But even on a windy, 20-degree day, Olson finds solace in the foothills of the Snowy Mountains, camped out to do what he loves — and try out some of his new tools.

“Companies are really coming out with a lot of neat stuff for ice fishing,” he said. “Check this out.”

Moving from one side of the tent to the other, Olson grabs a battery-powered ice auger, one of his latest tools.

“Compared to the hand augers, this saves me a lot of time,” he said, effortlessly drilling a hole. “It’s also a lot lighter than the gas-powered ones.”

Olson can have all the gadgets he wants to perfect the experience, but having state-of-the-art equipment doesn’t guarantee a flawless day of fishing. This trip was no different, as much time was spent cleaning slush out of the tent.



After a day of fishing on East Fork Reservoir, Curt loaded his family, Michelle, Reese and Jett, into a sled. He pulled the sled with his snowmobile to the family vehicle, where they unloaded their gear and headed home.

“The water level is pretty high,” he said. “That’s the bad thing about having so much snow. Normally you don’t have any water come up, but there is so much weight on the ice.”

Still, Olson doesn’t complain. He’s loved ice fishing since high school. Growing up in Malta, he’d take the 60-mile trip to Fort Peck Dam any chance he got.

“There’s just something about pulling a fish through that hole,” he said. “You never know what you’ve got until you see it come through.”

The moment Olson lifts a fish out of the hole is one of the biggest reasons he loves ice fishing, but it’s also the time of year. Growing up, he was usually busy with work in the spring and summer, so having an opportunity to fish in the winter was something he couldn’t pass up.

“My dad was a rancher and a bit of a slave driver,” Olson joked. “He didn’t give us much time off, which is probably why I’m more into ice fishing than regular fishing. I just had a lot more time to do it.”

Settled in his chair with an Ugly Stick pole, Olson takes a deep breath and allows himself to relax. Besides the whistle and occasional roar of the wind, the tent is still and silent as Olson awaits a bite.

He didn’t wait long. A perch came around, but it was only a few inches long, hardly something to brag about.

“It’s definitely not worth filleting for a meal,” Olson said, releasing the perch.

That’s kind of how it goes at East Fork, Olson said, which is why he often goes to Fort Peck instead, where the northern pike fishing is excellent.

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MANAGER'S MESSAGE

From Scott Sweeney

Changes at Fergus Electric Co-op

At the end of March, our meter technician, Kerby Durbin, retired. I want to give a great big thank you to Kerby for 26 years of dedicated service to the cooperative. Kerby's expertise in the meter department has been very valuable to the cooperative. Thank you, Kerby! We wish you well in retirement.

In early April, Bret Ophus, who has worked as foreman since 2012, and at the co-op since 1992, was promoted to assistant supervisor of construction, operations and maintenance in Lewistown. Bret will assist Dale Rikala in scheduling line crews and coordinating with our engineers and members to help ensure that our line crews are working efficiently, and members requests for new services are built as quickly as is reasonably practical.

Congratulations on your promotion, Bret. We had six high-quality candidates apply for the new position, and I thank all who applied. As we work through staff transitions, we are entering our busy season and there is a lot of work ahead of us. I am grateful that we have a great group of employees who are up for the task.

New metering system

Our new meter technician, Brian Godbey, is in the process of learning all about installing and operating our new automated metering infrastructure (AMI). The new metering system is a big undertaking, and we are looking forward to the many opportunities a new AMI will provide the cooperative.

The old "turtle" metering system has worked relatively well since we first began installing it in 2004, but now it is old, obsolete and in need of replacement. The goal of the board and management is to install a new AMI system that works well and has a good longevity rate.

The new metering system will help identify power outage locations and provide the cooperative with voltage levels at the meter locations. Having this capability will help speed up outage

restoration and provide the information required to improve service quality. There will also be the option of members prepaying power bills, so we will not have to require a two-month deposit. Another option available is the ability to reconnect and disconnect meters from the office, so line crews will not be required to physically drive to the meter locations.

Fergus Electric Cooperative's service territory contains more than 4,200 miles of power line. If we can use software to pinpoint meters that are malfunctioning and dispatch line crews directly to that meter, it will reduce the number of miles spent patrolling line during outages, when weather is bad and conditions are poor. We anticipate that our members will be better served by the co-op having a new AMI.

Annual Meeting

The cooperative is excited to celebrate our 80th Annual Meeting on June 7 at the Fergus County Trade Center. I invite all members to come and join us for the annual business meeting of your electric cooperative. A delicious lunch will be served between noon and 1 p.m. followed by the business meeting and awarding of 10 \$1,000 scholarships to students planning to attend or who are enrolled in college or a trade school.

Giving away scholarships is an exciting highlight of the annual meeting. It is a tradition that the board and management enjoy, and want to see continue for many years!

This year the cooperative is asking the membership to approve one bylaw change to permit the discounting of accrued capital credits to offset a member's delinquent power bill. I recommend the members approve this change as I believe it will improve efficiency regarding keeping records on capital credits and bad debts.

Please mark your calendar for Thursday, June 7 to attend the 80th Annual Meeting of Fergus Electric Cooperative. I hope to see you there.

Scholarship drawing at annual meeting

Must be present to win

Fergus Electric Cooperative will offer 10 \$1,000 scholarships in a drawing at this year's annual meeting, on Thursday, June 7.

Rules for the scholarship drawing are: 1) The applicant or applicant's parent/guardian must be a member of Fergus Electric Cooperative, 2) The applicant must be present at the annual meeting accompanied by a parent/guardian, 3) The applicant must have at least a "C" grade average, and 4) The scholarship may be used for undergraduate college, vo-tech or for graduate studies.

No support documentation is required. Winners are determined by the luck of the draw. Checks will be written to the college or school of the winners' choice.

Please complete the following application and return it to: Fergus Electric Scholarship Drawing, 84423 U.S. Highway 87, Lewistown, MT 59457.

Fergus Electric Scholarship Application*

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____

College/Vo-Tech attending/
will attend

I maintain at least a "C"
average _____

Student Signature

Parent/Guardian Signature

**Application due by June 1, 2018*



Curt Olson uses his new auger to drill through ice at East Fork Reservoir in February. Catching a fish is exciting for son Jett and daughter Reese. Curt proudly displays a Northern Pike he caught at Fort Peck Dam recently. Photos courtesy of Olson

Curt Olson

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"I caught an 18-pounder there once," he said.

Olson said it's nice to have a place such as East Fork so close to home, and the kids love it, especially his son, Jett. Now 5 years old, Jett is starting to get into it, enamored by the moment a wagging fish comes out of the hole.

Perhaps such captivation is an inherited trait. Jett and his sister, Reese, 2, let out giddy screams when their dad reeled in another little perch, especially Jett, who immediately ran over to his pole in hopes to get lucky as well.

Looking over at Jett proudly, Olson let out a little laugh and took a seat. As they fished together, I wondered if Olson was thinking about the many ice-

fishing adventures they'd share in the future.

Jett is lucky, Olson said, because with today's improved technology, it's a great time to take up ice fishing. Yet, there is also something to be said for sticking to traditions.

"I've always made a lot of my own equipment," he said. "I made several different types of tip-ups using my homemade stuff. ... I've even made them for other people."

There are plenty of ways to be resourceful when it comes to ice fishing, Olson said, but that's totally up to the fisherman. There are many ways to shop for trend-setting gear. For the most part, ice fishing is ice fishing, no matter where you are or what you're using.

"There's really nothing to it," Olson said. "Get yourself a good rod/reel set-

up and go out and fish. Once you get into it, you kind of learn where the fish are at. A lot of times the guys at the local sports store or the local fish and game officer will tell you some of the best spots to fish."

When you find a place you love, go often and get familiar, Olson said.

Fort Peck is that place for Olson.

"Whenever I have a free weekend, that's where I'll go," he said. "I'll go out there for 2-3 days and sleep on the cot. I stay pretty warm, too, by keeping the heater going all night."

Olson said he likes East Fork, too.

"I just wish the fish were bigger," he said.

Notice of annual meeting

Pursuant to Article III, Section 3 of the bylaws of Fergus Electric Cooperative, Inc., notice of the 80th annual meeting is hereby given.

The member meeting will take place at the Fergus County Trade Center, Lewistown, Montana, on Thursday, June 7, 2018. Registration begins at 11 a.m., with lunch at noon.

The business meeting convenes at 1 p.m., with the order of business as follows: report of members present, reading of notice and proof of publication, election of three trustees and transaction of other business.

Join us for your Annual Meeting

Thursday, June 7, 2018 at 11 a.m.
Fergus County Trade Center

Register for a chance to win:

- Grand prize — \$500 cash
- Ten \$1,000 scholarships
- Base charge credits • Cash prizes
- Gift cards • Other prizes

Mark your calendars for
Thursday, June 7

Meet your board candidates

In accordance with Fergus Electric Cooperative Bylaws, Article IV, Section 4.3, the nominating committees met and elected candidates for the Board of Trustees.

In addition to the procedure set forth above, any 15 or more members acting together from the district in which a trustee is to be elected may make other nominations by petition not less than 30 days prior to the meeting, and the secretary shall post such nominations at the same place where the list of nominations made by the aforesaid committees are posted. No other method of nominating candidates for trustee shall be permitted.

Brad Arntzen – District 3

Incumbent Brad Arntzen is a fourth-generation rancher from central Montana, where he currently operates a seed-stock Angus cattle ranch, along with his family, north of Hilger.



In 2001, Brad graduated from Montana State University – Bozeman with a Bachelor of Science degree in animal science. After graduation, he returned to the family ranch, where he currently resides with his wife Stacie and his daughters Abbie, Ashlen and Aleia.

Brad is involved in community activities. He served as president of the Central Montana Angus Association, at which time he helped organize the Montana State Angus Tour. He also served as a director on the Central Montana Port Authority and as a director on the HRDC Loan Review Committee.

Brad was selected to be a member of the Fergus Electric Cooperative Advisory Committee, of which he was chairman. His experience on the advisory committee helped him learn more about how a rural electric cooperative operates. He is seeking his second three-year term.

Terry Frost – District 5

Incumbent Terry Frost has been a board member for nine years, and looks forward to the challenges of another three-year term. After serving as a line-man and foreman at Ravalli County Electric Cooperative for 30 years, Terry

understands the complexities involved with all aspects of electric cooperatives. His knowledge of power supply, power safety and related services, as well as customer expectations, are essential in board decisions.

Terry and his wife, LaVonne, raise registered Angus Cattle in the Bull Mountains south of Roundup. They have lived there for 18 years, and love the proximity to their sons and families. Terry and LaVonne have been married for 45 years.

Terry continues to volunteer for organizations, which keep him active in the community. He has been president for the Midland Empire Angus Association and for the Musselshell Stockgrowers, as well as for the Ravalli County Stockgrowers. Terry served as a volunteer fireman for the Corvallis Fire Department for many years. Terry is currently on the Refuse Board for Musselshell and serves as an elected director for the Genex Corporation.

Terry thanks members for their confidence in his service, and he appreciates the opportunity to venture forward for another three years as a member of this progressive board.

Bob Evans – District 7

Incumbent Bob Evans is seeking an 11th term on Fergus Electric's board, where he currently serves as president. He is past president of the statewide organization, Montana Electric Cooperatives' Association, headquartered in Great Falls.

Bob said, "I see complex issues facing the cooperative in regard to long-term power supply. Maintaining quality power and affordable rates remain my top priority."

Bob earned a Bachelor of Science degree in industrial arts from the University of Montana – Western at Dillon in 1974, and returned to Geyser where he and his wife, Kathern, operate a cow calf, yearling operation. He is also involved in a variety of community activities.



Identify Account Number*

Win a \$32 credit

If one of the following account numbers is yours, call Fergus Electric (406-538-3465) and identify yourself and your account number.

Account 320842
Account 390538
Account 392072

You will receive a \$32 credit on next month's statement.

*Numbers are drawn randomly.
Last month's winner was **Arleene Wepler** of Rapelje.



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
Guy Johnson	406-366-9170
Scott Sweeney	406-538-7218
Don Criswell (Roundup)	406-366-3465
David Dover	406-366-1975
Melanie Foran	406-462-5650

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Fergus Electric is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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District 3: Brad Arntzen, Hilger, 462-5555

District 4: Cathy Kombol, Roundup, 428-2202

District 5: Terry Frost, Sec./Treas., Roundup, 323-3415

District 6: Jason Swanz, Judith Gap, 473-2462

District 7: Bob Evans, Jr., President, Geyser, 735-4476

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