

FERGUS

FEATURES

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



The 2026 Luck of the Draw scholarship winners pose for a photo at the Fergus Electric Annual Meeting. Fergus Electric awarded \$100,000 in scholarships this year. | PHOTO BY KATE LOOSE, SEVEN DIAMOND PHOTOGRAPHY



MANAGER'S MESSAGE

From Carson Sweeney

ON June 4 we had a successful annual meeting, and I would like to thank everyone who attended. After enjoying a wonderful meal prepared by the Montana Cattle Women, President Terry Frost and I each provided reports on work completed in 2025 and our plans going forward. Our auditor presented the 2025 financials, with an unmodified opinion.

Everyone could feel the energy and excitement in the room when we awarded \$100,000 in scholarships to member students in attendance. We can award scholarships like this thanks to the benevolent support of member-donated estate capital credits and unclaimed capital credits. Many

members have kindly chosen to donate their estate capital credits in support of member students throughout Central Montana. If this idea interests you and you would like to learn more, please contact our office. We have a form that members can fill out to help them choose beneficiaries of their estate capital credits in the future. In the coming months, we will provide an article in the *Rural Montana* magazine with details on who received scholarships and what their plans are for the future.

Construction season is well underway as our crews work to complete new service requests. If you have a project this year that will need electric service from Fergus Electric, please

contact our engineering department soon. Our construction schedule is already looking quite full, and we are now 4-6 weeks out for new requests.

As members prepare for field operations and harvest season, please take note of overhead powerlines. We continue to have infrastructure damage as equipment and trailers contact our poles and wires. Please be aware of your surroundings and the height of your equipment. Do not touch or come near overhead powerlines. Contact Fergus Electric with any questions or concerns.

Happy Independence Day to all! Be safe and enjoy the warm summer days of July. RM

ANNUAL MEETING 2026

Annual Meeting of the Members was a success

WALLEYES UNLIMITED OF MONTANA

Crooked Creek Chapter

Group fosters warm-water fishing traditions

STORY BY CATHY MOSER | FOR FERGUS ELECTRIC

IN 1983, walleye fishermen living in Glasgow and Glendive coalesced to found the nonprofit Walleyes Unlimited of Montana. Then, in the early 1990s, Carl Seilstad and Curley Olsen of Lewistown founded the Crooked Creek Chapter that has since imparted a Walleyes Unlimited presence in Fergus and Petroleum counties. In hand with the national Walleyes Unlimited mission that states, in part, “organize and educate fishermen to promote walleye and warm-water fishing,” Crooked Creek Chapter hosts a Kid’s Fishing Day every summer.

Several members take part in the event designed to familiarize youth with warm-water fish species such as walleye, northern pike, largemouth and smallmouth bass, as well as teach angling skills. At Nelson Reservoir near Glasgow last summer, 30 boys and girls were divided up into smaller groups and matched with a Crooked Creek mentor before they climbed into boats and went fishing.

“Members show up with their boats,” said Dakota Wahl, Crooked Creek Chapter president. “We supply the kids with life jackets, rods, tackle and bait, and we feed them grilled hot dogs, chips and cookies.”

The kids, with their mentors, fish for about five hours. Kid’s Fishing Day is open to boys and girls ages 6 through 12.

Although all fish caught are released, some kids go home with trophies awarded for having caught the largest walleye, northern pike, or another species, or for smallest walleye. Every boy and girl goes home with a brand-new spinning rod.



Crooked Creek Chapter President Dakota Wahl and sons Lincoln and Landon are all smiles after landing a lunker. | COURTESY PHOTO



Walleyes Unlimited of Montana

has 17 chapters and is the largest warm-water fishing organization in Montana.

“The kids are happy and really enjoy getting the opportunity to go fishing on chapter members’ boats,” Dakota said. “I’m sure for some of the kids it’s the only day of the year they get to fish out of a boat, and knowing we gave those kids a fun day, that brings satisfaction to all of us who help out on Kid’s Fishing Day.”

Crooked Creek members also organize field projects that focus on warm-water and cold-water fisheries in central Montana. These further advance the Walleyes Unlimited mission, or specifically, “improve and



The Crooked Creek Chapter organizes Kid's Fishing Day to energize and excite youth about the sport of fishing. | **COURTESY PHOTO**

conserve walleye and other warm-water fish in suitable bodies of water.”

Members' work at these sites is almost always hands-on. At Casino Creek Reservoir south of Lewistown, the group repaired aging gazebos and undertook a general clean up around that small lake.

At East Fork Reservoir, also south of Lewistown, members started the project from scratch, building gazebos and a wheelchair-accessible fishing pier. At Petrolia Reservoir southeast of Winnett, their work included extending the boat ramp by 60 feet.

By erecting “Selected Harvest” signs at various lakes, chapter members help fishermen differentiate a walleye, a member of the perch family, from its lookalike perch cousin, a sauger. The signs inform anglers about fish size and age, using size as a reference point

TO JOIN

Crooked Creek Chapter readily welcomes new members. For information about the monthly meetings, call Dakota at (406) 200-5866.

KID'S FISHING DAY

For information about Kid's Fishing Day, contact Jake Henderson at (406) 366-5889.

in determining age. Selected Harvest signs encourage anglers to release large fish for the overall good health of the fishery.

The sport of fishing has been a mainstay throughout Dakota's life, or as he

put it, “I'm 38 and I've been fishing ... forever.” A succession of boats in his lifetime included the one with a 16-foot tiller (the handle used to steer a motor) from which he fished as a kid with his father. Nowadays, Dakota fishes from the comfort of a Ranger. It's from that boat he passes the warm-water fishing tradition to his two sons. Ten-year-old Lincoln and 8-year-old Landon both love to fish, but recently, Lincoln has enjoyed learning how to net fish properly.

Spirited debates among warm-water fishermen as to which warm-water game fish is the trickiest to catch continue from one generation to the next. When Dakota finds himself in such a debate, he quotes the “old walleye fisherman” who quipped: “God

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“ I'm sure for some of the kids it's the only day of the year they get to fish out of a boat, and knowing we gave those kids a fun day, that brings satisfaction to all of us who help out on Kid's Fishing Day. ”

– **Dakota Wahl**, Crooked Creek Chapter president



Crooked Creek Chapter members built this pier at East Fork Reservoir. Anglers with mobility issues have easy access to the water. | **COURTESY PHOTO**

FISHING

Continued from previous page

created a bass so anyone could catch a fish, and then he created the wall-eye to separate fishermen from real fishermen.”

Expert angler P. Allen Parsons, writing for *Outdoor Life*, stated this about the walleye in his in-depth coverage of warm water fish: “Its large eyes, which look as though the fish were half or wholly blind, give it its name.... Walleye fishing is a sport for those with patience.” The walleye is not native to Montana, and is believed to have been introduced in the 1940s. Parsons also called the walleye “some of our best-flavored fishes.” Legions of fishermen who relish the challenge of outsmarting a walleye also relish eating the fish’s firm white flesh.

Dakota joined the Crooked Creek Chapter seven years ago. His profes-

sion at Fergus Electric Cooperative is journeymen lineman. Two co-workers, Darek Dygert and Jake deRosier, are also Crooked Creek members.

“We’re a good organization with a good group of people,” Dakota said, adding that members’ expertise and mentoring have helped him improve his own walleye fishing skills.

At the monthly meetings, members bounce around ideas about how to improve local fisheries as well as support communities. The money that is raised through memberships and the annual banquet in February in Lewistown, a popular event with its walleye feed, is not necessarily earmarked for fishing-related projects. Crooked Creek members, in addition to hosting Kid’s Fishing Day, support local youth in other ways. They have helped fund trips to Washington D.C. and donated \$5,000 for the new baseball fields at Veteran’s Park in Lewistown.

RM

IDENTIFY ACCOUNT NUMBER*

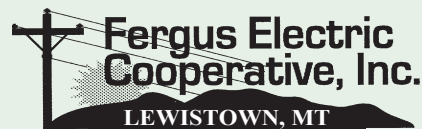
WIN A \$35 CREDIT

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 \$35 credit on next month’s statement.

**Account 6011, Account 396472
Account 54430, Account 395587
Account 396642, Account 396940**

No winner to report for last month.

*NUMBERS ARE DRAWN MONTHLY



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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:

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Scott Olson	406-366-5822
Dan Balster.....	406-366-0975

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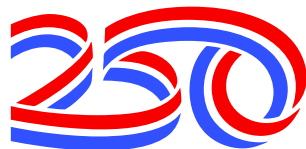
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Fergus Features is an award-winning newsletter.

AMERICA INDEPENDENCE DAY



CLOSURE

Fergus Electric Cooperative offices will be closed Thursday, July 2 and Friday, July 3