

# F E R G U S

## FEATURES

Member Newsletter ♦ Fergus Electric Cooperative, Inc., Lewistown, MT ♦ [www.ferguselectric.coop](http://www.ferguselectric.coop)



## MANAGER'S MESSAGE

From Carson Sweeney

## Aggressive vegetation-management practices are a priority for FEC

**I**n our constant pursuit of being good stewards of our electric infrastructure, I believe it is prudent that we take a more aggressive approach in our vegetation-management practices.

Historically we have trimmed trees on a regular basis, but we didn't often pursue removing trees outside of our right of way that were within striking distance of our lines. In the news, we have all seen the damage caused by wildfires in California and Hawaii.

For several years, Fergus Electric Cooperative has steadily increased budgets for the inspection and maintenance of our lines. In 2022, we hired Jacob deRosier to help trim trees and test the structural integrity of our wood poles. Jacob and the team have helped us improve our system immensely. We have a proactive line inspection and maintenance plan, but my fear of wildfire continues to grow.

Fergus Electric has more than 4,000 miles of powerlines, many of which are in treed and mountainous areas.

Going forward, we will be more aggressive in our vegetation-management practices and intend to remove trees entirely as compared to trimming them every few years.

We will be asking landowners to support our long-term plan to remove problematic trees instead of trimming them on a regular basis. We will also be working with landowners to discuss the removal of tall trees within striking distance of our overhead powerlines.

Our goal is to protect cooperative powerlines and members' property from wildfire.

In conjunction with proactive tree trimming and removal, I anticipate that we will convert some overhead lines to underground and reroute lines away from treed areas where practical.

Our concerted effort to reduce the risk of wildfire is at the forefront of our strategic planning and investment. We must take a more heavy-handed approach to vegetation management to reduce our chance of igniting a wildfire.

Mother nature will always have the upper hand, but



Jacob deRosier fells a tree south of Grass Range within Fergus Electric's right of way. The co-op's goal is to protect cooperative powerlines and members' property from wildfire.

with continued focus and investment in our system, we can reduce our risk and protect our members.

I look forward to discussing this further with our membership at our upcoming annual meeting on Thursday, June 5.

RM

# Notice of 87th Annual Meeting

Pursuant to Article III, Section 3 of the bylaws of Fergus Electric Cooperative, Inc., notice of the 87th annual meeting is hereby given.

The member meeting will take place at the Fergus County Trade Center, Lewistown, Montana, on Thursday, June 5, 2025. 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 two trustees and transaction of other business.

## MEET THE BOARD CANDIDATES

**I**n 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 procedures 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 posted.

### DISTRICT 6

#### Jason Swanz

Hello Fergus Electric Members,

My name is Jason Swanz, and I am running for re-election to the Fergus Electric board as your District 6 trustee. Along with my wife Jody and our two sons Jackson and Jacob, we run our family ranch and feedlot along Careless Creek on the south side of the Big Snowy Mountains. We have had a year of change as Jackson is finishing his first year at Carroll College, where he also participates on the track team, so our family has been one member short for the first time. Jody and I still stay busy on the ranch and follow Jacob as he participates in various sports for Stanford High School. This keeps us busy, and we are coming to the realization that it will soon come to an end, so we are fully enjoying every minute we can with our boys.

As I have served on the co-op board for 15 years and have seen some challenging times, I am happy to report that Fergus Electric is in a very strong position right now. We have been able to keep rates stable for over a decade, while at the same time putting the cooperative in a good position to handle the challenges of rising rates from our power supplier. We saw a small rate increase this year and we will continue to see this in the coming years, but we are doing everything we can to mitigate the effects on our members.

It is always the goal of the board to keep our rates for the members as affordable as we can, yet keep our cooperative in a strong financial position while keeping our members and employees safe.

The cooperative has completed several projects in the last few years that will keep improving our reliability. These projects face the same challenges that we all face in our businesses, rising costs of materials and delays in availability of materials and equipment. Despite these challenges, the cooperative was able to bring these projects to an end on time and, often, under budget. I am looking forward to seeing the completion of upcoming projects as we continue to grow and work to continually improve our system.

I am proud to be affiliated with Fergus Electric because of the tremendous employees who power our cooperative. The work culture at Fergus Electric is one that ensures that our cooperative is running safely, efficiently and effectively. As members we are very lucky to have Fergus Electric as our



*See SWANZ, page 8*

# DISTRICT 1

## Paul Brady

Paul Brady is a rural veterinarian who, with his wife Whitney, has owned and operated Lewistown Veterinary Service since 2014. Paul has a Bachelor of Science degree in animal science with a beef cow/calf production emphasis from Oregon State University. He went on to earn a Doctorate of Veterinary Medicine from Oregon State, graduating in 2011. He is running for the Fergus Electric Co-op board of directors because he wants to serve and represent the rural central Montana community.



Paul, Whitney and their three young children live just south of Lewistown. They like to spend their free time helping on their family's cattle ranch, riding horses, camping and fishing in the summer, and sledding and skiing in the winter. Paul enjoys gardening, hiking, working outdoors and spending time with his family.

Regarding serving on the Fergus Electric board Paul said "My profession gives me a unique opportunity to work with members from across the Fergus Electric service area. I have had the privilege of developing personal relationships with members from many different parts of central Montana. Chuteside conversations with ranchers and their neighbors is a great place to talk about concerns of the rural community and issues Fergus Electric members might be facing. In addition, I'm excited to bring my skills and experience from owning and operating a small business in rural Montana to the board of directors. I look forward to learning about the inner workings of the co-op and how the entity can further serve rural communities, fulfilling its mission statement to, 'provide reliable, safe, and affordable energy services to the communities we serve.'"

Paul urges all members to attend the annual meeting on Thursday, June 5, and support the co-op.

## Paul Descheemaeker

I am Paul Descheemaeker, and I am honored to seek re-election to the Fergus Electric Cooperative board of directors. My family and I live and work east of Lewistown, where we operate a cow-calf and back-grounding



operation. This has been my home for the past 49 years. We understand the importance of reliable, affordable electricity for our rural communities.

A graduate of Montana State University with a bachelor's degree in agriculture business and a minor in accounting, I bring a strong background in financial management and rural enterprise. I have also completed the NRECA Credentialed Cooperative Director education program. I currently serve as president of the Fergus Electric Cooperative board and represent Fergus Electric on the Members 1<sup>st</sup> Power Cooperative board. I have traveled to both Helena and Washington, D.C., to lobby for policies that benefit electric cooperatives and ensure our communities are served well.

If re-elected, I will continue to prioritize stable rates, safe working conditions for our employees, and keeping Fergus Electric a cooperative that works for its members. I appreciate your support and encourage you to join us at the upcoming annual meeting on June 5.



REMEMBER AND HONOR

# MEMORIAL DAY

— ★ ★ ★ —

## CLOSURE

Fergus Electric Cooperative offices will  
be closed Monday, May 26



# LUCK OF THE DRAW SCHOLARSHIPS

## 10 scholarships to be given away at the Annual Meeting

### Must be present to win

Fergus Electric Cooperative will offer 10 \$1,000 scholarships in a drawing during this year's annual meeting June 5 at the Fergus County Trade Center.

Rules for the scholarship drawing are: 1) The applicant must have a home address in a residence served by Fergus Electric or be the child of a current Fergus Electric Member. 2) The applicant must have at least a "C" grade average, 3) Applicant **MUST** return application slip by June 3. No applications will be accepted at the annual meeting. 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 in which the student will enroll.

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

### FERGUS ELECTRIC LUCK OF THE DRAW SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATION

*Application due by June 3*

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

College/Vo-Tech attending/will attend: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

I maintain at least a "C" average: ☐

Student Signature: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian Signature: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## SWANZ

*Continued from page 6*

rural cooperative, as the employees care about our members and always strive to do the best they can on behalf of the membership. Whether it is working overtime on a storm or on day-to-

day projects, our employees are always professional and hard working. I would like to take this chance to offer a big thank you to our employees for being the outstanding group that they are.

I continue to enjoy my time on the Fergus Electric board, and I would ask for your vote to continue to serve another three-year term. Thank you.

## IDENTIFY ACCOUNT NUMBER\*

### WIN A \$34.00 CREDIT

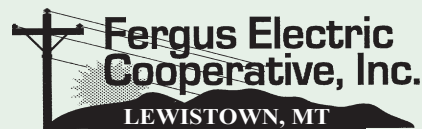
If one of the following account numbers is yours, call Fergus Electric (406-538-3465) and identify yourself and your account number, and you will receive a \$34.00 credit on next month's statement.

**Account 318979, Account 396710  
Account 321814, Account 398835  
Account 396052, Account 321026**

### CONGRATULATIONS!

**Cheryl Walling** of Lewistown, **Joseph R Nash** of Roy, **Tammi & Dennis Crawford** of Lewistown and **David Ponte** of Roundup 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:

Tyson Ruff .....	406-366-9830
Bret Ophus .....	406-366-7523
Bret Nellermeoe (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](http://www.ferguselectric.coop)

E-mail: [ferguselectric@ferguselectric.coop](mailto:ferguselectric@ferguselectric.coop)

Facebook: [www.facebook.com/ferguselectric](https://www.facebook.com/ferguselectric)

**Carson Sweeney.....General Manager**  
**Bret Ophus.....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., Geyser, 735-4476

**Fergus Features is an  
award-winning newsletter.**