

# F E R G U S

## FEATURES

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

## Cottonwood Log Cabins: a getaway close to home

Story and photos by

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Contributing Writer

**N**eed a break but can't commit to a week away?

How about a staycation?

According to Cottonwood Log Cabins owner Al Lake and partner Devney Welsh, it appears central Montanans are becoming more accustomed to this idea and are taking him up on his four-cabin getaway less than 10 miles west of Lewistown.

"It's a very peaceful place," Welsh said. "You can sit on the deck and listen to the birds. There is no other noise."

Lake, an Indiana native, has owned the cabins for nine years.

"I started leasing ground for cattle and raising alfalfa just next door to the cabins," Lake said. "When the place came up for sale I found a way to buy it."

Back then, there were three cabins. Since purchasing the spot in 2009, Lake has done extensive work on the place, with much help from Welsh.

They added a fourth cabin in 2016.

"We've added new roofs, new bathrooms, new windows and more," Lake said. "It's been a process to keep everything updated, but it's been worth it."

"We want each room, each cabin,



*Along with improvements on the original three cabins, a fourth cabin was built in 2016. The cabins are located 10 miles west of Lewistown near Beaver Creek.*

to be comforting and inviting," Welsh said.

More than 200 guests stay each year, and many return, Lake said, which he and Welsh believe speaks volumes about the quality of the place.

"There is much to enjoy," Lake said. "Just listen. You hear that? There's no extra charge for the singing of the birds, and that's all you hear. The cabins are spread out, so the experience is yours alone — you and whoever you bring along."

"It's nice and private," Welsh added. "No people. No vehicles."

Outdoor recreation is a huge part of the experience at Cottonwood Log Cabins. There is a walking trail that goes for miles, and is accessible in both the summer and the winter for (snowshoeing). People staying at the cabins also have access to fishing Beaver Creek.

The list goes on.

"We have inner tubes for the kids to float in the creek," Lake said. "You're not going to run out of things to do. We also have grills and fire pits at each

cabin."

Two of the four cabins also come with a hot tub, including the highly coveted honeymoon cabin; the cabins that don't have hot tubs have satellite TV.

All four cabins have something to offer, Lake said, adding that each cabin has a sensational view.

Lake and Welsh also take pride in the interior of the cabins.

"We try to make them not too nice for hunters, but not too shabby for families," Lake said. "We also want them to be pet friendly. Dogs love it out here."

Welsh put a lot of time and energy into designing the rooms, giving them a rustic feel. Some antiques were used in the furnishing.

"A lot of attention to detail went into the interior," Lake said. "We have cow-skin rugs in the bedrooms and headboards that I made myself. We also have a pair of jackalopes hanging on the wall.

"He loves those jackalopes," Welsh joked.





# MANAGER'S MESSAGE

From Scott Sweeney

## Mechanic retiring

From his toolbox filled with a variety of well-known, well-worn hand tools and technical manuals printed on paper, to devices and computerized diagnostic testing equipment, Tom Simons has seen a lot of changes over the past 26 years in his job as our mechanic. Since January 1992, Tom has done an excellent job identifying, diagnosing and fixing problems on the service, digger and bucket trucks.

Now after more than two and a half decades of maintaining and repairing equipment, Tom has made the decision to retire. Tom has been dependable, being one of the first to arrive at work each morning, every day of his career. He enjoyed sharing with pride news and photos of his kids and grandkids, and he often regaled us with a story related to current events, sprinkled with a dash of Tom's own special blend of seasoning. Thank you, Tom. We appreciate all your hard work. Enjoy your retirement!

## Truck garage

I am pleased to report that our truck garage is being built, with plans to complete it by this fall. When it's snowing this winter and the temperatures drop, for the first time in our history, the crews will be able to park the trucks inside at the end of the workday, keeping them out of the weather. The truck garage will certainly be appreciated and put to good use for many years to come.

## Projects underway

Our line crews and engineers continue to be busy with the installation of new services. We have constructed six new irrigation services and two new commercial, three-phase accounts. And we have numerous new single-phase services for new homes, barns, shops and stock wells which are keeping our line operations and engineering staff hard at it.

We are continuing to work on rebuilding the 50kV transmission line north of Lewistown from the Carter Substation north seven miles along Highway 191. The rebuild is expected to be completed by year's end.

Work on our new automated metering infrastructure (AMI) will continue over the next three years. There is much to be done to replace and upgrade the co-op's entire metering system. We expect the new AMI to be fully deployed in 2020.

## Overhead and underground power-line safety

I want to encourage everyone to be safe. When we are on the go trying to get things done, it is easy to forget to check our surroundings. Be aware of overhead and underground power lines. If you are planning to dig, be sure to call in for an underground locate. Whether you are trimming trees, irrigating, moving equipment, stacking hay or setting up a trampoline for the kids, please be mindful of where the power lines are and take steps to stay safe!

## Kerby Durbin completes 26 years at the co-op

Kerby Durbin was the go-to person for anything related to meters. From time to time he was approached with a concern about a meter running fast. The meter in question would be changed out and brought to Kerby for testing. As he explained to a concerned member, meters are very accurate instruments, and rarely do they run fast or even slow.

As a licensed electrician, Durbin was able to provide information on a variety of electrical-related questions. He was also responsible for the Turtle meters – automated meter reading program.

Kerby and his wife Karen, a high school counselor, are already enjoying summer camping trips.



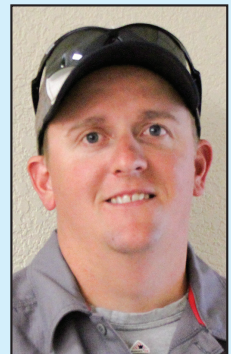
## New faces in new places

Foreman Bret Ophus joins Line Superintendent Dale Rikala as Assistant Line Superintendent in Fergus Electric Cooperative's operations department. Ophus, hired as a journeyman lineman in 1992, was promoted to line foreman in 2015. He assumed his new position this past spring. Bret's responsibilities include scheduling daily work assignments for line personnel, coordinating service orders and assisting the membership with usage and billing concerns.



Bret Ophus

Journeyman Lineman Dakota Wahl comes to Fergus Electric Cooperative from Yellowstone Valley Cooperative in Huntley, where he worked for seven years. Prior to that, he was an apprentice lineman for Aevenia Power Line Contractors and Higher Power, LLC.



Dakota Wahl

When asked what he likes about line work, he said, "I like working outside and working with my hands; and, oh yes, the guys on my crew." He added, "Interesting parts of being a lineman is working storms and night outages."

When not working, Dakota likes to hang out with his wife Alison and two young sons — Lincoln, age 2½ and Landon, 7 months old. He grew up in Lewistown, and is happy to be back.

# Cottonwood Cabins *Continued from page 3*



*Devney Welsh and Al Lake stand in front of the new multi-table pavilion used for hosting weddings, family reunions, conferences and more. The cabin rooms are comfortable, not fancy, but pleasant and inviting.*

## **New pavilion open for events of all kinds**

Last year, Lake expanded Cottonwood Log Cabins further, adding a multi-table pavilion for hosting weddings, family reunions, conferences and more.

"I think the pavilion can hold around 50 people," Lake said.

Lake has hosted three weddings this summer, as well as a business convention. People are enjoying the pavilion, he said, which also features a stove.

Having the pavilion has increased the public's knowledge that Cottonwood Log Cabins is part of the community, and it has sparked interest for couples and others to come out and use the area as a getaway.

"We're encouraged," Lake said. "The local presence is picking up, as is business from all over the country. We've had people stay from Washington, D.C., New Mexico, California, Michigan, Indiana and elsewhere. People from out of town especially like seeing the wildlife. We have pheasants, deer, elk, porcupine, and once we saw a black bear."

People love to fish Beaver Creek, too, which is a perk of staying at the cabins.

"Staying at the cabin is the only way you to get to fish here," Lake said, "which adds to the privacy element."

## **The pleasure is all theirs**

It's an honor and a privilege for Lake and Welsh to welcome people from all walks of life to Cottonwood Log Cabins. Lake said he particularly enjoys having the opportunity to visit with folks about "The West."

"I like sharing central Montana his-

tory," he said. "I like talking about the settlers and the cattle."

Welsh's favorite aspect of hosting is getting to know the people who stay.

"Everyone brings something to us," she said. "Each family is unique. They all bring stories we can share with future customers."

Lake also likes to give people the opportunity to see what a working ranch looks like, as he continues to raise alfalfa and cattle.

"People like to see the hay equipment run and the cows roaming around," Lake said. "It's an experience city folks don't get very often."

For more information, call 538-8411

or go to [www.cottonwoodlogcabins.com](http://www.cottonwoodlogcabins.com).

## **Cabin options:**

**Cabin 1:** Two queen beds, three twin beds, satellite TV, picnic table

**Cabin 2:** Two queens, two twins and a futon, hot tub, picnic table

**Cabin 3:** The "honeymoon cabin" complete with one queen bed and a hot tub

**Cabin 4:** Two queen beds, one bunk bed, screened porch, picnic table, satellite TV

*All cabins include a propane fire-place, a stove, microwave and other essential amenities.*

## **Sweeney elected to NWPPA Board**

Manager Scott Sweeney was elected to the Northwest Public Power Association (NWPPA) Board of Directors at the annual conference in Boise recently. Representing Montana, Sweeney, along with another Montana manager and two directors, will serve a three-year term.

Headquartered in Vancouver, Washington, NWPPA is an international association representing and serving customer-owned, locally controlled utilities in the Western U.S. and Canada.

Some 154 utility members serve approximately 5 million meters and more than 20 million consumers. The association also serves more than 300



associate members who are allied with the electric utility industry.

Sweeney has leadership skills that will fit nicely with NWPPA's objectives — local control, member-driven, integrity, quality and accountability.

Hired as a staking engineer in 1979, Sweeney was promoted to supervisor of construction, operations and maintenance, then assistant manager and in 2004, he was selected by the Fergus Board of Directors as the cooperative's general manager. He has a civil engineering degree from Montana State University, and maintains his professional engineering license.

# Mayday, Mayday, Mayday

Fergus Electric Cooperative employees, including linemen and office staff, practiced Mayday procedures at the June safety meeting. EMT and Fergus meter technician Brian

Godbey organized the day's activities. A lot of knowledge was gained, and participants agreed it was a beneficial exercise.



L to R: An injured lineman rescue is demonstrated by Louie Hould. Assistant Line Superintendent Bret Ophus, Brian Godbey and one of the Mercy Flight nurses discuss the day's activities. Lewistown responders and ambulance were dispatched to the scene. Here, they are demonstrating a Lucas automated chest compression device. Mercy Flight from Great Falls sent a helicopter and crew to participate in the drill.



## Identify Account Number\*

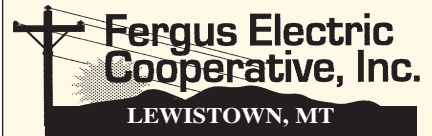
Win a \$32 credit

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You will receive a \$32.50 credit on next month's statement.

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Donnis Doman of Winnett was last month's winner.



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**Second:** Check the breaker below the meter.

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

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