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*McLean County consistently ranks among one of North Dakota's most popular pheasant hunting counties. **Lacey**, an English cocker spaniel, is proud of her retrieve on this rooster.*



Fall in McLean County



McLean Electric Cooperative serves several recreation-based businesses, which help tourism and outdoor recreation play an important role in McLean County's economy and quality of life. Duck hunting is one of several fall outdoor recreation opportunities in the county.

Fall in McLean County

BY PATRICIA STOCKDILL

While farms and rural homes account for the bulk of McLean Electric Cooperative's (MEC) accounts, businesses involved in the recreational industry also play an important part – and it's much more than the revenue they generate for the cooperative.

Recreational-based businesses add to the quality of life for MEC members, North Dakotans throughout the state, and visitors throughout the country and beyond, described MEC General Manager/CEO Marty Dahl.

Typically, the majority of recreational activity occurs in the summer when people turn to places such as Lake Sakakawea, Strawberry Lake, Brush Lake, the Missouri River, and other lakes across the county for boating, camping, fishing and simply enjoying the outdoors.

However, like other areas of North Dakota, fall is a great time to recreate in McLean County.

The county typically ranks in the top five for upland game bird harvest and in the top 10 for waterfowl harvest.

Last year, McLean County led the state in the highest percentage of pheasants harvested by residents,

accounting for 6.7 percent of the total overall resident pheasant harvest.

In addition, it ranked second in 2017 in the highest percentage of partridge taken by nonresident hunters, accounting for 12.3 percent of the total nonresident partridge harvest. The county was third in waterfowl harvest in 2015 and fifth in 2016.

When migration is in full swing, places like the Audubon National Wildlife Refuge, Garrison Dam's wooded river bottoms, an array of U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Waterfowl Production Areas, Fort Stevenson State Park, N.D. Game and Fish Department Wildlife Management Areas, and The Nature Conservancy's John E. Williams Preserve draw birders' attention in the fall.

Audubon National Wildlife Refuge Project Leader Todd Frerichs suggested that fall is an excellent time to drive its auto tour route, especially if one can catch the amazing sight of thousands upon thousands of snow geese as they move through.

Check the auto tour route and refuge hiking trail any time after a weather event, he added, because it can bring a variety of unusual bird species and activity. The hiking trail is open year-round. "It's (trailhead) right at the back door of the office," Frerichs described.

Birds start migrating as early as August and the variety of species changes depending on weather and time of the year.

Admittedly, accessing Lake Audubon during ice fishing season is one of the refuge's most popular visitor activities. "Whenever first ice appears, it doesn't take long for ice fishermen to appear, as well," Frerichs described. He estimated anywhere from 60,000 to 70,000 people visit the refuge each year with a bulk of them for ice fishing.

The refuge is open for archery deer hunting and deer gun season for hunters with tags for the unit where the refuge is located. However, portions of the refuge are closed for safety reason, Frerichs explained.

The most popular fall activity is a tradition that begins after deer gun season closes, when the refuge opens for upland bird hunting – pheasants in particular. It's traditionally been the refuge's biggest event, Frerichs added.

Another McLean Electric member is also becoming a year-round destination, Dahl suggested – Fort Stevenson State Park. One reason the park often has the highest visitation rate among all N.D. Parks and Recreation Department state parks is activities extending beyond the summer recreation season.

Fort Stevenson State Park Manager Chad Trautman said he sees a slight increase in fall park use in recent years. The niche of park users in the fall extends beyond the traditional hunter and fall angler.



McLean County is a popular destination for hunters. They might even occasionally find a partridge, the little spook of the prairie that almost always sparks surprise – even with a dog on point – as they flush.

Park visitors and campers in the fall tend to be a little different from those in the summer, Trautman added. Many enjoy the fall quiet time, its fall colors, and wildlife seems to be a little more visible. “And the mosquito count is always less,” he added.

Activities such as geocaching are becoming more

popular. “It’s just a fun activity ... The one benefit of geocaching is you really do get off the trails and explore the park,” Trautman suggested. In addition, the park offers fat tire bike rentals for year-round use on its trails.

The N.D. Parks and Recreation Department statewide camping reservation system ends after Labor Day so camping is first-come, first-served. Primitive camping and electricity is available year-round, Trautman explained.

Weather-permitting, the park tries to keep all utilities available until Oct. 1. They may delay shutting utilities down if Mother Nature and the weather cooperate with extended warm weather. Once water is shut off, though, campers can still get potable water at the shop, Trautman added.

Another advantage to fall camping at Fort Stevenson is cheaper off-season rates: Electricity, water and sewer camping sites are \$25, electricity and water sites are \$20, and primitive camping is \$12 during the off-season.

McLean Electric Cooperative also serves recreational facilities at Lake Brekken and Lake Holmes, as well as Indian Hills Resort west of Garrison.

Indian Hills Resort owner Kelly Jo Sorge said cabin rental is available until Nov. 1 each year. While many fall visitors come to pheasant hunt, Sorge said fall fishing is becoming increasingly popular. She expects the same – or better – this fall. “I think we’re going to see a lot more anglers this year with the good fishing,” she said.

How to get a bite

The Lake Sakakawea and the Missouri River tailrace is the only place in North Dakota offering salmon fishing and fall is a great time.

Adult fish move into shallower water as they attempt to spawn in the fall. If an angler doesn't want to invest in the setup involving downriggers for summer salmon fishing when they're in the deep depths of the lake, September and October is when deep-diving crankbaits come into play. Try trolling over sunken islands in 30 feet, suggested Six-Mile Bait and Tackle owner Carey Gieser, Garrison.

Or try trolling open water with reef runners.

With hunting seasons and an array of other activities, it can be easy to overlook Lake Sakakawea's fall fishing opportunities. With the lake's high water elevation in 2018, Gieser said there's a possibility the area around Fort Stevenson State Park's Beacon Point could provide some fall

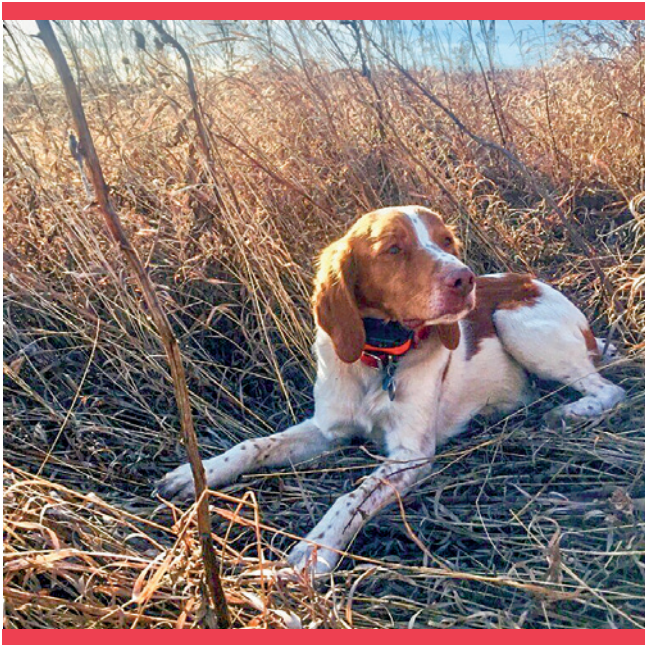
walleye opportunities.

Typically, fall is a good time to go west. With the good walleye bite throughout much of Lake Sakakawea this year, 2018 might be no exception. Don't overlook Douglas Bay, but anywhere from Deepwater Bay west to Shell Village and beyond are excellent areas for fall walleye success on Lake Sakakawea

“That section is often phenomenal from Oct. 1 until freeze-up when you can't get a boat in anymore,” he added.

Try jigging Raps in 20 to 25 feet or work jigs in shallow water. “The more consistent bite is with jigging Raps, though,” he continued.

Fishing is just another reason McLean County and recreational businesses served by McLean Electric Cooperative are popular when weather cools. ■



Waterfowl hunting in McLean County is popular among residents and nonresidents alike. This hunting dog, **Garnet**, patiently awaits the arrival of ducks on a clear, crisp autumn morning in eastern McLean County.

Sorge founded the annual Bite Me fishing tournament in 2005. Held in mid-August – Aug. 17 this year – it

provides an opportunity for one of the last fishing tournaments of the year on Lake Sakakawea.

While it is competitive because cash prizes are awarded to its winners, Sorge said the 40-team field typically consists of many families. “It’s a small family tournament ... we see the non-competitive fishermen in it,” she added.

Indian Hills hosts the AIM (Anglers Insight Marketing) Weekend Walleye Series North Dakota Championship Aug. 24 and 25, the first time the event comes to the resort. The winner qualifies for the AIM national championship. North Dakota, Minnesota and Wisconsin comprise the AIM circuit and events are held at various lakes throughout the summer.

The Indian Hills location easily allows anglers to fish east or north, Sorge suggested, which was one reason tournament officials were drawn to the resort. In addition, weigh-in is onsite at the resort.

It’s growth and activities extending throughout the year that make tourism, including outdoor recreation, the “other industry” that brings commerce to the region, Dahl offered. When there is growth and activity through the year, it helps ensure viability for everyone.

And it’s another reason to call McLean County home. ■

Autumn events

Just because August brings school and harvest, doesn’t mean McLean County slows down in recreational opportunities and participation. Several events are on tap as leaves turn into a kaleidoscope of colors and temperatures cool:

- **Aug. 17:** Bite Me Invitational fishing tournament, Lake Sakakawea, Indian Hills Resort, Garrison.
- **Aug. 24 and 25:** Anglers Insight Marketing fishing tournament, Lake Sakakawea, Indian Hills Resort, Garrison.
- **Aug. 25:** Fort Stevenson Regatta, Fort Stevenson State Park deTrobriand Marina, Garrison. Racing begins at noon.
- **Aug. 25:** Beach Party, Fort Stevenson State Park, Garrison. Activities begin at 5 p.m.
- **Aug. 31:** Archery deer season opens.
- **Sept. 1:** Dove and mountain lion seasons open.
- **Sept. 15 and 16:** Chinook fishing tournament, Lake Sakakawea, Government Bay, Riverdale.
- **Sept. 15:** Snipe and sandhill crane seasons open.
- **Sept. 22:** Missouri River Tailrace fishing tournament, Missouri River, Riverdale.
- **Sept. 22:** Tentative opening day for resident waterfowl season.
- **Sept. 29:** Tentative opening day for nonresident waterfowl season.
- **Sept. 29:** Bike Your Park Day, Fort Stevenson State Park, Garrison. Biking the trails with park staff begins at 1 p.m.
- **Sept. 29:** Badlands Bass Bandits fishing tournament, Lake Audubon.
- **Oct. 6:** Pheasant season opens.
- **Oct. 13:** Turkey season opens.
- **Nov. 9:** Deer gun season opens.
- **Nov. 23, Nov. 24, Nov. 25, Nov. 30, Dec., 1, Dec. 7 and Dec. 8:** Dickens Village Festival Geocaching, Fort Stevenson State Park.
- **Nov. 26:** Upland game bird season traditional opening day, Audubon National Wildlife Refuge, Coleharbor. ■

TIME FOR AUTUMN CHORES!

As the autumn air turns crisp, it's time to make sure your home's air leaks are sealed properly to keep winter winds away. Here, McLean Electric Cooperative shares information on properly sealing air leaks.

TIPS FOR SEALING AIR LEAKS

- Test your home for air tightness.
- Caulk and weatherstrip doors and windows that leak air.
- Caulk and seal air leaks where plumbing, ducting or electrical wiring comes through walls, floors, ceilings and soffits over cabinets.
- Install foam gaskets behind outlet and switch plates on walls.
- Inspect dirty spots in your insulation for air leaks and mold. Seal leaks with low-expansion spray foam made for this purpose and install house flashing if needed.
- Look for dirty spots on your ceiling paint and carpet, which may indicate air leaks at interior wall/ceiling joints and wall/floor joists, and caulk them.
- Cover single-pane windows with storm windows or replace them with more efficient double-pane low-emissivity windows.
- Use foam sealant on larger gaps around windows, baseboards and other places where air may leak out.
- Cover your kitchen exhaust fan to stop air leaks when not in use.
- Check your dryer vent to be sure it is not blocked. This will save energy and may prevent a fire.
- Replace door bottoms and thresholds with ones that have pliable sealing gaskets.
- Keep the fireplace flue damper tightly closed when not in use.
- Seal air leaks around fireplace chimneys, furnaces and gas-fired water heater vents with fire-resistant materials.

COMMON CAULKING COMPOUNDS

Caulk Type	Recommended Uses	Cleanup	Shrinkage	Adhesion	Comments
Silicone	Seals most dissimilar building materials such as wood, stone, vinyl, metal flashing and brick	Immediately with dry cloth and mineral spirits or naphtha	Little or none	Good to excellent	Permits joints to stretch or compress. Will stick to painted surfaces, but paint will not adhere to most cured silicones.
Polyurethane, expandable spray foam	Expands when curing. Good for larger cracks. Use in non-friction areas, because foam becomes dry and powdery over time.	Immediately with solvent such as lacquer thinner	None; expands quite a bit	Good to excellent	Quickly expands to fit larger, irregularly shaped gaps. Flexible. Can be applied at variable temperatures. Must be painted for exterior use to protect from ultraviolet radiation.
Water-based spray foam	Around window and door frames in new construction or remodeling projects; smaller cracks	Water	None; expands only 25%	Good to excellent	Takes 24 hours to cure to a soft consistency. Will not overexpand to bend window frames. Must be exposed to air to dry. Not useful for larger gaps, as curing becomes difficult.
Butyl rubber	Seals most dissimilar materials such as glass, metal, plastic, wood and concrete. Seals around windows and flashing; bonds loose shingles	Mineral spirits or naphtha	5%-30%	Good	Lasts 10 or more years. Resilient, but not brittle. Can be painted after one week. Variable shrinkage may require two applications. Does not adhere well to painted surfaces.
Oil or resin-based	Seals exterior seams and joints on almost all building	Mineral spirits or naphtha	10%-20%	Good	Low cost. Rope and tube forms available. Oils dry out and cause material to harden and fall out. Low durability; lasts 1-4 years. Poor adhesion to porous surfaces such as masonry. Should be painted. Limited temperature range.



Historic 2011 Missouri River System flooding resulted in the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers opening Garrison Dam spillway gates. In 2018, though, the hydropower generation tunnels and adjacent regulatory tunnels moved the high volume of water out of Lake Sakakawea. The Corps estimates high releases from Missouri River system dams will generate more than 12 billion kilowatt-hours of hydropower.

Missouri River System hydropower

BY PATRICIA STOCKDILL

On any given year, power plants from the six Missouri River System mainstem dams normally generate about 9.3 billion kilowatt-hours (KWH) of electricity.

That's the long-term average over decades of ebbs and flows of water released from Fort Peck Dam, Montana; Garrison Dam near Riverdale; and Oahe, Big Bend, Fort Randall and Gavins Point dams in South Dakota.

But this is life on the Northern Great Plains and "normal" means extremes – extreme heat, extreme cold, drought and floods.

A majority of water inflow into Lake Sakakawea comes from mountain snowpack in portions of Wyoming and Montana. With adequate mountain runoff last year, the lake was still at typical summer elevations in 2017, despite moderate and severe drought conditions gripping much of North Dakota surrounding its share of the Missouri River system.

The scenario changed in 2018 when above average snowpack fell in the western mountains feeding the river.

Mountain runoff was estimated to be 36 percent above the long-term average, with approximately 34.6 million acre-feet of water flowing into Lake Sakakawea.

That spells flood concerns for folks downstream of dams along the river system, including portions of

McLean County and farther south in Bismarck-Mandan and beyond.

It also spells bank erosion concerns for land and property owners adjacent to the top of Lake Sakakawea's flood pool – 1,854 feet above mean sea level (MSL).

However, while flood control is a priority for Missouri River System management, hydropower production is one of the six authorized project purposes when Congress approved the 1944 Pick-Sloan Act creating the Missouri River's six-dam reservoir system.

Ironically, when the tunnels are fully open, the large volume of water flowing downstream from the six dams benefits many users of electricity, including rural electric cooperatives such as McLean Electric Cooperative (MEC).

To help move the large amount of water in the reservoir system, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the agency in charge of Missouri River system reservoirs and dam management, increased Garrison Dam releases to about 60,000 CFS daily average in June, the highest level since the 2011 flood.

The scene wasn't quite the same in 2011 – this year the spillway gates weren't opened. However, Garrison Dam Power Plant tunnels were opened to full capacity again in 2018, releasing 41,000 cubic feet per second of water after

churning through the plant's hydropower turbines.

Additional water was released through adjacent regulatory tunnels to help move reservoir inflows – remaining mountain snowpack plus June plains rainfall – through the reservoir system.

Altogether, that means the six hydropower plants are producing a lot of electricity: In June, the Corps projected total electric generation in 2018 to be approximately 12.7 billion KWH, 3.4 billion KWH above average. “It’s doing its job right now,” McLean Electric Cooperative (MEC) General Manager/CEO Marty Dahl described, as the dams and reservoirs hold back floodwaters while producing above-average hydropower generation.

Western Area Power Administration (WAPA) is the federal power marketing administration (PMA) buying and selling hydropower produced by the river system’s dams. The electricity goes out on the electric grid throughout the multi-state region.

McLean Electric, other rural electric cooperatives, and other eligible entities receive a percentage of hydropower as part of the mix of sources from its wholesale providers, Basin Electric Power Cooperative (BEPC) and Central Power Electric Cooperative (CP).

Basin Electric Power Cooperative is a member of the regional electric generation and transmission consortium, Southwest Power Pool, which enlarges BECP’s pool of available electricity to meet its peak demand periods. “We have more sources of generation we can tap into,” Dahl explained.

McLean Electric receives about 10 percent of its electricity from hydropower. “It’s (electric grid) kind of like a hotdish,” Dahl described, with the cooperative’s



Fort Stevenson State Park visitors didn't have far to walk from their picnic tables at the park's east picnic area with Lake Sakakawea about 2 feet into its flood pool in 2018.

electricity coming from a variety of generation sources – coal-based power plants, hydropower, wind, and to a lesser degree, solar or nuclear.

The six Missouri River dams can produce more electricity for WAPA to make available on the grid because it’s operating at a higher-than-normal capacity. “They (WAPA) have more power to sell,” Dahl explained, which can ultimately benefit McLean Electric consumer-members and taxpayers alike. That’s because when WAPA can sell more electricity, the agency, in turn, generates more income.

That money goes into the federal coffers to help generate federal revenue – and more federal revenue can reduce taxpayer burden.

In addition, as WAPA generates more revenue, it could ultimately lower wholesale electric costs.

WAPA and other electric generation providers have contracts to meet, Dahl continued. Higher hydropower



The courtesy dock at Fort Stevenson State Park south of Garrison was moved to a temporary location to accommodate higher-than-normal lake elevations.

generation makes it easier for WAPA to meet its obligations, as well as sell the extra electricity on the open market.

WAPA tacked on a “drought adder” to its wholesale costs when a major drought gripped the region not that many years ago. At that time, the dams weren’t producing enough electricity for WAPA to meet its contractual obligations because the reservoir system was in a water conservation mode.

The drought adder provided revenue for WAPA to cover its additional expenses of having to go on the open market to buy electricity generated from other, more expensive, sources in order to meet their contracts.

WAPA has removed the drought adder so it can provide its wholesale electricity at a lower cost.

In addition, McLean Electric and other electric cooperatives eligible to receive hydropower allocations from WAPA recently learned the federal government won’t consider a proposal to privatize PMAs such as WAPA.

“The administration pulled that (privatization proposal) off the table. It generally comes up with every administration change ... but when they (Government Accounting Office) do the analysis, they find (PMAs) actually make money for the federal government,” Dahl described.

While the total amount of hydropower produced in 2018 by Garrison Dam and the other Missouri River system won’t be determined until the end of the year, there is at least some benefit to higher-than-normal water levels to help offset issues and concerns accompanying high water levels. ■



*Congratulations to Terri Schmidt of Turtle Lake, the \$1,000 grand prize winner at McLean Electric Cooperative’s annual meeting! **Larry Gessele**, MEC president, presents **Terri Schmidt** with the \$1,000 grand prize.*

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