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## Message from board chairman

BY LARRY GESSELE

This summer, McLean Electric Cooperative will reach a notable milestone. Seventy-five years ago, this co-op was formed and things were never quite the same since. The people who were instrumental in getting this co-op started were part of the “Greatest Generation.” They certainly knew about hardship and uncertainty, coming out of the Great Depression and World War II. It’s ironic that the generation before them faced a pandemic similar to the one the current generation is facing.

To be sure, we are facing uncertain times, but if you have ever questioned where the strength of this country comes from, listen to the “Ode to the Common Man” by Aaron Copland. He managed to transform that strength to music. The common man and woman have been the backbone of this country through every crisis it has had and they will be again. I see that strength in all the McLean Electric employees and I see it in the McLean Electric members all across our service area.

As flexibility is a key to long-term survival and success in any business, the pandemic situation has McLean Electric redoubling its focus on maintaining safe, reliable power to its members through this turbulent time. At the same time, as our current manager is retiring later this year, the board is focusing our efforts on a

manager search for his replacement.

The board and I would like to thank all of the current and former employees and board members who helped build this co-op. Their vision and dedication is sincerely appreciated.

Also, we would like to thank Marty Dahl for his many years of service to this co-op. He will leave McLean Electric in very good shape. We wish all the best to Marty and Alisa as they enter their retirement.

In closing, as we are in the midst of change, and we will have to adjust to the “new normal” (whatever that will be!) One thing is certain: We will emerge from this experience changed, for sure, but stronger and wiser.

The board and I thank you all for your support and will keep you posted as to the revised annual meeting date. ■



LARRY GESSELE

SMALL CHANGE  
THAT CHANGES LIVES!



MAKES A DIFFERENCE!



## From the manager's desk

BY MARTIN DAHL, GENERAL MANAGER

Greetings to all of our McLean Electric Cooperative members. Normally, you would see all of our annual meeting information in this issue. The board of directors made a wise choice to postpone the annual meeting due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This decision was based on ensuring a safe environment for our members and staff.

It is our hope to reschedule the meeting for late summer or early fall, depending on if this virus runs its course by then. We need to see a decline and stabilization of COVID-19 cases before it will be safe to have a meeting.

Your cooperative is healthy financially and to date has not seen large financial losses due to the virus. In addition, our staff has remained healthy.

We closed the front lobby early, because if our people get sick and the lights go out, who is going to get the lights back on? We have taken many steps to keep our employees safe. It is imperative that they stay that way. We are not traveling out of state. We are not going to meetings out of our service area. We are avoiding face-to-face contact. Much of our business is being

handled online.

We are certainly sorry about any inconvenience, but our people are not easily replaced if they can't work. We all appreciate your patience. Hopefully, we will be able to get back to normal operations in the near future.

In the meantime, please stay safe and healthy. We will keep you posted on the new meeting date. At this time, we intend to evaluate dates as we proceed into summer.

Thank you all and we hope your summer will be a happy and healthy one. ■



**MARTIN DAHL**



We're all looking forward to getting outdoors and enjoying the sunshine this summer, but McLean Electric Cooperative wants you to stay safe, too. Ground-fault circuit interrupters (GFCIs) are one form of protection from electrical hazards outdoors. GFCIs detect dangerous situations where a shock may occur and cut off power to prevent shock. Any situation where electricity is used near water is a shock hazard. You should have GFCI protection on lighting around pools and near hot tubs.

Here are other tips to stay safe in or around swimming pools:

- Do not put electric appliances within 10 feet of a swimming pool.
- Any electric outlets within 20 feet of a pool should have a GCFI.
- Never swim during a thunderstorm.
- When you leave the pool, don't touch any electrical appliances until you are dry. Never touch any electrical appliances when you are wet or standing in water.

If you plan to go boating or fishing this summer, be aware of your surroundings and potential electrical hazards.

- Check for the location of power lines before fishing. Make sure you are casting the line far away from power lines to avoid contact.

# Call before you dig!

Planting a tree? Installing a fence? Remember to contact North Dakota One Call first! The first step to any project is safety, and damaging an underground facility while you dig can cause injury or even death.

Numerous utility lines may be buried on your property, ranging from electric and telephone lines to water and sewer lines, but North Dakota One Call will help you locate these lines before your project begins.

Contact North Dakota One Call and utility line owners will locate and mark their lines. These locates do not include any lines you may have installed to your private facilities, such as detached garages, wells or yard lights.

Go online at [www.ndonecall.com](http://www.ndonecall.com) or call **800-795-0555** or **811**.

It's free, it's simple and it's the law.

## The 811 process:



**Know what's below.  
Call before you dig.**

### 1. Notify

Notify the North Dakota One Call Center by calling 811 or making an online request at least 48 hours before work begins, excluding weekends and holidays. You'll give the operator information about how to contact you, where you are planning to dig and what type of work you will be doing, or go online to enter this information. Utility companies who have potential facilities in the area of your dig site will be notified about your intent to dig.



### 2. Wait

Wait the required amount of time for affected utility operators to respond to your request.



### 3. Confirm

Confirm that all affected utility operators have responded to your request and marked underground utilities. Compare the marks to the list of utilities the One Call Center notified.



### 4. Respect

Respect the marks. The marks provided by the affected utilities are your guide for the duration of the project. If you are unable to maintain the marks during your project, or the project will continue past your request's expiration date, please call 811 to ask for a re-mark.



### 5. Dig carefully

Dig carefully around the marks. No mechanical excavating can take place within 24 inches on either side of the marked location of the underground facility. If you plan on digging within that 4-foot-wide area, hand digging is allowed, but please dig carefully and cautiously.



**JyliAnne Striha**, Minot, has her hands full with a walleye while her friend, **Kayla Desjardins** shares her excitement. Kayla's dad is McLean Electric Cooperative Lineworker Loren Desjardins. The idea of living along Lake Sakakawea is one of the reasons Loren was interested in joining McLean Electric and moving to Garrison with his wife, Desiree.



PHOTOS BY LOREN DESJARDINS

## Livin' the lake life

BY PATRICIA STOCKDILL

It's a major economic driver in McLean County, as well as the state of North Dakota. It's the Missouri River System, including the river, Lake Sakakawea and Lake Audubon.

For some lifelong McLean County residents, its presence is yet another reason they choose to stay and live in the area.

For others, its presence is one reason they choose to recreate in the area.

And for others, the outdoor opportunities that abound are one reason they choose to live and seek employment in the area. For example, six of McLean Electric Cooperative's (MEC) 23 employees moved to the area and live near Lake Audubon or Lake Sakakawea in part because of the Missouri River System's "lake life."

"Lake life" takes on many meanings, depending on the individuals and their family. For two employees, though, "lake life" became part of their fabric at a young age. Lineworker Loren Desjardins considers the east end of Lake Sakakawea as his "home water" for fishing, although he admits he is partial to the west end of the "big lake."

"When I talk about the lake, it should go without saying that I'm thinking fishing," the avid tournament



**Loren Desjardins** enjoys fishing any time of the year on Lake Sakakawea, including when spring brings the chance to land a large northern pike.

angler suggested. “Regardless if it’s fun fishing or prepping for an upcoming tournament, I treasure the time we spend on the lake.”

MEC General Manager/CEO Marty Dahl also spent his youth on the water, whether water skiing, fishing, swimming, or simply a slow cruise in a boat.

“I still remember catching a large northern from the dock at age 4,” he said with a smile.

Both moved to McLean County and its “lake life” when job opportunities arose at McLean Electric. Desjardins and his wife, Desiree, owned their lake lot before he joined MEC and were considering building a cabin in the coming years. “When the opportunity came up in

Garrison, it didn’t take long talking with my family that we should make our home where we love to play,” he continued.

Now, rather than waiting for a lake cabin, they hope to have their home ready by the fall of 2020.

Dahl joined McLean Electric in 2009, building a home south of Garrison.

Dahl and Loren agree that “lake life” is more than life on the water, as important as that is to them and their families.

“One of my favorite times of day is the drive to work,” Loren described, when he gets to experience wildlife awakening – or in the case of deer, tucking into bed.

## Other lakes offer recreation, too

**M**cLean County lake life isn’t just about the Missouri River System and people embracing Lake Sakakawea, Lake Audubon and the river itself.

Years before the damming of the Missouri River and creation of Lake Sakakawea and Lake Audubon, county residents – and others – discovered natural prairie lakes dotting McLean County.

The checklist of lakes includes little treasures such as Strawberry Lake, home to the first seasonal cabin account McLean Electric Cooperative served. Other lakes include Crooked and Brush lakes with the number of summer cabins growing as interest in boating and fishing grew. Blue Lake, adjacent to Brush Lake, also has its recreational fans with seasonal cabins.

Many other lakes simply provide recreational opportunities for “lake life,” rather than seasonal or year-around living: Lake Brekken and Lake Holmes north of Turtle Lake are two examples. Together with Lightning Lake east of Turtle Lake, they came about with the advent of Garrison Diversion and the McClusky Canal. East and West Park lakes are also part of the Garrison Diversion “chain of lakes.”

McLean County provides a litany of hidden lake treasures, including Lake Gertie south of Benedict with northern pike and Scooby Lake southwest of Benedict stocked with walleye and perch. Both lakes are relatively new fishable lakes after the N.D. Game and Fish Department stocked them as they became viable enough to support fishing opportunities. Schroeder East Lake northeast of Mercer is another new perch lake, although all three lakes don’t have boat ramp access available.

Coal Lake near Underwood is now a Game and Fish

Department Wildlife Management Area after North American Coal Company and the agency worked together, along with other agencies and industry, to establish the public wildlife area. While the natural lake suffered major fish losses in the winter of 2018-2019, it has been restocked and could provide fishing opportunities in the coming years. In the meantime, it’s available for paddle craft use, such as kayaking and canoeing. Just remember that as a wildlife management area, wildlife comes first and special regulations apply.

Other McLean County lakes include: Camp Lake, Camp Loop Pond, Custer Mine Pond, Long Lake, Painted Woods Creek, Painted Wood Pond, Riverdale City Pond, and Triangle Y Pond.

Lake Audubon has seven boat ramps available in the summer, while Lake Sakakawea has recreational access at Deepwater Bay, Indian Hills Resort, Douglas Creek, Camp of the Cross, Garrison Bay, Fort Stevenson State Park, Steinke Bay, Sportsmen’s Centennial Bay, West Totten Trail Day Use, Wolf Creek, and Government Bay.

Three Missouri River access points in McLean County are available at the Garrison Dam tailrace, Washburn and Steckel Landing.

Of all of the lakes within McLean County, there are only three the Game and Fish Department doesn’t stock: Pelican Lake northeast of Mercer and Turtle Lake northwest of Turtle Lake both have fishable waters, however, but no boat ramp. Weishaar WPA, also northwest of Turtle Lake, is a fishable lake in the winter for smaller perch.

The N.D. Game and Fish Department website, ([www.gf.nd.gov](http://www.gf.nd.gov)), provides an array of information about McLean County lakes. Go to the website, clicking “Fishing,” “More Fishing” and “Where to Fish.” ■



PHOTO COURTESY ALISA AND MARTY DAHL

**J. Layman**, grandson of McLean Electric Cooperative General Manager/CEO Marty Dahl and his wife, Alisa, gets a young introduction to fishing on Lake Sakakawea.

Couple that scene with a light west breeze and it's a good bet Dahl and his wife, Alisa, will be in the boat – engine shut off – just drifting in the backwaters of Garrison Bay below their home.

The neighbors living east of the Desjardins are generally quiet, except when rooster pheasants are crowing and even some sharp-tailed grouse make their appearance. While he lives near Sportsmen's Centennial Park in Centennial Bay, Loren's view to the east is the Custer Mine Wildlife Management Area. An old railroad sign denoting the long-gone mining area "Custer" stands cockeyed to his south. To the west, well, there's a handy boat ramp.

Julie Streich and her husband, Carey, moved to Lake Audubon seven years ago when Julie joined McLean Electric as a customer service representative. They began considering a move when their son moved to the family farmhouse, continuing their family farming tradition in northwest North Dakota. While living the lake life was part of their decision in selecting their location, it was the fact that they found a house that suited them that sealed the deal.

In the process, they gained numerous new friends and discovered the variety of "lake life" activities. Their move allows them to enjoy more time pontooning on Lake Audubon, fishing, and just spending time with friends. Plus, it's hard to beat a campfire near the lake and the

"Then you have the other end of the day, where we have the most beautiful sunsets in North Dakota. Then put them (sunsets) over the lake. ... It's second to none," he exclaimed.

Dahl echoes that sentiment: "I must have 100 sunset photos that are all different. ... The wildlife around the lake is also a great thing to see. We have seen deer, geese, ducks, coyotes, fox, moose, a mountain lion, rabbits, a badger, and more from our patio."



Part of living the "lake life" is the opportunity for quick access to an array of fishing and boating activities. It's hard to hug a fish, so **Madeline Moe** greets her nice spring catch of a yellow perch with a kiss. Madeline's parents, Curtiss and Sonja Moe, live along Lake Sakakawea south of Garrison. Sonja is McLean Electric Cooperative's member service advisor.

PHOTO BY SONJA MOE



**Jaxson Dahl** kayaks in Garrison Bay on Lake Sakakawea while visiting his grandpa and grandma, Marty and Alisa Dahl. The Dahls live in Garrison Bay and Marty is McLean Electric's general manager.

chance to entertain grandchildren with water-skiing and tubing.

"Lake life" is many different things to different people. But it's also important to McLean Electric Cooperative.

"Many cabins have become full-time lake homes," Dahl described, which provide stable, year-around revenue for the cooperative. "The lake is a huge boost to the area economy," he added, citing a report estimating that simply having docks available at Fort Stevenson State Park's marinas generates more than \$2 million in taxable sales in the areas. "This helps the local residents a lot. Farming and tourism are our best drivers of the local economy."

Yes, it's the "lake life" – a reason to live life and work in McLean County. ■



Lake life isn't complete without a bonfire. **A.J. Layman, Jaxon Dahl** and **Aaliyah Dahl** enjoy roasting marshmallows as the sun sets on Lake Sakakawea.

PHOTOS COURTESY ALISA AND MARTY DAHL

## Water safety matters

**W**hile living the lake life, whether as a resident, seasonal cabin owner or weekend visitor, brings fun, family, friends and good times together, it can spell tragedy when accidents occur.

The N.D. Game and Fish Department has several programs encouraging people to become educated about boating, fishing and water safety, including a free "Boat North Dakota" watercraft safety training program. It's a great refresher course for experienced boaters, an excellent information source for beginners, and mandatory in North Dakota for children 12 to 15 years of age operating a boat or personal watercraft with a 10-horsepower motor or larger.

Hard copies of the course can be ordered by calling the Game and Fish Department, 701-328-6300, email ([www.gf.nd.gov](http://www.gf.nd.gov)) or writing N.D. Game and Fish Department,

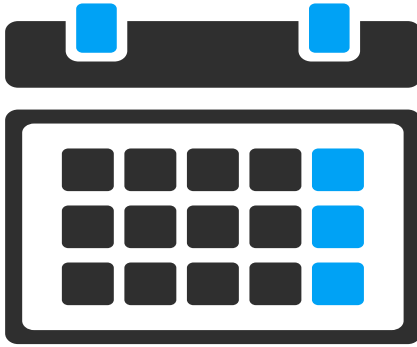
100 N. Bismarck Expressway, Bismarck, ND 58501.

While the home study course is free, the online version has a fee. It's available for order at the Game and Fish Department website, ([www.gf.nd.gov](http://www.gf.nd.gov)), clicking "Boating" on the homepage, "Boating Safety" and then "Boat and Water Safety Education."

Another water safety program entitled "Kids Don't Float" is geared toward children 7 through 11 years of age.

It helps children understand the importance of life jackets; what hypothermia is, how to prevent it, and how to deal with it; safe boating practices; and rules of the boating "road."

A downloadable information brochure with contact information about course locations is also available from the Game and Fish Department. ■



McLean County community calendar:

## Events and activities to see and do

BY PATRICIA STOCKDILL

### June

McLean Electric Cooperative's 75th annual meeting and celebration originally scheduled in Garrison in June is postponed and will be rescheduled for a later date. Please visit our website, Facebook page and your *North Dakota Living* local pages for an announcement of the upcoming meeting date and other details. We look forward to celebrating 75 years of empowering our members later in 2020.

### McLean County food pantry

**distributions:** With additional demands for food pantry services and in meeting COVID-19 precautions and mandates, please feel free to contact your local food pantry for schedule changes, questions or concerns. Some pantries may have

additional temporary distributions or changes in distribution procedures.

### McLean County food pantries:

- **Community Cupboard of Underwood:** 4-6 p.m. June 4; 10 a.m.-noon, June 20; 4-6 p.m. July 2, 208 Lincoln Ave.
- **Garrison Area Resource Center & Food Pantry, Garrison:** noon-2 p.m. and 5-7 p.m. June 25, back door, former Lazy J's building.
- **Our Savior Lord's Food Pantry, Max:** noon-3 p.m. and 5-7 p.m. June 15, Max City Hall, 215 Main St.
- **The Lord's Pantry, Turtle Lake:** 2-4 p.m. June 11; 10 a.m.-noon June 27, Trinity Lutheran Church, 515 Kundert St.
- **Wilton Food Pantry, Wilton:** "Mini" distributions every Friday, 11:30 a.m. until gone; full distribution 4-6 p.m., June 18, 16, Wilton Senior Citizens Center, 42 Dakota Ave.

**PLEASE NOTE THAT SCHEDULED EVENTS ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE PENDING COVID-19 PRECAUTIONS AND MANDATES. PLEASE FOLLOW HEALTH GUIDELINES AND RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONTACT EVENT SPONSORS FOR DETAILS AND UPDATES.**

### Tentative June events:

- **June 6:** National Trails Day, 2 p.m.: Guided ranger hike through Fort Stevenson State Park's native prairie area beginning at the Fort Stevenson Guardhouse Interpretive Center, Garrison. Call 701-337-5576 for more information.

- **June 12-14:** Riverboat Days, Washburn. CANCELLED.
- **June 12-14:** McLean County Fair, McLean County Fairgrounds, Underwood.
- **June 13:** McLean County Fair 83 Jackpot barrel racing and poles in conjunction with the Max Rodeo, McLean County Fairgrounds, 1 p.m.
- **June 13:** National Marina Day, Fort Stevenson State Park, Garrison, 1 p.m. Call 701-337-5576, for more information.
- **June 20:** Citywide rummage sale, Wilton. POSTPONED. Date and time to be announced at a later date:
- **June 27:** Midsummer Classic Car & Bike Show, Underwood.
- **June 27 & 28:** Frontier Military Days, Fort Stevenson State Park, Garrison, noon to 4 p.m. Call 701-337-5576, for more information.
- **June 28:** Visitor Appreciation Day, Fort Stevenson State Park, Garrison, with free day use admission.

McLean County organizations and communities can contact Patricia Stockdill, (stockdill.patricia@gmail.com) or telephone 701-337-5462 to submit community events. ■

*McLean County organizations and communities can contact Patricia Stockdill by emailing stockdill.patricia@gmail.com, or calling 701-337-5462, to submit listings.*

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