

# THE *Southwestern*

A SOUTHWESTERN ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE MEMBER MAGAZINE

MARCH 2021 • VOLUME 73 • ISSUE 3

## Members & Miles

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TALKS ECONOMICS OF  
OPEN SPACE

ON THE  
ROAD AGAIN

EV OWNERSHIP  
ACCELERATES

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Flare Up.

**On Account:** We've hidden a member-account number in this issue (mailing label excluded). If the account number belongs to you, contact us within 30 days and we'll take \$25 off your electric bill. Good luck!



## ON THE COVER

Snow geese gather against a sunset sky outside Vandalia.

### Ask The CEO

Have a question for the CEO? Send it to Bobby Williams at [bobby.williams@sweci.com](mailto:bobby.williams@sweci.com), or write to him at Southwestern Electric Cooperative, Inc., 525 US Route 40, Greenville, IL. Periodically, we'll print some of your questions with his replies in The Southwestern. Each member who submits a question will be entered in a drawing for a \$25 bill credit. We'll draw a name each time we run an "Ask The CEO" Q&A segment in the magazine.

## FROM THE CEO



525 U.S. Route 40, Greenville, IL 62246.  
Phone: (800) 637-8667. Office Hours:  
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### CEO

Bobby Williams ..... Chief Executive Officer

### The Southwestern

Joe Richardson ..... Editor  
e-mail: [joe.richardson@sweci.com](mailto:joe.richardson@sweci.com)  
Mike Barns ..... Art Director  
e-mail: [mike.barns@sweci.com](mailto:mike.barns@sweci.com)  
Nathan Grimm ..... Media Specialist  
e-mail: [nathan.grimm@sweci.com](mailto:nathan.grimm@sweci.com)

### Satellite Locations:

St. Jacob Office  
10031 Ellis Road, St. Jacob, IL 62281

St. Elmo Distribution Center  
2117 East 1850 Avenue, St. Elmo, IL 62458

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When my family and I moved to Southwestern's service area a little over five years ago, we had no idea where we'd settle. We just knew it would be on co-op lines. I grew up in rural Illinois, with a yard that opened into trees and fields and sprawling countryside. I wanted my family to have that same experience. That's one of the advantages to being a Southwestern member. You can live close enough to town that driving to school or work is convenient, but far enough outside a city to see fields or woods through your windows.

In Southwestern's service area, we have elbow room.

And lots of it.

On average, Southwestern Electric serves about seven homes per mile of line. Investor-owned utilities average 34 households per mile of line. Municipal utilities? They average 48 homes per mile.

In terms of having room to breathe, we're hard to beat. In terms of households per mile of line, we're at an economic disadvantage. Here's what I mean:

The cost for a utility to build a mile of line is relatively consistent. Southwestern Electric's cost, a municipal utility's cost, an investor-owned utility's cost to build a mile of line—all about the same. The same could be said for maintenance—the cost of keeping that mile of line clear of trees is relatively consistent, whether you're a co-op, municipal or investor-owned utility.

Now think back to the numbers I shared a moment ago.

Municipal utilities are recouping their cost to build and maintain that line from revenue generated by 48 households. Investor-owned utilities are recouping their investment through revenue collected from 34 households.

And Southwestern Electric?

Our number is seven.

We're building and maintaining that mile of power line through revenue generated by about seven households.

To put it another way, municipalities are dividing their cost of service per mile of line among 48 customers. Investor-owned utilities are dividing their cost per mile of line among 34 consumers.

*Continued on page 26* ➤

# What does it mean to be a co-op member?

Having trouble paying your bill?

Call us at (800) 637-8667 or email us at [billing@sweci.com](mailto:billing@sweci.com). We'll suggest resources that may be able to help.

*You may qualify for energy assistance through LIHEAP. Find out more at [sweci.com/energy-assistance](http://sweci.com/energy-assistance).*

## It means we're here for you.



**YOUR ACCOUNTABLE ENERGY PARTNER**

## *Coronavirus Response* **Mitigation Measures Remain in Place**

**S**outhwestern Electric Cooperative will keep its coronavirus mitigation measures in place through March. The co-op's response plan calls for lobbies and drive-up windows to remain closed through March 31. "Our employees will continue to answer calls and questions from our membership, and our line crews will respond to outages and make repairs quickly and safely, just as they always do," said CEO Bobby Williams.

Social distancing, weekly disinfecting by the cooperative's maintenance service, daily disinfecting by each employee, wearing masks in common areas and bringing forward questions about possible exposure and symptoms have proven effective safeguards for the cooperative, Williams said.

In March 2020, the co-op took precautions to safeguard the health of employees and members and curb the spread of COVID-19. Protective measures included adopting CDC health and safety guidelines, observing social distancing protocols, wearing face coverings when appropriate, and reviewing safety measures with employees. Those precautions have remained in place since last spring.

Williams encouraged members to manage their accounts, report outages and make payments using the co-op's online payment portal, by using the SWEC IL app, or by calling the cooperative at (800) 637-8667.

For the latest information, go to [www.sweci.com](http://www.sweci.com).

## **BOARD MEETING MINUTES**

We've rebuilt our website! The new site is easier to navigate and displays well on a broad range of devices. It also allows us to accommodate additional material. You'll find updates and a link to the board meeting minutes on the drop-down menu under the News & Information tab at [sweci.com](http://sweci.com).

## **CO-OP REMINDERS**

**March 8** Payment processing systems will be unavailable from midnight to 4 a.m., while we perform system maintenance. No payments will be processed during this time. We will resume processing payments at 4:01 a.m.

**April 2** Southwestern's offices will be closed for Good Friday.

# Co-op Offers Rebates for High Efficiency Heat Pumps, Electric Water Heaters, Smart Thermostats

You embraced our 2020 rebate program with enthusiasm. We're back to offer more savings in 2021. Our rebate program will help you save money on the replacement or new installation of air source heat pumps, geothermal systems, electric water heaters and smart thermostats.

Members are eligible for one rebate per category per year. All rebates will be applied as a bill credit upon receiving the completed rebate application and proof of purchase. Rebate forms are available on our website at [sweci.com](http://sweci.com). You can email your completed application and proof of purchase to [julie.lowe@sweci.com](mailto:julie.lowe@sweci.com), or mail it to: Julie Lowe, 525 US Route 40, Greenville, IL 62246. You're also welcome to leave your materials in the drop box at our Greenville office.



**Have questions? Call Julie Lowe at (800) 637-8667 or email her at [julie.lowe@sweci.com](mailto:julie.lowe@sweci.com).**

## HEATING AND COOLING

High efficiency heat pumps can significantly increase the comfort of your home while lowering your energy bills. If you're thinking of upgrading to or installing a new air source or ground source heat pump, our \$300 rebate will help you offset some of the cost.

To qualify for the rebate, your heat pump must be the primary source of heat in your home. It may be installed in a newly constructed home, or replace electric resistance heat, propane or fuel oil heat. Installed backup heat must be electric, and the condenser and coil must be replaced and/or installed as a matched set.

Requirements for air source heat pumps include:

- At least 16 SEER
- 9 HSPF

Requirements for ground source (geothermal) heat pumps include:

- For closed systems—at least 17 SEER; COP 3.6
- For open systems – at least 21.1 SEER; COP 4.1

## WATER HEATERS

Water heating accounts for about 18 percent of your home's energy use. Choosing an energy efficient water heater can help you reduce your monthly water heating bills.

To qualify for our \$250 water heater rebate, you can install an electric water heater as part of a newly constructed home, or replace an existing gas water heater with an electric model.

Your water heater must be at least 50 gallons and one rebate is allowed per home.

On-demand water heaters do not qualify for a rebate.

## SMART THERMOSTATS

A smart thermostat learns your lifestyle and adjusts the temperature of your home automatically, helping you use less energy and save money.

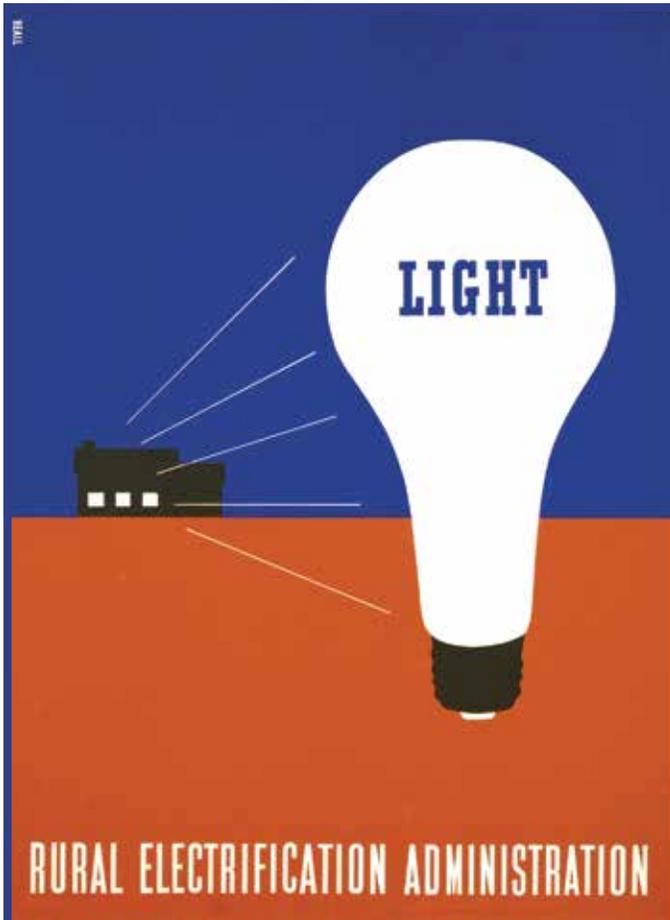
With a smart thermostat, you can control your home's temperature settings, even when you're at work or on the road. Connected to your Wi-Fi, your smart thermostat allows you to monitor and change your home's temperature from your smart phone, tablet or PC.

You can install a smart thermostat as part of a newly constructed home, or replace an existing manual or programmable thermostat.

To qualify for our \$50 rebate, your smart thermostat must be:

- Energy Star certified
- Internet-enabled

## MEMBER MAIL



### REMEMBER WHEN?

My husband and I both attended a one-room school, called the “Big Rock,” in rural Alhambra, Ill. He was in the fourth grade and I was in first. We didn’t have any electricity in our school so the teacher and the parents decided to have a “Box Social.” All the girls were to bring boxes that were fancy decorated and full of food. It was all supposed to be secret when they auctioned them off. We had a play in which everyone had a part. Then the time came to auction the boxes! We made enough money to get electricity in our school! That was early 1950.

—Sandra and Jr. Abert, Alhambra

P.S. Thanks for your awesome magazine—really enjoy it.

### EDITOR’S NOTE

You’ve been sending letters to The Southwestern for more than 60 years. Today you’re likely to email us about programmable thermostats, the SWEC IL app, or your new solar array. On page 7, we’ve shared some of the many useful applications you found for power—in March 1941.

### SEASONS OF GRATITUDE

Thank you for your Seasons of Gratitude [November 2020 issue], From The Editor piece in this month’s Southwestern!

I am one of those people who daydream about white sand beaches and turquoise waters. Often times I forget how breathtaking our Illinois seasons really can be.

Thank you for a beautifully descriptive piece! It’s a great reminder to stop a moment and really take in all Illinois has to offer. There is plenty!

You are a very talented wordsmith and I look forward to reading your future articles.

—Cari Hoover, Troy



### GOOD OLD DAYS

I will be 99 years old next summer. The picture in this month’s magazine [December 2020 issue] is an old-fashioned clothes iron. We had two of them. You heated them on your coal stove and when they got hot you used one to iron your clothes and when it cooled off you used the other one until you got your ironing done.

Good old days.

—Mary Heidke, Worden

### FOND REMINDERS

It is a Sad Iron. I always had to use one to help with the ironing in my family. To heat them, the kitchen stove had to be hot in summer, too.

We had another version, too, that had a removable handle so that one could be heating on the stove while ironing with the other one. The handle detached from one to the other.

When I graduated from high school in 1946, I got a job at First National Bank on the square in Greenville, and with my first paycheck, I bought my mom an electric iron, as they had gotten electric power in the summer of 1946. I still have two of them to remind me always of what used to be!

I have been a Southwestern member since 1950, continuous for 71 years.

—June Wise, Greenville



# The Southwestern

Page 6, March 1941

## More Letters From Our Members

Mr. and Mrs. Ed Marti write us: "We want to drop you a card to say that we appreciate your sending out the monthly bulletin with so much good information. We have had a range from the start of REA, refrigerator, electric pump in house and outdoors."

Mr. August Korte came in the office to pay his bill and reported that he has a popcorn popper, radio, 4 motors, refrigerator, and iron.

When Mr. Harry Cooper mailed in his payment he wrote: "We like your paper very much. As a co-op patron we find it quite a help."

Along with a check from H.C. Emde came this fine comment: "I also want to express my appreciation for the little bulletin you send out. It acquaints a person a lot with the spirit of the co-op. We are pleased very much with the service and so far we are making good use of it."

"We were glad to get the bulletin 'The Southwestern' and hope you will continue sending it as we like it very much." This came from Mr. and Mrs. Tom Johnson.

"Electricity is surely wonderful on the farm. Also enjoy reading the monthly REA bulletin and may you have the power to send it every month," from Fremont E. J. Schoock.

We are certainly pleased to read all of the good letters. If you have any suggestions for this newsletter just let us know. Here is another letter -- this one from Mr. and Mrs. Raymond Weinheimer.

"We think your monthly news letter is a good idea as it will bring about a better understanding between the cooperative and its members to the benefit of both. At the present time we are using electrical energy for lights, radio, toaster, iron, washing machine, also for water pump, milking machine, corn sheller, water heater in milk house and automatic lights and water heaters in henhouse, also electric range during summer months, and have just purchased a refrigerator and electric chick brooder. We think electricity is a wonderful thing for the farm."

W. A. Thallman reports that they have a refrigerator, stoker, vacuum cleaner, washing machine, toaster, clock, iron and radio, also a water system.

"We think electricity is wonderful in helping us do our work. We don't know how we got along without it all these years. The lights are grand without any other conveniences but we have other appliances such as a washing machine, iron, refrigerator, radio, electric fan for the whole family in the home, and as for the men folks, they have a motor which is so handy in running a device for sharpening cutting tools, running a fan mill and a carpenter cut and rip saw, and last but not least a sausage mill." So write Mr. and Mrs. Wm. Leppin and Mr. and Mrs. Edmund Leppin.

## Believe It Or Not!

It takes approximately 38,000 revolutions of the mimeograph and addressing machines to print this news letter and address the envelopes.

## WARNING

TO BOYS AND GIRLS FLYING KITES  
Stay away from electric lines. Use dry cord, not wire. NEVER climb electric light or telephone poles to release a kite that is caught, and don't try to knock it down with rocks and sticks.



# ON THE ROAD AGAIN

## EV ownership accelerates with growth of public charging network

Story by Nathan Grimm

### KEY POINTS

- The U.S. is home to 40,552 EV charging stations with 98,194 charging outlets available to travelers.
- In Illinois, 840 public charging stations offer 2,095 charge points.
- Some EVs, like the Tesla models, can travel 300 miles between charges.
- More than 1.6 million all-electric and plug-in hybrid vehicles have been sold in the U.S.
- The Tesla Model 3 remains the most popular EV on the market.

**A**s the world slowly begins to open back up, travel is at the forefront of many minds. In place of being able to actually traverse the globe, restless wanderers have settled for mapping out their future escapades and preparing for the day the all-clear is given to once again move freely about the country. Expansive museums, chic restaurants and hip microbreweries are just a few of the venues that will be popular

destinations in the coming months.

Hitting the road en route to those ports of call will be more electric vehicles (EVs) than ever, as the industry continued to grow into the new year. As of August 2020, more than 1.6 million all-electric and plug-in hybrid vehicles had been sold in the United States since 2010, according to the Argonne National Laboratory. Much of that growth has occurred in recent years, with more than one million of those EVs being sold in

the past four years.

Leaders in the industry have remained constant as well. The Tesla Model 3 — the model recently purchased by Southwestern Electric — was the top-selling plug-in car in the U.S. in both 2018 and 2019 and remains the most popular EV on the market. It's so popular, in fact, that it's the first EV to outsell many gas-powered competitors, according to U.S. News & World Report. Other popular makes and models include





the Chevrolet Volt, Nissan Leaf and the Tesla Model S, among others.

As the number of EVs on the road grows, so, too, do the opportunities to stop, stretch your legs and recharge your electric vehicle. The U.S. is now home to 40,552 EV charging stations with 98,194 charging outlets available to travelers. In Illinois alone, 840 charging stations offer 2,095 charge points, 11th-most of any state in the country.

That expanding network of charging stations is just one of the reasons for the ever-increasing embrace of EVs. Also growing is the range many EVs boast these days, with most exceeding 200 miles and some, like the Tesla models, eclipsing 300 miles before needing to recharge.

The biggest barrier for making the leap to an EV remains, for many, the up-front cost of purchasing an electric vehicle. Even that initial investment,

though, is becoming more reasonable as more makes and models enter the market. Most EVs are eligible for a federal electric vehicle tax credit that helps level the playing field with similarly-equipped gas vehicles, as well.

The savings over the lifetime of the car help further offset those costs. As of the end of January 2021, the cost of fueling a vehicle with electricity compared to a similar vehicle that runs on gasoline, was \$1.21 per eGallon, as compared to \$2.39 for a gallon of gasoline. On average, it costs about half as much to drive an electric vehicle.

So as you begin to plot and plan your own adventures for the coming months and years, consider not just the destination but the vessel that will transport you there as well. More and more, electric vehicles are becoming the transportation mode of choice for forward-thinking — and forward-moving — consumers.

## RESIDENTIAL CHARGER REBATES AVAILABLE

Southwestern Electric Cooperative is offering a \$200 bill credit to the first 50 members who install new Level 2 electric vehicle (EV) residential chargers. All brands are eligible.

The rebate is part of Southwestern Electric's EV Pilot Program—an initiative launched in October 2020 that will help the co-op identify energy demand and usage patterns among EV owners and develop EV-oriented incentive rates.

Rates will be structured to reward EV owners, with margin enough to fund infrastructure improvements.

Until incentive rates are in place, EVs will charge at a member's existing electric rate. The co-op's immediate goal is to make electric vehicle ownership an attractive option, encouraging higher EV adoption rates among members.

"More EVs mean more power sales," said Julie Lowe, program coordinator. "We can use that revenue to fund more infrastructure improvements while keeping our rates in check."

Incentive rates and prime charging hours will become clear later this year as Southwestern reviews data from the EV Pilot Program. For more information, contact Julie Lowe at (800) 637-8667 or [julie.lowe@sweci.com](mailto:julie.lowe@sweci.com).



## PLUG or PUMP?

**PAY AT THE PUMP**

**\$2.39**

Average price per gallon.

**PRICE AT THE PLUG**

**\$1.21**

Average price per eGallon.

An eGallon is the cost of fueling a vehicle with electricity compared to a similar vehicle that runs on gasoline. Pricing information provided by [energy.gov](http://energy.gov) based on Illinois averages as of January 30, 2021.





# RELIABLE

# RIGHTS

# OF WAY

## LINE CLEARANCE PROMOTES SAFETY & RELIABILITY

**E**very now and then, Southwestern Electric receives calls or letters from members regarding right of way maintenance work. More often than not, those members are reaching out to compliment our crews on a job well done.

But not always.

On occasion, we hear from a member who's returned home after a long day to find co-op crews have cleared right of way on their property, and the extent of the work has surprised them.

That member may have seen tree trimming — select branches being cleared from lines to eliminate blinks — but he or she wasn't familiar with the corridor clearing our crews perform when they're cutting back foliage for right of way maintenance.

Tree trimming is the work most of you are familiar with. You've probably seen our crews making small, select cuts

to specific limbs that have grown near or into our lines. Our objective with tree trimming is to resolve a blink or reliability issue that's confined to a well-defined area.

On pages 12-13, you'll find a map that outlines our right of way clearance plan for 2021. The circuits we highlighted on our map are scheduled for right of way maintenance. In this work, we clear a path that spans about 20 feet on either side of the power lines.

With right of way maintenance, our objectives are to ensure and promote member safety, system integrity, and

long-term power reliability.

The work demands considerable time and resources. We currently clear right of way in an area once every seven years. So if you're new to Southwestern Electric, you may not have noticed right of way maintenance in your area.

The change in landscape is dramatic, particularly in an overgrown area. But the close-cropped look is short-lived. You'll see significant and rapid change in spring and summer, when the open corridors allow grasses to take root and the canopy reaches into the edges of the corridor we cleared.

**With right of way maintenance, our objectives are to ensure and promote member safety, system integrity, and long-term power reliability.**



In addition to ensuring reliable power, right of way work supports the growth of natural grasses and provides habitat for plants and wildlife that call our corridors home.

We understand the pride and affection you have for your timber and green spaces. We feel that way ourselves. As our operations and engineering teams will tell you, while trees are a tremendous asset, they're also a leading cause of outages. Consequently, sound forestry practices are vital to keeping your family cool in the summer and warm in the winter months.

The co-op's right of way maintenance program has significantly reduced the number of outages you experience. It's also offered our crews better access to power lines, improving our power restoration times after storms.

In more remote areas, where lines travel through field and timber far from roads, it's a challenge for linemen to access our infrastructure and repair damage. So it's particularly vital that we do all we can to promote line integrity near homes in areas like this.

In the past, some members have

requested we not clear right of way on their property. We simply can't honor that request without compromising the lines that serve them, their neighbors, and in some cases, many other members.

We presently notify members by phone before we begin work on a circuit. We'd prefer to stop by and speak with each of you personally before we begin maintenance in your area. These are expensive endeavors, and we're mindful of how we use the resources you entrust to us. As we review our budget for right of way maintenance, we assess the cost and opportunities included in dedicating an employee to meeting each member before right of way work begins.

Ultimately, we hope to create conditions that support growth of natural grasses in our rights of way, and provide habitat for plants and wildlife that call these corridors home.



# MAINTENANCE MAP

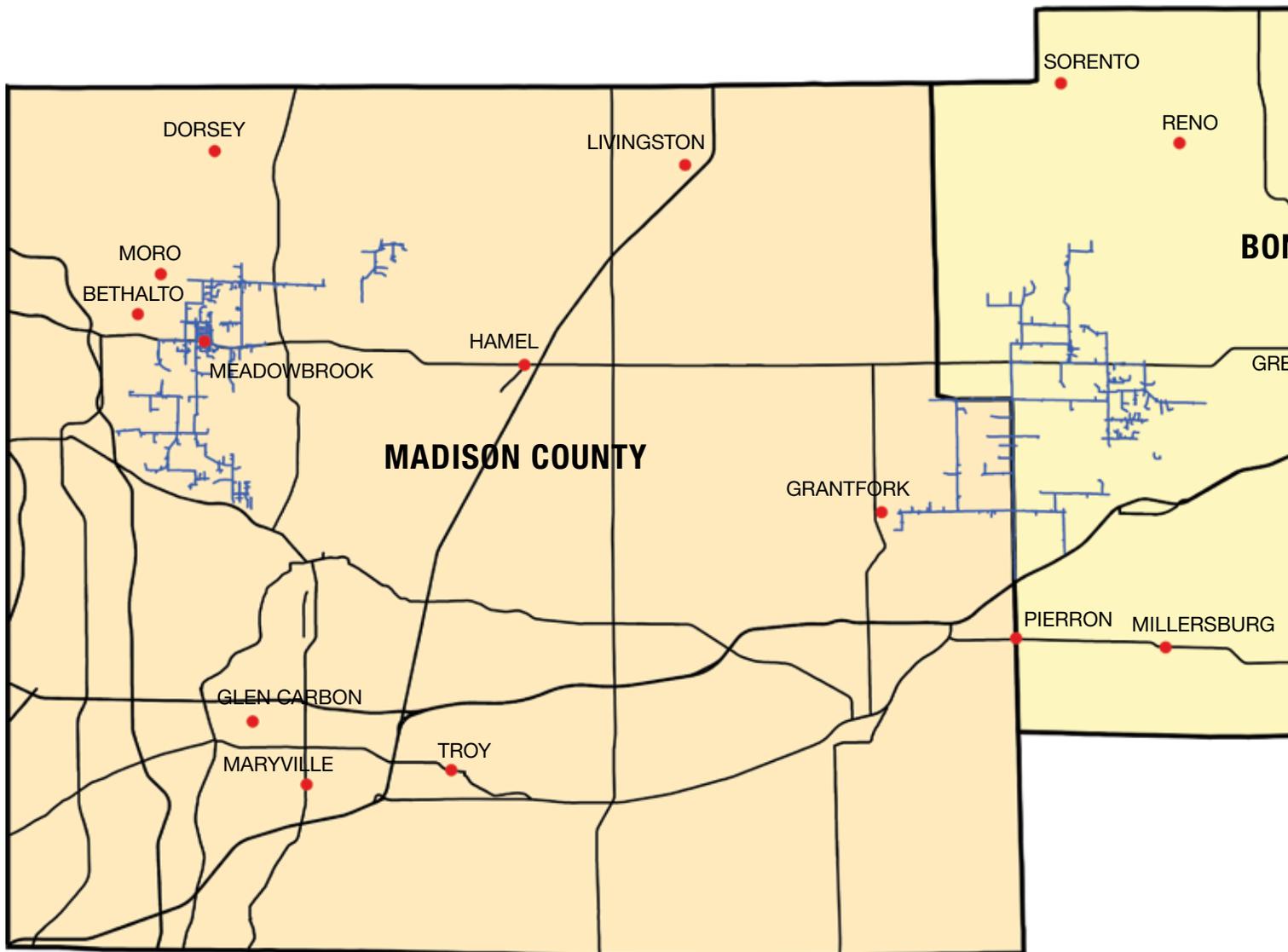
## 2021 RIGHTS OF WAY IMPROVEMENT PLAN

The areas highlighted in blue are scheduled for right of way maintenance in the coming months. When performing right of way maintenance, our crews clear a path that spans about 20 feet on either side of the power lines.

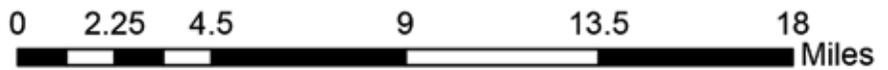
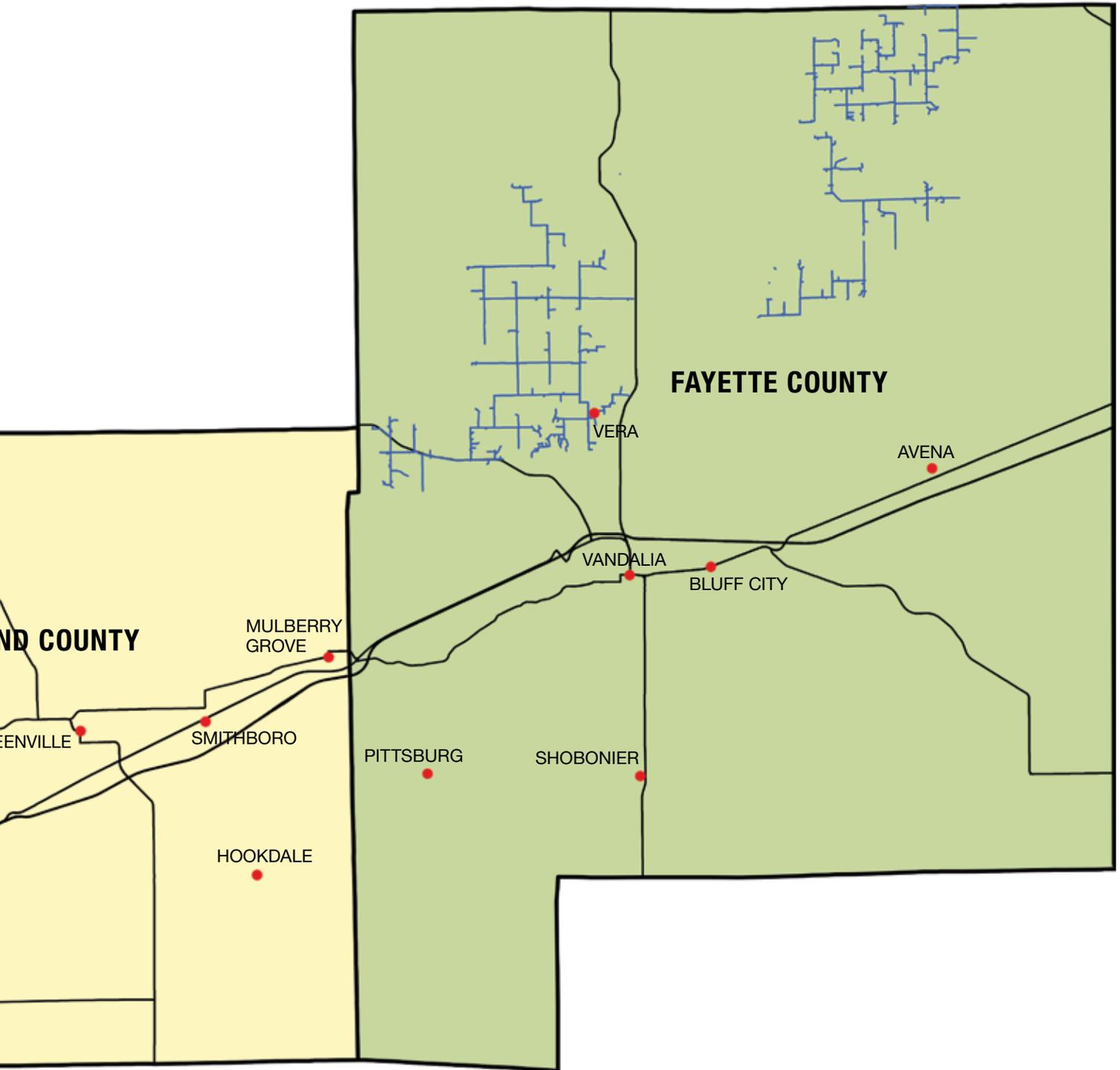
Southwestern's right of way maintenance program has significantly reduced the number of outages you experience. It's also offered our crews better access to power lines, improving our power restoration times after storms.

You can read more about our right of way maintenance work on page 10.

*We'll call before we begin right of way maintenance in your area.*



On Account: If your account number is 37111001, call us within 30 days to receive a \$25 credit on an upcoming electric bill.



2021 Lines to Trim



Primary Roads



Towns



**Counties**



Madison County



Bond County



Fayette County

# BE PREPARED

*Powerful storms can cause extended outages in any season. Form a backup power plan today.*

Every utility works to keep the power on around the clock, every day of the year. And every utility falls short of the goal. Elements ranging from mechanical failures to weather to wild animals interrupt service.

Most interruptions are measured in minutes or hours. But in the case of a storm that damages infrastructure system-wide, an outage can last for days. No one can predict when the next powerful storm will strike. But developing a backup power plan today will help you weather an extended outage safely when it does come.

Your plan can be as simple as making arrangements to stay with a friend or family member (who lives on a different circuit) during an outage.

If friends and family aren't nearby, look into purchasing a standby generator. Investing in a standby generator is the most reliable way to ensure you always have electricity. Consider the following items as you develop your backup power plan:

## REACHING OUT

The ability to communicate during an outage is vital. If you usually rely on a cordless phone with a base, keep in mind, it probably won't operate during an outage.

Most of us own a cellular phone. Keep yours fully charged and handy when forecasts suggest a storm is likely. If you

don't own a mobile phone, consider buying one with an economy plan to use in emergencies.

## EMERGENCY SUPPLIES

Electric pumps mounted to wells won't function without electricity. If you depend on a well for water, store plenty of extra water in case of a power outage. Water is a key ingredient of your emergency supply kit.

If you already have an emergency supply kit, take a few minutes now to make sure it's stocked and your supplies are fresh. If you don't have a kit, spend some time assembling one this week. Your kit should include:

- A three-day supply of water (one gallon per person per day).
- High-calorie, non-perishable food items such as dried fruit or energy bars.
- A blanket or sleeping bag.
- A change of clothing and footwear per family member.
- A first aid kit, including prescription medicines.
- Emergency tools, including a battery-powered National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) weather radio and portable radio, flashlight and extra batteries.
- Any special items needed by an infant, elderly, or disabled family member.
- An extra set of car keys and a credit card or cash.

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*Members who depend on electricity for medical reasons should develop a backup power plan today.*

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- Telephone numbers for medical emergencies, law enforcement, family members, and friends who may be able to offer assistance.
- Your Southwestern Electric Cooperative account number and the co-op's phone number: (800) 637-8667.

## WHEN THE LIGHTS GO OUT

Check in with neighbors to see if you're the only home without service. If you are, check your electrical box for tripped circuit breakers or blown fuses.

If you can't source your outage to your electrical box or your neighbors are also without power, call Southwestern Electric at (800) 637-8667. The line is staffed 24 hours per day. Your call will be answered by a Southwestern Electric employee or a representative of the co-op's emergency response service. Please be prepared to give the operator your name, address, telephone number and account number.

You can also report outages using the SWEC IL app.

Don't rely on e-mail or social media to contact the cooperative during an outage or other emergency. While our phones are constantly monitored, our e-mail and social media aren't.

During an outage, it's a good idea to unplug or switch off lights and electric appliances, leaving on a light or two so you'll know when power is restored. Doing so will help you avoid overloading a circuit when the electricity comes back on. After your power is restored, turn on appliances and electrical devices one at a time.

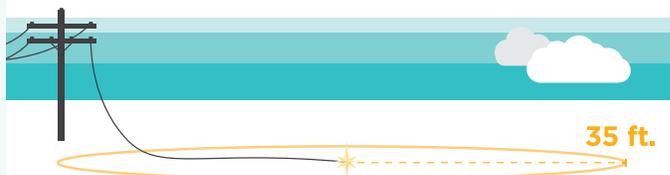
## BEWARE OF DOWNED POWER LINES

After a storm, be alert for downed power lines. Tree limbs and debris may disguise deadly electrical hazards. Treat all downed or hanging power lines as if they're energized. If you spot a downed or low-hanging line, warn others to stay away and report the location to local authorities and Southwestern Electric immediately.



# Downed and Dangerous

If you see a downed power line, always assume it is energized and dangerous. Avoid going near it or anything in contact with the power line.



Downed power lines can energize the ground up to **35 ft.** away - so keep your distance.



Never drive over a downed line or through water that is touching the line.



If you see a downed line, notify the local authorities immediately.



Never try to move a downed power line, even if you think the line is deenergized or if you're using a non-conductive item - this will not prevent injury or death!

Source: ESFL.org

*Keep your cellular phone fully charged and handy when forecasts suggest a storm is likely. If you don't own a mobile phone, consider buying one with an economy plan to use in emergencies.*

# Sowing Seeds

The most important item in your tree planting tool kit isn't a shovel or seedling—it's a plan.

**W**ith spring right around the corner, many of us are eyeing our lawns, lots and acreage, and giving serious consideration to landscaping projects that were nothing more than notions a few weeks ago. If tree planting made it to your landscaping list, take time now to prepare a plan.

A little research and forethought addressing canopy size and shape, growth rates, and your tree's position relative to overhead and underground utilities, can ensure you receive the maximum benefit from the seeds or saplings you sow. Here are 10 items you'll want to consider as you build your planting plan.

**Climate.** The National Arbor Day Foundation offers a Hardiness Zone Map (<https://www.arborday.org/trees>) to help you select trees well suited to our area. Southwestern Electric Cooperative's service territory is located in Hardiness Zone 6. Visit the National Arbor Day Foundation's web site at [ArborDay.org](http://ArborDay.org) for a catalog of trees that typically thrive in our zone.

**Height & Canopy.** Will the tree crowd your home, outbuildings, utility lines or other trees when it's fully grown?

**Ever Green?** Is the tree deciduous or coniferous? Will it lose its leaves in the winter?

**Thick & Thin.** A columnar tree will grow in less space. Round and V-shaped species provide more shade.

**Life Span.** How long will it take your tree to reach maturity? Slow growing species typically live longer than faster growing trees.

**Bearing Fruit.** It's satisfying to pluck an apple or pear from a tree you planted yourself. But fruit trees attract insects and can make a mess of your yard. Weigh the pros and cons of contending with bugs and lawn maintenance before you plant.

**Hot & Cold.** You can use trees and shrubs to boost your home's overall energy efficiency. A properly designed landscape can help you maximize shade in the summer, channel cool summer breezes toward your home, take advantage of the sun's warmth in winter, and minimize the cooling effect of winter winds.

**Underground...** Before you dig, contact the Joint Utility Locating Information for Excavators (JULIE). JULIE will notify member utility companies. The utilities will mark their underground facilities so you can dig safely. The marking services are performed at no charge to you. To contact JULIE, call 8-1-1 or visit [www.illinois1call.com](http://www.illinois1call.com). It's simple, it saves lives, and it's the law.

**...And Overhead.** As you plant, keep right of way maintenance in mind. Avoid planting trees under or near power lines. Keep shrubs, hedges and other plants

away from utility poles as well (see suggestions on page 17).

If you think you may be planting a tree too close to Southwestern Electric's right of way, please call us at (800) 637-8667. Cooperative operations and engineering personnel will ask you about the trees you have in mind, discuss the space you're working with, and offer suggestions.

The conversation will help us ensure reliability by protecting the integrity of the co-op's distribution system.

Co-op crews and contractors periodically clear rights of way and routinely trim trees using methods that protect power lines while preserving the health of trees. Right of way maintenance and tree trimming may change the shape of a tree. The best way to avoid clearance and maintenance is by planting in locations that aren't near the right of way.

**Arbor Experts.** Before you plant, talk to people who are familiar with the trends and conditions unique to your area. Your community's tree board, city forestry department, and representatives from your area's cooperative extension office can offer insight into local soil, moisture, disease, and pest issues.

**Concerned you may be planting too close to our right of way? Call us at (800) 637-8667. We'll be happy to talk with you and there's no charge for the consultation.**

# Plant the Right Tree in the Right Place

For more tips on smart tree planting in your community, contact Southwestern Electric Cooperative or visit [www.ArborDay.org](http://www.ArborDay.org).

Trees beautify our neighborhoods, and when planted in the right spot, can even help lower energy bills. But the wrong tree in the wrong place can be a hazard... especially to power lines.

## LARGE TREES

Height/spread of more than 40 feet, such as:

- Maple
- Birch
- Oak
- Sweetgum
- Spruce
- Linden
- Pine

## MEDIUM TREES

Height/spread of 25 to 40 feet, such as:

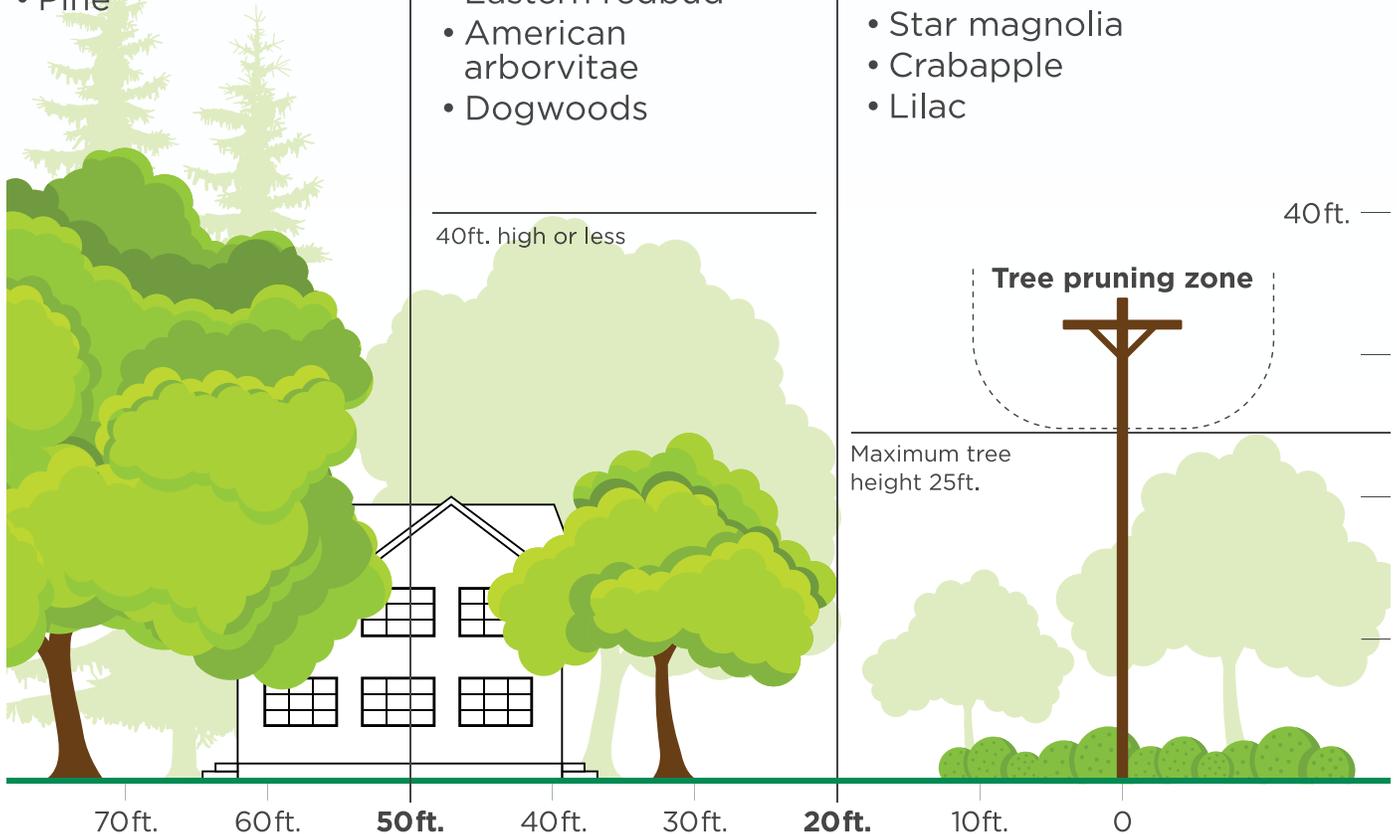
- Washington hawthorn
- Goldenraintree
- Eastern redbud
- American arborvitae
- Dogwoods

## SMALL TREES

Avoid planting within 20 feet of power lines. When planting within 20 feet is unavoidable, use only shrubs and small trees.

Height/spread of no more than 25 feet such as:

- Star magnolia
- Crabapple
- Lilac



**Be safe! Always call 811 before you dig to locate any buried utility lines.**

Source: The Arbor Day Foundation and the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association

# CONE ZONE

## WATCH FOR CREWS AFTER THE STORM

**I**n winter, Southwestern linemen navigate multi-ton trucks down snow-slickened blacktops to reach work sites. In spring they fight 40-mph gusts to replace poles in failing light. Come summer, they'll string wire after storms, working by headlamp and floodlight in 100-degree heat. Regardless of the job or season, our linemen approach each outage with a

single concern foremost in mind: safety.

From the clothes they wear to the tools and training they use, safety is at the forefront of all they do.

But some aspects of a crew's safety aren't entirely up to them.

They're up to you.

"Most motorists our crews encounter are cautious and courteous. They make good decisions when they're approach-



ing a work site,” said Southwestern editor Joe Richardson. “But there are always a few who approach the area too fast. By failing to respect the crews, the cones, and the warning signs, they’re endangering themselves, their passengers, and our linemen.”

Richardson urged drivers to exercise caution when driving during or after bad weather.

“Storms bring down power lines and bring out work crews,” he said. “In many instances, moving a bucket truck off the road isn’t an option. Drivers need to watch for signs and cones that signal crews are in the area. They may crest a hill to find linemen working and trucks parked immediately over the rise.”

Every driver has a responsibility to exercise caution and good judgment. Leaving early, driving carefully, devoting your full attention to the road, and being attuned to the environment can help prevent accidents. “Ideally, you stay home when the weather makes roads treacherous,” Richardson said. “If you

have to get out, keep in mind you’ll be sharing the road with line crews and service trucks.”

After a storm, stay alert for debris. Storms can drop poles and power lines into roadways. The lines could be energized, and they’re very hard to see. “You may have rounded a bend a thou-

sand times with no trouble—but storms change the environment. Reduce your speed and pay attention to the landscape. Are lights out? Limbs down? Then there’s a good chance we have a crew working in the area.”

It’s important for drivers to recognize their limitations, especially in bad weather, Richardson said. “Some people aren’t comfortable driving in rain or snow. I know a few drivers who rely on experience, and familiar routes, to compensate for slower reflexes, and eyesight that isn’t as sharp as it used to be.”

Those strategies are less effective when conditions are poor. “Don’t risk your safety and the well-being of others. If you have to get out, call a friend or family member for a ride,” he said. “At the end of the day, we want to see our crews and the people who share the roads with them make it home safely. Our members can help us make that happen.”

“AT THE END OF THE DAY, WE WANT TO SEE OUR CREWS AND THE PEOPLE WHO SHARE THE ROADS WITH THEM MAKE IT HOME SAFELY. OUR MEMBERS CAN HELP US MAKE THAT HAPPEN.”





# WOLF CREEK STATE PARK

Story by Nathan Grimm | Photos by Mike Barns

Something about the cold heightens the senses. Everything seems sharper, clearer; it's almost as if the sun shines brighter, despite doing little to warm our bodies.

A crisp late-winter afternoon spent at Wolf Creek State Park just northwest of Windsor, Ill., offers all the views one could want on a clear, sunny day. The park borders Lake Shelbyville and features large tracts of carefully maintained indigenous woodlands. Seven different trails provide varying lengths and difficulties, ranging from a 1/2-mile path to a three-mile trail. Each trail offers a compelling view around every corner. When snow is on the ground, a 16 1/2-mile

snowmobile trail also makes for great wintertime fun.

Along with doing, there is plenty to see for the astute visitor. Signs of life both past and present can be spotted if you look hard enough, though the various animal tracks spotted on the shoreline of the lake were hard to miss on this February day—an abundance of deer, pheasant, rabbits, wild turkey and songbirds call the park home. Also spotted: two visiting bald eagles, in town for the winter to fish in the lake's blue waters.

Don't just take our word for it—a half-hour drive north from Effingham, the natural beauty of the Shelby County escape is something you have to see for yourself.





**GETTING THERE**  
 Take Interstate 70 east to Effingham, then take Exit 160 onto Illinois Route 33 headed northwest. Continue onto Illinois Route 32 North and turn left onto 1875 N/1900 N until you hit North Wolf Creek Road. Turn left and you're there.

## WHO • WHAT • WHERE

Unless you've visited Highland's historic downtown district, last month's mural was new to you. Located at 907 Main Street, on the north side of the square, the mural was painted by Julie Korte in celebration of Highland's Street Art Festival in 2012, and in honor of Highland's 175th Jubilee.

Commissioned by the Highland Arts Council, the painting is a reproduction of a Michael Chomyk mural painted inside the former bank building.

Born in the Ukraine in 1911, Chomyk studied at Washington University's School of Fine Arts in St. Louis. He moved to Ironton, Mo., in 1955 and built an art studio in the attic of his home.

Renown for his large-scale wall paintings, Chomyk, who died in 1993 at the age of 82, produced a significant body of work during his lifetime. He was one of a number of artists commissioned by the Works Progress Administration to document the evolution of American

trade, exploration and achievement.

A Chomyk mural overlooked the ticket area of St. Louis Union Station, when the structure served as a railroad terminal.

As the Midwest's older buildings have been renovated or demolished, many of Chomyk's murals have been lost.

Korte's beautiful reproduction is one of 16 stops on the Highland Arts Council's Art Walk. According to the Council, the walk will give you a good overview of Highland, as you view art purchased by the Highland Arts Council, the Highland Garden Club, and the Highland Community School District, as well as individuals.

The Council clocks the 12-mile walk at around 2.5 hours, contingent upon the time you spend at each site. So you might opt to split the walk into multiple outings—or convert it into a walk/bike-or-drive.

Founded in 2003, Highland Arts Council actively promotes the arts in and around Highland through a

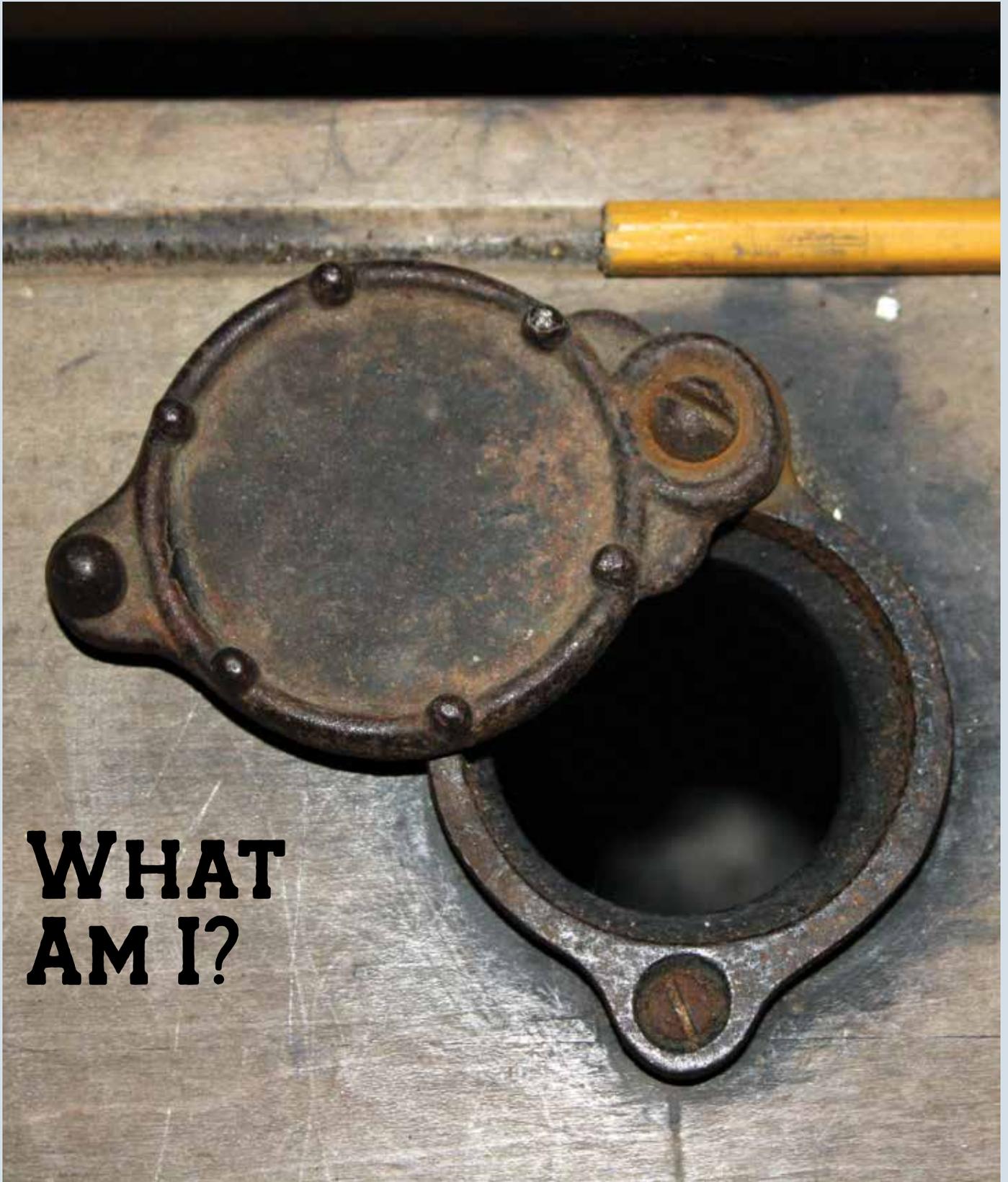
variety of activities and projects.

Staffed by volunteers, the Council showcases local artists and works to enrich the community by promoting the appreciation of visual, literary and performing artists and a variety of art forms, including music, dance, literature and theater. Their mission, simply put, is to create a forum for people who share a love and interest in the arts.

You can download an art walk brochure and learn more about the Highland Arts Council at <https://www.highlandartscouncil.org>. But before you go, take a look at the facing page. Recognize the item? Have a memory associated with it? We'd love to hear from you. You can email us at [joe.richardson@sweci.com](mailto:joe.richardson@sweci.com) or write to Joe Richardson, The Southwestern, 525 US Route 40, Greenville, IL 62246.

As always, we appreciate your email, cards and letters. Thanks for writing—and thank you for reading The Southwestern.





# WHAT AM I?

**Who-What-Where** is a contest that challenges your knowledge of people, places and objects in and around Southwestern Electric Cooperative's service area. Here's how it works: Each month, we run a photo. Your job is to tell us who's pictured, what we've photographed, or where we shot the photo. You can email your response to [joe.richardson@sweci.com](mailto:joe.richardson@sweci.com) or send it by mail to Joe Richardson, Southwestern Electric Cooperative, 525 U.S. Route 40, Greenville, IL 62246. Please include your name, mailing address, and hometown. If you have a story about our photo topic, include that as well — we love these! The puzzle solution—possibly accompanied by a few words from you — will appear in a future issue of *The Southwestern*.

# BLUE PLATE *Special*

## BAKED COD WITH TOASTED ALMONDS

### Ingredients

- 1 pound fresh cod fillets cut into 4 pieces
- 2 tablespoons fresh dill weed
- 4 teaspoons butter or margarine melted
- 4 teaspoons fresh lemon juice
- 1 teaspoon garlic crushed
- 2 tablespoons sliced almonds

### Directions

1. Arrange fish in single layer in greased baking dish.
2. In small bowl, mix dill, butter, lemon juice, and garlic.
3. Pour dill mixture over fish.
4. Bake at 425° for 8 minutes.
5. Sprinkle with almonds and bake for 2 more minutes, being careful not to burn almonds.

Baked Cod with Toasted Almonds

## PARMESAN SHRIMP PASTA BAKE

### Ingredients

- 1 (16 ounce) package farfalle (bow tie) pasta
- 6 tablespoons butter or margarine
- 3 cloves garlic finely chopped
- 6 tablespoons all purpose flour
- ½ cup chicken broth
- 2½ cups half and half
- ½ cup clam juice
- 1 tablespoon tomato paste or ketchup
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon pepper
- 1 pound uncooked medium shrimp peeled and deveined, thawed if frozen
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh or 2 teaspoons dried dill weed
- ¾ cup Parmesan cheese freshly grated

### Directions

1. Cook and drain pasta according to directions on package.
2. Melt butter in 2 quart sauce pan over medium heat.
3. Cook garlic in butter for 1 minute, stirring constantly.
4. Stir in flour and cook, stirring constantly with a wire whisk until smooth and bubbly.
5. Stir in chicken broth. Stir in half and half, clam juice, tomato paste, and salt and pepper. Cook over medium heat, stirring constantly, until thickened.
6. Stir in shrimp, dill weed, and ¼ cup of the cheese.
7. Pour into greased 2 quart casserole dish and sprinkle with remaining ½ cup of cheese.
8. Bake uncovered at 350° for 35-40 minutes or until light brown on top.

## FLORIDA STYLE SNAPPER

### Ingredients

- 2 pounds red snapper or other filets
- 2 tablespoons polyunsaturated oil (corn, sunflower, or olive oils)
- 3 tablespoons orange juice
- 2 teaspoons grated orange rind
- ⅛ teaspoon nutmeg
- salt and pepper to taste
- thin orange slices to garnish

### Directions

1. Thaw fish, if frozen and drain well.
2. Place filets in single layer, skin side down, in baking dish.
3. Combine oil, orange juice, rind, nutmeg, and salt and pepper.
4. Pour oil mixture over fish.
5. Bake at 375° for 20 minutes, or until the fish flakes easily.

## BLACKENED TILAPIA

### Ingredients

- 4 tilapia fillets
- 2 tablespoons paprika
- 2 teaspoons salt
- 2 teaspoons lemon pepper
- 1½ teaspoons garlic powder
- 1½ teaspoons ground red pepper
- 1½ teaspoons dried, crushed basil
- 1 teaspoon onion powder
- 1 teaspoon dried thyme
- 1 cup unsalted butter melted

### Directions

1. Mix spices in bowl.
2. Dip fillets in melted butter then coat with spice mixture.
3. Place fillets in hot skillet and cook for 2 minutes on each side or until fish flakes easily.

This month's recipes are courtesy of 4-H House Alumni Association's *Nurture the Future @ 805 4-H House Anniversary Cookbook* (Florida style snapper), Bond County *Habitat for Humanity Cookbook* (Parmesan shrimp pasta bake), and Greenville Regional Hospital Auxiliary's *Home Town Favorites* cookbook (baked cod with toasted almonds and blackened tilapia).

➤ *Continued from page 3*

We're dividing our cost among seven of you.

If you're looking at the numbers, you'd expect our rates to be about five times higher than the neighboring investor-owned utility. Of course that isn't the case. So how do we provide affordable, reliable, quality service, when — compared to investor-owned and municipal utilities — we recoup operating costs from so few households per mile of line?

There's a fundamental difference between not-for-profit cooperatives and investor-owned utilities, their priorities, and how they operate.

Investor-owned utilities are tasked with meeting the needs of two separate groups of people: customers and shareholders. They have to balance the needs of their customers—service, sustainable rates and system investment—against the expectations of their shareholders—a reasonable return on investment, or profits.

In a cooperative, there are no competing interests. Our shareholders and customers are one and the same. As a member, you're part-owner of the cooperative. Revenue we make that exceeds what we need to purchase power, maintain poles, wires and substations, and operate the business, is returned

to you. We call your equity capital credit. You can read about capital credits in the January 2021 Southwestern magazine, online at [sweci.com](http://sweci.com).

To put it another way, we're all about you. Everything we do is viewed through the lens of service, rates and reliability. We invest in our system to ensure reliable power. We offer that power at the lowest sustainable rate. And we're always working to serve you, be it in person, by email or over the phone.

That difference comes through in everything we do.

In addition to that, you can't beat us for elbow room.

I encourage you to contact me with your questions regarding our members per mile or any topic related to the cooperative.

I look forward to hearing from you. In the meantime, stay healthy and stay safe.

Bobby Williams, CEO



[bobby.williams@sweci.com](mailto:bobby.williams@sweci.com)

## MEMBERS ACROSS THE MILES

Across America, electric cooperatives maintain more miles of power line per consumer than other electric utilities. That means we collect less revenue per mile of line than municipal and investor-owned utilities.

As a not-for-profit utility, we go the extra mile to make the most of your investment—delivering safe, reliable, affordable energy to you, your friends and neighbors, and your communities.

Statistics provided by the National Rural Electric Cooperative Administration based on 2017 data.

Municipal Utilities  
48 Consumers Per Mile



Investor-Owned Utilities  
34 Consumers Per Mile



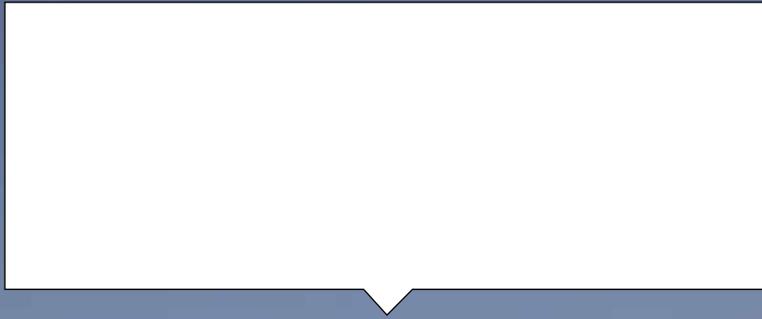
Southwestern Electric Cooperative  
6.8 Members Per Mile





Sun flares frame  
a blue-sky day  
at Horseshoe  
Lake State Park  
in Granite City.

**THE FINAL FRAME**



**S**outhwestern  
Electric Cooperative, Inc.  
Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

