

ACEC NEWS

FEBRUARY 2025 | VOLUME 28 | ISSUE 02

OUR TOP PRIORITY

—
DEMAND FOR
ELECTRICITY

—
HAVE YOU HEARD
OF FIRSTCALL?



NEW PRODUCTS AT RAINBOW QUARRY

See page 4





A MESSAGE FROM *Your General Manager*

Hollie McCormick
EVP/General Manager

What's Our Top Priority This Legislative Session

The start of a new year means the start of a new legislative session. At Allamakee-Clayton Electric, we work closely with our state and federal legislators on important issues. With a new cabinet and president in office, it's even more important that we pay close attention to what is going on in Des Moines, as well as in Washington D.C.

Starting the session

Nearly 170 staff and directors from Iowa electric cooperatives traveled to Des Moines on January 14 to attend the annual Welcome Back reception. This event kicks off the 91st General Assembly of the Iowa Legislature. At the event, co-op advocates discuss concerns and priorities face-to-face with their state legislators.

ACEC's Brenda Hackman, manager of economic development and community relations, as well as board member Jerry Keleher, were in attendance. Jerry also serves as the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives' (IAEC) Director for District 3 and as the Assistant Secretary and Treasurer. At the reception, Brenda and Jerry had the opportunity to speak with four of our state legislators, in addition to staff from IAEC and from our power supplier, Dairyland Power Cooperative.

Opportunities like these are important to cooperatives to build relationships, welcome new legislators to their roles at the Capitol, and get a glimpse at what is on the agenda for the new session.

Top priority

To stay on top of issues at the state level, we work closely with Ethan Hohenadel, director of policy & advocacy for the IAEC. This session, our top priority is protecting our electric service territory.

In Iowa, your location determines which electric utility serves your home, farm or business under the defined electric service territory law. For almost 50 years, electric service areas have benefited co-op members as the law provides stability so we can provide affordable rates, support a resilient electric grid and invest in economic development.

Weakening the current service territory law jeopardizes electric cooperatives' investments in rural economic development. In 2024 alone, ACEC and Dairyland Power secured a total of just over \$1 million in USDA Revolving Loan Funds to support businesses within the ACEC service footprint. ACEC and Dairyland also partnered for an additional \$4 million in USDA Rural Economic Development Loans.

Statewide, Co-ops have a dynamic impact on economic development. From 2018-2022, co-ops had a \$4.7 billion impact in economic development projects, supporting more than 7,300 Iowa jobs (retained, attracted or expanded). In 2023 alone, co-ops secured more than \$41 million in federal economic development funds, resulting in more than \$111 million of new capital investment in Iowa.

The proof is in the pudding when it comes to what happens when you reduce service territory protections. In states where service territories have been eliminated, consumers have experienced higher electric rates and decreased reliability.

According to a 2023 *New York Times* investigation, electric rates have increased in deregulated states. The report concludes, "Deregulation has resulted in increased rates/fees in every state where it has been introduced." And, "On average, residents living in a deregulated market pay \$40 more per month for electricity..."

In a column shared with fellow Iowa co-ops, Hohenadel shared "our analysis of publicly available industry data shows that electric reliability is lower in deregulated Midwestern states compared to Iowa. From 2018-2023, electric outages in Iowa are 65% shorter on average compared to deregulated Midwestern states."

Working with our representatives

One of our key priorities is to maintain solid relationships with our state and federal legislators. On the state level, elected officials in our territory are Republican Senator Mike Klimesh, Republican Representative Mike Bergan, Republican Representative Chad Ingels, Republican Senator Dan Zumbach and newly-elected Republican Representative Jason Gearhart.

On the federal level, we work closely with Republican Senators Chuck Grassley and Joni Ernst, as well as Republican Representative Ashley Hinson.

We've worked for years to cultivate bipartisan relationships with our elected officials. Every fall, we invite them to our headquarters for an informal conversation about upcoming issues. Brenda and other staff members also meet with them when they make visits to our service area.

In addition, representatives from ACEC have participated in a Washington D.C. fly-in event in the fall, where co-op staff from the entire nation gather to meet with representatives.

It's important we maintain those relationships with our elected officials so they can trust us to be experts in our field and provide feedback on upcoming legislation as it pertains to our members.

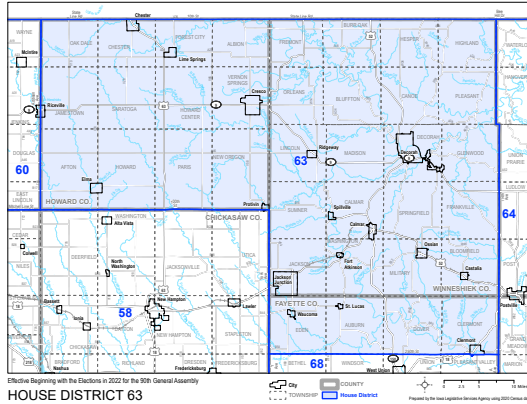
The work isn't done

We'll have another opportunity to advocate for our members and communities at the annual Rural Electric Cooperative (REC) Day on the Hill event on March 19. We enjoy attending this event and having the opportunity to chat with our legislators and staff from other cooperatives. #1188-18

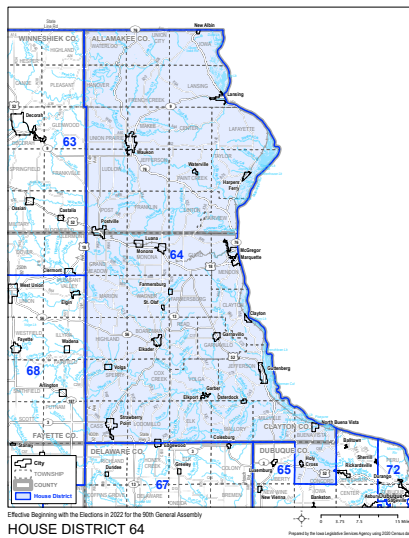
You can learn more about our advocacy efforts at www.IAruralpower.org.



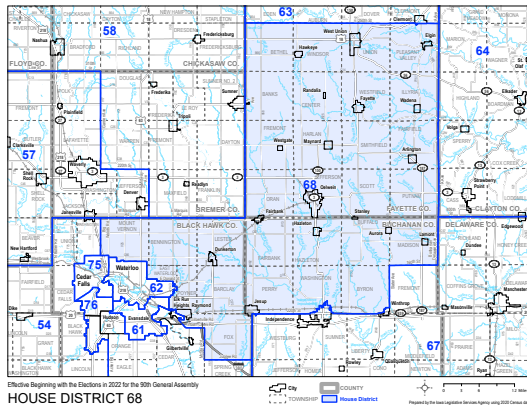
Michael Bergan,
House District 63



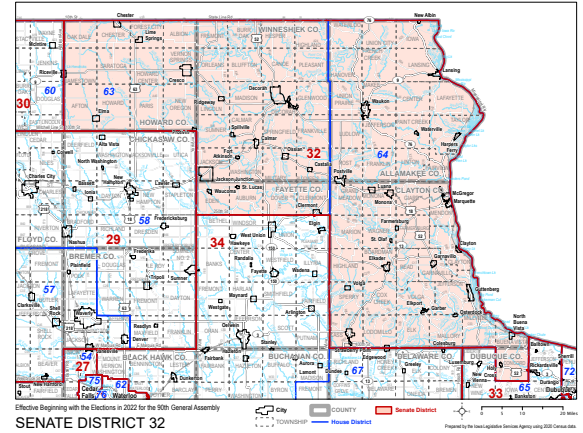
Jason Gearhart,
House District 64



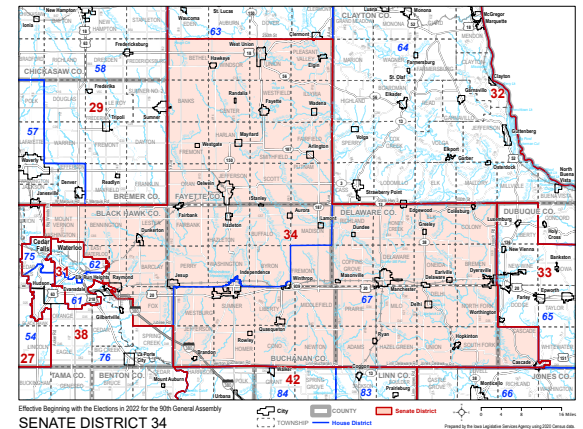
Chad Ingels,
House District 68



Mike Klimesh,
Senate District 32



Dan Zumbach,
Senate District 34



BOARD BRIEFS January 27 Meeting

- Reviewed Board Policies 407 Conflict of Interest and 410 Standards of Conduct
- Approved modifications to the following policies: 7.2 Purposes, Development & Revision of Personnel Policies, 8.8 Volunteer Firefighters and Emergency Medical Technicians and 9.2 Harassment
- Approved additions to Employee Handbook
- Repriced a CFC loan
- Approved 2025 capital budget
- Discussed 2024 financial recap
- Approved donation requests to Clayton County Development Group, Clayton County Fair, and the REC Linemen Bowshoot Fundraiser
- Hosted IAEC General Manager Leslie Kaufman for an IAEC update

Rainbow Quarry Owner Dan Bechtel Finding His Niche

Nestled in Allamakee County near Rossville sits Rainbow Quarry LLC. The three-generation quarry, owned by Dan Bechtel, offers unique products in addition to aggregate rock.

Recently, Brenda Hackman, ACEC manager of economic development and community relations, worked with Bechtel to apply for a USDA Revolving Loan to purchase a diamond wire saw. That saw allows Bechtel to create custom cut products that are unique to the area.

Taking over the quarry

Growing up outside of Rossville, Dan, the son of Dean and Sherry Bechtel, said the quarry was his playground as a child. The quarry wasn't mined until 1985, when the family began leasing it to other companies. By 2008, the Bechtels were ready to shut the quarry down. However, Dan decided to run the quarry himself.

In 2010, he took over production, creating Rainbow Quarry LLC. Dan was a 52% owner in the company, with his parents owning 48% and the land. In 2015, Dan became sole owner. He also purchased his own equipment that year to do custom crushing.

A large part of the quarry business is selling aggregate rock, which is a collection of broken pieces of rock used for projects like gravel driveways. Dan has five different sizes of rock available. He explained rock from his quarry

has a low percentage of breakdown on the freeze-thaw test, as well as low percentage of magnesium, which is better for nutrition in soil. Both of these factors make it unique and ideal for a variety of projects.

Looking to do more

As his company began to expand, Bechtel realized how his rock was unique to his quarry. "I didn't realize it was unusual to have all the layers of rock in the quarry like I have. That was when I got into selling flat stones for rock walls using natural stones" As Bechtel explains, most limestone in this area looks similar to plywood, with flat lines of limestone color differential. The limestone that comes out of Rainbow Quarry has a texturized appearance.



"You have some flat on the top and bottom but when you cut it open, the markings that you find, it reminds me of

marble," he said.

Bigger stones get set aside to be used for projects like



landscaping stone. Those stones are sorted into piles based on size.

Rainbow Quarry caters to everyone from contractors to homeowners. People are invited to schedule a time to stop at the quarry to look at the products and to talk to Dan about their project.

"We constantly have vehicles come in and want to fill up a few 5-gallon pails with rock and we have contractors wanting up to 40-50 loads," he said.

The Diamond Wire Saw

Seeing his sales move more in the direction of landscaping rock, Dan researched how he could set himself apart even further. He discovered the Pellegrini Diamond Wire Saw, produced in Italy. The saw allows for different cuts to be made on large pieces from the quarry, creating different projects. There are only a handful of other people in Iowa with this type of equipment, he said.

"There is more a niche market for me here," he said.



The saw can handle rock as long as 11 feet and as wide as 9. It involves using controls to move the saw and the rock to make cuts, not a computer.

Dan's daughter Hailey has stepped in to serve a vital role at the quarry. Since she was in high school, the Waukon graduate has assisted Dan with book work. Hailey now works full time at the quarry and is trained to run the diamond saw. She said she's enjoyed learning the new equipment and creating different items. #3221A

Dan said he enjoys the design side of the business, helping customers figure out how to create their project, from walkways to retaining walls to the new custom creations.

Dan and Hailey are still discovering the projects they can do with the saw. So far they have created 1-foot retaining blocks, a picnic table, benches, a fire pit, fascia for fireplaces and even a tombstone.

Here to help

Bechtel turned to Brenda at ACEC to help secure the funds for the saw. Hackman works with business owners within the ACEC service footprint in a variety of ways, including serving as a resource to access USDA loans. Brenda worked with Dan on a \$143,693 USDA Revolving Loan Fund application. That application was approved in April 2024.

"Supporting member businesses and members that own businesses is very important," said Brenda. "If you are putting gravel down, landscaping,



building a fireplace or fire pit, give Dan a call. I am continually impressed with Dan's creativity in design and knowledge of his rock products."

Get ready for spring

With spring around the corner, Dan and his staff are ready to assist customers with their spring projects. You can learn more about the products at Rainbow Quarry by following them on Facebook, www.facebook.com/RainbowQuarryRossville. To talk to Dan about your upcoming project, call 563-380-9195. ■



The USDA announced that the Rural Economic Development Loan (REDL) application submitted by Allamakee-Clayton Electric Cooperative was approved. The loan is for \$2 million at zero interest over 10 years to partially finance a loan to Nexus Cooperative to purchase equipment for the expansion at the existing feed mill located in Elgin. In December, ACEC's Brenda Hackman closed with Dan Jacobs, from NEXUS, and Jason Schwennker, CEO from Nexus.

Hauschild Scholarship 2025



Do you know a current high school senior planning to pursue a career in the electrical field?

Allamakee-Clayton Electric Cooperative offers college scholarships to seniors interested in continuing their education in an electric-related area.

Applicants must enter a course of study related to work within the electrical field, with preference given to those whose education will qualify them for work as electricians, electric line workers, electrical engineers, etc.

Applicants' parents or legal guardians are not required to be ACEC members; however, they must reside within the boundaries of the Cooperative's service territory.

Details and the application are available at acrec.com/Hauschild-memorial-scholarship-fund or by calling Jennifer at 888-788-1551.

Application deadline is Friday, February 28. ■

The Ever-Changing, Fast-Growing Demand for Electricity

By Scott Flood



When rural electric cooperatives first strung power lines from farm to farm less than a century ago, most members had but a handful of light bulbs of power. With time, they added appliances like refrigerators, but we're sure they couldn't begin to imagine the number and variety of electrical devices in today's homes and garages.

Across the U.S., people use a growing amount of electricity at work, home, and with the growth of electric vehicles (EVs), even on the road.

The demand for electricity increased by 2.5% in 2024 and is expected to grow by 3.2% this year. That was after co-ops saw a 4.8% increase in 2022. Through 2029, the nation's peak demand is projected to grow by 38 gigawatts. That would be like adding another California-sized state to our nation's power grid.

Factors driving demand

The rapid growth of artificial intelligence (AI) is driving the development of massive data center facilities, often placed in electric co-op service territories to take advantage of inexpensive land and fewer neighbors to complain. By 2022, these facilities accounted for 2.5% of the nation's consumption of electricity – and by 2030, they'll use 7.5% of all electric power.

Data centers and facilities like warehouses require a large, steady supply of electricity 24 hours a day. That means the electric co-ops supplying them can't rely on intermittent sources of electricity, such as solar or wind energy, to handle the additional load. Instead, they need more of what's known as baseload or always-available power, much of which is currently generated by burning fossil fuels. The more we depend on technology,

the more we'll need reliable baseload generation.

Baseload power is essential

Yet that's a problem because at the same time Americans are using more electricity, power providers are being forced to shut down reliable sources of baseload power such as coal and nuclear power plants. Many large coal plants have been converted to use cleaner-burning natural gas, but others have been deemed too costly to convert and are prematurely being shut down. More than 110 gigawatts of always-available generation – enough to power about 35 million homes – is forecast to retire by 2033.

The U.S. Energy Information Administration's forecast expects coal-fired generation to drop to half of today's levels by 2030. Renewable energy will capture a growing share of the supply, but as noted, much renewable energy is not reliable enough to provide baseload power.

Demand will steadily increase

As electricity powers a growing share of life's tools and conveniences, overall demand is expected to continue its steady growth through 2050. A great example is the efficiency of electric heat pumps. Federal and other subsidies and tax advantages are powering significant growth in their share of the home heating market.

In other words, at the same time everyone is using more electricity than ever, the supply of the most reliable source is drying up. Add in the uncertainty created by public policy debates around energy and climate change, and you can begin to understand why 19 states face a high risk of rolling blackouts between now and 2028.

The energy industry studies demand closely because construction of all types of generation is costly and lengthy – often taking more than a decade from groundbreaking to entering service.

As renewables become more efficient and cheaper to produce, their share of the power mix will only continue to grow. Someday soon, battery technology may reach the point where large-scale storage of renewable generation becomes possible, but until then, we'll need more of those always-available power sources. ■

Scott Flood writes on a variety of energy-related topics for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.

PLUGGED IN: Electric Vehicle Update

JANUARY

of miles driven: **82 miles**

kWh's charged: **30 kWh**

Total cost to charge

.146 x 30 kWh = **\$4.38**



MEMBER RECIPES

Send your favorite recipes and/or recipe topics to Jennifer Achenbach, ACEC, PO Box 715, Postville, IA 52162 or email jachenbach@acrec.coop.

You'll receive a \$5 bill credit if your recipe is printed. Please note – recipes must be received by the 25th day of the month before the intended publication.

March – FAVORITE DESSERTS; April – ANYTHING WITH GARLIC;

May – BEEF



CROCK POT LASAGNA

- 9 uncooked lasagna noodles
- 1 lb. ground beef (browned, with onion)
- 1 24 oz. jar Prego spaghetti sauce
- 1 15 oz. jar alfredo sauce
- 3 c. mozzarella cheese, shredded
- ¼ c. grated parmesan cheese

Directions

Spray crock pot and pour ¾ c. of spaghetti sauce over the bottom. Mix remaining spaghetti sauce with browned hamburger/onion. Layer 3 uncooked noodles over the spaghetti sauce in the crock pot. Add 1/3 jar of alfredo sauce over the noodles, then 1/3 of the hamburger/spaghetti sauce mixture and finally 1 c. cheese. Repeat twice more to create layers. To the top layer, add the parmesan cheese. I also sprinkle a small

amount of shredded cheddar cheese on the top layer. Cook on low 2-3 hours.

■ *Wendy Stahr, West Union*

CROCK POT HAM

- 5 lb. bone-in ham
- 2 c. brown sugar
- 6 oz. pineapple juice
- 1 can crushed pineapple
- Clove spikes

Directions

Put ½ c. brown sugar in bottom of crock pot. Put in ham, flat side down. Put ½ c. brown sugar over top of ham. Pour pineapple juice and crushed pineapple over ham. Add a few clove spikes to ham. Cook 8 hours on low.

■ *Becky Engelhart, Postville*

ElectricSense

Allamakee-Clayton helped our members receive \$123,670 in ElectricSense incentives in 2024. That's an average of \$12.41 per member, second best among all Dairyland Power Cooperatives.

Let us help you with your 2025 ElectricSense rebate today. For more details on rebates, visit acrec.com/rebates or call Ryan at 888-788-1551. ■

CYBER SECURITY Tip of the MONTH

Know the Tradeoff Between Privacy and Convenience

When you download a new app, open a new online account or join a new social media platform, you will often be asked for access to your personal information before you can even use it. This data might include your geographic location, contacts, and photos. For these businesses, this personal information about you is tremendously valuable – and you should think about if the service you get in return is worth the data you must hand over, even if the service is free. Something to think about – can you control your data privacy and still use the service? And is it worth the amount or type of personal data they want in return? ■



Thank you to new Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives Executive Vice President and General Manager Leslie Kaufman for visiting Allamakee-Clayton Electric! Kaufman visited ACEC in December, taking a tour of our facility and meeting our staff. She returned to Postville in January to meet with our Board of Directors. She is pictured here with Andrew Henderson, Ben Schulmeister and Jason Troendle. Welcome to your role at the IAEC!

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FIND YOUR SERVICE NUMBER

ACEC has hidden three Service Location numbers within this newsletter. The numbers are from different regions of our service area – **two are worth \$10.00, and one is worth \$5.00.** The service location number must be yours to claim the credit, and you need to notify us when you find it.



CONTACT ACEC

HEADQUARTERS

229 Highway 51 • PO Box 715
Postville, IA 52162

PHONE NUMBERS

LOCAL 563-864-7611

TOLL-FREE 888-788-1551

PAYMENT LINE 24/7 833-284-5051

UNDERGROUND CABLE LOCATING
811

SKYWAYS INTERNET SOLUTIONS

800-864-1611

WEBSITE

acrec.com

OFFICE HOURS

Monday - Friday 7:30 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

OUTAGES

888-788-1551 or 563-864-7611

IOWA STATE ONE CALL

811

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ROGER ARTHUR, Sumner

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PO Box 715 - Postville, IA 52162-0715

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Did you know...

Your cooperative offers peace of mind knowing help is just a press of a button away with a FirstCall Emergency Response System?

For over 30 years, ACEC has offered this service to ACEC members AND non-members.

How does it work?

The FirstCall client wears a pendant either around their neck or on their wrist. When the client presses the pendant, a trained medical emergency response operator, available 24/7, receives the signal. When the call is received at our Cooperative

Response Center, the operator checks with the customer to see if everything is okay. If it is a non-emergency situation, the operator contacts the list of responders the client has approved. If it is an emergency, they'll contact 911.

Help before you need it

Elgin resident Darla Dewitte, pictured, worked for the Co-op as a FirstCall representative. Now, she is a customer. She said while she has a support system with her children, she wanted to make sure she'd be able to access help with the press of a button should she need it. #5630

As she said in her 1996 column in the Co-op newsletter, "If you need it, it's too late. The trick is to have the ability to get help before you need it."

For more information on our FirstCall services, contact Kim at 888-788-1551. ■



Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative