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Ellen and John Lee Njos have been recognized for the innovations applied to their Bowman County ranch.

Njos family receives Leopold Conservation Award

Slope Electric Cooperative takes pride in the outstanding individuals who help strengthen our communities.

A former Slope Electric director, John Lee Njos, and his wife, Ellen, have earned the distinguished North Dakota Leopold Conservation Award for their dedication to their animals, the land and future generations. Their commitment to making a difference reflects the values of the cooperative spirit. The following is a press release from the Sand County Foundation announcing the well-deserved recognition.

Innovation in ranching

The ranching career of John Lee and Ellen Njos

has been defined by innovation and their lifelong willingness to test boundaries. They admit their ranch's survival often depended on it.

Since purchasing Coyote Creek Ranch in 1973, the family's willingness to adapt, learn and rethink conventional practices has made their landscape more economically and environmentally sustainable.

John Lee defies the American West's iconic, rugged individualist rancher image with his willingness to organize, educate and collaborate. His ability to share his life's experiences has advanced adoption of conservation practices far and wide.

John Lee credits influential mentors with encouraging him to adopt nontraditional ranching methods. After joining his district soil conservation

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board in 1986, the district sent him to a holistic grazing course taught by Allan Savory. That investment turned out to be transformational.

John Lee learned how fencing and grazing practices can be used to grow better grass and improve soil's infiltration of water. He not only began installing new practices at home, but he encouraged other ranchers to do the same. These relationships led to the creation of the North Dakota Grazing Lands Coalition.

An early innovation was installing cross-fencing despite considerable social pressure. The results validated the risk: The land responded dramatically, showing thoughtful experimentation could unlock ecological potential and improve overall productivity. That experience laid the foundation for a pattern of innovation in land and livestock management.

As his understanding of holistic management deepened, he undertook water development projects, including buried pipelines, solar wells and strategically placed dams. This reduced grazing pressure on riparian areas, enhanced livestock distribution, improved water quality and reestablished beavers to their portion of Coyote Creek. All of this was accomplished in a brittle environment that annually receives just 10 inches of rain.

John Lee has kept 35 years of detailed rain records for the two separate parcels that make up the 4,800-acre Coyote Creek Ranch in Bowman County. Today, he and Ellen ranch with their daughter, Angie, and her husband, Luke Rodakowski. Their son, Chad, ranches nearby with a similar conservation ethic.

Decades ago, John Lee planted tall wheatgrass strips

He has long embodied a servant-leader ethic, rooted in mentorship, open communications and a steadfast belief in learning alongside others. These qualities have earned him widespread respect across North Dakota and beyond.

across his fields to combat soil erosion from wind. Recently, he embraced bale grazing as a regenerative soil-building technique to enrich nutrient-poor areas with organic matter and carbon, while reducing machinery use, fuel consumption and emissions. To restore degraded cropland, cover crops are grown to build soil structure, enhance microbial function and prevent erosion. A diverse cover crop mix also provides forage for cattle and wildlife to graze.

The Njoses have worked with the Bird Conservancy of the Rockies, Ducks Unlimited, the N.D. Game and Fish Department and the National Audubon Society to host bird inventories and migration research, and support grassland bird capture and tagging. They are restoring 270 acres of diverse native grasses and forbs through Audubon's Conservation Forage Program. Their enrollment in Audubon's third-party verified "Bird Friendly Beef" program is a result of bird-friendly grazing practices that help stabilize grassland bird populations.

John Lee played a key role in forming a landowner working group focused on improving sage grouse management. His leadership and practical expertise helped shape management approaches that are effective for conservation and feasible for landowners to implement.

Through the years, John Lee's influence grew as he engaged in regional and national conservation efforts, but to describe him as a "pillar of the community" understates the depth of his influence. He has long embodied a servant-leader ethic, rooted in mentorship, open communications and a steadfast belief in learning alongside others. These qualities have earned him widespread respect across North Dakota and beyond.

North Dakota Leopold Conservation Award

The Njoses family has been selected as the 2026 North Dakota Leopold Conservation Award recipient.

The award honors farmers, ranchers and forestland owners who go above and beyond in their management of soil health, water quality and wildlife

habitat on working land.

The Njos family's 4,800-acre Coyote Creek Ranch is located near Rhame in Bowman County. They will be formally presented with the \$10,000 award in December.

Sand County Foundation and national sponsor American Farmland Trust present Leopold Conservation awards to private landowners in 28 states. In North Dakota, the award is presented with North Dakota Grazing Lands Coalition, North Dakota Association of Soil Conservation Districts and the North Dakota Stockmen's Association.

Given in honor of renowned conservationist Aldo Leopold, the award recognizes farmers, ranchers and forestland owners who inspire others with their dedication to environmental improvement. In his influential 1949 book, "A Sand County Almanac," Leopold advocated for "a land ethic," an ethical relationship between people and the land they own and manage. ■



MANAGER'S MESSAGE: Careers in energy



Jason Bentz

Co-General Manager/CEO

October is a special time for electric cooperatives as we celebrate National Cooperative Month and Careers in Energy Week. It is an opportunity to recognize the people, partnerships and shared values that make cooperatives unique. While members see the end result every time they flip a switch, a dedicated team is working behind the scenes every day to deliver reliable power and exceptional service.

You've likely heard the phrase, "Not all heroes wear capes." In our industry, many wear hardhats, harnesses and safety gear. Our lineworkers demonstrate their commitment every day in maintaining the electric system, responding to outages and working in challenging conditions to keep power flowing to homes, farms and businesses. Their dedication and willingness to answer the call, no matter the time or weather, reflect the cooperative spirit of service and commitment to the members we serve.

Equally important are the member services professionals who serve as the connection between

the cooperative and its member-owners. Whether answering billing questions, helping members understand programs and services or providing information during outages, they ensure members receive the support they need. Their work helps strengthen relationships and reinforces our commitment to putting members first.

These roles represent just a portion of the many career opportunities available within the energy industry. Behind every reliable electric system are employees in engineering, operations, information technology, accounting, communications and administration who work together to support our mission. Each position plays an important role in delivering safe, reliable and affordable electricity.

As we celebrate Cooperative Month and Careers in Energy Week, we recognize and thank the employees and industry partners whose hard work makes a difference every day. Their expertise, teamwork and dedication help power our communities, support local economies and improve the quality of life for the members we proudly serve. ■



MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD: **Your questions, answered**



Angela Carlson
President

A highlight of Slope Electric Cooperative's annual meeting is the opportunity to discuss issues that matter most to members. This year, I joined co-General Managers Jason Bentz and Travis Kupper for a panel facilitated by Josh Kramer, executive director and general manager of the North Dakota Association of Rural Electric Cooperatives.

For those unable to attend, here are three of the many questions discussed during the panel and key takeaways from our conversation.

How does Slope Electric's local governance model influence decisions around rates, reliability and safety?

As a member-owned cooperative, Slope Electric is guided by a board of directors who live in the communities we serve. The decisions we make affect our neighbors, friends, family members and fellow members.

The board helps set the cooperative's direction and ensures Slope Electric remains financially strong for the future. Employees manage the day-to-day operation of the electric system. Because decisions are made locally, issues such as rates, reliability and safety are considered with our members' needs in mind.

Electric cooperatives consistently invest in reliability. What progress has Slope Electric made to strengthen the system?

Bentz highlighted several projects aimed at improving reliability.

One recent example is the completion of a 14-mile project near New England this June that moved power lines along the Bomber Club Road area from overhead poles to underground service. Projects like this help reduce outages caused by severe weather, trees and other outside factors.

Slope Electric has also added equipment that gives crews a better view of the electric system, helping them locate problems faster and restore power more quickly. Investments in substations, additional line connections and ongoing tree trimming also

help improve reliability and shorten outages when they occur.

If a large-load project were to emerge, what due diligence would Slope Electric undertake?

Kupper explained any large-load project, such as a data center or other business that requires a significant amount of electricity, would undergo a thorough review. Slope Electric would evaluate system capacity and potential impacts on existing members.

Basin Electric Power Cooperative works with Slope Electric early in the process to help ensure costs associated with serving a large new customer are not shifted to existing members. Throughout the process, our focus remains on protecting members' interests and making sound long-term decisions.

Thank you to everyone who attended our annual meeting and participated in the discussion. If you were unable to attend, a recording is available at slopeelectric.coop/annual-meeting. ■

You're Invited

MEMBER APPRECIATION OPEN HOUSE

At Slope Electric, we believe in the power of membership and this event is a way for us to say thank you for being part of ours. Come enjoy a delicious meal on behalf of Slope Electric and visit with our board of directors, CEOs, staff as well as other members.



11 A.M. - 1 P.M. ON OCTOBER 12



**SLOPE ELECTRIC
BOWMAN OUTPOST
603 6TH STREET NE, BOWMAN**

MESSAGE FROM MEMBER RELATIONS:

LIHEAP helps cover weatherization costs



Brooke Waltner

Manager of Member Relations/Chief of Staff

Winter heating costs can be a significant concern for members across Slope Electric Cooperative's service area. Fortunately, programs are available to help eligible individuals reduce energy expenses and maintain a safe, comfortable home throughout the colder months. Taking advantage of these resources can help ease financial stress and improve energy efficiency, making it easier to stay warm when temperatures drop.

The Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) can help low-income and eligible individuals with assistance when it comes to heating and insulation costs in the winter. Through the N.D. Department of Health and Human Services and local human service zone offices, individuals can find help with a variety of services when it comes to home energy assistance such as heating.

Services offered

LIHEAP does more than help families pay their utility bills. The program can also cover a variety of weatherization services to improve a home's energy

efficiency and help lower utility costs throughout the year.

Eligible households may receive assistance for insulation in attics, walls, floors and foundations, as well as weatherstripping, caulking and other upgrades that reduce drafts and improve a home's energy performance. LIHEAP can also help with furnace cleaning, repairs, replacements and chimney inspections or cleaning to improve both efficiency and safety.

Apply for LIHEAP

Upon applying for LIHEAP, an outreach specialist will visit your home and assist you in gathering necessary documentation for the service. From there, an application will be sent into the state for review, and the results will be provided within a week or two.

Check with your local human service office for more information regarding these services.

Applications are now being accepted year-round and can be found online at applyforhelp.nd.gov or by request at the local human service zone office. ■

Scan the QR code or reach out to your local human service zone office for more information and to apply.



NOMINATIONS ARE OPEN!



Nominate a deserving Scranton Public School student for the October Slope Electric Touchstone Energy Student of the Month! **The nomination deadline is Oct. 15.**

Scan the QR code for more information.



MESSAGE FROM OPERATIONS: **Powering together**



Andrew Sonsalla
Operations Manager

As the seasons change and communities settle into a busy time of year, we also take the opportunity to celebrate National Cooperative Month. It's a time to reflect on what it means to be part of a member-owned organization committed to serving our members and strengthening our communities. As an electric cooperative, we are guided by seven cooperative principles, including cooperation among cooperatives, which is a

principle that plays an important role in the work we do every day.

Our cooperative has a unique story. Years ago, our board of directors recognized the value of working together and joined a cooperative that partners with other cooperatives every day. By sharing expertise, resources and services, these cooperatives can operate more efficiently, control costs and better serve the members who depend on them.

Through ownership of Innovative Energy Alliance Cooperative (IEA), Slope Electric Cooperative works closely with three neighboring electric cooperatives, KEM Electric, Mor-Gran-Sou Electric and Roughrider Electric. It's a perfect example of how cooperation among cooperatives strengthens everyone involved.

Reduce costs

Through IEA's services, Slope Electric works alongside other cooperatives to help improve efficiency and better serve members. While IEA's engineering department assists with system analysis, maintenance planning and future expansion, the collaboration extends far beyond engineering.

IEA also supports information technology and supervisory control and data acquisition systems, works with accounting teams on budgeting and financial planning, and partners with member services departments to help communicate outage information and other important updates to members. By sharing resources, expertise and services, participating cooperatives can accomplish more together than they could individually while keeping

costs manageable for the members they serve.

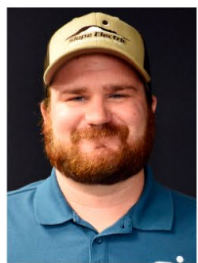
On occasion with new services or line construction, Slope Electric may not have the correct transformer or material in stock due to possible wait times from manufacturers or suppliers. Then, we are able to reach out to our neighboring cooperatives, who are likely able to help us out. This is beneficial for all co-ops to be able to share resources when others are in need.

Providing mutual aid

A well-known value of cooperatives is the willingness to help when others are in need. When a storm hits and a co-op is in need of additional crew members or equipment, we call each other for assistance. Because we are neighboring cooperatives, we are often familiar with the service area and may use the same technology to make the process a bit smoother during urgent situations.

Through these partnerships, we can better serve you with cost savings while maintaining quality of service to our members. By working together, sharing resources and supporting one another, we build a stronger cooperative. This month, we are proud to not only celebrate what we have accomplished, but who we have accomplished it with! ■





GENERATOR SAFETY TIPS

With working foreman, Mark Frank

When used incorrectly, generators can pose serious risks to both members and lineworkers. Improper use can lead to carbon monoxide poisoning and dangerous backfeeding during outage restoration. Always follow the manufacturer's instructions and keep these safety tips in mind.



Install and regularly test carbon monoxide alarms.

Keep generators at least 25 feet from doors, windows and vents.



Never connect a generator directly to household wiring unless a transfer switch has been installed by a qualified professional. Use properly rated, three-pronged extension cords and inspect them before use.



Never run a generator indoors, in a garage or in any enclosed or partially enclosed space.



Keep children and pets away from generators while they are running.

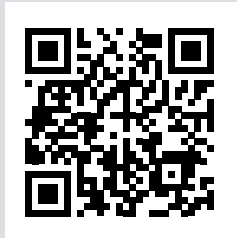
For more information, visit:
slopeelectric.coop/generator-safety

Operation Round Up Deadline

Operation Round Up is a voluntary, charitable program that allows cooperative members the opportunity to round up their electric bill to the nearest dollar. The pennies, dimes, nickels and quarters accumulate in a fund. The funds are then distributed by our Operation Round Up Board in the form of grants solely for medical, educational, charitable, safety and scientific purposes.



Our next Operation Round Up grant application deadline is Oct. 15. Visit our Operation Round Up page on our website for details and to apply.



You can find the complete monthly board meeting minutes by scanning the QR code or visiting the "Governance" page on our website,

slopeelectric.coop/governance.



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MANAGEMENT

Jason Bentz
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