

Somerset Rural Electric Cooperative, Inc.

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 



One of 14 electric cooperatives serving Pennsylvania and New Jersey

SOMERSET REC

223 Industrial Park Road
Somerset, PA 15501
814-445-4106
800-443-4255

Email: e-mail@somersetrec.com
Website: www.somersetrec.com

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

President

Jerry L. Engle, District 4

Vice President

Floyd T. Lehman, District 1

Secretary/Treasurer

Lowell L. Friedline, District 3

Russ Hillegas, District 2

James B. Harrold Sr., District 5

P. Timothy Vought, District 6

Jason Huston, District 7

Joshua C. Sechler, District 8

Harvey W. Reckner Jr., District 9

Ruston Ogburn

General Manager

STAFF

Gary Gindlesperger

Manager of Information Technology

Jonathan Hillegas

Director of Finances

Andrew Phillippi

Manager of Outside Operations

Emily Baer

Director of Marketing and Member Services

Phil Stern

Manager of Technical Services

Jessi Ditzler

Executive Assistant

OFFICE HOURS

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

EMERGENCY OUTAGE NUMBERS

814-445-4106
800-443-4255

What a Difference a Year Makes



RUSTON OGBURN

MY END-OF-YEAR REFLECTION ALWAYS INCLUDES a review of what I wrote for this column last year. What a difference a year makes.

On track

The cooperative's plans and projects remain on track with several reaching their final stretch in the upcoming year. This work can be categorized into our longer-term cycle work and our shorter-term goals, which stem from our strategic planning session. Our 2022 planning session had a three-to-five-year implementation plan, so this year we focused on designing and building the foundation for these initiatives.

Our most significant progress came from the expansion of our metering infrastructure and the development of tools to proactively use our metering data. Thousands of updated meters have been installed. These meters will provide real-time information that can improve our operational decisions for upgrading equipment, coordinating outages and planning for future expansion.

Our broadband support project, which helped about 125 members explore their internet options, will end this month. Members involved in this project have offered positive feedback and most have found a suitable option to provide some form of internet service. The rapidly changing nature of this technology will likely result in different options and different needs for our members. While this step of the process is ending, we will remain engaged on this topic and may launch similar efforts in the future.

Electricity markets and supply chains

Electricity production and consumption have changed significantly in recent years. Pairing these changes with the disruptions in global energy markets created major volatility for electricity prices. Some of this volatility seems to have subsided, but the demand for electricity continues to rise. Part of this increase was built into our recent rate changes, and we will continue to update you as we know more about how energy prices evolve in the near future.

Good news continues for our supply chains. While many manufacturers have changed the way they do business, the lead times for many common components have become predictable. Hopefully, these lead times will soon return to their former patterns and allow us to manage our inventory more efficiently.

Optimism

In last December's column, I said the biggest surprise of 2023 was that pessimism had crept into many conversations I had. The most welcome change I can report for 2024 is that optimism has returned to many of those conversations. It was hard for me to point to something specific that caused last year's attitude, but clearly many of those feelings have been replaced with a renewed sense of hope. Hopefully, we will all focus on what we can control in our daily lives to ensure these feelings remain.

I hope the holidays give you a chance to be surrounded by friends and family. Merry Christmas and Happy New Year. 🍷

RUSTON OGBURN
GENERAL MANAGER

A Credit Instead of Coal

EMILY BAER, DIRECTOR OF MARKETING & MEMBER SERVICES

AT THE CO-OP, AS WE make our list and check it twice, members who lived on cooperative lines in 1999 and 2000 will receive an electric bill credit this month — whether they've been naughty or nice. As a cooperative member, you deserve a credit for helping build and sustain your local electric cooperative. This month, Somerset Rural Electric Cooperative (REC) returned \$571,000 to members across our co-op service territory.

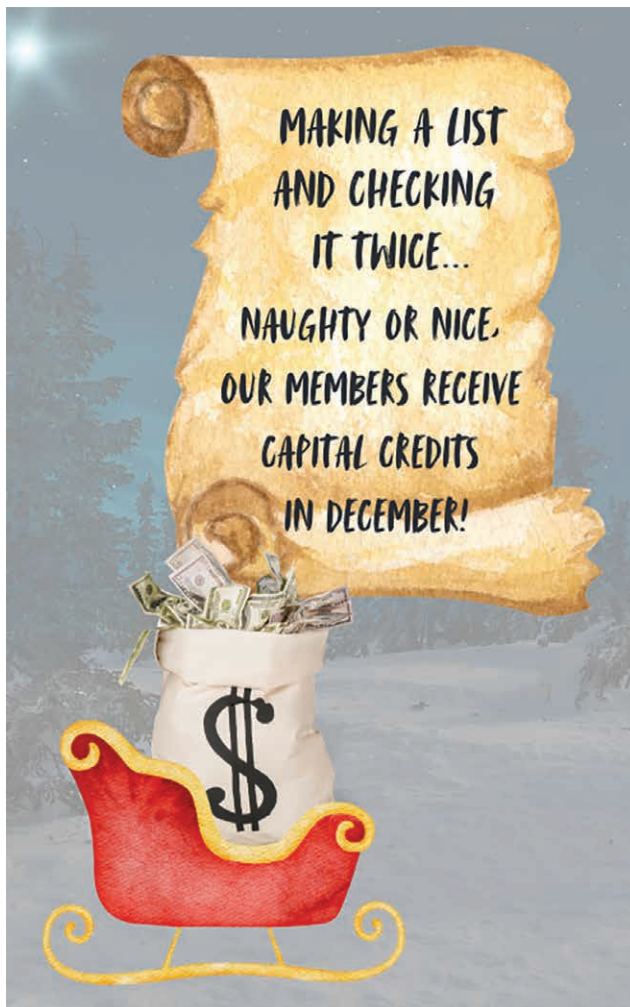
When you signed up to receive electric service from Somerset REC, you became a member — and owner — of an electric utility. While investor-owned utilities return a portion of any profits back to their shareholders, electric co-ops operate on a not-for-profit basis. Instead of returning leftover funds, known as margins, to investors who might not live in the same region or even the same

state as you do, every December, we issue capital credits based on how much you paid the co-op for electricity during a specific period.

If you were a Somerset REC member in 1999 or 2000, you should have noticed a credit on your electric bill this month. Members from that period who no longer live in the cooperative's service territory received a check in the mail. This reflects your ownership of the cooperative. During those years, Somerset REC saved part of what was paid by the members to cover emergency expenses and to build and maintain a reliable electric delivery system.

If you were a recipient, we hope you enjoyed the extra jingle sent your way this holiday season — although a lump of coal doesn't sound too bad when you're an adult.

If you established a membership after 2000 and are wondering when you will receive capital credits, the current capital credits payback timeframe is 23 to 25 years. 🎁



2025 DIRECTOR ELECTIONS

The 86th annual meeting of members of Somerset Rural Electric Cooperative (REC), Inc. will be held in May 2025.

Somerset REC is proud to have a board comprised of committed and knowledgeable directors who play a vital role in the decision-making process at the cooperative.

Listed below are the three director positions open for election in 2025 at the annual meeting. Directors elected are required to serve a three-year term. The following districts up for election are:

- ▶ **District 4:** Brothersvalley and Somerset townships
- ▶ **District 6:** Black, Elk Lick and Summit townships
- ▶ **District 8:** Lower Turkeyfoot, Saltlick, Springfield, Stewart and Upper Turkeyfoot townships

If you are interested in running for one of these positions, your primary residence must be in one of these areas, and you must be a member in good standing. Please submit to the cooperative, in writing, your request to run for the specific district no later than Feb. 1, 2025.

Communication Skills Successful at Somerset REC

EMILY BAER, DIRECTOR OF MARKETING and member services at Somerset Rural Electric Cooperative (REC), was recognized during the 2024 Pennsylvania Rural Electric Association's (PREA) Communications Awards Ceremony, held Oct. 2 at the Omni Bedford Springs Resort. The program is sponsored by the statewide organization representing the 13 electric cooperatives in Pennsylvania and one in New Jersey.

Awards were presented by Pete Fitzgerald, PREA vice president, public affairs & member services, and Colleen Taylor, a regional vice president with the National Rural Utilities Cooperative Finance Corporation.

Somerset REC received an Award of Excellence for **Best Graphic Design** and Honorable Mentions for **Best Use of Cooperative Principle** and **Best News Story**.

The awards program was held in conjunction with the 2024 PREA Communications Institute. During the two-and-a-half-day educational event, cooperative communicators learned about nonverbal communication and the effective use of artificial intelligence. They also participated in a day-long media training session as well as a roundtable discussion that included reports from their respective electric cooperatives.

Thirteen representatives from 10 Pennsylvania cooperatives attended the institute. 📍



AWARDS OF EXCELLENCE: Cooperative communicators display their Awards of Excellence, presented during the PREA Communications Awards Ceremony in Bedford. Recipients were, front row, from left – Nikki Staley of Central Electric, Emily Baer of Somerset REC, and Sarah Frank of Adams Electric; back row, from left – Doug Roles of Valley REC, Sarah Parrish of Sullivan County REC, and Kami Noel of Adams Electric.



HONORABLE MENTIONS: Cooperative communicators display their Honorable Mention certificates, presented during the PREA Communications Awards Ceremony in Bedford. Recipients were, front row, from left – Wendy Conley of New Enterprise REC, Kayla King of REA Energy Cooperative, and Emily Baer of Somerset REC; back row, from left – Sarah Parrish of Sullivan County REC, Kristy Smith of United Electric, Kami Noel of Adams Electric and Doug Roles of Valley REC.

ATTENTION PLEASE!

HIGH SCHOOL JUNIORS!

The Rural Electric Youth Tour gives high school juniors an opportunity to learn leadership skills, hang out with peers from across the United States, travel with other PA and NJ students and have FUN while doing it!



WHAT TO EXPECT

An all-inclusive trip to Washington, D.C. June 16-21. Tour Capitol Hill. Learn about electric cooperatives. Visit monuments and memorials. Stop at the Smithsonian museums. And so much more!

APPLICATIONS

Applications are available at somersetrec.com and due Jan. 22, 2025. Please contact Emily Baer at ebaer@somersetrec.com or 814-445-4106 for more information regarding this all-inclusive once-in-a-lifetime opportunity!

YOUTH TOUR 2025 - APPLY BY 1/22/25 FOR TRIP OF A LIFETIME!

Merry



Somerset REC • 85th Anniversary • 1939 - 2024

Christmas

We wish you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

Directors

Jerry L. Engle
Lowell L. Friedline
James B. Harrold Sr.

Russ A. Hillegas
Jason P. Huston
Floyd T. Lehman

Harvey W. Reckner Jr.
Joshua C. Sechler
P. Timothy Vought

Employees

Daniele Anderson
Kathy Armstrong
Emily Baer
Adam Barnes
Roy Bittner
Drew Boyer
Jeff Brant
Kristi Burkett
Don Cober
Brock Crawford
Jessi Ditzler

Dave Dudak
Wendy Durica
Carter Engleka
Gary Gindlesperger
Glenn Gross
Jonathan Hillegas
John Hochard
Mindy Huzsek
Brian Marker
Phil Martz Jr.
Jessica Maurer

Alex Mazanowski
Andy Nicklow
Ruston Ogburn
Emily Parks
Andrew Phillippi
Zack Pritts
Casey Pyle
Phil Read
Tony Retassie
Bryan Schrock
Sam Shoher

Roger Shroyer
Gary Smith
Tanner Smith
Kara Specht
Tim St. Clair
Phil Stern
Steve Tataleba
Garrett Thomas
Rick Yoder
Tawnya Zorn



The office will be closed Dec. 24 & 25 for Christmas and Jan. 1, 2025, for New Years.