

# 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  
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800-443-4255

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

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

### President

Clarence B. Waltermire, District 5

### Vice President

Jerry L. Engle, District 4

### Secretary/Treasurer

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Floyd T. Lehman, District 1

Russ Hillegas, District 2

P. Timothy Vought, District 6

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Joshua C. Sechler, District 8

Harvey W. Reckner Jr., District 9

### Ruston Ogburn

General Manager

## STAFF

Gary Gindlesperger

Manager of Information Technology

Douglas E. Glessner

Manager of Outside Operations

Jonathan Hillegas

Director of Finances

Emily Baer

Director of Marketing and Member Services

Phil Stern

Manager of Metering 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

## Thanks for another year



AS THE COLORS OF FALL begin to fade, I wonder where the year has gone. It seems like just yesterday we were shoveling snow and preparing for baseball and softball season. With both of my daughters now old enough to participate in activities, such as softball, gymnastics, basketball, and summer camp, I'm sure most of you can relate to the summer just seeming to fly by.

When I was younger, opportunities for children to participate in organized teams and camps were not as plentiful as they are today. For me, a summer spent playing in the creek and catching crawfish and minnows was a day well spent. I had the occasional basketball league or Little League game, but most of the summer was spent hanging out with friends and attending family picnics.

With children back in school, the schedules seem to fill up just as fast. My evenings are spent running one daughter to basketball practice, while my husband or mom takes our other daughter to gymnastics. My husband always reminds me that it's OK to stay at home an evening or two a week. Truth be told, he's probably right.

As Thanksgiving approaches, I would like to stop and take a moment to remember all those things I am thankful for, both personally and professionally.

As I grow older and hopefully wiser, my "thankful list" seems to change every year. On the personal side, I have a co-worker, also a friend, who is battling breast cancer. I also am coping with my oldest daughter, who is experiencing some eye complications. Both give me a greater appreciation for how valuable good health is. There is not a day that goes by that I don't thank God for my family's and friends' health and answered prayers for healing.

On the cooperative side, there seems to be more items we are thankful for in 2022 than in the past few years. The ability to, once again, meet in person and hold cooperative events with record attendance has been a highlight of the year. The number and lengths of outages continues to be low, and this is something we can all be proud of. Much of this is the result of cooperative members allowing us to trim trees and keep rights of way clear of potential problems.

Overall, I am thankful for the wonderful membership, employees and board of directors at the cooperative. All three groups continue to work for the same goal, which is to provide safe and reliable electric service. This year, we are also thankful for the employment of three new employees. By hiring these friendly, qualified individuals, the cooperative's family has grown to serve you.

As the holidays come and go, please take a minute to stop and give thanks for whatever is important in your life. Life goes by very quickly, and in the blink of an eye, the years pass by. We appreciate your continued support of the cooperative and welcome any ideas that could benefit the membership.

Thank you and please remember to be thankful for all those things that touch your life. 🍂

## EMILY BAER

DIRECTOR OF MARKETING AND MEMBER SERVICES

# A historic stroll through co-op territory

**EMILY BAER**, DIRECTOR OF MARKETING AND MEMBER SERVICES

**DURING OUR BUSY DAILY COMMUTE,** it is easy to forget the beauty and history that surrounds us right here in cooperative territory in the Laurel Highlands. In Somerset County, there are 32 properties and districts listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The most popular of these are the covered bridges.

Also, while it may not be a covered bridge, the Big Savage Tunnel along the Great Allegheny Passage is also worth noting. The landmark is served by Somerset Rural Electric Cooperative (REC).

In Pennsylvania, there are 209 historic covered bridges in 34 counties. Somerset County is home to 10: the Barronvale Bridge, Burkholder Bridge, Glessner Bridge, King's Bridge, Lower Humbert Bridge, New Baltimore Bridge, Packsaddle Bridge, Shaffer Bridge, Trostletown Bridge and Walter's Mill Bridge.

It is important to highlight a few of these Somerset County historic places that are located within our service territory.

## **Barronvale Bridge**

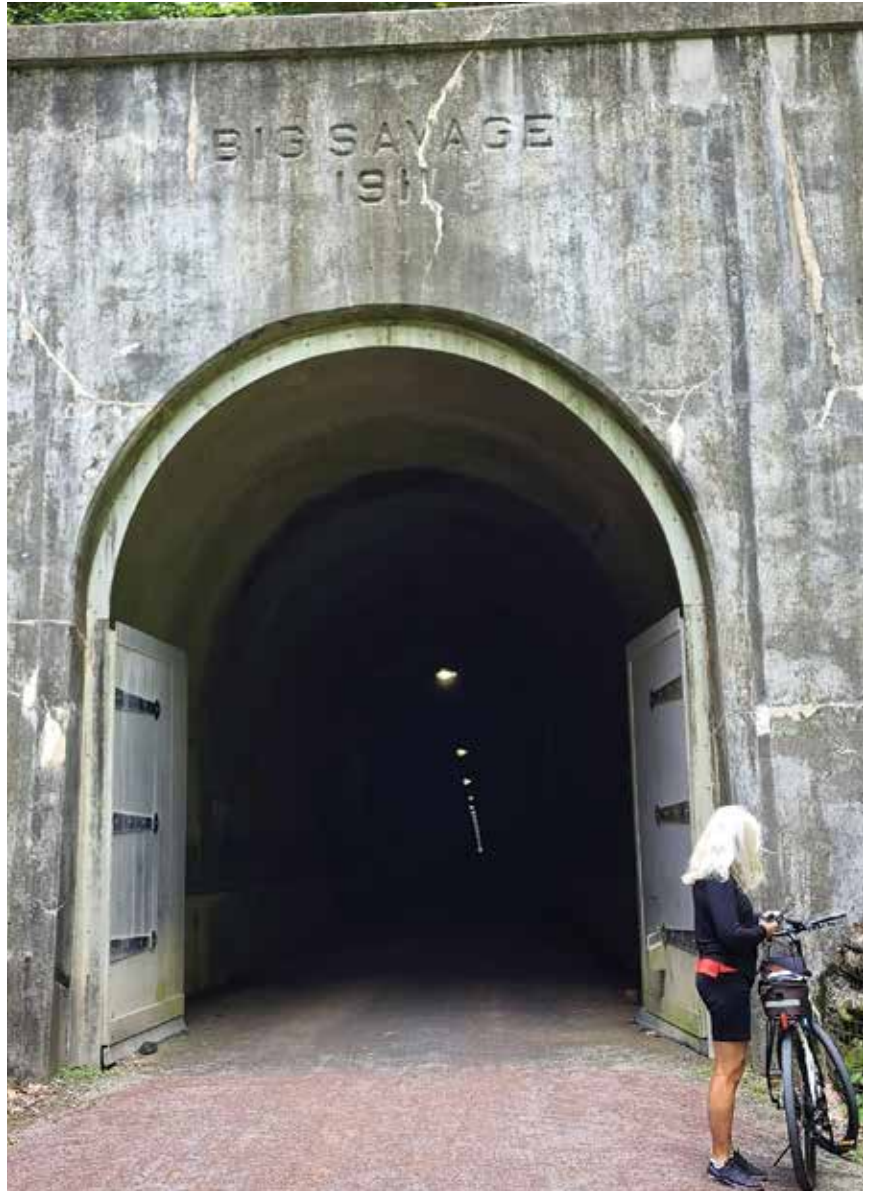
**Coordinates 39.9527°, -79.2705°**

*National Register of Historic Places*

*Reference Number: 80003633*

Currently owned and maintained by Middlecreek Township, the original Barronvale Bridge was built in 1830 and uses the Burr arch truss design. The bridge crosses Laurel Hill Creek in the township and is approximately 5 miles west of New Centerville, or 3 miles southwest of Laurel Hill State Park. The original structure was bypassed by State Route 3014 in Barronvale.

The historic marker next to the bridge says the following: "In 1828, Mr. Peter Kooser petitioned the county commissioners for the bridge to be built for patrons of his gristmill that once stood nearby. On July 14, 1829, The Somerset



**HISTORIC TUNNEL:** Built in the 1900s and abandoned in the 1970s, the Big Savage Tunnel has been restored and is now a popular spot for bicyclists and hikers. It is open to the public from April to November.

Herald published this notice: "The commissioners give notice that the contract for building a bridge at Kooser's Mill in Milford Township (this area is now Middlecreek Township) will be sold on the 8th of August."

Cassimer Cramer obtained the contract and completed the project in 1830 at a cost of \$300. In 1907, the present stone supports were built. They were quarried nearby and

were dressed and installed by a group of Italian craftsmen for \$773.85. Since the original build, repairs have been done over the years to strengthen and preserve the bridge's history.

A little more than 162 feet long and nearly 14 feet wide, this bridge which only allows foot traffic, is the longest covered bridge in Somerset County.

## Glessner Bridge

**Coordinates 40.02616°, -78.92091°**

*National Register of Historic Places Reference Number: 80003631*

Located in Stonycreek Township along Covered Bridge Road, the Glessner Bridge was originally built in 1881 by Tobias Glessner and later rebuilt in 1998. Like the Barronvale Bridge, the Glessner Bridge design uses Burr arch truss construction. Measuring 90 feet long and 12 feet wide, this bridge is built over the Stonycreek River and is open to vehicular traffic.

## Packsaddle Bridge

**Coordinates 39.867592°, -78.817354°**

*National Register of Historic Places Reference Number: 80003629*

Located in cooperative territory on Packsaddle Road in Fairhope Township, this famous Somerset County covered bridge is known for its picture-perfect combination with a waterfall.

Originally constructed in 1870 by an unknown builder, the 48-foot-long Packsaddle Bridge — or Doc Miller Bridge, to some — is an example of kingpost truss construction. The bridge was rehabilitated in 1950 and then again in 1996, when it was heavily damaged by flood waters.

Since the bridge is used daily by vehicle traffic, in May 2020, the bridge underwent repairs to improve public safety. The repairs were made with original aesthetics and historical authenticity in mind.

## Big Savage Tunnel

**Coordinates 39.7454°, -78.8965°**

According to [gaptrail.org](http://gaptrail.org), the 3,291-foot-long tunnel is named after surveyor and inventor Thomas Savage. As legend goes, in the winter of 1736, Savage and other surveyors were stranded on the mountain ridges. Savage offered himself up as food to save the rest of the party from starving. Fortunately, a rescue team showed up, saving Savage's life.

PHOTO BY RUSTY GLESSNER, PABUCKETLIST



**PICTURE PERFECT:** Built in 1870, Packsaddle Bridge in Fairhope Township, Somerset County, is tucked away in an idyllic setting near a waterfall.

In the early 1900s, the success of coal and steel triggered the Western Maryland Railway's ambition to expand westward from Cumberland to Connellsville. To compete with the existing B&O Railroad, Western Maryland built nine tunnels and more than 30 bridges and viaducts to shorten the route.

While tunneling through Big Savage Mountain, workers encountered soft, wet mud and sand 600 feet from the western portal, slowing progress. After several conventional methods to clear the tunnel were unsuccessful, the railroad brought in air locks used in New York City's subway construction. After the rail line was abandoned in 1975, the tunnel deteriorated.

In the late 1990s, the Great Allegheny Passage Conservancy gathered support for tunnel restoration. Then, in 2003, the refurbished tunnel was opened for bicyclists and hikers to enjoy as a cool alternative from the summer sun and gusty winds in the spring and fall.

The Big Savage Tunnel is open daily from dawn to dusk, from approximately April 1 to November 30, and is closed during the winter months to protect its inner concrete liner from damage. It is fitted with custom arched portal doors and a modern lighting system, powered by Somerset REC. For easiest access by car, parking at the Deal trailhead is recommended.

For more information on Somerset County's historic covered bridges or the Big Savage Tunnel, please visit [PABucketList.com](http://PABucketList.com), [golaurelhighlands.com](http://golaurelhighlands.com) and [gaptrail.org](http://gaptrail.org). 

## Members notified of rate increase

Safe, reliable and affordable electricity is crucial for our members. That's what Somerset Rural Electric Cooperative strives to deliver to you all day, every day. We're proud of our efforts to serve your needs with competitively priced electricity, responsive member service, and proactive and necessary investments in the grid, all while maintaining the financial ability to retire member capital credits to you.

Over the last few years, the co-op was able to absorb the rising costs of fuel, materials and right-of-way maintenance. Due to these rising costs and a future increase in our power bill from our supplier, we will need to implement a rate increase.

Our residential basic service charge will increase by \$8.20, and the kilowatt-hour (kWh) charge will increase by 9.25%. With this combined effect, an average residential member will notice a 12% to 14% increase in their electric bill. Also, if you pay \$10/month for a yard light through the cooperative, that rate will increase to \$13/month.

Recent changes to our agreement for service from the transmission system to our substations significantly increased the portion of our bill associated with electricity demand. Demand billing focuses on the peak kilowatt use each month and five daily peaks from June 1 to September 30.

These service agreement changes coincided with energy price increases impacting all aspects of electricity production. Fortunately, through our generation and transmission partner, Allegheny Electric Cooperative Inc., we own generation that supplies more than half of our needs. Our remaining electric supply needs get fulfilled through the PJM Interconnection market. These purchases will be increasing our power bill.

Our commercial members will see a 9.25% increase in the kWh energy charges and a 23% increase in the kilowatt-demand charges.

The concerns of our members are one of our main priorities. For a more specific breakdown of the impact these changes will have to your electric bill, please feel free to contact your billing representative at 814-445-4106. 📞

## Generate Safely

Safe Generator Operation

Keep this information in your home's emergency kit or with your generator.

- Never connect a standby generator into your home's electrical system. There are only two safe ways to connect a standby generator to your equipment:

**Stationary Generator:** An approved generator transfer switch, which keeps your house circuits separate from the electric co-op, should be installed by a professional.

**Portable Generator:** Plug appliances directly into the outlet provided on the generator.

- Set up and run your generator in a well-ventilated area outside the home. Make sure it's out and away from your garage, doors, windows, and vents. The carbon monoxide generated is **DEADLY**.

- Use a heavy-duty extension cord to connect electric appliances to the outlet on the generator.

- Start the generator first **BEFORE** connecting appliances.



Source: SafeElectricity.org

Developed jointly by the Energy Education Council & Rural Electricity Resource Council



**THE OFFICE WILL BE CLOSED  
VETERANS DAY**

*We thank you for your service.*



**THE OFFICE WILL BE CLOSED  
THANKSGIVING DAY**

*From our table to yours,  
Happy Thanksgiving!*