

Somerset Rural Electric Cooperative, Inc.

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 



One of 14 electric cooperatives
serving Pennsylvania and New Jersey

Somerset REC

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Office Hours
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7:30 a.m. - 4 p.m.

Emergency Outage Number
814-445-4106
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From the General Manager



Tomorrow's electric system

By Ruston Ogburn

NEARLY eight years ago, I wrote a *Penn Lines* article looking at the future of our electric grid. Given the amount of energy-related discussion in today's news, I thought it would be good to revisit that discussion while focusing on the drivers of the next generation of the grid. Technical innovation and policy will determine how the grid looks and what types of energy sources will be used to power it.

Innovation

We will likely see technical innovation in two areas: tools focused on the reliability of the electric system and changes in electric generation. Fortunately, we live in an area where reliability is already very good, but concerns have risen recently with the Russian-Ukraine war escalating cybersecurity concerns around the world.

Devices installed across the grid help us locate outages and, if the outage is severe, to route power around an isolated area where the outage occurred. Advances in this technology will allow the locations to be determined much more accurately. They will also provide the ability to combine data from many devices to determine the best way to maintain service by isolating the outage to the smallest possible area.

The importance of electricity to our economy and society increases the need for these advances. I have no doubt that we will see an attack on our infrastructure in the future. The best way to deal with that — short of preventing it — is to have technology in place to be resilient when it occurs.

Innovations in electric generation

have paralleled many other technologies over the past 125 years. The same changes that have made cars, communication, or other things we use to make our lives safer and more efficient have occurred with electric generators. Even with these advances, the question remains: What energy source will we use to produce electricity in the future?

We have recently had a significant decline in the percentage of electricity produced by coal in the U.S. Natural gas has replaced most of that decrease. Natural gas prices tend to be more volatile than other energy sources. Production and pipeline bottlenecks create high prices, especially when cold weather requires natural gas for residential use in addition to electricity production.

The recent increase in energy prices impacting our heating and travel budgets also impacts electric generation prices. This impact will be delayed for our cooperative because the roughly 30% of electricity not generated by Allegheny Electric Cooperative, Inc., our generation and transmission provider, gets purchased through contracts several years in advance.

The recent push for electric vehicles has reignited the discussion for more electric generation capacity. Much of that discussion focuses on wind and solar with nuclear occasionally being mentioned.

The U.S. has relied heavily on nuclear generation over the last 50 years. Very few new nuclear plants have been built in recent years because regulatory hurdles have become almost insurmountable. Despite these obstacles, I believe

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The adventure continues at Mountain Ridge ATV Park

By Emily Baer

SPRING has arrived, nice weather is on its way and there is no better place to get your fix of the outdoors than at Mountain Ridge ATV Park, located in cooperative territory in beautiful Stonycreek Township. Mountain Ridge is a multi-family-owned business nestled in the Laurel Highlands. Only 10 miles from the Flight 93 National Memorial and just outside of Shanksville, the ATV park welcomed its first patrons in the fall of 2005.

Mountain Ridge is the perfect destination for individuals and families who enjoy camping and hitting the trails with their all-terrain vehicles. Throughout the last 16 years, many hours and ideas have been poured into improving and expanding the park's facilities. In 2021, more than 20,000 patrons came from all over Pennsylvania and surrounding states to enjoy all that Mountain Ridge has to offer. Soon to be considered the largest East Coast ATV park, Mountain Ridge is hopeful 2022 will be just as successful as last year.



THE WEIR BOYS: The Mountain Ridge boys, Bowen and Mason Weir, hold the signs for the two campsite loops powered by Somerset REC.

Trail riding

The 3,000-acre park features 150 miles of trails, more than 40 miles of single track, a kids' track and a motocross track. Its trails accommodate side-by-sides, four-wheelers and dirt bikes. Riders of all skill sets can find trails that cater to their level of experience.

Each trail is color-coded green, blue or black to note the level of experience associated with that trail. There are six green trails suitable for novice riders, six blue trails for experienced riders and four black trails for riders who enjoy a challenge. All trails are clearly marked and are one-directional.

You will also find that Mountain Ridge has some of the nicest, well-groomed and maintained trails around. The outside staff works hard all season long to keep trails cleared of debris and groom them after busy weekends of high-traffic riding. There is also



plenty of rainy weather that creates mud on the mountain that everyone seems to love.

The park's trails and campgrounds offer a picturesque view of the surrounding scenery. One of the most photographed sites is from the Shamrock Trail lookout, which showcases steep valleys and mountains. From the campgrounds, some of the most beautiful sunrises and sunsets Somerset County has to offer can be seen. Several wind turbines can also be found on the property.

After a long day on the trails, what could be better than relaxing with family and friends at your campsite?

Camping

There are 21 new electric campsites available for the 2022 season with plans for 44 more sites to be added in the upcoming years. Somerset Rural Electric Cooperative (REC) employees Doug Glessner, manager of outside operations, John Hochard, staking engineer, and several construction crews assisted with the new connections. Doug and John worked closely with the park owners to bring the campsite plans to fruition. The park owners greatly appreciated the cooperative's guidance during the planning process and in overseeing the project's execution.

"Somerset REC was great to work with throughout the whole process of staking and installing the aerial lines to suit our needs for the park," says



Travis Hankinson, co-owner of Mountain Ridge. "The cooperative completed the project of the electrical lines in a timely manner with no interference to the daily operation of the park."

And if you don't have a camper, it's not a problem. Mountain Ridge has camping options and accommodations for everyone. There are currently 50 electric campsites, 14 rustic cabins, 10 primitive tent-camping sites and two large fields for additional primitive camping. The electric campsites can accommodate 30- and 50-amp services and are equipped with a picnic table and fire ring. The fully powered rustic cabins can hold up to eight guests and

are set up with bunkbeds and a ceiling fan. Some cabins are also equipped with a mini-fridge and shed doors for quad storage.

Included in the camping reservation is access to a water-fill station and a dump station, which is on-site to make everyone's trip to Mountain Ridge easier. There is also a shower

OVERLOOK: Patrons at Mountain Ridge ATV Park take a break from the trails to enjoy the mountain views.

house for guests to wash up after a busy day of getting muddy or dusty on the trails. Before loading up to go home, guests can go to the quad wash to clean their machines so they will be ready to head out on their next adventure.

Mountain Ridge is proud to be powered by Somerset REC and would like to extend its thanks to the cooperative for all that it has done to help the park continue to grow.

Interested in riding in the beautiful Laurel Highlands? You can stay connected through the park's Facebook page, @MountainRidgeATVPark, and Instagram account, @MountainRidgeATV, or visit its website, mountainridgeatvtrails.com, where you'll find more information and can make reservations. ❁

2022 Season Schedule:

April 23 and 24 – open for season pass holders only, 9 a.m. to 6 p.m.

April 29 to Memorial Day – open Friday, Saturday & Sunday, 9 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Memorial Day to Labor Day – open seven days a week, 9 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Labor Day to October 30 – open Friday, Saturday & Sunday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

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2022 NIGHT RIDE INFO

June 11 - 9 PM • July 16 - 9 PM • August 13 - 9 PM

September 10 - 8:30 PM • October 22 - 7 PM

REGISTRATION AT OFFICE BEGINS 45 MINS

BEFORE START TIME

COST IS \$5 PER RIDER

APPROX. 2 HOUR RIDE

NO DIRT BIKES OR SPORT QUADS

MUST BE 16000 OR LARGER

MUST HAVE HEADLIGHTS

ALL OTHER MRTR RULES APPLY!

From the General Manager

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nuclear research will continue, but unfortunately it will likely take over a decade for a significant number of units to come online.

Wind, despite being highly visible in our area, and solar only contribute a small fraction of the electricity that we use today. We will likely see continued growth of these resources driven by state requirements and heavy subsidies. Wind turbine technology has been relatively constant in recent years, while solar technology has made significant efficiency advances, a trend I believe will continue.

Solar installations outpaced all other planned projects in our area and in most of the country. In fact, so many projects have been proposed that approval of new projects may have to be suspended for several years.

Unfortunately, many technologies produce electricity when it is not needed the most. Therefore, this energy needs to be stored until electric demand increases. Pumped-storage hydro plants have provided storage for decades by pumping water into an elevated reservoir at night and releasing it back through generators to a lower reservoir during the day. In recent years, new technologies for grid-scale batteries, flywheels, compressed air and even electric cars have supplemented traditional pumped-storage. These technologies are still relatively new and expensive, but storage advances like these will change how electricity gets produced and used before long.

Policy

Many policy areas impact the electric industry; however, environmental regulation has led to significant changes in recent years that have altered the course of electric production. When natural gas was cheap, the effect of these policies was muted. However, with less diverse baseload electric generation available, the long-term effect of these policies has now begun to impact the end consumer.

It is yet to be seen if our policymak-

ers will recognize this impact — and the importance of baseload generation — before more of these generators retire prematurely. I am cautiously optimistic that we will learn lessons from Europe, where the electric sector has higher prices and emissions, but lower reliability because they tried to transition before innovation could provide the right solutions.

As always, if you have any questions about the electric sector today or in the future, please stop by or give me a call. ☘

The office of Somerset Rural Electric Cooperative will be closed Friday, April 15, in observance of Good Friday.

Save the Date!



Somerset Rural Electric Cooperative
83rd Annual Meeting - Drive-Thru
 223 Industrial Park Rd, Somerset | May 26, 2022
 Register and vote between 3:30 PM - 6:30 PM
 \$10 bill credit and gift for all attending members!




Lineman
Appreciation Day
 April 18, 2022

Thanks for keeping the lights on!



Alex Brian Tanner Casey Sam
 Phil Adam
 Roy
 Bryan Glenn Casey Garrett