

Photo: Lisa Bohlman, May Calendar Photo Contest Winner

# NEWSLETTER

May 2025

## 2025 Annual Meeting Of Agralite Electric Cooperative

Agralite Electric Cooperative is pleased to invite you to the 86th Annual Meeting of the Cooperative. This is your opportunity to take part in the governing of your electric cooperative. This year, District 3 and District 4 seats are up for election. In District 3, Bennett Zierke is up for election for another term. Bennett has served on the Board of Directors for the cooperative since 2013. In District 4, Steve Nelson is up for election for another term. Steve has served on the Board of Directors for the cooperative since 2016. Members will receive the cooperative's 2024 Annual Report and financial reports separately via mail. Join us June 10th and enjoy some good food, great music, and partake in the proceedings of your electric cooperative!



### How To Vote

All voting will be done by either delivering it by hand or depositing it in the U.S. Mail. The ballot must be enclosed in an official sealed envelope bearing your name and address, and addressed to the secretary. 1270201 Ballots are due to the Agralite office no later than 3:00 p.m., June 10th. Ballots will not be accepted at the meeting.

## 2025 ANNUAL MEETING



## SAVE THE DATE

**Agralite Electric Cooperative's  
86th Annual Meeting**

**June 10th, 2025  
@ Benson High School**

**5:30 PM – 6:45 PM:**

Registration and steak supper grilled by the  
West Central Cattlemen's Association

**7:00 PM:**

Business meeting

\*Hundreds of dollars in door prizes

\*Each registered member will receive a gift

## EMPOWERING communities

with innovative  
and sustainable  
energy solutions

FOR OVER

# 85 YEARS

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## Agralite Electric Co-op

*We're member-owned!*

320 US-12, Benson, MN  
(320) 843-4150  
1-800-950-8375  
[www.agralite.coop](http://www.agralite.coop)

 Like us on Facebook



## Office Hours

**Closed Monday, May 26th  
for Memorial Day**

**Beginning Tuesday, May 27th:  
Office hours change to  
7:00 AM to 3:30 PM**



Touchstone Energy®

Agralite is a Touchstone Energy® Cooperative.



## Find your account number and win a \$100 credit!

If your account number (as it appears on your monthly electric bill) is one of the [four account numbers](#) hidden in this issue, give our office a call by the end of the month and you will receive a \$100 bill credit. If more than one member finds their account number in a single issue, \$100 will be split equally amongst them.

### Congratulations

to Donald DeNeui for finding his account number in the March newsletter.

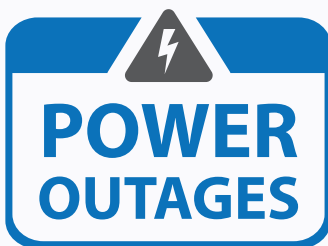
### Energy Saving Tip:



Routine maintenance is important to keep your refrigerator running efficiently. Lint and dirt should be cleaned from the coils every six months to a year, and more often if there are pets in the home.

When coils are coated with lint, dust, and pet hair, your refrigerator works harder than it is designed to. This prevents the appliance from cooling properly and efficiently. The extra work can increase your refrigerator's energy costs by up to 35% and shorten the life of the appliance.

Source: energy.gov



**Call Day or Night  
1.888.884.3887**

[Do not call the office for outages](#)

May Energy Payment is due June 20.\*

\*We accept Visa, Discover, and Mastercard.

## See You At The Annual Meeting

By Jenny Stryhn, General Manager

Most of us lead busy lives. We find ourselves multi-tasking, which often includes constantly checking phones and email to keep up with the demands of modern life. Thanks to technology, we can accomplish many tasks electronically and remotely to be more efficient. And with so many pressing obligations, we like to protect our "spare" time. Invitations to attend in-person meetings and gatherings are weighed carefully as we decide whether or not our time and effort to attend is beneficial. The answer to the question, "what's in it for me?", must be compelling. You may think attending the Agralite Electric Cooperative annual meeting would be easy to lump into the "no benefit to me" category. However, I'd ask you to think again.

Agralite Electric Cooperative exists to provide safe, reliable, and affordable energy to its consumer-members (that's you!). Equally important is our mission to enrich the lives of all members and to serve the long-term interests of our local communities. This is where you can help.

As a member of the community, you have a perspective that is valuable—and we invite you to share it with the co-op. At the annual meeting, co-op leaders will discuss the current priorities and challenges, and discuss the financial health and priorities for the coming year. The annual meeting is also the time to vote for new board members who will represent you, the members of the co-op. 1718900 Board members are local consumers, just like you.

Agralite Electric Cooperative is one of the few local organizations that is uniquely positioned to bring together all members of the community.

Perhaps you may feel that you have nothing to add to the discussion, so there is no need to attend the annual meeting. However, every energy bill you pay to the co-op helps ensure better service and reliability for the whole community. Your dollars are reinvested locally into improvements that impact the reliability and affordability of your energy. While Agralite Electric Cooperative provides convenient electronic options for bill-paying and communication, there are times when there is no substitute for in-person engagement.

If you've never attended our annual meeting, or if it's been a while, please stop by. Our co-op family looks forward to visiting with you! We'll have food, fun, and door prizes, so mark your calendar for the annual meeting on June 10th!

### It's All About The Energy:

#### Join Agralite Electric Cooperative For An Energy Tour Bus Trip

Join us: June 11-13 / \$175 per person / 20 seats available. We're excited to invite you to join us for our 2025 Energy Tour from June 11-13! This three-day luxury coach tour will take you through North Dakota's coal country where you'll learn how electric power is generated at a lignite coal plant and how a coal-gasification plant produces natural gas.

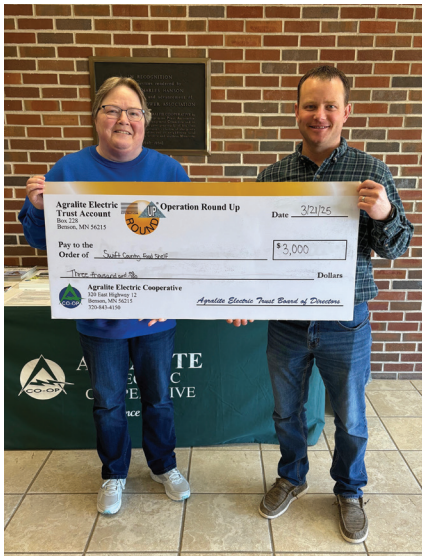
The tour includes visits to:

- Basin Electric Powers Antelope Valley Power Station near Beulah, ND
- Great Plains SynFuels Plant
- The Coteau Properties Freedom Coal Mine
- Garrison Dam Hydropower Generation Plant
- The North Dakota History Museum
- Lewis & Clark Riverboat Dinner Cruise

You'll be staying at a hotel in Mandan for two nights. The trip cost is \$175 per person. Most meals are included, except for fast food and coffee stops during the bus trip to and from North Dakota, and any restaurants you may visit during your free time.

*This trip promises to be both fun and educational, and we hope you'll join us for this exciting opportunity. Sign up by calling our office at 320-843-4150.*





### Agralite Donates \$3,000 To Local Food Shelves During Minnesota Foodshare Month

Here at Agralite, we are always proud of what our Operation Round Up program does for our four-county region. In March, Operation Round Up donated to all four of our local food shelves in Big Stone, Pope, Stevens, and Swift counties. The Board of Directors at Agralite created a board policy to contribute unclaimed capital credit dollars to Agralite's Operation Round Up. A portion of those dollars go directly to our local food shelves, totaling \$3,000 to each one for the month of March.



These dollars were delivered during Minnesota Food Share month. During the March Campaign, donations were matched by Minnesota Food Share. The amount of matched dollars received is based on a percentage of how much was raised in the county. The more dollars raised, the more matching funds received. If you haven't yet considered signing up for Operation Round Up, it's never too late! On average, Agralite members contribute about \$6 a year. A little goes a long way!

More information and Operation Round Up applications can be found on our website: [www.agralite.coop/operation-round](http://www.agralite.coop/operation-round).

### Power Hour Events



Our Power Hour events were created to provide members with the opportunity to meet their directors, ask questions, and mingle with other co-op members.

Our two Power Hour events took place at 10:00 AM on April 10th in Holloway and April 11th in Hancock. The events offered a platform for members to interact with co-op representatives. Conversations primarily focused on the new headquarters facility, the generator program, the financial health of the cooperative, and work plan projects. Thank you to all our members that attended these events! 1702300

Your active participation in the cooperative through these events contributes to the overall success of the cooperative.



We hope you'll join us in recognizing the sacrifices veterans have made for our great country—and the many contributions they continue to make to our wonderful community.

Veterans, including Agralite's  
Electrician – Jack Hoeke,  
Meter Tech – Jon Dale,  
Lineman – Ryan Hanson,  
**We salute you!**





## FREE YOUTH BASEBALL CLINIC

OPEN TO EVERYONE, AGES 6-12!  
**SUNDAY, JULY 27**

### TIME:

**10:00 AM - 12:00 PM**

### HOST:

Agralite Electric  
Cooperative

### FIELD:

**Chiefs Field**  
1400 Montana Ave  
Benson, MN 56215

**REGISTER  
FOR FREE**   
[TWINS.COM/CLINICS](https://twins.com/clinics)



  
**COMMUNITY FUND**



*This institution is an equal  
opportunity provider and employer.*

To file a program discrimination complaint, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, AD-3027, found online at [http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint\\_filing\\_cust.html](http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_cust.html) and at any USDA office or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by: (1) mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue SW, Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; (2) fax: (202) 690-7442; or (3) email: [program.intake@usda.gov](mailto:program.intake@usda.gov).

## May Is Electrical Safety Month

Electricity lights homes and businesses, provides warmth, and keeps appliances and equipment running smoothly. During Electrical Safety Month, Agralite Electric Cooperative and Safe Electricity provide these electrical safety tips to avoid hazards both inside and outdoors.

### Staying Safe On The Road

Downed power lines can happen due to wind, storms, animals, or an auto accident/collision.

- 1 If you see a downed power line, call 9-1-1 to report it, and stay in your car. You cannot tell by looking or listening if the power line is de-energized. Wait in your vehicle until an electric utility crew member says it is safe to get out.
- 2 Do not drive over a downed power line. Doing so could cause a domino effect and bring down other lines, poles, and equipment.
- 3 The only time you should exit is if your vehicle or cab is on fire. If this is the case, make a solid jump from the car or cab without touching it, landing with both feet together. Then, hop away with your feet together as far as you can.

### Staying Safe Outside

When working outside, be aware of overhead and underground power lines.

- 1 Keep at least 10 feet away from overhead power lines. Keep any items you are carrying or using, such as long poles or other extended equipment, 10 feet away from power lines at all times. Carry an extension ladder or other far-reaching tools or equipment horizontally.
- 2 Make sure that all outside outlets are ground-fault circuit interrupter (GFCI) protected.
- 3 Before digging, call 8-1-1 or your state's underground locating service. Buried lines such as electric, gas, water, sewer and other lines bring services indoors. Besides the dangers of coming in contact with a gas or electric line, fines due to damage are the responsibility of the homeowner or landowner. Privately owned lines and systems will not be marked by the free service.
- 4 When you see lightning, take shelter inside the house, shop, or a hard-topped vehicle for protection. Stay away from high places, and do not take shelter under an isolated tree. Stay away from items that conduct electricity, such as metal fences. If you are swimming or in a hot tub, get out. Water is an electrical conductor that is dangerous during a storm.

### Staying Safe Inside

With so many people working from home and the workplace, where you live can be one and the same. This means more devices are plugged into outlets or circuits that may not be able to handle the load.

- 1 Have a qualified electrician/licensed contractor check for hazards if you notice the following: dimming lights, a sizzling or buzzing sound, the smell of warm plastic, a switch plate that feels warm or looks scorched, sparks when plugging in or unplugging items or circuits that trip often.
- 2 When working with electrical equipment inside the house or shop, be aware that electrical equipment can spark when flammable vapors, gases, or dust are present.
- 3 Do not overstretch a cord or use frayed or damaged cords.
- 4 During storms, lightning can enter homes through corded phones, televisions, radios or computers. Lightning can also travel through plumbing, so do not take a bath, shower, or wash dishes when you see lightning strikes. If possible, unplug appliances and electronics before the storm, including cell phones that are charging via electricity. Surges caused by lightning can damage electronics and appliances.

For more information on electrical safety, visit [SafeElectricity.org](https://SafeElectricity.org).



## 2025 AGRALITE ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE BOARD NOMINEES Q & A



**Bennett Zierke** *District 3 Board Nominee*

### **1. Please tell Agralite Members a little bit about yourself.**

I was born in Blue Earth, MN, in 1954. Our family moved to a farm 11 miles south of Chokio in 1957, which happened to be the first farm to receive power from Agralite. I married an Appleton girl, Wendy Koosmann. We are blessed with 8 children and 5 grandchildren. We farmed in Artichoke township until 2003 when we moved to Hancock. We have a manufacturing business that was started in 2005 making hog equipment. It has since evolved into building equipment for the airline industry, sand and gravel, large door industry, ATV trailers, and other miscellaneous products. I am active in the Stevens County Republican Party, and Wendy and I have helped with starting a new church in Hancock.

### **2. Why do you want to be a Director?**

I really enjoy the teamwork with six other directors and management team, going over the monthly business of the co-op, talking over the challenges, and coming to a consensus with each issue.

### **3. What aspects of the director's job do you consider the most crucial?**

- Keeping the lights on by letting our State and US Senators and Representatives know our issues, and what they need to understand about the differences between providing power to rural America versus the cities.
- Slowing down or stopping the State and Federal mandates.
- Keeping good relationships with our power and transmission providers (*East River, Great River Energy, and WAPA*)

### **4. What work experience or other board experience do you have that will help you be an effective Director?**

First farming, and now manufacturing, and through working with several vendors/customers and being involved in many different organizations, I have learned to enjoy working with many different personality types to solve issues.

### **5. What challenges do you see for Agralite Electric Cooperative in the future and how does the cooperative meet these challenges?**

Our base load power (*coal, natural gas, nuclear, and hydro dams*) provide us with 24-hour power. Wind and solar are hit or miss and until we get reasonably priced battery backup for wind and solar, we must keep our base load sources going strong. We need to echo these truths so we can keep the lights on.



**Steve Nelson** *District 4 Board Nominee*

### **1. Please tell Agralite Members a little bit about yourself.**

I have lived in Rolling Forks Township all of my life. I graduated from Benson High School. I was married for 31 years to Baan Jean (*Eastman*) Nelson, who passed away in 2009 after a courageous battle with breast cancer. I have 4 children, 13 grandchildren, and 5 great grandchildren. I currently live north of Swift Falls with my wife Roxanne (*Carson*) and my stepson Logan. I am a life-long farmer and operate Nelson Farms with my two brothers in rural Benson.

### **2. Why do you want to be a Director?**

I would like to continue being a director to help guide the direction our cooperative is going now and in the future. We are currently in a time of almost constant change with legislation and new regulations, the growing demand on our power grid, and how this energy is generated. My goal is to continue to provide safe and reliable electricity to our local homes and businesses. I enjoy the challenge of being a part of making the important decisions that will make this cooperative sustainable for future generations. I appreciate all of the education I have received in this position and I look forward to the constant learning that comes with the director position.

### **3. What aspects of the director's job do you consider the most critical?**

The most critical responsibility is keeping electricity affordable and safe, while also exploring all of our energy options as we plan for the future demand. I pledge to always keep an open mind and to work well with other board members and the cooperative members to keep the co-op flourishing.

### **4. What work experience or other board experience do you have that will help you be an effective Director?**

I served on the Rolling Forks Township board for a total of 30 years, and was a chairman for the last 21 years. I have served as church council president at Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church for 9 years. I am also a board member of the Robert Sonsteng Foundation. I was a 4-H leader for the Swift Falls Winners. I was on the Glacial Ridge Hospital board for 10 years as well.

### **5. What challenges do you see for Agralite Electric Cooperative in the future and how does the cooperative meet these challenges?**

The cooperative needs to keep energy accessible, safe, and affordable to all our members, while keeping up with government mandates and our members' interest in renewable and clean energy. The board needs to continue exploring all the options available to the cooperative and its members, both now and in the future. One of our greatest challenges is switching to a greater percentage of renewable green energy versus fossil fuel produced energy.

## CURRENT AGRALITE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Kathy Draeger, Clinton  
*District 1*

Jeff Hufford, Morris  
*District 2 - Secretary/Treasurer*

Bennett Zierke, Hancock  
*District 3*

Steve Nelson, Starbuck  
*District 4*

Orvin Gronseth, Murdock  
*District 5 - Vice President*

Andrea Thomson, Benson  
*District 6*

Warren Rau, Appleton  
*District 7 - President*

## MINUTES OF MEETING BOARD OF DIRECTORS

March 2025

Board Chairman Warren Rau called a meeting of the Board of Directors of Agralite Electric Cooperative to order at 8:30 a.m., March 27, 2025. Directors Rau, Gronseth, Hufford, and Thomson were present, and Director Zierke joined by Zoom. Directors Nelson and Draeger were absent. The agenda, minutes of the last meeting, the monthly disbursements, the payment of capital credits of deceased members, Work Order #579, and February Special Equipment were approved.

Jonathan Messner, Manager of Member Services, reported on activities of his department for the month. He discussed load control for the month. He discussed the Annual Meeting and Power Hours.

Stephanie Wroblewski, Manager of Finance/CFO, discussed margins for the month of February. She discussed patronage received in March and Capital Credits. She brought forth 2024 Capital Credit Allocations and the Board approved it. She brought forth the recommendation for a bill credit to be applied for Capital Credit retirements under \$50 and to any active member 60 days or more delinquent and the Board approved it.

The financials were given by Stephanie with a PowerPoint presentation.

## CAN YOU SPOT THE ELECTRICAL HAZARD?

Electricity is essential for everyday life, but when combined with seemingly harmless items or elements, it can create a hazardous situation. View the grouped items below, then circle the two items that (when combined) create a potential electrical hazard.

Check your work in the answer key below.



- |    |   |   |   |
|----|---|---|---|
| 1. |    |    |    |
| 2. |    |    |    |
| 3. |    |    |    |
| 4. |   |   |   |
| 5. |  |  |  |

Answer Key 1. a&b 2. a&c 3. b&c 4. a&c 5. b&c

Tom Hoffman, Manager of Engineering & Operations, reported on activities of his department for the month. He discussed line crew projects and outages for the month. He gave an update on the new substations and related projects. He stated that there was an auction for the shed behind the Agralite office and the successful bidder will have it removed by March 28th.

Tom gave the safety report. 585404

Jenny Stryhn, General Manager/CEO, reviewed her report to the board. She discussed recent meetings she attended including the East River Managers Meeting, Basin Managers Meeting, NRECA PowerXchange, and the GRE Managers Meeting. She discussed a meeting with

Riverview on the Stevens Milk Plant facility, and CVEC on their solar array. She discussed wildfire mitigation plans and gave an update on the new headquarters facility project.

A roundtable discussion was held including the topics of new loads MREA distributed generation and the layoffs at CASE.

The April board meeting was set for the 24th.

Being no further business came before the Board, the meeting was adjourned.