



Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

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# Drawing people to McLean County

BY PATRICIA STOCKDILL



PHOTO BY PATRICIA STOCKDILL

Boaters on a pontoon enjoy a ride on Brush Lake in eastern McLean County.

For some, it's a hidden treasure they enjoy visiting. However, for a few thousand folks, it's simply "home." It's McLean County and it's an important cog in a wheel that drives the state's economy – including tourism.

Topping the list of county tourist destinations are two-thirds of what the N.D. Game and Fish Department considers the state's "Big Three" fisheries – the east end of Lake Sakakawea and part of the Missouri River, with Devils Lake comprising the third.

Toss in Lake Audubon and several smaller lakes, such as

Strawberry, Brush and Crooked lakes, along with Lake Brekken and Lake Holmes, and it's easy to see why North Dakotans and nonresidents alike visit the county for fishing and water-based recreational activities.

Sprinkle generously with fall hunting activities, where McLean County typically ranks in the top five counties for upland game bird harvest and in the top 10 counties for waterfowl harvest. For example, the county was third in waterfowl harvest in 2015 and fifth in 2016.

Fold in non-consumptive activities, such as birding along

the shores of those same lakes, Audubon National Wildlife Refuge, Garrison Dam's wooded river bottoms, an array of U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service waterfowl production areas, Fort Stevenson State Park, Game and Fish Department wildlife management areas and The Nature Conservancy's John E. Williams Preserve, and the recipe offers a delectable variety of species and habitats for birders.

Top with community activities such as Turtle Lake's Turtle Days, Max Rodeo, McLean County Fair hosted by the community



PHOTOS BY PATRICIA STOCKDILL

East Totten Recreation Area on Lake Audubon is a popular camping spot in McLean County. The campgrounds, adjacent recreation area with boating access, and Totten Trail Restaurant are all served by McLean Electric Cooperative.

## Water also prompts growth

**A**sk any farmer or gardener – as water goes, so goes the crop.

Water can also drive an economic engine and when it comes to rural North Dakota, good water is part of that engine.

Just look at Lake Sakakawea and the Missouri River System: In McLean County alone, it fuels the White Shield Water System, Garrison Rural Water District, the cities of Garrison and Washburn, farm irrigation systems, and even supplies water for Great River Energy's Coal Creek Station.

The combination of reliable electricity from McLean Electric Cooperative and quality water from Garrison Rural Water District (GRWD) is the engine for economic development around the east end of Lake Sakakawea and Lake Audubon, described GRWD board of directors

president Hjalmer Carlson, Garrison.

GRWD is unique: It's relatively small geographically, reaching out about 12 miles east, another 12 miles west of Garrison, venturing a few miles to the north and northeast, and butting up against the northeastern shore of Lake Sakakawea and northern side of Lake Audubon. However, the district is experiencing almost urban-like growth, GRWD Manager Todd Martinson described.

As the city of Garrison worked to improve its water supply system for its residents, Garrison Rural Water worked with the city to purchase water, going online in October 1993. Gradually phasing in its early 225 accounts, the district now serves more than 700 rural accounts.

While its growth helped grow

the area's economy and rural population, it also brought challenges for the water district to meet increased water demands. U.S. Department of Agriculture Rural Development grants originally funded the project to meet existing needs for Garrison and the surrounding rural area.

As cabin sites and rural subdivisions grew, the need to better serve new and existing customers also grew. Armed with a \$2 million N.D. State Water Commission grant, construction on a \$2.7 million expansion and upgrade began in 2017. To help qualify, GRWD needed a "paper-ready project" and have its matching funds in hand, Carlson described.

It included four water lines parallel to existing lines and one loop, along with two booster pump stations, to increase the

of Underwood, Washburn's Riverboat Days, White Shield Powwow, and activities virtually every month of the year in Garrison – highlighted by the Dickens Village Festival – for even more activities and interests.

The common ground on all of the places, activities and events is that they bring people who spend money and increase sales and use coffers, described McLean Electric Cooperative (MEC) General Manager/CEO Marty Dahl.

The county's economy mirrors the heart of North Dakota's economy – agriculture, energy and tourism. N.D. Tourism Division 2015 statistics – the most recent Oxford Economics study – attribute \$1.49 million in McLean County sales and local tax revenue to tourism. Residents and

nonresidents alike spent \$2.82 million in lodging, \$6.12 million in food and beverage, \$790,000 in retail sales, \$1.55 million in recreation, and \$3.37 million in

transportation – a total of \$14.65 million in visitor spending.

And 2015 was a down year, given the downturn in the energy industry.



*McLean Electric Cooperative serves Fort Stevenson State Park south of Garrison. The park's deTrobriand Marina is located on the east side of the park. Fort Stevenson is home to the city of Garrison and Garrison Rural Water District's water intake structure providing water to community and rural residents alike.*

volume and pressure at peak demand. One booster station is located four miles east of Garrison. GRWD also funded a new office located at that station. The other booster station is two miles west of Garrison.

Along with new offices, the water district hired Martinson and Office Manager/Field Technician Dean Krebsbach.

McLean Electric serves the new booster stations and office, MEC General Manager/CEO Marty Dahl explained. The additional load benefits MEC members, even if they're not receiving water from Garrison Rural Water. "The more small commercial loads you have, the better for the members. ... Every member will see a small amount of benefit from every new service we connect that uses power."

Dahl anticipates almost 100

rural lots for sale in McLean County in 2018. While Garrison Rural Water District serves only those within their boundaries, Carlson and Martinson both anticipate additional service requests this year.

The recent expansion enables GRWD to meet its member needs well into the foreseeable future, Carlson added, although he could envision long-term growth within the district stretching west from Douglas Bay to U.S. Highway 83 to the east. The project was important to longstanding existing customers, we well. "They're the ones that made the system," Carlson offered.

Additional growth is also anticipated along Lake Audubon, Martinson added.

New SCADA – Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition – technology installed as part of

the project allows Martinson to readily monitor the system. Areas of high water usage or breaks can be readily identified. Much as an electric outage can be narrowed down on a service call by lineworkers with similar electrical SCADA technology, GRWD technicians can reduce outage time and affected areas with SCADA identifying problems quicker and easier.

New and existing customers will also enjoy new automated meter reading in the coming years as GRWD upgrades to radio-read transmitter meters. "It gives us an efficiency we don't have," Martinson said, and customers won't have to submit meter readings. Instead, the meters will be automatically read by GRWD personnel in their service vehicle. ■

That also reflects in county revenue, McLean County Auditor Les Korgel added, extending far beyond hunting, fishing or birding. “The cabin areas in McLean County are tourism. These areas generate property tax dollars and sales tax dollars in the county. But they also generate employment in the county, from construction to cabin maintenance, vehicle and boat repairs, propane and electricity sales, food and fuel supplies, meals at restaurants, insurance, telephone, and medical. All of these areas are affected by tourism.”

When one benefits, all of the county benefits. “We need all of these businesses to be a vibrant community. In other words, without tourism in our area, the quality of life as we know it would be greatly diminished,” Dahl suggested. “Sales taxes from people outside the area help to lessen the amount of taxes needed from our residents to provide community services and development.”

That holds true for McLean Electric and its consumers, as well. The cooperative provides electric service to tourist destinations such as Indian Hills Resort, Fort Stevenson State Park, Sportsmen’s Centennial Park, and an increasing number of rural subdivisions including some that aren’t located immediately adjacent to Lake Sakakawea, Lake Audubon and other lakes.

Drawn to McLean County to visit family or friends, attend an event or enjoy the outdoors, many visitors became residents. As the number of MEC members increases in rural subdivisions – and elsewhere – those accounts provide more revenue. That helps spread costs among members and



Garrison Rural Water District Manager **Todd Martinson** in the rural water district’s booster station located east of Garrison. McLean Electric Cooperative serves the district’s two new booster stations and its office.

helps hold electric rates down, Dahl explained. “Modest growth is good for our economy and through good experiences bring more growth and opportunities for business to succeed,” he explained.

Indian Hills Resort began small with a rental condominium, bait shop and boat ramp. Today, it’s home to a full-service operation with camping and a variety of lodging options.

Fort Stevenson State Park now has two marinas, expanded camping and activities throughout the year.

Sportsmen’s Centennial Park, managed by the McLean County Park Board, was once subsidized by county taxpayers. It’s now fully self-funded, Korgel said.

Yet as winter gives way to spring and summer tourist season, for McLean County residents and MEC members it’s part of simply being at home, helping everyone enjoy the quality of rural life. ■

## To learn more:

Garrison Rural Water District’s office hours are 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Thursday and 8 a.m. to noon Friday, Manager Todd Martinson said, pending service calls.

Customers can now drop off GRWD water payments at a secure drop box located within Krause’s Market inside the main store entrance doors, Garrison, during the store’s regular business hours, deliver to the water district office four miles east of Garrison, or send payments via U.S. Postal Service, Garrison Rural Water, P.O. Box 840, Garrison, ND 58540.

The district also launched a new website, [www.garrisonruralwater.com](http://www.garrisonruralwater.com), which has a wealth of information on payment options and service requests. Office telephone is 701-337-5682.



PHOTOS BY PATRICIA STOCKDILL

*Water-based recreation, such as tubing, is just one of many activities available on Lake Sakakawea.*

## Spruced up in time for spring

BY PATRICIA STOCKDILL

**M**cLean Electric Cooperative (MEC) members Kyle and Sandy Giffey are ready for spring – and so, too, is their remodeled storefront at Giffey’s Yard & Garden in Garrison.

With Medora’s wooden boardwalk in their minds, the couple always envisioned a western-themed walkway along the entrance to their garden center.

After pondering the idea for a few years, the vision became reality with a little help from Garrison Area Improvement Association’s Business Improvement Grant Program. “They match up to \$5,000,” Kyle described. It provided the little incentive they needed to make their idea a reality.

In addition to the boardwalk, they added a western “hitching post” railing over a newly shaded deck area displaying shrubs and perennial plants. “That will give us more display area,” Giffey continued. Customers can meander off the deck into an area where larger trees are for sale or take the boardwalk to the east into the garden center’s

greenhouse and its array of vegetable and flower plants.

Other additions were a false dormer above the doorway to add depth and dimension to the building and a new sign, which highlight another aspect of the business – Kyle’s Katering and gift shop.

Open year-round, the gift shop is transformed into the “Christmas Store” during Garrison’s Dickens Village Festival. It features garden-themed indoor and outdoor items for ideal gifts for gardeners.

After a hard drought in 2017, their 15th year of business, Giffey said gardeners are always anxious for spring and the upcoming planting season. However, the big unknown this year will be how adventurous people will be to add trees, shrubs and perennials to their yards for new or existing landscaping projects should dry conditions persist.

While to plant or not to plant may be a question for some, remodeled Giffey’s Greenhouse and gift shop will have the plants, trees, shrubs and yard and garden accessories for those who say “yes, we must plant.”



*Giffey’s Garden and Kyle’s Katering owner **Kyle Giffey**, rural Garrison, stands along the new boardwalk and western-style railing, part of a remodeling project. Giffey and his wife, Sandy, are McLean Electric Cooperative members. The remodeling was done, in part, with a Garrison Area Improvement Association Business Improvement Grant.*

The Giffey’s live west of Garrison where their yard is an extension of their love of plants and gardening. ■

Large shelterbelts with multiple tree rows can save homes and yards from battering in a North Dakota "breeze." They also help conserve energy throughout the year.



## Dig in the dirt to save money

BY PATRICIA STOCKDILL

**G**oing green by planting trees, shrubs and plants can save some green – dollars, that is.

Proper landscaping helps conserve energy throughout the year. Consider these [www.Energy.gov](http://www.Energy.gov) facts:

- A well-designed landscape could pay for itself in eight years or less in energy savings.
- Summer daytime temperatures can be up to 6 degrees cooler in tree-shaded areas.
- Air-conditioning costs could decrease by 15 to 50 percent with properly designed landscaping, an overall savings of \$100 to \$250 annually.
- A 6- to 8-foot deciduous tree planted near a home could provide shade its first year. It could shade a roof in five to 10 years, depending on species and home design.
- Properly planted deciduous trees could screen 70 to 90 percent of summer sun while allowing cool breezes through.
- A South Dakota study found north, west and east windbreaks reduce energy consumption about 40 percent. ■

### Trees and utilities:

- Stay at least 20 feet from overhead power lines. Trees 20 feet from power lines should not exceed 20 feet at maturity.
- Trees 20 to 30 feet from overhead lines should not exceed 40 feet at maturity.
- Trees of any height at maturity can be planted more than 30 feet or more from overhead lines.
- Always call North Dakota One Call, 811, or go online to [www.ndonecall.com](http://www.ndonecall.com) before planting trees.
- Never plant trees near buried utility cable.



# ELECTRICAL SAFETY CHECKLIST

Electrical safety should be everyone's priority.

Check everything off this list monthly to make your home as safe as possible for you and your family.

## 1 | BATHROOM

- All electrical appliances are used away from the sink, tub, toilet and/or shower.
- All appliance cords are unplugged when not in use.
- All appliances are plugged into GFCI (Ground Fault Circuit Interrupter) -protected outlets, and GFCIs have been tested monthly.
- All unused outlets have safety caps installed, especially when children are in the home.
- All lighting in your shower area is vapor-tight.

## 2 | KITCHEN

- Back of refrigerator has room for air circulation and its coils are free of dirt and buildup.
- All electrical appliances are placed and used away from the sink.
- All appliances are plugged into GFCI (Ground Fault Circuit Interrupter) -protected outlets, and GFCIs have been tested monthly.
- All electrical cords are not cracked, frayed or damaged in any way.
- Appliance cords are not hanging from tables or counters and are unplugged when not in use.

## 3 | BASEMENT

- Circuit breaker box is labeled with the last electrical inspection, correct amperage and which rooms, outlets and circuits they service.
- Standard circuit breakers have been inspected, and you've considered talking with your licensed electrician about replacing with Arc Fault Circuit Interrupters (AFCIs).
- Washer and dryer do not wobble excessively while running, have room for air circulation, and dryer lint is removed after each use.
- Furnace has been inspected, cleaned and has proper ventilation outside the house.
- Temperature on the water heater is set to 120° or less.

## 4 | FAMILY ROOM

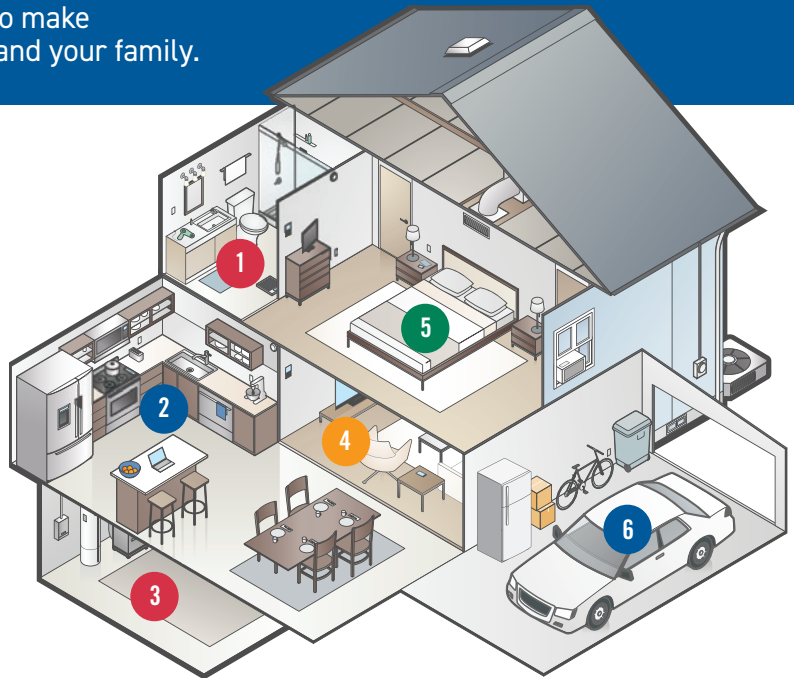
- All unused outlets have safety caps installed, especially when children are in the home.
- All light switch and outlet covers are not cracked or broken.
- All electrical equipment (lamps, electronics, etc.) are being used without the use of extension cords.
- All power outlets, power strips and surge protectors are not overloaded.
- All electronics have room for air circulation.

## 5 | BEDROOM

- All smoke and carbon monoxide detectors are in working order, and are placed outside all sleeping areas and on every level of the house.
- All light fixtures throughout the home are using bulbs not exceeding the fixture's maximum wattage.
- No electrical cords are resting under rugs or furniture.
- Electronic devices such as phone chargers are unplugged when not in use.
- Window unit air conditioners are plugged in on their own dedicated circuit.

## 6 | GARAGE

- All electrical cords are not cracked, frayed or damaged in any way – and are never used on a permanent basis.
- Appliance cords are unplugged when not in use.
- All appliances are plugged into GFCI (Ground Fault Circuit Interrupter) -protected outlets, and GFCIs have been tested monthly.
- Any garage-stored appliances, like refrigerators and freezers, have dedicated 20 amp appliance circuits.
- All storage boxes are placed away from wiring and plugs.



## IMPORTANT BILLING CHANGE! PLEASE READ

**M**cLean Electric Cooperative will be changing when we process our bills. Previously, we processed billing on the first day of each month. Starting in May, we will process billing anywhere from the 11th to the 15th. Usage will continue to be read from the first day of the month to the first day of the next month, just as it is now. For example, billing on May 11 will be kilowatt-hours used from April 1 to May 1.

This will change the date your bills are due.

Previously, your payments were due by the 20th of each month. Starting with the May 11 billing, payments will be due on the first of each month. (May 11 billing will be due on June 1).

Members who are on automatic payment (ACH/EFT from a bank account or a credit card) were drafted on the 20th of each month. We will draft on April 20 as usual, with the next draft occurring on June 1 and continuing to draft each month thereafter on the first day of each month.

We are changing the billing to implement our automated metering system for our three-phase meters. This will provide a more up-to-date billing for those members who have a three-phase service. ■



**Annual Meeting**  
2018

GARRISON, ND  
**GARRISON AUDITORIUM**

**JUNE 19, 2018**  
5PM REGISTRATION

*Look for the annual report  
in the June issue  
of North Dakota Living.*

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