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Manager's moment



Mark Doyle
General manager/CEO

Thanks for a moment of your time.

I'll begin by saying how honored I am to be selected as McLean Electric Cooperative's (MEC) new general manager/CEO. I look forward to serving you, our member-owners. I apologize for not reaching out sooner. These are still disruptive times, but we are all working to make the best of it, taking

advantage of more family time and the opportunity to slow down our busy lives.

As the new manager of your electric cooperative, I want to reflect on what it means to be a cooperative member-owner. MEC is operated by its member-owners, which means you have a direct impact on what MEC does.

That puts power and responsibility in the hands of those affected by the cooperative's choices, its members.

We will have MEC's annual meeting and election in June. As we begin the election process, please recognize the responsibilities laid upon your directors. Each director represents one of McLean Electric Cooperative's seven districts. Your director is your voice. This is your opportunity to participate. I encourage you to become involved and support the director representative of your choice.

In closing, please free to contact me with any issues or ideas you care to discuss. I'm available for conversations at markd@mcleanelectric.com or 701-463-6700. The industry in which we serve is evolving and I would be more than happy to discuss any of these topics with you.

Regards,
Mark Doyle
General manager/CEO

COVID-19 vaccinations: Contact your health care facility

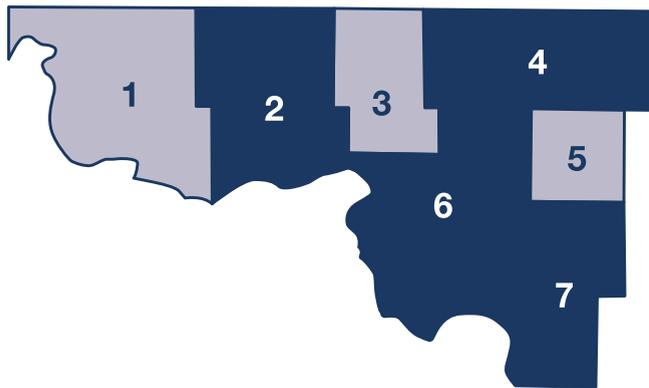
BY PATRICIA STOCKDILL

McLean County residents with any questions or concerns regarding the COVID-19 vaccination are advised to contact their local health care facility or First District Health Unit office with questions, schedule an appointment or to place their name on a waiting list if the vaccine isn't available:

- **Garrison:**
CHI Garrison Family Clinic, 701-463-2245.
First District Health Unit, McLean County Garrison office, 701-463-2641.
Trinity Community Clinic, 701-463-2626.
- **McClusky:**
First District Health Unit, Sheridan County McClusky office, 701-363-2506.
Northland Health Center, 701-363-2296.
- **Turtle Lake:**
Northland Health Center, 701-448-9225.
- **Underwood:**
Underwood Clinic, 701-442-3148.
- **Washburn:**
Washburn Clinic, 701-462-3389.
First District Health Unit, McLean County Washburn office, 701-462-3330. ■

Do you want to become a director?

Have you ever thought of running for a seat on the board of directors? It is quite simple. Pick up a petition at the McLean Electric Cooperative headquarters in Garrison and secure 15 signatures of members from within your district. You can start circulating the petition right away, but it must be filed at least 60 days prior to the date of the annual meeting. Petitions for the 2021 director elections must be filed with the co-op by Friday, April 16, 2021.



According to the bylaws, any member of McLean Electric Cooperative who is a member of this cooperative as a bona fide resident of the district he/she represents, and is in no way employed by or financially interested in a competing enterprise, can become a candidate for the board of directors.

Directors shall be elected by the members at large. Directors currently serving the cooperative find the duty extremely rewarding.



Clarence Behles



Darcy Klain



Karen Hanson



Larry Gessele

Director duties

Directors have a fiduciary responsibility to the cooperative.

They exercise care, time and responsibility in reviewing cooperative matters. Directors treat cooperative business as if it were their own.

Directors devote a certain amount of time to the cooperative. At a minimum, a director attends each monthly board meeting.

Directors learn about the industry as a whole by reading other materials and by attending state and national meetings. An understanding of the issues facing the industry is vital.

To help directors with their responsibilities, training is offered through the electric cooperative's statewide organization. Courses cover director duties and liabilities, understanding the electric business, board roles and relationships, strategic planning and financial decision making.

Directors currently serving the cooperative find the duty extremely rewarding.

This year, the districts up for election are:

- **District 2**, which is a two year term, includes the townships of Douglas, Blue Hill, Gate, Roseglen, 149-86, 149-85, Saint Mary, 148-86, Blackwater, 147-88, 147-87, 147-86. District 2 is currently served by **Clarence Behles**.
- **District 4**, which is a  term, includes the townships of Dogden, Butte, Otis, Andrews, 150-82, 149-82, Greatstone, Horseshoe Valley, Aurena and Byersville. District 4 is currently served by **Darcy Klain**.
- **District 6**, which is a three year term, includes the townships of 148-81, Malcolm, 147-84, Victoria, 147-82, Turtle Lake, 146-81, 146-82, Longfellow, 146-84, 145-83, Buffalo Lake, 145-81. District 6 is currently served by **Karen Hanson**.
- **District 7**, which is a two year term, includes the townships of Mercer, 146-80, 145-80, 145-84, 145-79, 144-80, 144-81, 144-82, 144-83, 144-84, 143-81, 143-80. District 7 is currently served by **Larry Gessele**. ■



PHOTO COURTESY THE NATUE CONSERVANCY

The John E. Williams Preserve near Turtle Lake provides vital habitat for the piping plover, as well as other birds and wildlife.

Spring, migration and birds in McLean County

BY PATRICIA STOCKDILL

“Birders who’ve made a visit (to North Dakota) in late spring or summer know what makes the state special: parks and refuges with distinctive grassland and wetland birds, ease of travel, and an utter lack of crowds. Also not to be discounted: the feeling of freedom that comes from roaming wide-open spaces...” Audubon Society (www.audubon.org/news/birding/north-dakota).

The arrival of spring provides warmth, energy and a revitalization of one’s appreciation for all that North Dakota – and McLean County – offers residents and visitors alike.

Spring, officially underway March 20, means farmers will soon be in the field, grass will green, and thoughts of summer activities flood people’s minds.

It also means the sky will be alive with birds of all sizes returning home, some stopping to rest while en route to nest in far northern regions and others who call North Dakota – and McLean County – their summer home.

From a waterfowl standpoint, North Dakota is smack in the heart of the Central Flyway. Nesting ducks and geese may seem commonplace to many residents. To birding aficionados, though, North Dakota – and McLean County – is a destination; a waterfowl haven and a wetland and prairie wonderland for birds never seen before.

“North Dakota may be one of the most under-rated birding destinations in the country,” suggests the Audubon Society’s website.

While most of the state is known for its grassland bird species, McLean County offers grasslands and more. Just consider these public destinations for a day trip around the county:

- **Audubon National Wildlife Refuge (NWR), Coleharbor:** More than 246 different bird species have been documented on the refuge since its 1956 establishment to mitigate for lost wildlife habitat with the Missouri River impoundment. Some are frequently observed and common while other birds are a rare and treasured treat should a visitor happen to catch a glimpse. Refuge headquarters are a mile off U.S. Highway 83 on the south shore of Lake Audubon. The refuge has a mix of native and renovated grasslands, trees, and wetlands with the variety of bird species reflecting its diversity. Contact the refuge, 701-442-5474, for information or visit www.fws.gov/refuge/audubon, clicking “Wildlife & Habitat” to access the wildlife checklist.
- **John E. Williams Preserve, Turtle Lake:** The soul of the preserve located 3 miles east of Turtle Lake, is its alkaline wetlands and lakes: their gravelly, salty beaches, and the birds who depend on their habitat. That includes sandhill cranes, waterfowl, and especially a small shorebird, the piping plover, which is on the federal threatened and endangered species list.

- Garrison Dam downstream area, Riverdale:** Birders encounter a distinct contrast to open spaces in places like the John E. Williams Preserve and Audubon NWR when they go downstream of Garrison Dam. There, woods south of Garrison Dam National Fish Hatchery, down to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Downstream Campground, and south into the Riverdale Wildlife Management Area burst with the diversity of woodland birds – and a splash of gulls, terns, waterfowl and raptors flourishing along the Missouri River. The downstream area is a fragment remnant of the original Missouri River bottomland woods with massive, mature and aging cottonwoods and an evolving ecosystem of shrubs and trees. In addition to woodland species, birders will find nesting bald eagles.

A family's next camping, fishing or hiking outing in McLean County – or even a routine drive in the country – could easily include birding opportunities with a number of public areas, including lakes in eastern McLean County, N.D. Game and Fish Department



PHOTOS COURTESY N.D. GAME AND FISH DEPARTMENT

North Dakota's prairie is home to the chestnut-collared longspur, a small grasslands birds that feeds mainly on seeds. They prefer the open terrain of fairly flat to rolling shortgrass to mixed-grass prairie in North Dakota.

Wildlife Management Areas along both Lake Audubon and Lake Sakakawea, and recreation areas such as Fort Stevenson State Park, Indian Hills Resort or Sportsmen's Centennial Park, for example.

Just take binoculars and a birding field guide or download a birding app, such as Merlin to get started. ■

Birding in the backyard



PHOTO COURTESY N.D. GAME AND FISH DEPARTMENT

Tree swallows are more tolerant of other birds, including other tree swallows, nesting in an area.

Birding in McLean County can also be as close as one's backyard.

Adding birdhouses and water features such as maintaining a birdbath are one way to do it.

Just be sure to call North Dakota One Call, 811, before digging too deep to install a birdhouse post or pipe, especially if it's something like

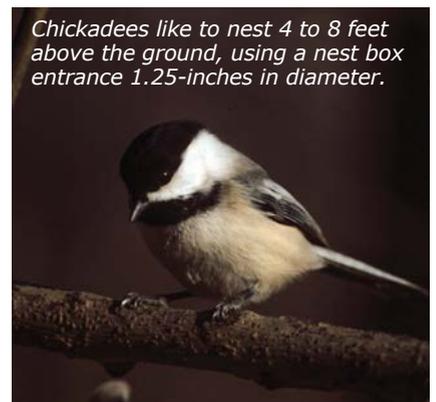
purple martin housing on a tall, sturdy pipe.

Purple martin housing, whether traditional apartments or round artificial gourds, shouldn't be too close to trees and never near power lines. An apartment or gourd colony should be 15 to 20 feet in the air. Purple martins in this region are entirely dependent on artificial nesting provided by humans. More information about the largest member of the insect-eating swallow family is available from the Purple Martin Conservation Association, www.purplemartin.org.

Try to avoid putting birdhouses on wooden posts, which mice and squirrels can easily climb and intrude. Add a predator guard if using wooden posts or use smooth surfaced pipes or posts.

Other birdhouse tips:

- Don't face into the wind and



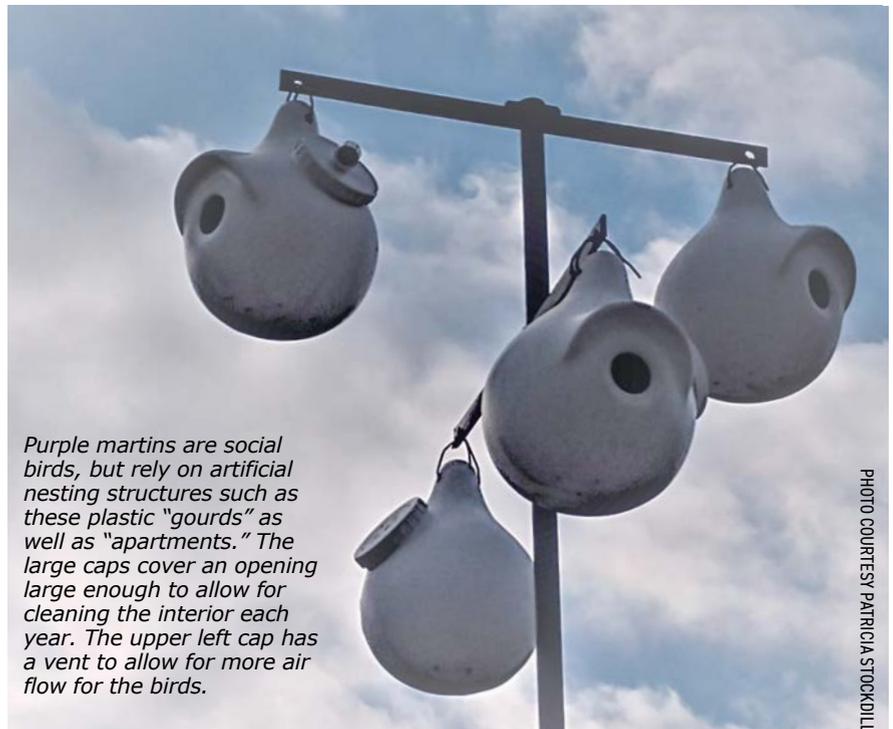
Chickadees like to nest 4 to 8 feet above the ground, using a nest box entrance 1.25-inches in diameter.

make sure birds have a clear flight path into the house.

- Clean houses in the fall to avoid pest infestation and potential diseases.
- Get the proper type of birdhouse for the birds you want to attract to nest. Entrance opening size, for example, should be appropriate for the species.

An opening too large could attract undesirable birds, such as starlings or house sparrows when a house is intended for wrens, tree swallows or bluebirds, for example. Bluebirds need a 1.5-inch entrance hole while nuthatches and chickadees can slip through a 1.25-inch entrance opening.

- Make sure the house has air holes for ventilation and opens for cleaning.
- Some birds, such as wrens and tree swallows, will tolerate another nest nearby while others, such as bluebirds aren't as sociable.
- Pick the proper location and height for the species you want to nest. For example, bluebirds like to be 5 to 8 feet above the ground while chickadees are fine 4 to 8 feet above a thicket floor. Wrens, however, prefer more lofty heights of 6 to 10 feet in a tree.



Purple martins are social birds, but rely on artificial nesting structures such as these plastic "gourds" as well as "apartments." The large caps cover an opening large enough to allow for cleaning the interior each year. The upper left cap has a vent to allow for more air flow for the birds.

PHOTO COURTESY PATRICIA STOOKDILL

The N.D. Game and Fish Department has a free publication, "Plans for Building Nest Structures and Songbird Feeders" available to order from its website, gf.nd.gov.

gov. Type the title in the search bar to download as a PDF file or the print version can be ordered from the website. ■

THE POWER OF CHANGE!





PHOTO COURTESY PATRICIA STOCKDILL

This rural outdoor living space has several electrical needs, including outlets in the retaining wall for an audio system and to run a small fountain by the log bench. The pond features running water cascading down a waterfall, into a pool, and onto the creek into the koi and goldfish pond. In addition, there are electric aerators and lighting features. A heated birdbath in the winter is plugged into the retaining wall outlet along with Christmas lights draped across the wall. The bighorn sheep on the "mountain" is lit with two floodlights.

Electricity and your next outdoor 'to-do' project

BY PATRICIA STOCKDILL

It seems great accomplishments tend to start with a single idea, blossoming, expanding and evolving from a simple vision.

When it comes to landscaping, gardening and outdoor living, though, "thinking big" initially can save hassles, headaches and extra work later – and maybe even money.

This might sound familiar: The idea of "let's put up a lighted flagpole" grows over a period of time to include a lighted flagpole surrounded by a garden with additional lighting ... and a water feature ... and maybe a patio ... with an outdoor kitchen and living space ... and maybe a sauna or hot tub.

If that scenario has a familiar ring, it's possible the initial electrical needs blossomed right along with the blossoming ideas.

Yards are becoming increasingly popular as outdoor living areas – a place where families and friends can gather and enjoy themselves in a healthy environment without traveling.

Nowadays, many yards are less about growing and mowing grass, planting a basic garden or adding some flowers. They're more about enjoying North Dakota's all-too-brief summers outside.

However, there can be growing pains if that initial outdoor vision evolves, expands and blossoms beyond its electrical capabilities, McLean Electric Cooperative Technical Service Manager Anne Brawley suggests. Just think about that lighted flagpole: A simple buried outdoor-rated electrical cable and outlet receptacle would be adequate to serve that floodlight well into the future.

But if the homeowner didn't map out where the electric line was buried, it's possible the patio addition could mean cutting a buried line when laying pavers or rock.

In addition, the water feature means another buried line, which would possibly be something like a garden hose.

Expanding the patio into an outdoor kitchen could mean the addition of a gas line extending from the house to the patio for a gas grill – that's another trench. It could also mean the need for additional and larger electric wires to accommodate a small refrigerator for the outdoor kitchen and more lighting. The sauna or hot tub brings in the need for higher 220 wiring and outlets.

That's a lot of buried things and a lot of digging that could be more than extra work and expense – it could be dangerous.

Brawley recommends homeowners think ahead when starting any outdoor landscaping, gardening or living space.

“The sky is the limit; let your imagination fly,” she offers, “but do it right once.” Ultimately, the initial upfront costs can be less than if a homeowner had to re-do their initial buried utility or water lines.

Some suggestions:

- Call North Dakota One Call, 811, prior to digging to locate buried utility lines.
- Avoid power lines and buried underground lines when planning an outdoor project and factor in mature tree and shrub height when planting vegetation. Avoid planting trees and shrubs directly over a septic tank and drain field, as well.
- Think ahead about potential outdoor living features and make certain they’re not located near power lines or over buried underground lines.
- Don’t plant trees, shrubs or vegetation too close to air conditioners or pad-mount transformers. While flowers or shrubs may improve the aesthetics around those objects, workers need to be able to access them for repairs and vegetation could be damaged or destroyed in the process.
- Always use electrical materials rated for outdoor use to withstand moisture, heat and sunlight. Outdoor UF cable is designed to keep out moisture and is tolerant of sunlight.
- Consider using a larger sized conductor and possibly using a three-wire with ground instead of a two-wire with ground to provide an additional circuit.
- Use larger wire if a water feature is heated in the winter as an open water birdbath because they carry a heavier electrical load.
- Factor in the distance from the breaker to the features and be cognizant of potential voltage drop when electrical features are located farther away from the breaker panel or when more electrical items are added in the future.
- “Get larger wire than what you think you need to allow for future development,” Brawley advises. It also helps to consult with an electrician for wire size and other recommendations on “do-it-yourself” projects.
- Consider using 1- to 2-inch diameter plastic pipe as a raceway for materials (sewer or water pipe – or even larger 6- to 8-inch drain tile pipe, for example). It should be large enough to house electrical wiring, garden hose and other buried lines such as a small gas line. That way, all lines can

be in one enclosed space in one buried pathway from the source to the outdoor features. The pipe can be flexible or rigid, but take into consideration any curves or bends when choosing options.

- “The beauty of it (buried pipe for all wires and hoses) is that it allows for growth and something new,” Brawley describes. Any additional wires or water hoses, for example, can simply be snaked through the existing pipe if it’s large enough, which saves digging and planting grass every time a new feature is added.
- Bring the pipe up to the source (house or garage, for example) with an elbow and consider adding a switch so features can be turned on and off inside or right outside a door. It could be brought into a closet or out-of-the-way area in a garage so it’s less visible and it could also be a Wi-Fi switch.
- Consider installing timers, motion sensors or remote electric eyes to also make it easy to turn items on and off.
- Measure and make a map of all buried lines – which, if done with a single piped pathway, is easier than diagramming multiple lines added over the course of years. Also try to go as straight as possible when digging from the starting point to the end point.
- Consider including a small water heater and sink when planning for an outdoor kitchen or living area.
- While standard outdoor waterproof receptacle covers meet outdoor electrical codes, metal ones last longer and don’t break. Plastic will deteriorate in sunlight and the hinged covers can snap off.

Contact Brawley at McLean Electric, 701-463-6700 or toll-free, 800-263-4922, for more information. ■





Know what's below. Call before you dig.

It may be something as basic as planting a tree or installing a new mailbox, but North Dakotans should call ahead to North Dakota One Call, 811, before digging.

North Dakota laws require anyone planning to dig to contact North Dakota One Call at least two days prior to when they intend to begin, whether they're a homeowner, contractor, utility cooperative, or large energy company.

If you want to dig, you had better call first.

North Dakota isn't unique in its requirements. One Call digging requirements are common through the United States. The reason is it saves lives by preventing accidents or worse – death – should someone expose a potentially dangerous hazard such as gas line or underground electrical cable.

It also helps prevent disruption of services, such as an outage when underground electric cable is cut.

North Dakota electrical code requires major electrical lines to be buried at least 36 inches deep. Typically, McLean Electric buries its lines 42 to 48 inches, but it's possible electric utility underground cable could be anywhere from 18 to 24 inches deep and deeper. However, just as rocks mysteriously appear where they never existed the previous summer, winter weather can cause frost heaves to slither electric lines into shallower depths.

Even though someone may think they won't dig deep enough to hit any buried wires or pipelines, something like communications wires could be shallower than water lines or electrical cables.

It's better to be safe than sorry.

Locating a utility company's underground lines, pipes or wires is free, although anyone digging is required to request a cable locate at least 48 hours prior to when they intend to dig to allow all of the utilities time to get to the area.

McLean Electric goes to the member's meter and it's the members' responsibility if they want their personal secondary wires located from the meter to another location.

The area where digging is planned should be identified with white flags to help those locating if no one is on site when the locate takes place.

Entities locating buried lines use flags specific to what is buried: Red for electrical; yellow for gas, oil, gaseous materials; green for sewer or drain; orange

for communication; pink for temporary survey markers; blue for potable water; and purple for reclaimed water, slurry and irrigation lines.

People can notify North Dakota One Call via telephone, 811, or go online to the website, www.ndonecall.com. The process can be enhanced by being prepared by having the site's legal description available, project description, exact address and specific location. North Dakota One Call then notifies utilities, pipeline companies, water authorities and others, and they identify if a line locate is necessary.

By contacting North Dakota One Call, the onus is on the entity responsible for any cables or pipelines. For example, if someone doesn't request a cable locate and hits McLean Electric's underground electrical cable, it is that person's responsibility to pay for repairs and other damages.

Utilities and companies are required by law to complete a locate request within 48 hours.

Anyone planning to dig, especially homeowners or new rural subdivision property owners, should remember that not everything is buried along road or section line right-of-way and buried lines could be on the property. ■

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District 4, Ruso

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