



OCTOBER 2021

# country living

FOR MEMBERS OF EAST CENTRAL ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

## Breaking Ground on the Cooperative's Future

October is National Cooperative Month. Usually it is a time to reflect on the history of co-ops and the member-first values that make us unique.

This year, we are using it as a reason to celebrate!

And boy, do we have a lot to celebrate.

At the end of August, our locally-elected Board of Trustees broke ground on a much anticipated facility expansion project. The \$9.5 million project will both add space, and repurpose existing space, to maximize the benefit to our members and ecoLINK customers.

The project was made necessary by the amazing growth we have experienced in our ecoLINK fiber project.

Over the last few years, high-speed fiber internet

has proven to be a critical resource for our members.

We have reached the half-way point in extending fiber across our service area, and have already witnessed a revolution in productivity for rural students, families, and businesses.

As we continue to integrate fiber with our current electrical infrastructure we are also seeing the benefit of improved communication and emergency reaction times.

ECE General Manager Tim Smith said, "This real time data with our electric infrastructure allows us to provide reliable power and responsiveness to our members."

Beyond fiber, our Board of Trustees has implemented a strategic plan for how East Central Electric can

continue to be at the forefront of serving our members' needs. This includes long-term planning for electric vehicles and member-owned renewable resources.

But even as we move forward and seek ways to improve, the things that matter will never change. Like our commitment to community.

In September, a team of dedicated East Central linemen traveled to Louisiana to aid our sister cooperatives in restoring power after the devastation of Hurricane Ida.

We are proud to have employees who embody our Cooperative Principles, like Cooperation Among Cooperatives and Concern for Community.



**East Central Electric Linemen Tyler London, Gary Baker, Stacy Bourne, Lael LeBlanc, Trevor Cheatwood, and Jody Gilroy traveled to Louisiana to provide Mutual Aid in hurricane recovery.**

**Pictured at top of page from left to right: District 6 Trustee Jim Hall, General Manager Tim Smith, District 7 Trustee Dwight Luther, District 1 Trustee Larry Harvey, District 3 Trustee Max Shoemake, District 2 Trustee Lowell Hobbs, District 5 Trustee Jay Emerson. Not pictured: District 4 Trustee Michael Vernon.**

To learn more about your elected trustees, or to view a district map, please visit [ecoec.com](http://ecoec.com). To contact your trustee, please call 918-756-0833.

notes from  
the chair



by Lowell Hobbs, President, East Central Electric Cooperative Board of Trustees

## The Importance of Focus

I continue to hear from our members that our co-op is standing the test of scrutiny for our staff performance. As our broadband build out continues to connect more homes, our members are so excited and don't mind parlaying their excitement to us. We are well along with phase 3 and going into phase 4 with total completions projected by the end of 2023.

We have also continued our focus on safety. We have a monthly safety meeting conducted by safety experts and as of 7/31/21, we have completed 622 days with no lost time accidents. This fact supports my belief that what you focus on is more than likely going to happen. Focus on quitting your job-it will happen. Focus on divorce-it will happen. Focus on buying a new car-it too will happen.

When we focus on doing the right thing it builds strong marriages, families, churches, communities, and businesses. Always take the high road. Let's not discount the good that each one of us can accomplish even with limited resources. Attitude is a little thing that makes a big difference. I believe most people are as happy as they make up their minds to be.

Your well being is not the responsibility of the government, your spouse, or your kids. I have heard it said "the best time to plant an oak tree was 30 years ago--the next best time is today". The same principle applies to our relationships. Don't put off another day to tell your family, friends, or neighbors that you love and appreciate them.

By the time I turned 13 we had left the town life and returned to country living. No telephone, no running water in or out of the house, and no indoor bathroom. My mother and

dad were both school teachers with after school activities, so I would ride the bus home and do the chores.

Daddy started buying community sale baby calves, and we would force our cows to let the new baby nurse along with hers. If she gave lots of milk, we would have 4 calves nursing. This was a twice a day event. It took a lot of time and effort along with patience to get as many as 20 to 30 calves fed this way and put the calves back in their pen after nursing. On one particular spring we had successfully raised about 53 of these calves to the age they could grow on grass without 2x daily efforts. We lived next to the Arkansas River (before the Keystone Lake) about 7 miles from Cleveland, and the river had changed its course from years past creating an island when flooding occurred. The island was about 1/4 mile wide and 3/4 mile long and produced the best grass.

When spring was well along, it started raining and soon the river had flooded back into the old channel and the current channel, and our 53 community sale barn calves, at about 500# each, were stranded on the island. My Dad went upstream to the far upper end of the island and started swimming downstream using the current to his advantage. He managed to reach the island before the current took him past it. He was able to get above the calves and drive them to the lower part of the island on our side and all 53 calves swam to safety with my Dad in pursuit. We elected to sell them before our planned date while they were still alive. We made some money on them but they would have been much bigger by fall if we had not lost our focus!

*Lowell Hobbs represents ECE District #2. To reach him, please call his cellphone at 918-695-5289.*

## Local Boys, National Heroes



**When the Category 4, 150 m.p.h. winds of Hurricane Ida ripped through Louisiana leaving over a million people without power, East Central linemen didn't hesitate to offer support.**



**Working long hours, far from home, even over a holiday weekend, ECE linemen made a significant difference, aiding in the recovery effort. If you would like to show support for the linemen who participated in this effort, feel free to mail a letter to the cooperative marked ATTN: MR/PR or submit your message online at: <https://bit.ly/3n8MrQW>.**



# Fiber Timeline Shows Completion In Sight

In September, 2018, the East Central Electric Board of Trustees approved a landmark decision to extend fiber internet to our members.

The luxuries of high speed internet that were previously off-limits to rural America are now proving their worth, with local advancements in farm automation, medical care, and distance learning.

When the project began, it was projected to be complete in six years. We are currently two years

ahead of schedule, with a projected completion date of December 2023.

The project is being built out in five phases. The map below details both the phases, and the electrical feeders to which our members are connected.

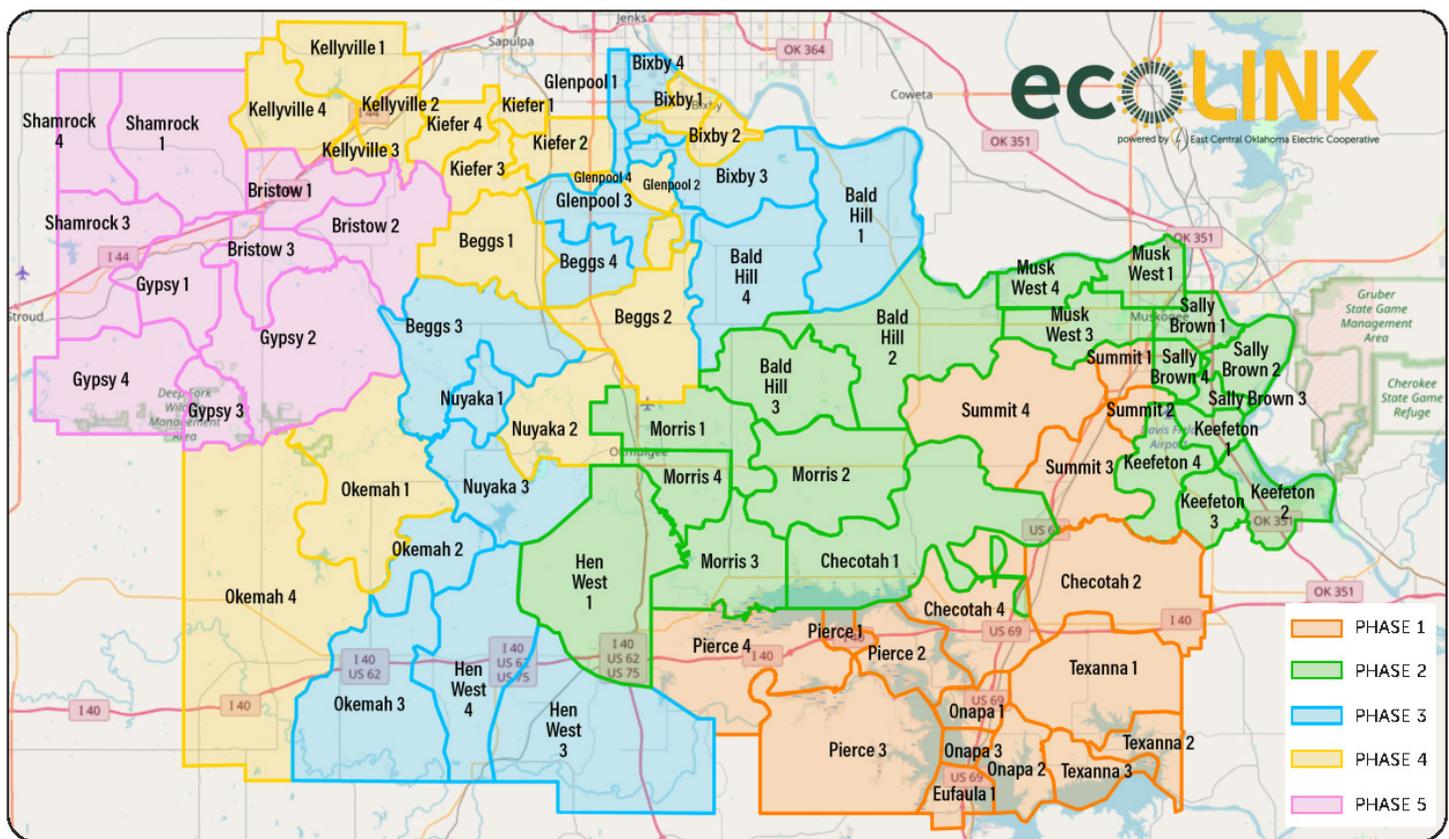
Phases 1 and 2 are fully constructed, and members living in those areas can sign on at any time with no contract. Phase 3 is currently under construction.

Within each phase, the feeders open whenever construction in

that area is complete and has passed final inspections.

Members who sign up for updates through [www.ecolink.coop](http://www.ecolink.coop) will receive a notification whenever their area opens up for orders.

Our ecoLINK service also has a dedicated Facebook page where important notifications are announced. Members can follow the page @ecolinkfiber.



# Operation Roundup

MONTHLY UPDATE



Operation Roundup funds support local charitable organizations, civic groups, youth programs, community services, and needy families. For more information on this voluntary bill roundup program, please visit us online at [www.ecoec.com](http://www.ecoec.com).

Applications reviewed	1,245
Applications granted	852
Applications denied	367
Applications tabled	14
Scholarships awarded	\$284,500
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Total Disbursements	\$2,052,187.68
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Average member contribution	48¢

## ELECTRICAL SAFETY TIP OF THE MONTH

With hunting season coming soon, be careful not to place gear or decoys on or near electrical equipment. It can be a hazard to you and our linemen.

SOURCE: ELECTRICAL SAFETY FOUNDATION INTERNATIONAL



## RECIPES



### Cranberry Pumpkin Bread

#### INGREDIENTS

1 3/4 c. flour	1/2 tsp. nutmeg
1 c. sugar	1/2 tsp. allspice
2 tsp. baking powder	1/2 c. oil
1/2 tsp. baking soda	2 eggs
1 tsp. cinnamon	1 1/2 c. fresh cranberries

#### DIRECTIONS

Preheat oven to 350°. Grease and flour an 8" loaf pan. Combine dry ingredients in a medium mixing bowl. Combine remaining ingredients except cranberries in a separate bowl. Stir into dry ingredients until you have a moist dough. Coarsely chop cranberries and stir into dough. Spread evenly in loaf pan. Bake 1 1/2 hours. Remove from pan and cool.

SOURCE: ECE 80TH ANNIVERSARY COOKBOOK



## East Central ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

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Pay online using SmartHub.

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