

Along these LINES

MARCH/APRIL 2026



Celebrating Women's History Month

From left, DEMCO chief officers Peggy Maranan, Russchelle Overhultz and Galen Dunbar oversee key areas supporting members, employees and long-term planning Page 7

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Women Leading the Way Pages 18-19



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WIRED FOR GROWTH

Balancing data center demand and reliability

Data centers may feel like a big-city phenomenon, but more of them are showing up in rural communities like the ones we serve—and for good reason. Rural areas offer what data centers need most: affordable land, room to grow and access to transmission lines that can move large amounts of power.

What makes data centers different from other large businesses is their appetite for electricity. These facilities run 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Servers must stay online constantly, which means power must be reliable every minute of every day.

For Louisiana’s electric cooperatives, the growth of data centers presents both opportunity and complexity.

On the plus side, data centers have the potential to bring steady, long-term load growth that helps support investments in local grids. With proper planning and policy support, those upgrades—including new substations, stronger lines and smarter technology—could benefit all co-op members and help keep electricity rates steady.

However, providing power to data centers presents challenges, too. These large facilities can be constructed and operating in as little as a year, but ensuring the necessary infrastructure, equipment, and electricity requires longer lead times and significant financial investment. Strategic planning and partnerships—as well as long-term power supply strategies—are essential to the process.

While most data centers operating in Louisiana are served by

investor-owned utilities, co-ops nationwide are fielding requests and inquiries from tech companies.

As member-owned utilities, electric cooperatives have a dual responsibility: to listen to the communities they serve and to provide reliable, affordable electric service to all co-op members. Balancing those responsibilities is not always simple, especially as new types of large-scale energy users—such as data centers—become part of the local landscape.

Louisiana’s energy landscape continues to evolve, bringing both promise and new challenges. The board and employees of the Association of Louisiana Electric Cooperative are committed to continuing to listen, communicate, and work with our member cooperatives, policymakers and community leaders to ensure decisions reflect the best interests of the people and communities we serve.

We encourage cooperative members to stay informed and engaged and to reach out to their local electric cooperative with questions about data centers, electric service or other energy-related issues. Your voice matters. ■

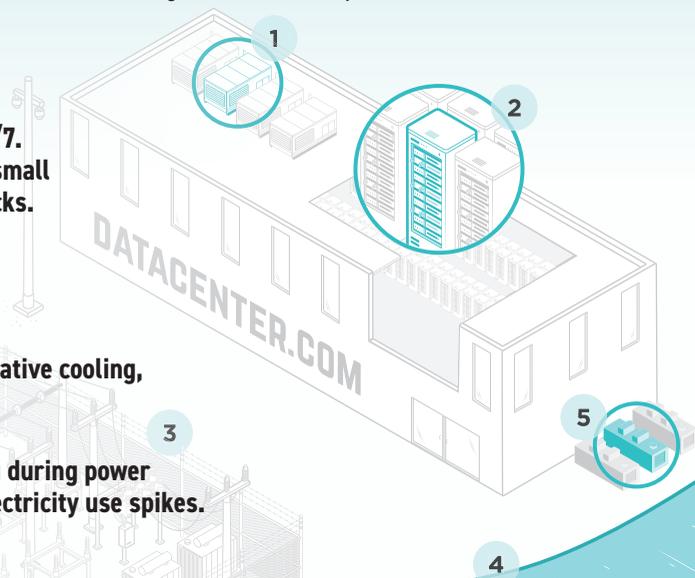


Aaron Graham, Interim CEO

Big Data, Bigger Demands

Many companies are choosing rural areas for their data centers because of cheaper land, available power and potential tax breaks. Data centers require huge amounts of electricity to operate, which presents new opportunities and challenges for electric co-ops.

1. **HVAC.** Constant cooling is needed to ensure servers function properly.
2. **Server racks.** Servers run applications and process data 24/7. One server rack can consume enough electricity to power a small home. A large data center can house thousands of server racks.
3. **Power upgrades.** Data centers often require new electrical infrastructure to meet their power needs.
4. **Water source.** Many large data centers are deploying evaporative cooling, which is more efficient than compressor-based systems.
5. **Backup power.** On-site generators keep data centers running during power outages and can also be used to help lower demand when electricity use spikes.





Love the Boot Week is Louisiana's largest litter removal and beautification effort, bringing awareness to our state's litter problem while empowering organizations and individual citizens to clean up litter and beautify spaces in their communities.

This year, we are cleaning up in honor of America's 250th birthday! Show your love for your country and your community by participating.

In 2025, 26,935 people volunteered a total of 81,852 hours at over 1,408 events, removing a record 514 tons of litter in all 64 parishes.

Let's surpass last year's numbers and grow our impact statewide.

WIN A PORTABLE BLACKSTONE GRILL

Make a \$1 donation to the Cooperative Youth Leadership Fund to enter a drawing for a new grill. Tickets are available at your cooperative, and proceeds benefit the Louisiana Youth Leadership Council Representative Scholarship.



The prize drawing is held in July at the Association of Louisiana Electric Cooperatives Annual Meeting in Baton Rouge. The winner is contacted by phone.



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Galen Dunbar

Volume 41, Issue 2

Mission

To enhance the quality of life for our members, employees, and communities by safely providing reliable and competitively priced energy services.

Along These Lines (USPS 4089) is published bimonthly by the Association of Louisiana Electric Co-ops Inc., 10725 Airline Highway, Baton Rouge, LA 70816, in partnership with Pioneer Utility Resources.

Annual Subscriptions: Members \$2.57. Nonmembers \$5.

Postmaster: Send form 3579 to 10725 Airline Highway, Baton Rouge, LA 70816.

Periodicals postage paid at Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70821 and additional mailing offices. DEMCO is an equal opportunity provider and employer.



Manager's Report

Randy Pierce
CEO & General Manager



When people think about electric service, they often picture our line crews in the field. Linemen are among the most visible employees at DEMCO—especially during outages—and their work is essential to keeping the lights on. But the work of the cooperative extends far beyond what members typically see.

Much of what keeps DEMCO running happens behind the scenes through planning, coordination, system oversight, and leadership that supports employees, operations and long-term decision-making. That work is carried out by many teams across the organization, including women serving in key leadership roles.

Since March is Women's History Month, I want to highlight the important role women play in how our cooperative is governed, led and supported every day.

In this issue, you'll meet four women who serve on DEMCO's Board of Directors. As locally elected member-owners, our board members help guide the cooperative's long-term direction, ensure accountability, and represent the members and communities we serve. Their commitment and integrity in governance reflect the principles on which our not-for-profit electric cooperative was built. See Page 18.

Leadership is also reflected throughout our organization. Three of DEMCO's four chief officers are women, helping guide key areas that support our employees and operations across our seven-parish service area. Alongside dedicated teams across the cooperative, their work helps keep DEMCO focused on serving members with excellence, sound decision-making and continuous improvement. See Page 7.

That same behind-the-scenes focus is reflected in many areas of our work, including efforts members may never see but benefit from every day.

While power lines and substations are the most visible parts of electric service, much of today's cooperative work also depends on digital systems that support operations, manage billing, and help keep electricity flowing safely and securely. Protecting those systems is an essential part of serving our members, and you'll learn more about this work in the story, "Protecting More Than Power." See Page 16.

Together, this work—seen and unseen—reflects the many people and teams who help power our cooperative and serve our members every day.



**CLOSED FOR
GOOD FRIDAY**

FRIDAY, APRIL 3

DEMCO WISHES YOU A JOYFUL EASTER!

The Women Who Power DEMCO

March is Women's History Month—a time to honor not only historic milestones, but also the women who contribute to and lead organizations today.

While linemen are often the most visible employees, much of the work that keeps DEMCO running happens behind the scenes. Many of the people supporting that work are women.

Across the cooperative, women help guide decisions, support operations, and ensure members receive timely and professional service. Women serve in roles across the organization, including finance, engineering, operations, project management, member services, community engagement and business development. Each are essential to the cooperative's daily work.

Executive leadership also includes three women. Galen Dunbar, Peggy Maranan, and Russchelle Overhultz serve as chief officers who oversee key areas that support members, employees and long-term planning—from member services, communications and community engagement to financial stewardship, safety and human resources.

Working alongside teammates across the organization, these three women help power the leadership, service and behind-the-scenes work that members rely on every day.

As we recognize Women's History Month, we also acknowledge the many women in business, at home and in our communities whose contributions power lives in meaningful ways. ■



Galen Dunbar
Chief Member Services Officer



Russchelle Overhultz
Chief Corporate Services Officer



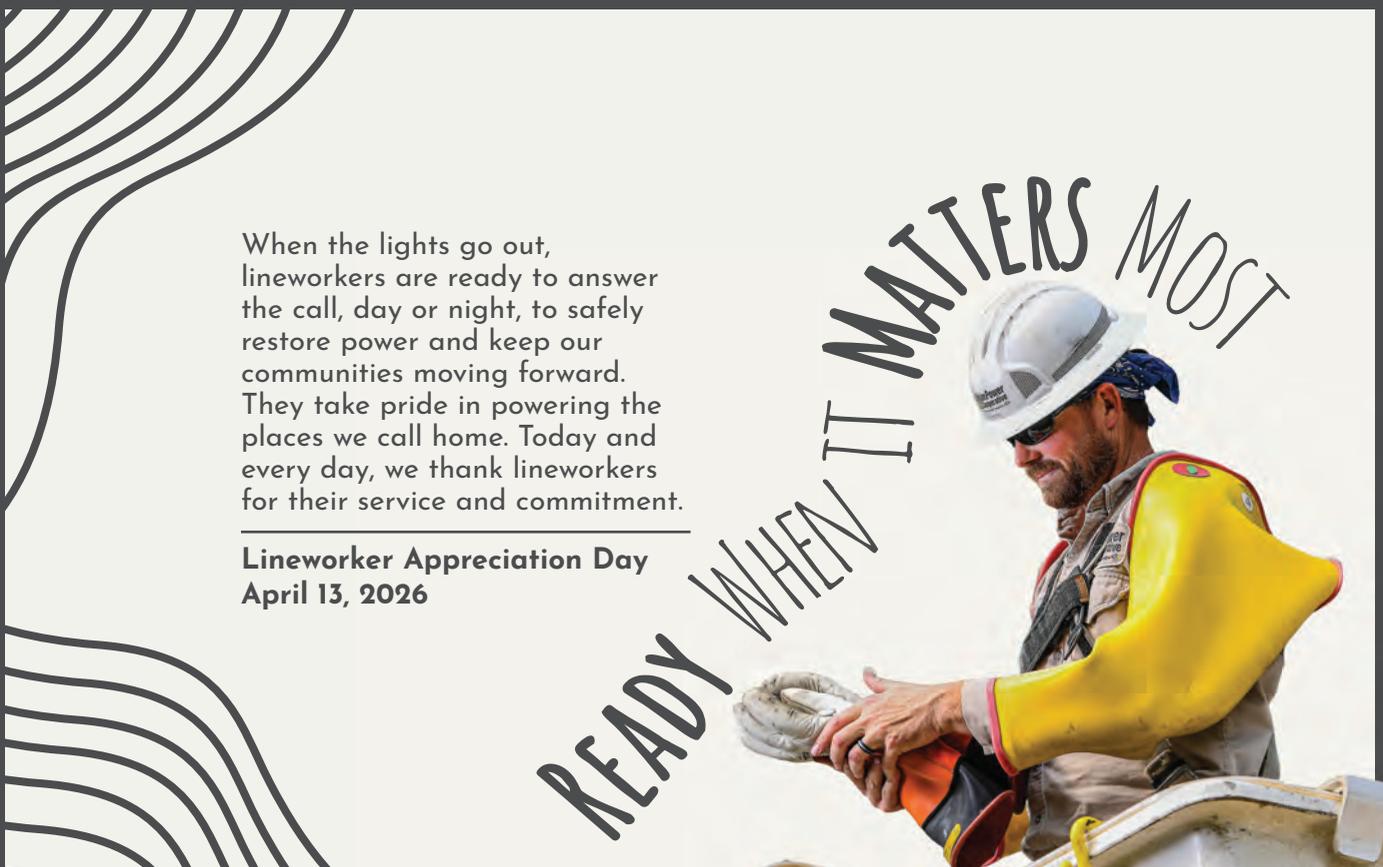
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Digging into an Outdoor Project?



Before you dig, dial 811 or visit www.call811.com to protect underground utilities. Careless digging poses a threat to people, pipelines and underground facilities. Contact 811 first and help keep our community safe.



When the lights go out, lineworkers are ready to answer the call, day or night, to safely restore power and keep our communities moving forward. They take pride in powering the places we call home. Today and every day, we thank lineworkers for their service and commitment.

Lineworker Appreciation Day
April 13, 2026

READY WHEN IT MATTERS MOST

**DEMCO BOARD ELECTION
DIXIE ELECTRIC MEMBERSHIP CORPORATION
CALENDAR OF EVENTS**

2026 ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING
Saturday, May 9, 2026 at 10 a.m.

LOCATION OF MEETING
DEMCO Headquarters Facility
16262 Wax Road, Greenwell Springs, LA 70739
(Elections in Districts 4, 5, 8, and 10)

**February 9, 2026 –
March 6, 2026**

Publish the Calendar of Events in the official journal of each parish, including the date, time and place of the meeting of the Nominating Committee.

**March 10, 2026 –
March 12, 2026**

Pre-qualification period. Members interested in seeking a position on the board of directors are required pursuant to DEMCO bylaws to appear in person between these dates to determine eligibility as prescribed in the corporation's bylaws. Candidates not pre-qualified will not be eligible to seek a position on the board of directors.

March 19, 2026

DEMCO Governance Committee will meet at 3:30 p.m. on this date, if needed, to determine eligibility of director candidates who have pre-qualified. Only candidates who have pre-qualified will be considered.

March 19, 2026

DEMCO Board Meeting at 5 p.m., at DEMCO Headquarters. The Committee on Nominations will be appointed at this meeting.

March 19, 2026

The Nominating Committee meeting begins at 5:05 p.m. at DEMCO Headquarters, 16262 Wax Road, Greenwell Springs, LA, 70739 with results of the meeting to be posted March 20, 2026.

March 20, 2026

This is the Record Date for the 2026 Annual Membership Meeting. A final list of those members eligible to vote in DEMCO's 2026 Annual Membership Meeting will be prepared.

March 23, 2026

Beginning on this date, pre-qualified director candidates may obtain a petition to run for a seat on the board of directors. DEMCO bylaws require 50 valid signatures for the petition to be validated.

April 6, 2026

Petitions must be returned to DEMCO Headquarters office by 4:30 p.m. and received by the CEO and General Manager's office.

April 16, 2026

The Governance Committee will meet at 3:30 p.m. on this date, if needed, to validate each petition and post the results as required by the corporation's bylaws on this date.

**April 20, 2026 –
April 24, 2026**

The Official Notice of the 2026 Annual Meeting will be mailed to all members of the cooperative during this time.

April 20, 2026

Ballots for the 2026 Annual Meeting will be mailed to members of the cooperative on this date. Members should receive their ballots by Saturday, April 25, 2026 — VOTE and mail your ballot immediately.

May 1, 2026

The deadline for receiving ballots for the 2026 Annual Membership Meeting is 4:30 p.m. on this date —DO NOT DELAY—VOTE.

May 4, 2026 – May 5, 2026

Ballots will be counted during this period by the certified public accountants selected by DEMCO to conduct the annual meeting. Candidates will be advised as to the time and place that the ballots will be counted.

May 9, 2026

Annual meeting and election results announced at 10 a.m. at 16262 Wax Road, Greenwell Springs, LA 70739.



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FOR YOUR FUTURE**



Member-students can apply for one-year scholarships of \$1,250 for each of two consecutive semesters awarded in a random drawing at the DEMCO annual membership meeting.

Learn more at DEMCO.org/Scholarships.

Lighting a *Fire*

Louisiana firefighter Coby Bailey wins 'The Great American Recipe'

By Cheré Coen

Like many South Louisiana natives, Coby Bailey learned to cook from his parents and grandparents. But it took a fire station to turn it into a passion.

"It really wasn't until I started as a firefighter that I enjoyed cooking," Coby says.

That spark turned into a fire that landed Coby on Season four of "The Great American Recipe" show on PBS. After a month of competition, Coby took home the top award Aug. 15, 2025.

"Cajun Country for me is not just food and something to eat but a way of life," he says. "Everything we do here in South Louisiana is centered around food. I wanted the Cajun culture represented well, and I think I did that."

At the Lafayette Fire Department, the crew arrives early to clean,

inspect their gear and get ready for the day. They're usually done around 9 a.m. to either train or start cooking for lunch, Coby explains. Sometimes the firefighters make a run to the grocery store to pick up supplies. And yes, they take the fire engine and head off for emergencies when needed.

"We've left a lot of groceries in the truck," Coby says with a laugh.

Back at the station, the fires they attended to were on the stove.

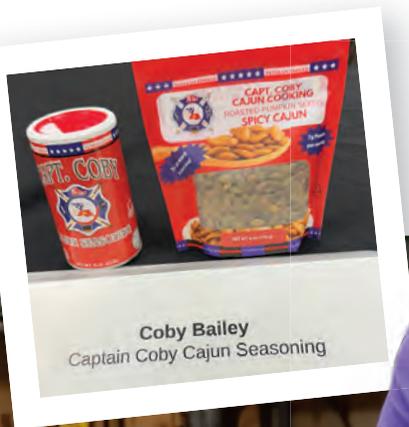
"I was fortunate to have a captain who loved to cook every single day," Coby says. "He liked to get everyone involved, including other stations or people we liked around the community."

The firefighters ate well.

"We'd have a great meal," Coby says. "The other stations would come. We'd tell stories. And we'd always make enough so we'd have supper."

When Coby made captain—he's been at the Lafayette Fire Department for 27 years after serving in the U.S. Navy, including during Desert Storm—he decided to carry on the tradition and teach others at the station to cook. One day, a firefighter approached him about watching his YouTube channel and encouraged Coby to create his own.

BELOW: Coby prepares pork jambalaya. PHOTO COURTESY OF VPM/ PBS FAR LEFT: Coby Bailey developed a seasoning and roasted pumpkin seeds. PHOTO COURTESY OF CHERÉ COEN



Coby Bailey
Captain Coby Cajun Seasoning



“I said, ‘Dude, I watch you every day. I don’t need to know what you do on your day off,’” Coby says with a laugh.

The firefighter challenged Coby to see who could attract the most followers on YouTube. Coby did, and his cooking videos took off. That’s how PBS producers discovered the Lafayette native to invite him to compete on “The Great American Recipe.”

Coby had two requests: He had to bring his own food, and the chief needed to give him a month off to travel to Nashville, where the show is filmed.

“I really didn’t have to sell him,” Coby says of his chief giving permission. “I said, ‘Let’s do it for Lafayette. Let’s do it for the food.’ And he agreed.”

The trick for this Cajun chef was cooking up his recipes with his needed tools in hand. Coby drove to Nashville with a pickup full of his beloved pots and pans, roux spoons and supplies.

Filming began around 6:30 a.m. in a barn where contestants prepared their recipes while telling stories. Filming ended around 8 p.m. The first exercise was for contestants to cook a dish that made them fall in love with cooking. Coby thought of eggs, so he prepared a unique boudin omelet.

“It was important to me to keep the Cajun food and the Cajun tradition in there,” he says.

Other recipes Coby delivered to judges Tiffany Derry, Tim Hollingsworth and Francis Lam were an alligator sauce piquante and seafood gumbo. During one episode, Coby related a heartfelt anecdote about his buddies in Desert Storm. He took the top prize after creating a Cypress knee shrimp po’boy and cornbread-stuffed chicken with andouille cream sauce.

In announcing Coby as the winner, Tiffany said, “This home cook stayed true to who they are through every last one of their dishes that truly represented the heart of their cooking and their great American recipe.” ■

Coby Bailey’s Alligator Sauce Piquante

- 10 alligator legs
- ¼ cup yellow mustard
- Capt. Coby’s Cajun Seasoning
- 2 cups regular coconut oil, not extra-virgin oil
- 1 cup flour
- 1 pound smoked sausage, sliced
- 2 medium yellow onions, diced
- 1 green bell pepper, diced
- 2 8-ounce cans tomato sauce
- 1 can diced tomatoes with green chiles
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- 2-3 tablespoons dry roux
- 1 pound peeled Louisiana Gulf shrimp, 31-40 count (or best available)
- 1 bundle green onions, chopped, for garnish

FOR THE GRITS

- 1 pint heavy whipping cream
- 3 12-ounce cans chicken broth
- 2 sticks butter, divided
- 4 teaspoons salt, plus more to taste
- 16-ounce box quick 5-minute grits

DIRECTIONS

In a large bowl, apply generous amounts of mustard and Capt. Coby’s Cajun Seasoning to the alligator legs, and mix well. Melt coconut oil in a large cast-iron pot. Toss the alligator legs in flour, then add to pot. Cook until lightly browned. Add sausage, onions and peppers. Cook until browned and all brown bits are lifted from the pot.

Add in tomato sauce, diced tomatoes, garlic and dry roux. Let cook for 30 minutes. Stir in shrimp, and let cook for 15 minutes until all flavors come together.

To make the grits, add heavy whipping cream, chicken broth, 1 stick of butter and salt to a pot. Bring to a boil. After liquid comes to a rolling boil, pour in grits. Stir constantly until grits become firm and almost cooked, about 5 minutes. Finish by adding a stick of butter to the grits.

Serve alligator sauce piquante over grits, and garnish with green onions.



LEFT: Coby serves the judges his alligator sauce piquante on “The Great American Recipe.” **ABOVE:** From left, judge Tim Hollingsworth, host Alejandra Ramos, Coby, and judges Francis Lam and Tiffany Derry were part of Season four of the PBS cooking show. PHOTOS COURTESY OF PBS

Protecting the *Monarchs*

There are ways you can help

By Pamela A. Keene



A colorful monarch butterfly sips nectar from a Blazing Star *Liatris*. PHOTO BY MORGAN CHRISTMAN

Over the past several decades, the monarch butterfly population has declined because of habitat loss, increased pesticide use and climate variability.

The decreased availability of milkweed—the sole host plant and food source for monarch caterpillars—is another factor in the dwindling numbers of the colorful migrating butterfly. Deforestation, expanded lawn development and increased pavement contribute to reduced native habitats, putting insects at greater risk.

Monarchs are considered a high-profile species, and their plight is frequently described as a “canary in the coal mine” for environmental health. Studying their migration patterns and pollination activity as indicators of a healthy environment helps scientists better understand broader environmental changes.

“Monarchs are among the most recognizable butterflies in the United States,” says Morgan Christman, pollinator ecologist and assistant professor in the Department of Entomology at Louisiana State University. “Scientists and citizen-scientists have been studying monarchs for decades and have seen the overall decrease in their populations, as well as environmental and ecological changes.”

While monarchs are not listed as threatened in Louisiana, Morgan says they’re worth studying because the species may soon be considered for protection under the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service’s Endangered Species Act.

“It is important that all of us work together to mitigate threats to the monarch population,” she says.

“For instance, we can address the disappearance of habitats, the decrease in the availability of native milkweed and nectar

sources, and the use of glyphosate herbicides. In Louisiana, we can plant pollinator gardens and include native milkweed species in place of tropical milkweed. We can promote preserving and constructing natural habitats that include places for shelter, breeding sites and nectar sources.”

Morgan’s lab at LSU researches native and managed pollinators across natural, agricultural and urban landscapes to advance understanding of their ecology, threats and conservation.

“As the first pollinator ecology lab at LSU, we aim to address gaps in pollinator research in Louisiana and to translate that science into educational materials for the public,” she says.

Studying Monarch Migration

Monarch Watch, an education, conservation and research program based at the University of Kansas, offers ways for the public to become involved in studying and supporting monarchs. One of its most popular endeavors—the Monarch Watch Tagging Program—encourages individuals, schools, nature centers and other organizations to help study migration by tagging monarchs in the fall. That’s when the butterflies make their long commutes from summer breeding areas in southern Canada and the northern United States to overwinter in the warmth of central Mexico.

“The tagging program helps us understand more about the eastern monarch population’s fall migration,” Monarch Watch Director Kristen Baum says. “Since the start of the tagging program, the data we’ve collected with the help of many community scientists has revealed new information about the timing and pace of the migration, how weather can affect the migration, where migrating monarchs come from and more.”

Now in its 35th year, Monarch Watch sells tagging kits through its website. Each kit contains weatherproof adhesive tags with unique alphanumeric codes, datasheets for recording information about tagged monarchs, tagging instructions and other information. Visit monarchwatch.org for details.

SPOTLIGHT

Think Diversity for Pollinators

Choose colorful native flowers and heirloom plants for gardens. Pay attention to providing a range of heights, leaf shapes and plant forms. Combine trees and shrubs with perennials to create an aesthetically pleasing area for pollinators and humans.

Plant flowers of different varieties, colors and bloom schedules that give life throughout the year and attract an array of insects. Plant them in clusters to make it easier for insects to find them.

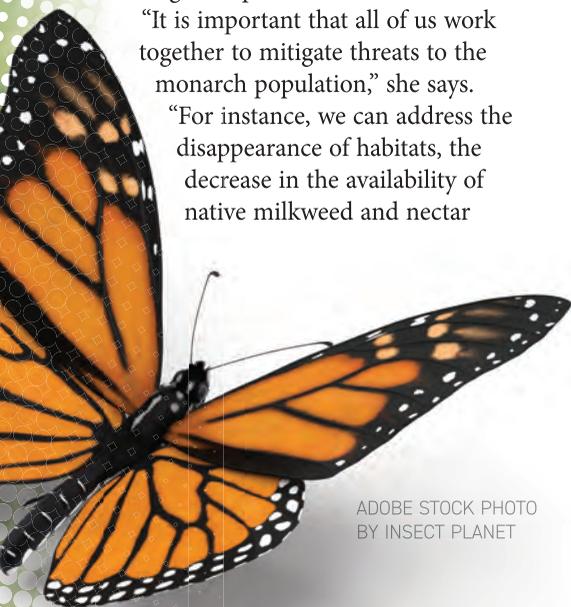
Colorful perennials, such as black-eyed Susans, coneflowers, asters, coreopsis, blazing star, goldenrod, American yarrow, swamp sunflowers and cardinal flowers, can be complemented by flame azaleas, flowering dogwood and coral honeysuckle.

Insects and butterflies seek sources for both pollen and nectar. Make sure to include a good assortment of each. Consider bloom time to ensure a continuous food source.

Pollinators and insects prefer differing flower shapes to accommodate their body types. For instance, butterflies prefer tubular blossoms so they use their proboscis to harvest nectar. Bees are drawn to bowl-shaped flowers, or those where pollen is easy to reach, where they have a place to land.

Remember to include a shallow water source or two, such as a saucer or a bowl that’s filled with small rocks.

Include at least one variety of milkweed. Not only do monarchs thrive on it, but other insects and butterflies are attracted to it as well.



ADOBE STOCK PHOTO
BY INSECT PLANET





Tagging monarchs helps track their migration and survival rate. PHOTO BY ANN DEAN

INSET: Native Pink Swamp Milkweed provides places for monarchs to lay their eggs. ADOBE STOCK PHOTO BY BRIAN WOOLMAN

Monarch Watch is a mark-and-recapture program, meaning its data comes from information participants provide when reporting insects' recovered tags. Tagged monarchs are reported along the migration route, and some are recovered every year from overwintering sites in Mexico. Each year, Monarch Watch compiles and publishes this information for the public to view.

Monarch Waystations and Nectar Sources

Monarch Watch also developed the Monarch Waystation Program to encourage people to create, conserve and protect monarch habitats. The organization provides educational resources to help people establish and maintain Monarch Waystations, the program's term for monarch habitats, to support butterflies during spring, summer and fall.

It's easy to create a Monarch Waystation in home gardens, schools, businesses, nature centers and along roadsides. Sometimes all it takes is creating a small space with several nectar-producing plants and a clump of native milkweed. However, it is important to

have a plan to sustain the space, regardless of size.

Good practices include thinning plants, mulching, watering, avoiding insecticides and removing invasive species. It is also helpful to occasionally add more native milkweed plants.

To date, Monarch Watch has recorded more than 54,000 registered Monarch Waystations worldwide.

"The Monarch Waystation Program is celebrating 21 years this year, and it's been incredible to see how many people have registered their habitats as Monarch Waystations," Monarch Watch Communications Coordinator Jess Anderson says. "These habitats provide crucial resources for monarchs, and we need to continue planting milkweed and nectar plants. This not only will benefit monarchs but many other pollinators and wildlife."

Native Milkweed Is Key

As monarchs' sole host plant, milkweed is crucial to the future of the species.

"We urge people to only plant native milkweed," says David Mizejewski,



Monarchs partially emerge from chrysalises.

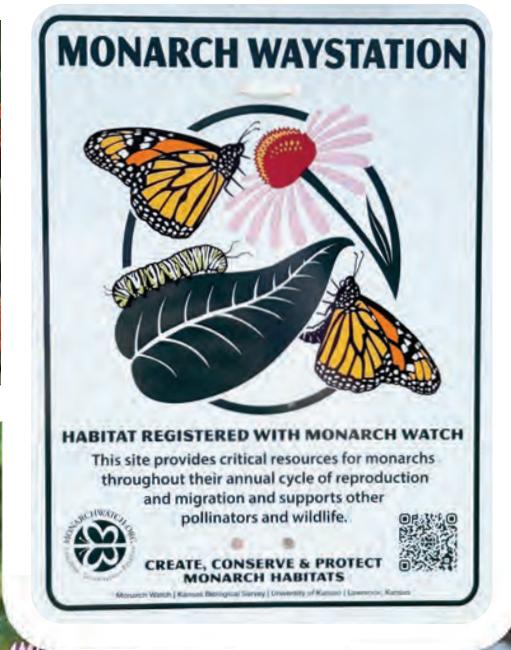
PHOTO BY JUDY CLAYTON WARD

naturalist with the National Wildlife Federation, a nonprofit conservation education and advocacy organization.

In Louisiana, recommended native species include aquatic milkweed, swamp milkweed and butterfly weed.

"We strongly advise against planting tropical milkweed because it is nonnative and it can carry a parasite called OE (*Ophryocystis elektroscirrha*) that is harmful to monarchs," David says. "Although tropical milkweed is sold at some retail nurseries, it's not native to the United States. Its distinctive reddish orange and yellow blooms may be pretty, but they signal, 'Don't plant; nonnative.'"

"The reason to plant native is that native wildlife and native plants coevolved together over millennia and, as a general



ABOVE: A monarch rests on a tall thistle.

TOP: Butterfly milkweed, officially known as *asclepias tuberosa*, acts as a primary host plant for monarch butterfly larvae. PHOTOS BY RAY MORANZ

LEFT: Monarch Watch developed the Monarch Waystation Program to encourage people to create, conserve and protect monarch habitats. PHOTO COURTESY OF MONARCH WATCH

BELOW: Aquatic milkweed, *asclepias perennis*, is an exceptional native host plant for monarchs. PHOTO BY RAY MORANZ



rule, rely on each other for survival in a way that nonnative plants often can't replicate," he says. "Nonnatives can also become invasive or spread disease to native species."

OE can be present on all types of milkweed, but it's most prevalent on the colorful tropical milkweed. Unlike native milkweed, tropical milkweed does not die back seasonally, allowing the parasite to persist year-round.

"The OE parasite's life cycle on tropical milkweed is not interrupted," David says. "When the native milkweed dies back, the virus dies with it."

Debate about milkweed species sometimes stands in the way of taking action.

"Finding native milkweed can be challenging, but it is important to ensure that you're only planting native," David says. "Take the extra time to seek out native milkweed at native plant sales at public gardens, arboreturns and area native plant societies, such as the

Louisiana Native Plant Society, Inps.org, that maintains a listing of plant sales, workshops and conferences."

Ray Moranz, pollinator conservation specialist with Xerces Society of Invertebrate Conservation in the central region of the United States, says OE may not be the main issue around preserving monarch butterflies.

"The biggest concerns are the declines in the availability of milkweed and nectar plants," he says. "Rising temperatures, loss of habitats and the use of pesticides are also some of the other major threats."

Ray says places for monarchs to feed on nectar, lay their eggs and protect themselves from predators are vanishing as native and natural habitats disappear.

"It's up to all of us to be aware of the monarch's dwindling population and to each do our part to help them survive and thrive by creating pollinator gardens with plants that haven't been sprayed with insecticides, reduce our use of pesticides and help preserve native habitats," he says. ■

Helpful Resources

Reputable organizations in Louisiana can provide a wealth of information about native plants and sources, monarch butterflies and pollinators. Here are a few resources:

- ▶ **Louisiana Native Plant Society**—Find native plant lists, plant seeds and sources, plus information about area-specific Native Plant Society Chapters; Inps.org
- ▶ **Louisiana State University Agricultural Center**—Provides Louisiana-specific recommendations and information about pollinators and monarch butterflies; lsuagcenter.com and lsuagcenter.com/topics/lawn_garden/native-plants
- ▶ **Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries**—Offers the Louisiana Native Plant Resource Guide; wlf.louisiana.gov
- ▶ **Xerces Society**—Is dedicated to protecting monarch butterflies; xerces.org/monarchs
- ▶ **U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service**—Home of the Save the Monarch initiative, fws.gov/initiative/pollinators/save-monarch
- ▶ **Monarch Watch**—Offers ways to support monarchs; monarchwatch.org.



The DEMCO IT Team is pictured, from left, Josh Ellis, Moussa Keita, Patrick Mansfield, Jared Louque and Patrick McCoy. PHOTO COURTESY OF DEMCO

Cybersecurity | Protecting More Than Power

While power lines and substations are the most visible parts of electric service, much of today’s cooperative work also depends on digital systems that manage billing, support operations, and help keep electricity flowing safely to homes and businesses across our service area.

Protecting those systems—cybersecurity—includes technology safeguards, ongoing employee training and regular evaluations to strengthen defenses over time.

“It’s more than a single tool or one department,” says Pat Mansfield, DEMCO manager of information technology. “It’s about building layers of protection and staying alert in a constantly changing environment.”

In 2025, DEMCO’s IT team participated in two detailed cybersecurity assessments to enhance system safety, reliability and data protection.

This work resulted in achieving the NRECA Co-op Cyber Secure Level 1 recognition—a national designation

that confirms the cooperative has taken essential steps to protect its systems and information. This effort strengthens protection, improves system security and helps ensure DEMCO is prepared to respond to evolving cyber risks.

While cybersecurity efforts often go unnoticed, members benefit from them every day. Billing systems are protected, account information is secured, and operational systems are monitored and supported to help ensure reliable electric service.

Cybersecurity isn’t something that’s ever finished. DEMCO continues to review systems, enhance safeguards and train employees to stay ahead of evolving risks—protecting the information you trust us with every day.

It’s one more way DEMCO works to serve the best interests of the members and communities we’re proud to call home. ■



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WOMEN Leading THE WAY



Women serve in important leadership roles across DEMCO, including at the board table. As members elected from and by the membership, DEMCO's board directors help guide policies, provide oversight and represent the members who own this cooperative. Each brings a perspective shaped by professional experience, public service and deep ties to the communities they serve.

Elinda Taillon, of Ascension Parish, blends decades of professional experience from BASF Corporation with a passion for community involvement. From the Jambalaya Festival Association to Ascension Parish tourism efforts, she has long been a connector of people and ideas. She brings that same collaborative approach to serving on the board by emphasizing stewardship, fiscal responsibility and service to local economies.

In Tangipahoa Parish, Melissa Dufreche brings a unique blend of professional skill and community engagement. As a certified court reporter, she understands the importance of accuracy, clarity and communication—strengths she carries into her service on the board. Her involvement in charitable and conservation efforts reflects a deep personal commitment to strengthening the communities DEMCO serves.

In East Baton Rouge Parish, Jill McGraw offers insight shaped by lifelong ties to the Baker and Zachary communities. Her service across multiple board committees reflects a steady focus on accountability, thoughtful planning and meeting the needs of a growing service area. Jill's leadership is informed by tradition and change, balancing local roots with long-term vision.

Tresa Byrd, of St. Helena Parish, offers a grounded perspective shaped by years of public service with the St. Helena Parish Police Jury. Her attention to detail and connection to local priorities give her a clear understanding of what matters most to members. Her leadership helps guide decisions that support members, families and local communities.

Together, Elinda, Melissa, Jill and Tresa demonstrate the strength that comes from diverse voices and lived experiences. Each holds the Director Gold Credential, reflecting a shared commitment to cooperative education, informed decision-making and leadership excellence. ■

Get to Know Your Board Members



Elinda Taillon

- ▶ Favorite local spot: Houmas House
- ▶ Fun fact: Enjoys relaxing and fishing in Natchez, Mississippi
- ▶ Current favorites: Hallmark movies—especially at Christmas



Tresa Byrd

- ▶ Favorite local spot: St. Helena parks for fishing, fresh air and quiet time
- ▶ Fun fact: Most fulfilled when bringing family together for events and gatherings
- ▶ Current favorites: Survivor and Tyler Perry's Madea movies



Melissa Dufreche

- ▶ Favorite local spot: Downtown Hammond, exploring local shops and the Saturday Farmers Market
- ▶ Fun fact: Loves all things creative—from painting to making hats, cups and fun outfits
- ▶ Current favorites: 9-1-1, Lone Star, Nashville Series. Loves watching scary movies



Jill McGraw

- ▶ Favorite local spot: Zachary parks with her grandchildren and browsing local thrift stores
- ▶ Fun fact: Known as “Honey” to her grandchildren and enjoys family traditions like Christmas baking
- ▶ Current favorites: Book club reads, such as “How to Test Negative for Stupid” and “The Rainbow Troops”

Home Lighting

101

By Abby Berry

Lighting is something most of us don't think much about—until it's wrong. Maybe the living room feels too dim for reading or the kitchen lights cast an odd glow. We often grab whatever bulb or fixture looks good without considering how it will perform.

With a little planning, your home can be brighter, cozier and more energy efficient.

Watts vs. Lumens

When shopping for light bulbs, it's easy to focus on wattage, but that only measures how much energy is used. When it comes to brightness, what matters is the lumen count.

Lumens measure the actual light output. For example, an 800-lumen LED bulb gives off about the same amount of light as an old-fashioned 60-watt incandescent bulb.

You've likely replaced all incandescent bulbs with long-lasting, energy-efficient LEDs. If not, it's time to make a switch.

A rule of thumb: The higher the lumens, the brighter the light while lower watts result in less energy consumed. Check wattage ratings for fixtures and install bulbs that meet the fixture's wattage safety requirements.

Color Temperature and Consistency

Light bulbs vary in color temperature. This detail is often overlooked—until you replace one bulb and notice the new light

doesn't match the others.

Consider installing bulbs of the same brand and wattage at the same time. That way, the look stays consistent, and you won't be stuck hunting for a perfect match later.

Dimmers and Switches

Installing dimmers in place of on/off switches can be a game changer. Dimmers give you more control over brightness, help save energy and create a more comfortable atmosphere. Not all bulbs are dimmable, so double check labels before buying.

While thinking about light switches, consider whether you have enough of them and whether they're in the right places. A light you can only turn off from one end of a hallway becomes annoying. For installations or upgrades, it's best to hire a licensed electrician to ensure everything is wired safely and efficiently.

Form Meets Function

Bulbs are only part of the equation—fixtures matter, too. Each type serves a purpose.

Ambient lighting from sconces or glass-covered ceiling fixtures provides general illumination. Task lighting—provided by pendants, desk lamps or track lighting—focuses light where you need it most.

When choosing a fixture, think beyond looks. Does the light provides the right amount of brightness for the space? A beautiful chandelier might look perfect over

the dining table but leaves the rest of the room too dim. Alternatively, an oversized fixture could flood the room with more light than needed, wasting energy and money.

Energy Efficiency Meets Convenience

Smart lighting adds a layer of control, but the real magic is convenience. With smart bulbs, you can adjust brightness and colors, and set schedules from your phone or an assistant such as Alexa or Google Assistant.

Want the lights to dim automatically for movie night or to turn on before you get home? Smart bulbs make it easy.

Smart lighting also personalizes your space. You can go classic with warm, white tones or experiment with colors to set the mood—anything from a soft glow for winding down to vibrant hues for a party.

Smart bulbs rely on power from a wall switch, which needs to stay in the “on” position for remote controls to work. If you prefer using a physical switch, consider pairing smart bulbs with a smart light switch.

Many of today's smart switches also come with motion detectors, adding another level of efficiency and convenience.

Good lighting makes your home look better and feel better. You can create spaces that are welcoming, functional and energy efficient. Whether you stick to traditional bulbs and fixtures or explore the flexibility of smart lighting, thoughtful choices today will brighten your home for years to come. ■

A Guide



The following information outlines recommendations for home lighting, however, additional options for bulbs, fixtures and spaces in your home may be available. Sources: Home Depot, Alcon Lighting

Room/Area	Recommended Lumens	Fixture Types	Smart Tips
 Living Room	15-30 per sq. ft. 150 sq. ft. room 2,250 - 4,500 lumens	Ceiling fixtures, can lighting, lamps/ accent lighting	Use smart bulbs to adjust color temp and control remotely.
 Kitchen	30-40 per sq. ft. 100 sq. ft. room 3,000 - 4,000 lumens	Recessed ceiling lights or flush mounts	Smart switches can be used to control zones (dining vs. prep); undercabinet motion lights offer late-night illumination.
 Dining Room	10-20 per sq. ft. 100 sq. ft. room 1,000 - 2,000 lumens	Pendant or chandelier fixture	Smart, dimmable bulbs allow various levels of brightness for ambiance.
 Bedroom	10-20 per sq. ft. 120 sq. ft. room 1,200 - 2,400 lumens	Ceiling fixtures or recessed lighting	Motion sensors are great options for nighttime use.
 Bathroom	50-80 per sq. ft. 60 sq. ft. room 3,000 - 4,000 lumens	Over-vanity fixtures and/or recessed lighting	Cool LED bulbs provide brighter light for shaving, applying makeup, etc.
 Porch/ Home Entry	100-200 per sq. ft. 100 sq. ft. entry 10,000 - 20,800 lumens	Wall lanterns, ceiling mount and/or floodlights	Motion-activated flood lights and/or smart outdoor bulbs are energy efficient and boost home security.



A Word About Water

Tap Into Water Heating Savings

If your home is like most, you and your family use about 64 gallons of water each day. If your water heater is electric, that probably accounts for about 18% of your power bill.

That makes your water heater the second-largest energy expense in your home. Why not use less electricity to heat it?

Today's high-efficiency water heaters use much less energy than older models, so you don't need to give up comfort for energy savings. That's good news for your power bill.

There is a newer option to consider: an electric heat pump water heater. These units give you the hot water you need by pulling heat from the surrounding air to heat the water—like a refrigerator in reverse. Because they do not directly produce heat, electric heat pump water heaters are two to three times more energy efficient than standard units.

According to the U.S. Department of Energy, a family of four can save about \$550 a year on water heating costs, which adds up to \$5,610 over the lifetime of the unit.

A heat pump water heater may cost a bit more upfront than other models. However, according to the DOE, most people see a payback in less than three years due to the unit's lower operating costs and energy savings. Look for the Energy Star label when shopping for a water heater.

Tankless electric water heaters are another option, but carefully weigh the benefits and drawbacks. These smaller units quickly heat water to provide it when called upon, but can use eight times more electricity than a standard water heater.

This high demand increases your co-op's cost of purchased power, which plays an important role in how much you pay for electricity. In some cases, people who use electric tankless water heaters must upgrade their home's wiring to support the greater demand for electricity.

Other ways to lower your energy costs include setting your water heater's thermostat to no higher than 120 degrees, fixing leaks, installing low-flow fixtures, and using energy-efficient dishwashers and washing machines.

Helping you save energy and money is another way your co-op is always here for you. ■

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ENERGY EFFICIENCY

TIP OF THE MONTH

As spring arrives, take advantage of milder temperatures to save energy at home. Open windows on pleasant days to bring in fresh air instead of running your HVAC system. It's also a great time to replace dirty air filters, which helps your system run more efficiently and improves indoor air quality. As daylight increases, turn off unnecessary lights and rely on natural sunlight when possible. Small seasonal adjustments like these can reduce energy use, lower monthly bills and help keep your home comfortable as winter transitions into spring.

