

South River EMC Communicator

July 2024

Pick And Sit A Spell

Are you looking for some activities as summer turns to fall? Do you like grapes, or know someone who does?

Late August is grape harvesting season, and Sampson County is home to a quiet place where you can pick all the grapes you could want.

Twisted Vines Vineyard is located just off Highway 701 and opens for daily business in late August.

Tracy and Dana Horne decided at the age of 22 to reclaim some farmland and follow an idea. After some prayer and a lot of hard work, their visionary idea became Twisted Vines Vineyard.

"The name just came to us as we threw out ideas. Vines look all twisty, so that's what we named it," said Dana. "We have 13 acres, which also includes our home, and we grow five different types of muscadine grapes, the sweetest of which is the Carlos grape."

Muscadine grapes are native to the southeast and sandy soil. They can be used for drinks, jellies, savory dishes, desserts and just plain eating. With so many options for use, that's why Twisted Vines offers a pick-your-own option for anyone who wants to come out and enjoy some time relaxing and picking.

The couple began their venture in 2002, ultimately opening to the public in 2019. Advertising predominately on Facebook Marketplace and by word-of-mouth, they drew people from all around.

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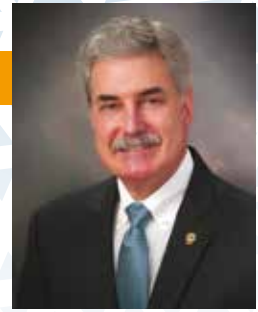


Reminder:

South River EMC offices will be closed Thursday, July 4, in celebration of Independence Day.



South River EMC earns this award based on data modeled by the ACSI® in 2023. Award criteria are determined by the ACSI based on customers rating their satisfaction with South River EMC in a survey independent of the syndicated ACSI Energy Utility Study. For more about the ACSI, visit theacsi.org/ badges. ACSI and its logo are registered trademarks of the American Customer Satisfaction Index LLC.



New EPA Power Plant Rules Threaten Grid Reliability

On April 25, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) released four major new regulations for the electric industry, including a much-anticipated rule to cut emissions from power plants, a sweeping move that will aggravate reliability concerns for electric cooperatives and other utilities nationwide.

“The path outlined by the EPA is unlawful, unrealistic and unachievable,” said Jim Matheson, CEO of the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association. “It undermines electric reliability and poses grave consequences for an already stressed electric grid.”

The power plant rule constrains existing coal and new natural gas plants by requiring them to install carbon capture and storage (CCS) technology that is not yet reliable or commercially available.

“The new EPA rules ignore our nation’s ongoing electric reliability challenges and are the wrong approach at a critical time for our nation’s energy future,” Matheson said.

The power plant rule will force the early closure of electricity generation sources that are available 24/7 and will also impede the construction of new natural gas plants. The timing of these sweeping new rules is particularly troubling as electric utilities in North Carolina and across the nation face a surge in demand for electricity from factors like transportation electrification and the rapid expansion of data centers to support artificial intelligence, e-commerce, and cryptocurrency. In North Carolina, our population is growing, and a significant amount of economic development is taking place. All of this adds to the need for more electricity in our state.

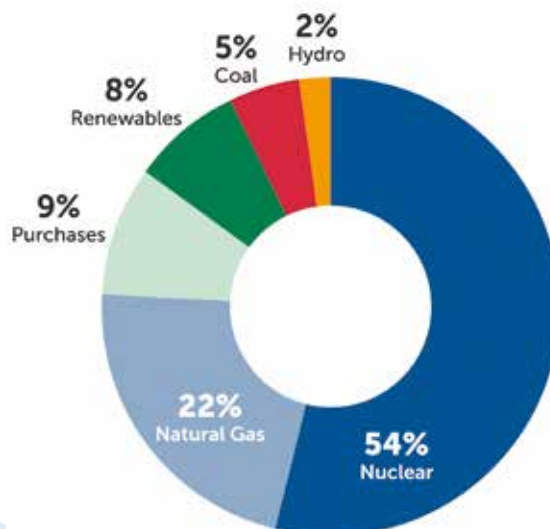
Under the new rule, existing coal-fired power plants that plan to operate past the start of 2039 must install CCS to capture 90% of emissions by 2032. The rule also requires new natural gas plants that operate

more than 40% of the time to install CCS and capture 90% of their carbon emissions by 2032. These standards, and their reliance on unproven CCS technology, will undermine electric reliability.

In our state, 22% of our power is generated from natural gas, which has 50% less carbon emissions compared to coal. Plans are being made by our power supplier, North Carolina Electric Membership Corporation (NCEMC), to add even more natural gas generation by 2030. Requiring a new natural gas fired plant to operate only 40% of the time or to install CCS technology, which is not yet reliable or commercially available, is a major concern. While our dependence on coal is only 5% of our fuel mix, the new rule will impact existing coal-fired plants directly at a time when we need more generation from multiple resources.

Electric cooperatives understand the need to keep the power on at a cost local families and businesses can afford. Surveys show that reliability is more important to electric cooperative members than the cost of electricity. Both are extremely important, and South River EMC is committed to providing you with affordable, reliable, and sustainable power, now and into the future. Clean energy technologies must be balanced with generation sources that are always available to ensure a reliable electric grid.

Electric cooperatives such as South River EMC deliver power to 42 million Americans. Our top priority is to meet our members' energy needs, and we must have reliable electricity available to meet that requirement. You can help in this matter by letting our federal elected officials know how you feel about policy decisions that will impact us all. Please consider joining Voices for Cooperative Power (VCP) today so that you can make your voice heard. Additionally, be sure to vote in November.



Autry Elected To South River EMC Board

Rhonda Autry from Sampson County has been elected to the South River EMC Board of Directors to represent the members from District 5. Autry was elected by the members of the Cooperative along with incumbents James "J.W." Simmons, District 3, and Wayne Collier, Jr, District 7.

The Board is charged with directing the affairs of the Cooperative, including governance, strategic planning and financial oversight responsibilities.

"As a lifelong resident of Sampson County, Ms. Autry has observed changes in the rural electric environment," said Dr. E. Sue Godwin-Baker, president, South River EMC Board of Directors. "She joins the board at a time when the cooperative world is experiencing even more challenges and changes. In her role as a board member, she, along with other board members, will make decisions to support the best interest of member-owners."

Directors are required to receive a Director's Certificate

or similar certification from the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) within three years of being elected. Directors are expected to actively engage in the governance of the organization and must attend at least two-thirds of all meetings in any calendar year. Additionally, directors are expected to remain in good standing with the Cooperative throughout their tenure and represent the Cooperative at events as needed.

Autry is a lifetime member of South River EMC, and she has

a special interest in seeing the Cooperative prosper and grow in the interest of all members.

"I am humbled and honored to be elected by the South River EMC members to serve as their representative," said Autry. "Thank you to all who voted for me, and I promise to do my best. I'm looking forward to learning more about how to become the best director possible and being a part of such a dynamic group of people."

She has worked on her family farm her entire life, while previously serving the community as a reserve officer with the Sampson County Sheriff's Office for several years. Autry has been a member of Mount Carmel Church of God of Prophecy for 43 years and is an active member of the Midway High School band boosters.

Autry lives in the Halls Crossroads Community of Sampson County, near Autryville, with her three children: Miranda, Banks and Braston.



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United for Stronger Communities

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VINEYARD continued from page A

"We have had families and individuals who have come back year after year since then, and while we have some picnic tables, and places to sit, vision came again," said Horne. "So, we are adding a venue that we hope will be used for weddings, meetings and retreats, or just a shady spot to rest."

That shady spot is a 4,600-square-foot facility with outdoor seating and views of the vineyard.

Inside, there is a kitchen for caterer's prep, changing rooms, bathrooms and a large space with heating and air conditioning, a speaker system and more.

"Caterers, while they are not able to cook in the kitchen, are able to prepare and serve out of it," said Dana. "The outside space

here, I could see it being used to set up a buffet."

Surrounded by the clean rows of fresh market grapes, it is a beautiful and quiet space to host your special event.

"Tracy keeps the rows clean, particularly underneath," said Dana. "We've received many compliments on the cleanliness of the area."

Not far off are the ponds that have fish and turtles; there is a



feeder, so come prepared.

Whether you are looking for a place to book a meeting, or just interested in having a place to run free, come the end of August, you will be able to visit Twisted Vines Vineyard, so pack your snacks.

The Hornes have also created Twisted Vines Vocational, a co-op program which works with high school students.

"Tracy and I are passionate about building hands-on skill sets for kids and working with students."

The Hornes have become connected to so many people with the vineyard, and hope to continue those relationships with this space, and maybe more one day.

Twisted Vines Vineyards is located at 82 Twisted Vines Ln., Clinton. Hours begin in late August and run through mid-October and information can currently be found at twistedvinesvineyard.com/.



Salute To America



On Display July 1-8

Bright Ideas Application Period Open

Summer, the perfect time to relax, but also a perfect time to begin planning.

Before you know it you'll be back in the classroom readying it for your next class of students. Teachers, we know there is never down time, but hopefully summer is giving you time to consider some bright ideas.

There are a lot of different ways to help students excel, but that doesn't mean there is the budget to do so. And that's how Bright Ideas can help.

The Bright Ideas grant program is for teachers in the certified, public, K-12 school system who have innovative classroom-based ideas that their school budget might not cover.

Teachers can apply for grants up to \$2,500 in any subject.

Applications for professional development will not be considered.

South River EMC typically awards at least \$50,000 in grant funding to teachers in parts of Harnett, Johnston, Sampson and Cumberland counties.

Since 1994, educators statewide have received \$15 million

to fund over 14,200 projects affecting 3.5 million students. South River EMC has funded \$1.6 million locally.

Teachers can apply online at ncbrightideas.com.

Educators with applications submitted by the early-bird deadline of Aug. 15, are entered into a drawing for a \$100 Visa gift card. The final application deadline is Sept. 15.

South River EMC only accepts applications online at ncbrightideas.com.

If you want to learn more about this program, visit sremc.com or e-mail connections@sremc.com.





Don't Let Pool Costs Add Up

If you're enjoying this newsletter by your pool this summer, you probably aren't thinking about pool costs.

But if you own a pool with a pump, that pump is probably one of the biggest energy users second only to your heating and cooling system.

There is an opportunity for savings, all while maintaining

that crystal clear water. Replace a single speed pump, one speed for all tasks, with either a variable or two-speed pump. A pump that allows you to select the speed you want for tasks can help you save.

Another way to save, run your pool pump for less time. Pumps need to be run when treatments are added, to ensure they mix, but they do not have to be run all day.

Start by running the pump a half hour less every couple of days. Keep backing it off by a half hour until it gets cloudy, if you can cut it down from eight hours, that's a savings.

If you install a variable or two-speed pump, you could be eligible for a rebate from South River EMC. For more information, visit sremc.com/pool-pumps.

Always Be Prepared

Don't be surprised one morning with a cold shower. There are several occurrences that alert you that a replacement water heater needs to be selected, including insufficient hot water, low water pressure, higher energy use, and more.

When considering replacements think beyond an electric storage water heater, which heats periodically throughout the day, even if no one is using water.

A heat pump water heater

uses surrounding heat to warm water. Because they move heat, rather than make it, heat pumps water heaters are 2-3 times more efficient. However, they require location in a 40- 90-degree area and about 1000 cu. ft. of space. Installation is also different than with a standard electric storage water heater.

Then there is solar water heating, which uses the sun to heat water. To make this type of system cost effective, you need

to make sure you have good solar resource. Solar panels would be located on the roof of your home, so you will need to make sure there are no codes against that.

When considering water heater replacements, find the option that works best for you, and know that some of those options are eligible for a rebate.

For details on rebates offered by South River EMC, visit sremc.com/energy-efficient-water-heating.

Making Your Home Efficient With Help

Heating and cooling your home makes up approximately 50 percent of your energy costs each month.

Now, there are quite a few items and practices that contribute to those costs. Yes, it is largely your heating and cooling system, it can be your windows and it is also the tightness of your home.

Even the most efficient homes

become leaky and need caulking and weatherstripping work done. However, it can be a costly endeavor and for those that need help making upgrades, there is a solution.

Community Action performs the weatherization package which includes: air/duct sealing, improved insulation, an HVAC tune-up or replacement, and a

programmable thermostat in a home with a heat pump or an electric furnace/ central AC.

In having this work completed by Community Action, you are eligible for savings as well as a rebate from South River EMC.

For rebate information on improvements like this, visit [sremc.com/weatherization](https://www.sremc.com/weatherization).

The HERO Helps You Save

The High Efficiency Residential Option, or HERO, home is a home that will be 30 percent more efficient than a home built to standard building code.

Being built tighter from the ground up can be done in two different ways.

The prescriptive path involves complying fully with a list of specific requirements for insulation, high-efficiency lighting, window

U-factors, whole house tightness and duct leakage testing, among other things.

The performance path requires an energy cost analysis (provided to you by your HERS Rater and signed-off by a Design Professional) as proof that the home you are building will have energy costs less than or equal to that same home built to the HERO Code's prescriptive requirements.

HERO homes save with slightly better insulation, fenestration or windows, air sealing, equipment, and lighting packages to deliver the savings.

If this is something you are interested in pursuing as you build a home, learn more about it at [energycodes.gov](https://www.energycodes.gov). For information on rebates offered by South River EMC, visit [sremc.com/hero-program](https://www.sremc.com/hero-program).



Window Replacement Can Help You Save

Windows, we love to look out them and we hate to clean them.

They are undoubtedly a focal point in our home, letting in light and keeping out weather and more, but what happens when the focal point becomes the problem? They're creaky, they're leaky and they're not so clear anymore.

Homeowners who want to improve their homes' efficiency often find that window replacement plays a part. Windows can be a significant source of air leakage and heat loss, after all they account for 18% of wall area in most homes.

Replacing old windows represents a significant investment, but the payback in terms of improved thermal comfort, reduced energy usage, and money saved over the long term makes replacement a smart choice.

Before replacing your windows, be sure you have already properly insulated and air sealed your home.

South River EMC offers a rebate on window replacements. So, if you find that the windows in your home are due for replacement, consider the cost and the rebate offered by South River EMC.

For details on the rebate, visit sremc.com/energy-star-windows.



Replace With A More Efficient System

With summer in full swing, heating and cooling systems are hard at work. It's great to walk into your home and feel cooler, however, it comes at a cost.

With heating and cooling making up roughly 50% of your electric bill each month, you might be looking at what you can do to stay cool and save money.

First, set your thermostat and forget it. The higher you set it, the more you can save. Recommended summer setting is 78 degrees, which means your home would be kept at 78 degrees. When you set your thermostat lower it means that your unit will run continuously, and this adds up.

Second, it could be time to replace your system. Your heating and cooling unit could be costing you more as it ages. Even those which are regularly serviced age and eventually need replaced.

The \$5,000 rule is often considered as a starting place. When a repair is necessary, take the repair cost and multiply it by the age of your system, if it

amounts to more than \$5,000, it might be time to replace. When it comes to replacement, you want a unit that is efficient and not too large. In the case of heating and cooling, larger is not always better. But the seasonal energy efficiency ratio, or SEER, rating, tells the true story of any system you're considering.

The SEER measures the cooling efficiency of a system, truly important for these warm days, and the higher the SEER, the more efficient system. A 16 SEER or greater unit is going to be an efficient option.

Speak with installers, get quotes and consider. Remember, bigger doesn't mean better, and efficiency is important when selecting a system.

For details on rebates offered by South River EMC on heating and cooling systems, visit sremc.com/energy-star-heating-cooling.



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