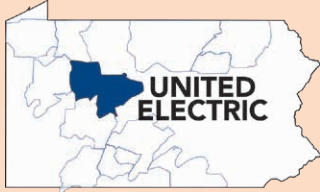




United Electric Cooperative, Inc.

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 



One of 14 electric cooperatives serving Pennsylvania and New Jersey

UNITED ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE, INC.

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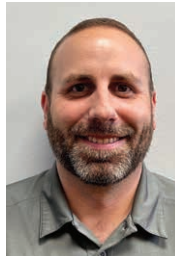
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Kristy Smith

COOPERATIVE CONNECTION

Guest Column

2023 Construction Update



MICHAEL FLOCK

CONSTRUCTION SEASON IS AN ONGOING operation in the utility industry — we always have at least one large-scale construction project underway. We are able to upgrade and rebuild 25 miles of line a year because of this construction practice. Engineering these projects also occurs year-round. Central LSS Consulting, a Falls Creek-based firm, continues to be a vital part of our success. They perform the bulk of our engineering design work for large system-improvements.

Currently, United Electric is in the third year of a four-year construction work plan with

14 projects in various stages of design and construction. Since last year's report, United crews, along with BNF Powerline Construction, completed five system-improvement projects. The projects included line relocations and rebuilds in the Brockway, Sigel, Burnside, Hyde, and Westover areas. These projects account for 16 miles of our 25-mile goal of line replacement for this year.

We have one project in the construction phase at this time. BNF crews are working in the McGees Mills area rebuilding a 12-mile section of aging line. This is the second stage of a multi-year project aimed at improving the reliability for our members in this area. The final two stages of this project are in the engineering phase and will be released for construction near the end of 2023 or early in 2024. These two projects account for approximately 26 miles of line rebuilt.

Along with the McGees Mills projects, we have three projects nearing the end of the engineering phase. These are in the Porter and Valier areas of our system. The projects include the replacement of aging wire and poles that have reached the end of their usable life. We are working closely with members in these areas to relocate many of these lines out of challenging rights of way to more accessible areas along roads. Having our power lines along roads speeds up restoration by allowing our crews to use bucket trucks, instead of climbing poles, to make repairs.

The remaining eight projects are in varying stages of design. Many of these are underground lines that have failed multiple times



JON FRAZIER

THE POWER BEHIND YOUR POWER: Journeyman Lineman Jordan Stear prepares to install this three-phase service in Punxsutawney.



CARL YEBERNETSKY

BUCKETS BRIGADE: Four buckets with journeyman lineworkers build out lines to a new member's service location.

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Guest Column

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and need to be replaced. Depending on terrain and right-of-way access, we may try to rebuild these lines overhead. It typically takes more than a year to design and prepare a system-improvement project for construction. We analyze all possible corridors and costs to determine the best route and whether to build the lines overhead or underground. These eight projects account for 16 miles of line and will likely be completed in 2025.

We truly appreciate our members' patience and understanding during the construction of our system-improvement projects. We do our best to limit the number and duration of planned power outages and try to alert affected members ahead of time. Without the cooperation of our members, we would not be able to accomplish our goals of designing and building a more reliable electric system. On behalf of United Electric, I thank you for your continued support. 🙏

MICHAEL FLOCK
MANAGER OF ENGINEERING



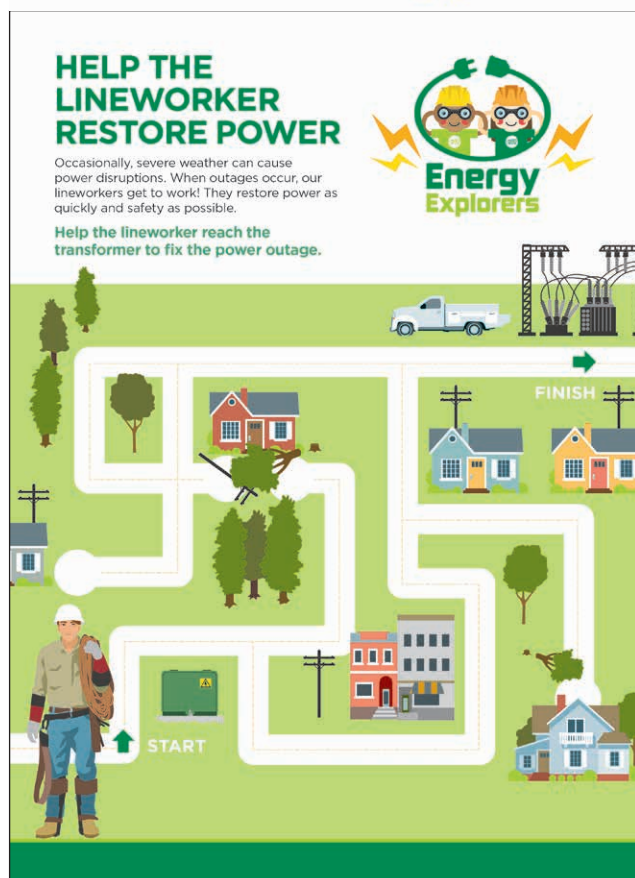
UP IN THE AIR: Construction begins on the top of a new pole while two journeyman lineworkers assist from buckets farther down the line.

Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

Did you know fall is the perfect time to schedule a tune-up for your heating system? Home heating accounts for a large portion of winter energy bills, and no matter what kind of system you have, you can save energy and money by regularly maintaining your equipment.

Combining proper equipment maintenance and upgrades with recommended insulation, air sealing and thermostat settings can save about 30% on your energy bills.

Source: Dept. of Energy



Rustic Views

Flowers or Weeds?

GLENN SCHUCKERS

MANY THINGS AMAZE ME. One of them is the difference between a flower and a weed. I have been thinking about this lately because I ran across a listing in a seed catalog for goldenrod seeds and plants. It looks as though I can order goldenrod seeds just in case there are not enough of them in every vacant field already.

I had been saying for years that if anyone could find a profitable use for goldenrod plants, he/she could become a millionaire. Now it looks as though some people have found that use. All they had to do was stop calling the plants weeds and start

calling them flowers.

That invites a basic question about a plant. When is something a desirable plant, and when is it a weed? The answer probably depends on who's asking and where the plants are growing. When it comes to plants like milkweed, the answer is not so easy.

Back in the "good old days" (which were never as good as we remember them), milkweeds were nothing but weeds. Farmers did everything they could to keep them out of cornfields, oats and wheat. Once they got a toehold in a crop field, they would soon take over, and as farmers

were not in the business of selling milkweed, we would do anything we could to stop their spread.

So it starts to look as though a flower is a plant that someone wants to plant, grow and look at, while a weed is a plant growing where someone thinks it should not be growing. Milkweed and its cousins, butterfly plants, can be flowers if they are in a "wildflower garden." They may have been planted there or just allowed to grow. I know lots of people who have wildflower gardens they guard from all change.

The problem with every kind of plant life — from alfalfa to zinnia



DELICATE DELICACY: A butterfly plant provides necessary food to a monarch butterfly and a honeybee and natural beauty to the rest of us.

— is they have the same goal: Grow, survive and proliferate.

I have sometimes been asked what to do if a tree is not producing fruit. My first response is “just wait.” Some varieties of fruits take longer to bear fruit than others. In my own little dwarf fruit orchard, there is a Lodi (a kind of “improved” Yellow Transparent) that had apples last year, and this year, had almost a peck, while the Honeycrisp planted the same year has yet to have one apple. When we had the orchard, we had the same thing. One of my favorites, the Northern Spy trees, often did not have a crop of fruit until they were 12 years or older.

But another remedy for a plant that is not bearing fruit is to “injure” it. Doc Ritter advised people to take a pocketknife and make a spiral cut around the trunk of a tree, being careful not to kill the tree, just slightly injure it. Trees often respond to that kind of injury by producing fruit buds. It is nature’s way of helping that species survive.

That’s why what we think of as “weeds” will survive just about anything.

When the first goldenrod, milkweed, crabgrass, dandelions, ragweed, or any other plant showed up, there may have been a flood or a drought, a late frost, or even a fire. Most of the seeds were destroyed, but a few survived. The ones that survived were adapted to grow in those conditions. Now we have alpine flowers that “bloom and grow” in even the harshest conditions.

So the difference between a weed and a flower boils down to what we call it. And what I call a flower might well be a weed to my neighbor, and what he sees as a weed may be my lovely flower. Some “flowers” are now considered invasive weeds, among them the butterfly plant I value.

This is how the U.S. Forest Service describes an invasive species: 1. Non-native (or alien) to the ecosystem under consideration; and 2. Whose introduction causes or is likely to cause economic or environmental harm or harm to human health.

It turns out my beloved butterfly plant qualifies as an invasive species on two counts. It is not a native plant, having been brought to America from China, and it is, just like goldenrod, invasive. I have not seen a butterfly plant spread like goldenrod, but I know the potential is there. I have seen milkweed take over a field to the point where nothing else grows there, but where milkweed has the term “weed” in its name, butterfly plant does not, and it may be safe.

Will I go out and dig out the butterfly plants in the flower bed

around the house? No. I will just do what I can to keep them from spreading, and I will most of all enjoy the beauty of their flowers and keep them for their role in nurturing bees and butterflies.

Like a lot of other things in nature, it is a matter of balance. Nature needs species of plants to feed and protect necessary elements like bees and butterflies that pollinate just about all we need to survive. And nature needs predators like wolves and coyotes to keep down the number of grazing animals that, if left unchecked, would destroy the environment.

Weeds or flowers? The difference may just be in the name, but we need to know the difference and accept that we need both, whether we like the looks of them or not. 🍷

