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Equestrian trails maintained by volunteers offer a stunning way to take in Texas.

*By Anna Mazurek
Photo by Dave Shafer*

Counting Down

Missile silo owners are fighting rust and ruin to preserve and repurpose subterranean Cold War relics.

*By Samantha Bryant
Photos by Eric W. Pohl*

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ON THE COVER

Mary Apple-Williams leads the way on a trail ride at soon-to-open Palo Pinto Mountains State Park.

Photo by Dave Shafer

ABOVE

Bruce Townsley at the launch control panel of his 1960s missile silo south of Abilene.

Photo by Eric W. Pohl



Pluck the Perfect Book

DO YOU LOVE being cooped up with a good book?

Central Texas author A.A. Davenport's *A Chicken Was There* collection aims to entertain while imparting history along the way—a perfect escape for National Read a Book Day on September 6.

Through the eyes of chickens, Davenport, a Bluebonnet Electric Cooperative member, takes readers to colonial America, the Civil War, Wild West and more.

"I was watching a movie with my husband. He really likes Westerns, and I noticed that there were chickens everywhere—in town, out on the homestead, at the stagecoach station," says Davenport, a former English teacher at Smithville Junior High School. "That's when I thought that the chickens have been eyewitnesses to a lot of historical events."

Her sixth book in the series came out in July.



A Pioneer in Academia

June Brewer made history in 1950 when she became one of the first African American women to apply and be admitted to graduate school at the University of Texas.

Brewer, born 100 years ago this month in Austin, got her bachelor's degree at the college now known as Huston-Tillotson University. After getting her doctorate from UT, she taught English for 35 years at what was then Huston-Tillotson College.

TCP Contests and More

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Snakes Alive!

RECOMMENDED READING

Revisit our September 2005 issue to see how our Best of Co-op Country picks stand up to the test of time. Read it at TexasCoopPower.com.



FINISH THIS SENTENCE

My favorite football team is ...

TCP Tell us how you would finish that sentence. Email your short responses to letters@TexasCoopPower.com or comment on our Facebook post. Include your co-op and town.

Here are some of the responses to our July prompt: **My favorite Fourth of July was ...**

The bicentennial celebration in 1976, with the huge regatta of tall ships in New York Harbor and the massive fireworks show over Lady Liberty.

STUART BERKOWITZ
PEDERNALES EC
MANCHACA

When my city relatives visited our farm, and for the first time I tasted soda pop and saw fireworks.

LORETTA BEDFORD
DEEP EAST TEXAS EC
SAN AUGUSTINE

When I came back from Vietnam in 1970.

LIONEL ROACH
CENTRAL TEXAS EC
BLUFFTON

When my husband and I had our first date and first kiss.

ELLEN HOLDCROFT
WOOD COUNTY EC
QUITMAN

Visit our website to see more responses.



Dressed for the Theater

When I was a student at Blinn Junior College in Brenham in 1977, I attended my first viewing of *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* at the Simon Theatre [A Century of the Simon, July 2025].

A friend and I were driving by one night and saw a long line of people dressed in what is now common garb for the RHPS experience. Back then it was quite a shock to see some of my dormmates in that line wearing fishnet stockings and bustiers.

William Culver III
Farmers EC
Murphy

Rodgers' Influence

Jimmie Rodgers did not sell more records—10 million—than any other RCA Victor artist before Elvis Presley [The Fast Track, July 2025].

In a 10-year period before Presley's first release, Perry Como sold more



than 30 million records for RCA Victor.

Coy Prather
Trinity Valley EC
Montalba

EDITOR'S NOTE You're correct, and we'll regret this mistake "till the end of time." We have fixed the story online.

I wonder if the author is familiar with Bill Monroe, the Father of Bluegrass Music. Monroe played, sang and recorded many of Jimmie Rodgers' songs back in the mid-to-late 1920s, 1930s and very possibly into the 1940s.

Rodgers very likely influenced Monroe into occasionally adding yodeling to his own music.

Mike Adams
San Bernard EC
Magnolia

Family Love


Stepping Up [May 2025] brought tears to my eyes. As a stepparent, I related to this story. DNA isn't what matters in a blended family—it's the love.

Rosie Strode
Tri-County EC
Parker County

TCP WRITE TO US
letters@TexasCoopPower.com

Editor, Texas Co-op Power
1122 Colorado St., 24th Floor
Austin, TX 78701

Please include your electric co-op and town. Letters may be edited for clarity and length.

 Texas Co-op Power

JULY 2025 A Century of the Simon

"I grew up in the late 1950s, early '60s spending Saturday afternoons at the Simon Theatre. Kids got money for the show and maybe popcorn and a soda."

TED KEMPER
SAN BERNARD EC
BELLVILLE

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Mounts in the Hills

Equestrian trails maintained by volunteers offer a stunning way to take in Texas

BY ANNA MAZUREK
PHOTO BY DAVE SHAFER
ILLUSTRATIONS BY RYAN O'ROURKE

Mary Apple-Williams was riding her retired ranch horse, Slick, on the equestrian trails at Benbrook Lake south of Fort Worth in April 2016 when she noticed sections of two trails were closed due to storm damage.

After talking with a park ranger, she discovered the nonprofit Texas Equestrian Trail Riders Association helped maintain the trails. She immediately joined the organization, reached out to her region's manager and led efforts to reopen the trails, which are now maintained by TETRA continually.

For her and many others who find great joy in trail riding, this is important work.



From right, Mary Apple-Williams on Cutter, Brenda Laing on Sunshine, Staci Barnes on Shadow and Matt Barnes on Lily depart the equine campground at Palo Pinto Mountains State Park in North Texas. The park is expected to open in 2026.

Panhandle, TETRA helped prevent a section of the trail built along a former railroad from being shut down in May 2022. That's despite the group's aging and dwindling membership, declining from 2,000 members when it was founded in 1997 to fewer than 300 statewide today.

"We were out there replacing boards off of the railroad trestle, and that was hard work," Apple-Williams says. "When you look at our volunteers, the average volunteer age of our organization—we're not spring chickens anymore."

Many state parks and other natural areas are supported by nonprofit organizations founded by volunteers, including TETRA members, who enjoy using and maintaining the outdoor spaces. "We support those groups with labor, expenses [and] grants," Apple-Williams says. "We'll do a benefit ride out there where any funds we collect ... we turn back into that group to help maintain that park."

Since equestrian trails are often multiuse trails, TETRA's restoration efforts also benefit hikers and mountain bikers at state parks, where attendance has topped 9 million each year since 2021, according to the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department.

Apple-Williams is now a manager for TETRA's Region 4, which encompasses a section of North Texas that includes the soon-to-open Palo Pinto Mountains State Park. To assist construction

efforts, TETRA held trail rides at the site in 2017 and 2018 and donated proceeds to the park's nonprofit, Palo Pinto Mountains State Park Partners, which advocated for trail riders during the park design process.

In November 2024, she volunteered at an on-site workday.

"To me, that day wasn't a workday but a preview of what riders would experience for years to come—beautiful streams, winding trails through large boulders [and] high plateaus where you can see for miles," she says.

If you ask Apple-Williams about her favorite place to ride in Texas, she can't pick one because there are too many amazing and diverse trails.

"I think the best place to ride is Texas," she says. ■



Ready to ride?
Turn the page to explore five state parks that are top picks among trail riders.

"For equestrians, riding is more than a hobby; it's a profound connection with nature," Apple-Williams says. "From the fragrance of spring blooms to the thrill of mountain trails, every ride is a celebration of the natural world."

Apple-Williams, who went on to serve as TETRA president from 2022 to 2024, says the nonprofit's goal is to develop and maintain riding trails across the state.

"We're a voice for equestrians in the state of Texas, and that is needed so much more today than it has been in the past," Apple-Williams says.

TETRA members and volunteers maintain more than three dozen trails, including some at Army Corps of Engineers lakes and many at state parks, through fundraising rides and scheduled workdays during the spring and fall. Volunteers put in a combined 800–1,000 hours a year doing trail maintenance, Apple-Williams says.

At Caprock Canyons State Park and Trailway in the

Across the Lone Star State, there are 19 equestrian trails in state parks (all of which require proof of a current Coggins test, which screens for potentially fatal equine infectious anemia). These are some of trail riders' favorites.



Palo Pinto Mountains State Park

Tucked halfway between Abilene and Fort Worth,

Palo Pinto Mountains State Park will be Texas' first new state park in 17 years when it opens. The Texas Parks and Wildlife Department has not set an opening date. The park will comprise nearly 5,000 acres of former ranchland with a rugged landscape of scenic plateaus, sheltered canyons and crisscrossing waterways, including Palo Pinto Creek near the northern boundary. The 90-acre Tucker Lake will be the park's star attraction for fishing, boating, swimming and birding, and there will be several multiuse trails, including 11 miles of equestrian trails with substantial trailhead parking for trail riders. Each of the 10 equestrian campsites will be equipped with a two-horse corral, water and electrical hookups.



Caprock Canyon State Park and Trailway

Home to the Texas State Bison Herd, this 15,000-acre park has 90 miles of trails, including the equestrian-friendly 64-mile-long multiuse trailway built on a former freight and passenger railway that operated from the early 1920s until 1989. The trailway has a variety of access points and passes through Clarity Tunnel, home to a half-million Mexican free-tailed bats. The Panhandle park also has a dozen primitive equestrian campsites with two corrals each.



Cooper State Park

Located on Jim Chapman Lake in northeast Texas, this park is an angler's paradise with an abundance of water activities and trails to explore. The park consists of two areas—the northern Doctor's Creek Unit and the equestrian-friendly South Sulphur Unit on the southern shore. The challenging Buggy Whip Equestrian Trail is a 10-mile adventure through dense forests and creek ravines. A dozen equestrian campsites have electricity but no stables.

Davis Mountains State Park

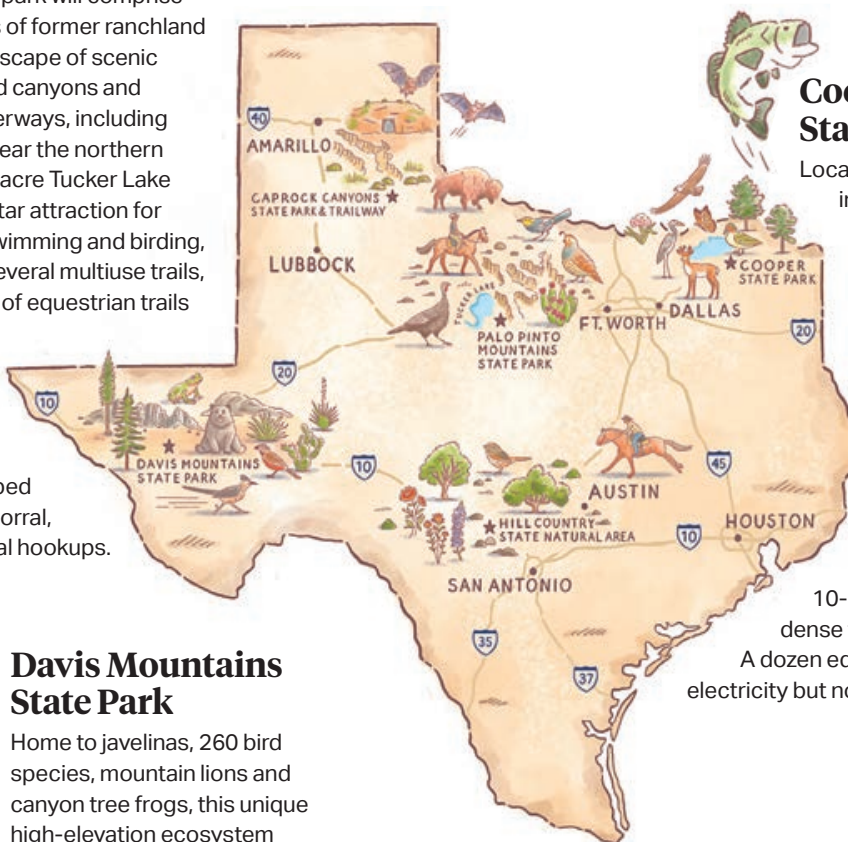
Home to javelinas, 260 bird species, mountain lions and canyon tree frogs, this unique high-elevation ecosystem at the base of the Davis Mountains was formed 25

million–30 million years ago by volcanic eruptions. This volcanic activity is responsible for the West Texas park's most unique formations, Frazier's Canyon, Sleeping Lion and Barrel Springs. Trail riders can explore the stunning landscape on 11 miles of trails that meander from 4,900 to 5,700 feet with scenic overlooks in the Limpia Canyon area. There are six primitive equestrian campsites.



Hill Country State Natural Area

At this former ranch northwest of San Antonio, 40 miles of shared-use equestrian trails cover terrain that includes flat, broad prairies and steep, rocky canyons. The park's extensive equestrian facilities include a day-use area near the headquarters with a water trough, hitching posts and a flush toilet. Overnight equestrian accommodations include six primitive campsites with pens, a group camp that has a barn with stalls for nine horses, and a 1930s ranch house that sleeps 12 humans and has stalls for five horses.





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COUNTING DOWN

Missile silo owners are fighting rust and ruin to preserve and repurpose subterranean Cold War relics

BRUCE TOWNSLEY'S FAVORITE place to visit in Japan is Ryoanji Temple Rock Garden in Kyoto. The enigmatic garden has 15 stones, but only 14 are visible to the viewer, no matter where they stand. One side of the garden is arid and stark, but walk around a corner and there's lush greenery.

It's the unexpected that gets him.

So it's little wonder that Townsley's home in Oplin, south of Abilene, is an illusion all its own. Drive onto his property, and you'll see a few small buildings and a Quonset hut. But that's the tip of the iceberg—one that descends 18 stories into the ground.

For the past 25 years, Townsley has lived underground in the two-story launch control center of a decommissioned missile silo. A relic of the Cold War, the 185-foot silo is one of 12 near Dyess Air Force Base that once housed nuclear-tipped intercontinental ballistic missiles meant to deter the Soviet Union from using their own.

The Atlas F missile sites roughly encircle Abilene like points on a clock face, a silently ticking time bomb that thankfully never had to be ignited—despite veering dangerously close during the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962.

In 1965, the government salvaged much of the metal, removed the 82-foot missiles and sold the silos to private owners and municipalities. Townsley bought his in 1997, and he's one of several missile silo owners bent on preserving the structures so future generations can learn about and honor this pivotal moment in the Cold War.

Townsley, formerly a real estate broker in Colorado, initially was interested in the site as a renovation project. He still remembers his first visit to West Texas, crawling into the silo by way of an air vent shaft and shining his flashlight deep inside the cavernous concrete and steel structure.

"It felt like it was—this is going to sound strange—alive," he says. "It was just like something was sleeping. It wasn't a frightening feeling; it was just an unusual feeling."

OPPOSITE Bruce Townsley in his missile silo in Oplin. The crib, the silo's steel framework, held an Atlas F intercontinental missile in the early 1960s.

RIGHT, FROM TOP A close-up of Townsley's Cold War-era missile launch control panel. He converted the control center into a living space.



"IF WE DON'T
KNOW OUR PAST,
WE CAN'T LIVE
OUR FUTURE
THE WAY LIFE
IS INTENDED
TO BE LIVED."

As with many of the 72 Atlas F silos built across six states, water had seeped into the vast void over the years, and the walls were graffitied with the names of local students who had sneaked onto the property decades ago.

Townsley, a Taylor Electric Cooperative member, purchased the property for \$99,000 and set about making the control center into a personal residence. Connected to the silo by a 40-foot tunnel, it once housed a five-man missile crew on its upper floor and equipment and offices on another floor.

After about 18 months of renovations, Townsley began his subterranean existence that has lasted more than a quarter century. He says he enjoys the quiet. The living spaces are white and open, with plenty of lighting and high ceilings.

"You don't have that sense of claustrophobia," Townsley says. "Now, some people really react to there being no windows, but cameras and monitors provide a pretty good substitute."

After renovating the control center, Townsley, with the help of others, turned his efforts to the silo itself, draining the water and removing debris (the only bones he found belonged to a coyote and an armadillo). He was also able to get one of the 75-ton, 3-foot-thick silo doors operable so that it once again opens to the sky with the press of a button.

As Townsley renovated the property, he became friends with people who had helped construct the facilities and missileers who served when the sites were active, 1962–65.

"You can't help but get involved in the history of it," Townsley says. "It's just part of it."

One of the people he met was Roger Jensen, who enlisted in the Air Force in 1961 at age 19 and worked on the Abilene silo sites as an electrical technician with the 578th Strategic Missile Squadron.



Now in his 80s, Jensen still remembers some of the passwords he spoke at the door to gain access to the control center, words like "bicycle" and "wheelbarrow."

"We spent 24 hours in and out of the silo," Jensen says. "We had to go out into the silo at least once every hour to take specific readings on various pieces of equipment."

Tensions between the U.S. and the Soviet Union were high during those years, especially during the 13-day Cuban Missile Crisis, when the Soviets deployed nuclear missiles to Cuba. The Air Force's Strategic Air Command was at DEFCON 2, one step away from the highest level of readiness for nuclear war.

With a wife and baby in Abilene, Jensen says the possibility of nuclear war became undeniable for the crew. "It was a big dose of reality and what was reality at that time," he says.

The crisis was averted through diplomatic agreements, and Jensen says the crew was “elated when it was over.”

In homage to that history, Townsley had long thought his silo should be turned into a museum, an idea planted by the broker who showed it to him. And in January 2024, he started the Atlas Missile Museum of Texas, a nonprofit organization with a five-member board.

Visitors must make an appointment through his website, www.atlasmissilemuseumoftexas.org, to tour the silo and control center and learn about the site’s role in the Cold War. They can walk into the silo and see the steel crib once equipped with an elevator capable of raising the Atlas F missile to the surface and launching it in about 10 minutes. Townsley has a model elevator to show how it works and a refurbished control console that simulates a missile launch.

A short drive down the road in Lawn, Larry Sanders is also preserving the history at his missile silo, which he acquired in 1999. Sanders spearheaded a movement in 2001 to get the roadway it sits along renamed to the Atlas ICBM Highway.

He spent years saving the complex from its more recent No. 1 enemy: rust.

“My immediate concern was stabilization,” Sanders says. “You have to keep in mind that water was everywhere. Wood rot, decomposing Sheetrock, metals being compromised totally to rust. So we did nothing for the first five years but demolition.”

Now that the site is stable and clean, Sanders plans to add back infrastructure. Through the Atlas Missile Base Cold War Center, a nonprofit he founded, he holds on-site events and

gives presentations to groups about the Cold War, a time that can sometimes get forgotten.

“No one received the recognition and the honor that they deserved in winning the Cold War, unlike World War II,” Sanders says.

In addition to veterans, Sanders says the heroes of the time include civilian contractors and city administrators. “Texas had a significant role in America’s Cold War victory, and Texans need to celebrate Texas’ role in that victory,” he says.

Like a lot of American schoolchildren in the early Cold War era, Sanders grew up doing “duck and cover” air raid drills in elementary school and watching the political tension unfold on TV.

Mark Hannifin, who owns a missile silo in Shep, also remembers this tense time and tells younger generations that for them, “the Cold War might as well have been in black and white. It’s kind of like us looking at the second World War or our predecessors looking at the first World War and Civil War. No, it was in color. It was a real thing.”

Hannifin and his wife, Linda, bought their silo in 1982 and were “armchair survivalists” at the time, he says. To avoid detection, they used a code word whenever they referred to the facility in public.

An avid scuba diver, Hannifin eventually decided to open the silo for diving and began cleaning out the debris. Their business, Dive Valhalla, hosts scuba dive clubs in the 120 feet of water.

“It’s nice, crystal-clear well water,” Hannifin says. “We have been letting people dive in there for about 30 years now.”

Hannifin’s control center is equipped with beds for over-night stays, and he shows a short Cold War documentary and slideshow so visitors are aware of the silo’s original mission.

The Hannifins no longer feel the need to keep it under wraps, and Mark says he’s seen other missile silo owners move from concealing their purchase to being more open about it.

The silos were part of a top-secret mission (although folks in Abilene couldn’t have missed the construction crews that arrived in 1960 to build them). When that secret mission faded, the silos “had fallen out of use,” Hannifin says. “Fallen out of memory.”

But these dutiful owners are ensuring this important history isn’t buried by time.

Jensen, who spent many hours in the silo as a young man during the beginning of his military service, certainly won’t forget.

“If we don’t know our past,” Jensen says, “we can’t live our future the way life is intended to be lived.” ■

OPPOSITE Mark Hannifin turned his silo in Shep into Dive Valhalla for scuba divers. A staircase and gangplank connect to a floating platform.

BELOW The entry to Larry Sanders’ silo in Lawn.



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Final Issue



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MESSAGE
FROM
GENERAL
MANAGER

ALAN
LESLEY

Sticking to Our Mission

ONE MORNING, a co-op manager came to work to find a slightly burnt stick on her desk. She knew there had to be a story behind the stick.

The stick was about 18 inches long and no bigger than the diameter of your little finger. It wasn't big enough to be dangerous if it fell on you—it was barely big enough for a dog to chew on. Yet, as she found out from the lineworker who eventually showed up to tell its story, this little stick managed to knock out power to more than 100 electric meters.

The co-op manager heard the frustration in the lineworker's voice as he described how thoroughly

Once he'd found it, things moved quickly. Repairs were made, and power was restored.

Normally, that would be the end of the story—but that story made me think about all we do to serve the members of CECA.

As I learned about this outage, I reflected on the work ethic and dedication of our own lineworkers, who work with diligence to restore electricity in their commitment to serving you, our members.

The story also made me want to share with our members the challenges of power restoration. The difficulty in finding this stick is an example of why,

when you call our office, we don't always know how long restoration will take or what is causing an outage. We do our absolute best, but there are so many variables in nature that we cannot control.

Some would say I shouldn't share this anecdote because if members knew just a little stick could knock out power, they would be concerned about reliability.

I see the point: When you look at all the trees, birds and animals in our service area and consider all the various weather conditions we endure, it's clearly a daunting task for us to keep the lights on. Yet we do keep them on, most of the time. Day after day, week after week, our lineworkers and other staff ensure that our members have power.

Although some might worry about one small stick causing so many to lose electricity, I look at the millions of sticks we face daily

and think: Isn't it great that we do keep the lights on so consistently?

I also think about what an amazing group of people our members have serving them. Thank you for letting us do what we do. We promise to keep picking up the sticks every day. ■



BIG COUNTRY EC

he patrolled up and down 8 miles of line, trying to locate the source of the problem. He couldn't find it, but he wouldn't stop looking until he did.

He knew that lights were out and members needed electricity. Nobody, co-op employees included, enjoys being without power.

The lineworker was turning around to patrol the line yet another time when his eye caught something. It was the stick—this tiny stick wedged in equipment atop a pole—that had knocked out service for so many.



DOLLYWOOD FOUNDATION

Dolly Parton, founder of the Imagination Library, sits with two young readers and holds a copy of her book *I Am a Rainbow*, highlighting the program's mission to provide free, high-quality books to children from birth to age 5 and foster a lifelong love of reading.

Inspire a Love for Reading, One Book at a Time

CECA'S OPERATION ROUND-UP is bringing the magic of reading to your doorstep with Dolly Parton's Imagination Library. CECA Operation Round-Up sponsors free books for children age 5 and under.

Each month, participating families receive a high-quality, age appropriate book delivered right to their doorstep. Each book is personalized with the child's name and meant to spark a love of reading from the very beginning.

The books are carefully chosen by a panel of childhood literacy experts and include tips on the inside cover for enhancing engagement and inter-

action between the child and their caregiver. Twice a year, children also receive bilingual Spanish and English titles to support early language development.

CECA Operation Round-Up's support ensures that the program is available at no cost to families within our service area. It is one way we live out the Seventh Cooperative Principle of Concern for Community and help

children grow and learn before they ever step into a classroom.

Books have a way of creating quiet moments, big dreams and lifelong habits. With every book that arrives in the mail, children gain something far more valuable than a story. They gain confidence, curiosity and connection.

To sign up, visit ceca.coop/imagination-library or scan the QR code on this page. ■



Vidalia Onion Dip

2 large Vidalia or 1015 sweet onions, finely chopped
1½ cups grated Parmesan cheese, divided use
1 cup mayonnaise
1 cup sour cream
¼ cup fresh dill, lightly chopped (or 2½ teaspoons dried dill), divided use
2 tablespoons chopped fresh parsley
1 tablespoon prepared horseradish
Pinch red pepper flakes
Kosher salt and ground black pepper, to taste

1. Preheat oven to 325 degrees.
2. Place onions, 1 cup Parmesan, mayonnaise, sour cream, 3 tablespoons dill (or 2 teaspoons dried), parsley, horseradish and red pepper in a mixing bowl and use a spatula to combine. Season to taste with salt and black pepper, then transfer the mixture to a deep-dish 10-inch pie dish. Sprinkle the top evenly with the remaining ½ cup of Parmesan and remaining dill.
3. Bake 40–45 minutes, until lightly browned. Serve with chips or crackers.

SERVES 4–6

TCP Find this and more delicious recipes online at TexasCoopPower.com.

BACKGROUND: MARCIN JUCHA | SHUTTERSTOCK.COM.
 DIP: IRINA ROSTOKINA | SHUTTERSTOCK.COM



CECA Members Hear Updates, Nominate Directors at Meetings

CECA MEMBERS IN DISTRICTS 3, 5 AND 6 met in July to conduct cooperative business and share important updates.

District Meeting Results

Each district meeting had a quorum of members present, allowing members to make nominations for directors who represent their respective districts on the CECA Board of Directors.

At the District 6 meeting, held July 14 at Mitchell Baptist Church in Cisco, Loren Stroebel was renominated to serve another three-year term on the board. Stroebel was the only nomination made at the meeting.

At the District 5 meeting, held July 15 at May Fire Station, Troy Stewart was renominated for another three-year term. Stewart was the only nomination at the meeting.

At the District 3 meeting, held July 17 at the CECA headquarters in Comanche, longtime board member Ruby Solomon did not seek renomination after 22 years of dedicated service. CECA is grateful for the leadership Solomon has provided over the years and wishes her the very best in retirement. She will continue to serve on the

CECA has experienced significant growth in its kilowatt-hour sales and kilowatt demand since 2018. This six-year growth reflects increased energy consumption in our large commercial and industrial rate class in recent years.

CECA is exploring opportunities with larger commercial and industrial loads, like artificial intelligence data centers, that can provide longer-term benefits to members. The cooperative is working to responsibly develop these projects within its service territory where it is feasible.

The Texas Legislature passed several bills this year that affect electric cooperatives and their members. This includes new legislation impacting:

- ▶ Wildfire and storm protection
- ▶ Solar consumer protection
- ▶ Grid security
- ▶ New electric generation

House Bill 3448, which would have infringed on property owner rights through forced easements and regulated rental rates while creating liability issues for utility pole owners, was successfully defeated by electric cooperatives. The bill, as drafted, was harmful to co-ops in many ways.

Without the voices of members through Voices for Cooperative Power, co-ops wouldn't have been able to defeat this bill. VCP is a grassroots network of more than 1.1 million advocates who help shape energy policy. VCP provides a platform for members to share their stories with policymakers, ensuring that rural communities have a voice in decisions affecting reliable, affordable power. Members can sign up at voicesforcooperativepower.com to receive updates and advocacy opportunities.

Co-ops Vote is a nonpartisan resource that helps electric cooperative members understand how voting impacts energy policy. The website, vote.coop, provides voter registration tools, candidate information and resources to help members make informed decisions about energy issues. Access these helpful tools to learn how public policy affects your electric cooperative.

Oncor's Dinosaur-Longshore 765-kilovolt transmission line project is moving through the regulatory process. This project is not associated with CECA, but it will impact our service area and many of our members' properties. The proposed line will connect the Dinosaur Switch near Glen Rose in Somervell County to the existing Longshore Switch about 4.5 miles west of Forsan in Howard County.

The regulatory timeline, according to Oncor, shows plans to file an application with the Public Utility Commission of Texas by December, with a decision expected in June 2026. Right-of-way acquisition would begin in late 2026 or 2027, construction would start in 2027, and the estimated in-service date is 2028 or 2029.

Looking Ahead

District meetings demonstrate the cooperative principle of Democratic Member Control. Members are not simply customers; they're owners with a direct voice in CECA's leadership and operations.

Member involvement ensures CECA continues to reflect the values and needs of Central Texas farmers and ranchers.

CECA's annual meeting of the membership will be held in October. Details on time and location will be announced soon. This represents another opportunity for members to connect and influence their cooperative's future. ■



TOP ROW: District 6 meeting door prize-winners, from left, Jane Smith with her drill, Ronnie Pierce with his air circulator and Nathan West with his extension cord.

MIDDLE ROW: District 5 meeting prizewinners, from left, Bo Allen with his drill, Jerry Simmons with his air circulator and Dixon Seider with his extension cord.

BOTTOM ROW: District 3 meeting prizewinners, from left, Julia Munn with her drill, Thomas Singleton with his air circulator and Jerry Neeley with his extension cord.

board until a new director is seated after the election at the co-op's annual meeting in October.

Bryan Morris and Jason Davis were nominated at the meeting by District 3 members. Both candidates will appear on the ballot at CECA's annual meeting, when the full membership will vote to fill the position.

At each meeting, CECA presented a slideshow answering frequently asked member questions about several key topics affecting the cooperative and its members. Every attendee received a cookie, drink and \$15 bill credit.

Co-op Updates

At the meetings, members heard updates about growth in the co-op's service area, the recent legislative session and Oncor's transmission line project, which will impact many members' properties. Members are encouraged to reach out to our member service department with any further questions.

Community Calendar

Brownwood

The Lyric Theatre, 318 Center Ave., Brownwood. Contact (325) 600-4303 or bmdd@brownwoodtexas.gov.

Dallas Brass, September 6, 7:30 p.m. An American brass quintet performing patriotic, classical and romantic repertoire. Features seven talented members. Dallas Brass has performed at Carnegie Hall and for presidents.

Bye Bye Birdie the Musical, September 20–21, 2:30 and 7:30 p.m. Step back into the 1950s with this musical comedy classic. Full of rock 'n' roll, teen romance and small-town hilarity, the show is centered on an Elvis-inspired star drafted into the Army.

Ballet Magnificat!, September 25, 7:30 p.m. Experience the beauty and power of Ballet Magnificat!, the world's premier Christian ballet company, as they bring stories of faith to life through breathtaking dance and stunning choreography. With a blend of classical ballet and powerful storytelling, Ballet Magnificat! captivates audiences with performances that inspire and uplift. Don't miss this opportunity to witness an evening of artistry, grace and passion, all set to stirring music and a message of hope.

Cisco

Citywide Fall Garage Sale, September 13. Contact (254) 442-2537 or ciscochamberofcommerce@gmail.com.

Leon Boles Gun, Knife and Coin Show, September 27–28, Myrtle Wilks Community Center. The event features a wide variety of vendors offering guns, knives and collectible coins. Contact (254) 442-2537 or ciscochamberofcommerce@gmail.com.

Comanche

Comanche Market; September 6, October 4; 9 a.m.–1 p.m.; 1300 E. Central Ave. Held the first Saturday of each month. Contact texashandmadesuds@gmail.com or (325) 330-3686.

Comanche County Museum Quannah Parker Day, September 13, 1–4 p.m., Comanche County Museum, 402 Moorman Road. Contact comanchecountymuseum@gmail.com or (325) 356-5115.

44th Annual Pow Wow, September 27, 10 a.m.–3 p.m., and September 28, 10 a.m.–4 p.m., Comanche City Park, 1200 Comanche Trail. Highlights include a car, tractor and motorcycle show; more than 30 food trucks; Native American dancers; live music; free kids' activities; and more than 100 vendor booths. Call (325) 356-3233.

Early

Movie in the Park, October 11, 6 p.m., McDonald Park, 101 Park Drive. Free of charge with free popcorn, s'mores and drinks. There will be booths from local businesses and nonprofits with games, crafts and candy. Before the movie starts, there will be a costume contest with kid, teen, adult and family divisions. At about 7:30 p.m. we'll start showing a Halloween-friendly film. Contact aconstancia@earlytx.net.

Eastland

RipFest, October 4. Experience Eastland's favorite tradition! RipFest offers something for everyone, starting with a 5K race and a grand parade, followed by vendor booths, live entertainment, a kids' street, classic car show and wide assortment of food trucks. All this excitement is paired with the rich history of Old Rip, making it a day to remember. Information can be found at eastlandchamber.com/ripfest or contact (254) 629-2332 or chamber@eastland.net.

Gorman

Gorman Peanut Festival, September 13, 120 S. Kent St. Celebrate Gorman's legacy in the peanut industry with a day full of fun, food and festivities. Contact gormanpeanutfestival@gmail.com or (254) 734-2317.

Lake Brownwood

Wildflower Walks with Ranger George; September 6, 13, 20 and 27 and October 4, 11, 18 and 25; 9:30 a.m.–12:30 p.m.; Lake Brownwood State Park; 200 State Highway Park Road 15. Enjoy a guided walk through the park to discover and learn about wildflowers. Program is weather dependent. Contact (325) 784-5223 or lakebrownwood.sp@tpwd.texas.gov or visit tpwd.texas.gov/state-parks/lake-brownwood.

CECA welcomes your local event submissions.

If you have any events you would like listed in the Community Calendar, please contact Triston McGehee. Event information must be submitted two months in advance for the magazine. The calendar is published monthly and includes events scheduled for the month of publication and the following month. CECA reserves the right to edit or exclude events based on space availability and other considerations. We do not certify the accuracy or reliability of any information posted in the Community Calendar. To confirm event details, please contact the event organizers directly. Email tmcgehee@ceca.coop; write to CECA at P.O. Box 729, Comanche, TX 76531; or call 1-800-915-2533.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

Grandparents Day
Sunday, September 7

Patriot Day
Thursday, September 11

Rosh Hashanah begins
Monday, September 22

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COURTESY SHAWNDELLE HARRINGTON, GORMAN ISD



Operation Round-Up Opens Doors for Gorman ISD Cosmetology Students

WHEN SHAWNDELLE HARRINGTON, Gorman High School's cosmetology teacher, applied for a CECA Operation Round-Up teacher grant, she had one goal in mind: to give her students an experience that would bring their career goals to life.

Thanks to the generosity of CECA members who round up their electric bills each month, that goal became a reality.

With funding from Operation Round-Up, students from Gorman Independent School District traveled to Branded Beauty Bar in Stephenville, where they took part in a professional lash extension class. The hands-on training provided beginner and advanced students with a deeper understanding of one of the fastest-growing specialties in the beauty industry.

Learning by Doing

More than just a classroom extension, the session gave students the opportunity to work with real tools, real models and real professionals.

The workshop focused on three core techniques:

- ▶ Proper taping
- ▶ Lash separation
- ▶ Lash placement and application

Students practiced on manikins and live models while receiving step-by-step guidance from seasoned lash artists. The structure of the course allowed each student to be challenged at their own level—giving beginners a foundation and more experienced students the chance to sharpen their precision.

LEFT: Gorman High School cosmetology students in the Hair Shoppe & Barbershop with their certificates.

RIGHT: The students learn how to apply eyelash extensions in class.

"This kind of opportunity is so valuable for our students," Harrington said. "They were able to step outside the classroom and see what a real beauty setting feels like. It gave them a sense of confidence and direction."

Career Readiness in Action

Beyond mastering new skills, the class gave students a first-hand look at what it takes to succeed in a professional salon environment. Several participants showed strong potential for immediate entry into the field, demonstrating growth in attention to detail and the ability to meet professional industry standards.

"This experience allowed our students to connect classroom learning to real-world application," Harrington said. "They walked away not only with new skills but with the belief that they belong in this industry."

Apply for a Grant

Are you a teacher or community leader with a project that could benefit from local support?

Learn more or apply at ceca.coop/operation-round-up. ■

CECA Offers Residential Solar Solutions for Members

DID YOU KNOW THAT CECA sells and installs solar power arrays? We have trained professionals who can evaluate your electricity use and property to provide the perfect fit for your home or business based on your usage patterns. We encourage members to include CECA in their solar array installation plans from start to finish.

CECA offers various options, from backup generators and battery systems to roof- and ground-mount arrays. Energy efficiency has progressed with new technologies, allowing members to take a more active role in optimizing their energy consumption. We're beyond the days of just turning off the lights or adjusting the thermostat when leaving the house.

If you're interested in optimizing your household's energy consumption, please call Riley Hilliard at 1-800-915-2533 to set up a free energy audit and solar power analysis. Solar power may not be a good fit for everyone, but under the right circumstances, it can save CECA members money on their monthly bills.

There are many companies marketing the installation of solar panel arrays in every county CECA serves, and this has created confusion around solar buyback plans and raised concerns about fair pricing in a new and changing industry. We're here to help our members navigate this confusion, and if you feel solar may be a good option for you, we can handle the sale and installation as well.

CECA does require an application process be completed before interconnection with our system to ensure proper safety, liability and metering standards are met. Regardless of the solar power vendor you choose, please contact us before you start your project to be sure your plans are compliant and your project goes smoothly.

You can always discuss your solar project plans with CECA staff for general information or specific needs. Solar power can be a great energy efficiency tool, and we applaud our members who are working to conserve power. Call us at 1-800-915-2533 to learn more about how we can help. ■



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24/7

**Outage
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ABOUT CECA

CECA operates in Brown, Callahan, Comanche, Eastland, Mills, Shackelford and Stephens counties.

This institution is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

Esta institución es un proveedor de servicios con igualdad de oportunidades.

OFFICE LOCATIONS

Headquarters

349 Industrial Blvd., Comanche, TX 76442
Monday–Friday, 7:30 a.m.–4:30 p.m.

Early

1801 CR 338, Early, TX 76801
Monday, Wednesday and Friday, 7:30 a.m.–4:30 p.m. Closed from 1–2 p.m.

Eastland

1311 W. Main St., Eastland, TX 76448
Tuesday and Thursday, 8 a.m.–4 p.m.

VISIT US ONLINE

ceca.coop



Check us out at
TexasCoopPower.com/comanche



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Harvest Safely

Workers are urged to take time to reap a safe harvest

IT CAN BE AN exciting and exhausting time, the culmination of a season of hard work. However, the rush to harvest can also yield tragic outcomes. Each year, dozens of farmworkers are killed and hundreds are injured in accidents involving power lines and electrical equipment.

Things people see every day can fade from view, and in the busyness of harvest time, it's easy for farmworkers to forget about power lines overhead. But failure to notice them can be a deadly oversight.

Review with workers the farm activities that take place around power lines. Inspect the height of farm equipment to gauge clearance. Keep equipment at least 10 feet away from power lines—above, below and to the side—a 360-degree rule.

Always lower grain augers before moving them, even if it's only a few feet. Variables like wind, uneven ground, shifting weight or other conditions can combine to create an unexpected result. Also use extreme caution when raising the bed of a grain truck.

Farmworkers should take the following steps to ensure a safer harvest season.

Use care when raising augers or the bed of grain trucks around power lines.

Use a spotter when operating large machinery near power lines. Do not let the spotter touch the machinery while it's being moved anywhere near power lines.

As with any outdoor work, be careful not to raise any equipment such as ladders, poles or rods into power lines. Remember, nonmetallic materials such as lumber, tree limbs, ropes and hay can conduct electricity depending on dampness, dust and dirt contamination.

Never attempt to raise or move a power line to clear a path.

Don't use metal poles to break up bridged grain inside bins. Know where and how to shut off the power in an emergency.

Use qualified electricians for work on drying equipment and other farm electrical systems.

Operators of farm equipment or vehicles must also know what to do if the vehicle comes into contact with a power line: Stay on the equipment, warn others to stay away and call 911. Do not get off the equipment until the utility crew says it's safe to do so.

If the power line is energized and you step outside, touching the vehicle and ground, your body becomes the path, and electrocution is the result. Even if a power line has landed on the ground, the potential for the area nearby to be energized still exists. Stay inside the vehicle unless there's fire or imminent risk of fire.

If this is the case, jump off the equipment with your feet together, without touching the ground and vehicle at the same time. Then, still keeping your feet together, hop to safety as you leave the area.

Once you get away from the equipment, never attempt to get back on or even touch the equipment. Some electrocutions have occurred after the operator dismounts and, when nothing happens, tries to get back on the equipment.

It's very important that farm workers and seasonal employees are informed of electrical hazards and trained in proper procedures to avoid injury. ■

CECA Allocates Capital Credits

AS EACH YEAR comes to a close, CECA allocates capital credits to the accounts of members.

Cooperatives determine each year’s margins accumulated from operations and allocate those margins to members’ accounts, after all co-op expenditures are paid and based on each member’s usage.

These capital credits will be returned to members in the future in the form of estate returns or general returns when doing so will not weaken the financial condition of the cooperative, as determined by CECA’s board of directors.

In the meantime, the funds are invested in the cooperative plant and credited to each member’s account, even if the member moves out of our service territory. That’s why it’s important for member who depart our service territory to inform CECA of address changes, so capital credits can be returned and not go uncollected when the board approves a distribution.

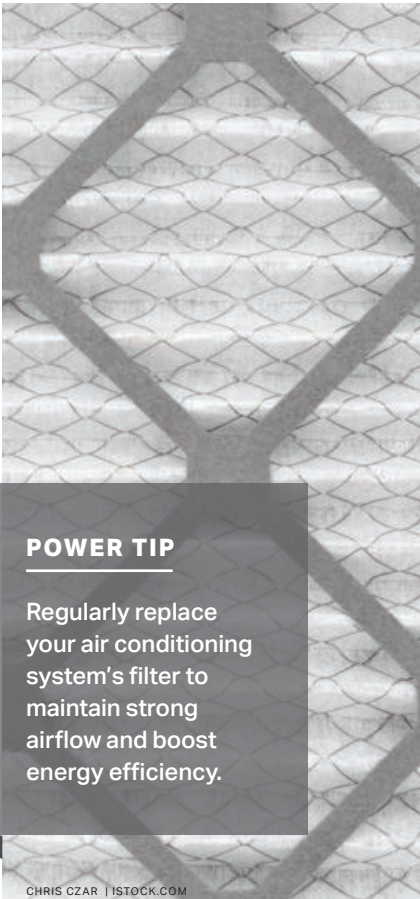
2024 Allocation Factors

Residential: 0.04321593
Single-Phase General Service: 0.05150826
Three-Phase General Service: 0.03965746

Capital credits for 2024 were calculated by multiplying each member’s bill by the allocation factors listed above. For example, if your total annual residential bill from the co-op—consisting of energy billing and power cost adjustment—was \$500, multiply that amount by 0.04321593, so the product is \$21.61. In calculating your total bill, include any security light charge but do not include any tax, service, or miscellaneous charges.

If you have any questions concerning these calculations, please feel free to contact the co-op office at 1-800-915-2533.

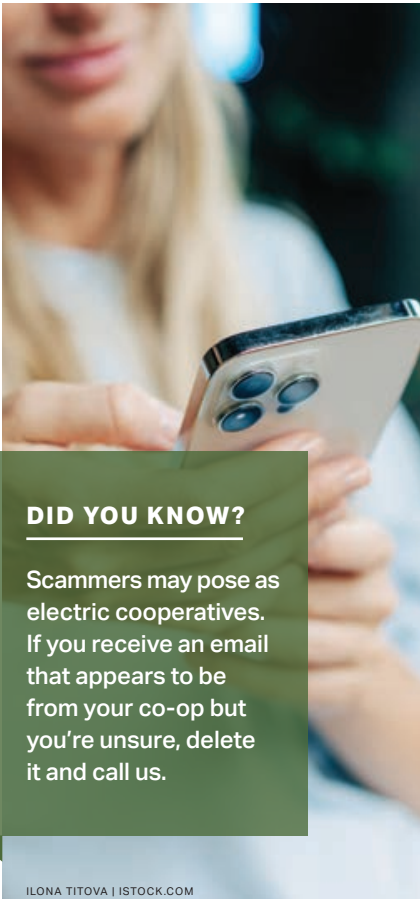
This article is intended to serve as an official notice of allocation of capital credits for 2024. ■



POWER TIP

Regularly replace your air conditioning system’s filter to maintain strong airflow and boost energy efficiency.

CHRIS CZAR | ISTOCK.COM



DID YOU KNOW?

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Exp. Date: CVV #: _____	

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<input type="checkbox"/> Single unit - \$19.99 per unit	\$19.99	
Shipping & Handling		+ \$7.95
TOTAL		



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TCP Listen as W.F. Strong narrates this story on our website.



It's in the Bag

How did Frito Pie make its way to Hank Hill and football fans across Texas?

BY W.F. STRONG • ILLUSTRATION BY GISELA GOPPEL

FRITOS PIE OR Fritos chili pie or simply Frito pie—whatever *you* call it—is a much-loved delight often spooned up under Friday night lights.

I've heard many baby boomers claim their mother invented the dish out of necessity to feed incessantly hungry kids back in the 1950s. I've heard claims that their grandmothers had been making something like Frito pie since the '20s, which would have been a neat trick since Fritos weren't invented until 1932.

A version of Frito pie was served at a gathering of the Dallas Dietetic Association in 1949. The recipe came from the Frito Co. itself and originally called for putting a layer of Fritos in a casserole dish, covering it with chili and then cov-

ering everything with liberal amounts of cheese and onions. Bake at 350 degrees for 20 minutes.

You can see how this got MacGyvered into just pouring chili into bags of Fritos for efficiency and transportability. Today, you'll also find it with the added ingredient of a mound of jalapeños on top.

Whatever the case, Fritos and the pies are Texas originals.

Charles Doolin of San Antonio created the chips, putting his own spin on a recipe he bought for \$100 from a Mexican restaurant in 1932. He fried strips of corn dough, and Fritos were born. It's interesting that most Texans now associate the chip with piles of meat, as Doolin was a vegetarian.

He called them *fritos*, Spanish for “fried.” Doolin also invented Cheetos, around 1948, by the way.

In the 1960s, my mother made something she called “creamed tacos,” which was a cheesy chili con carne poured over a plate of Fritos. Exceptionally filling, the recipe no doubt came from Frito-Lay itself. Though the company, now based in Plano, had its own brand of chili by then, my mother, like Hank Hill, preferred Wolf Brand Chili (“Neighbor, how long has it been?”), another Texas original.

This type of mixing and matching was encouraged in the early days of Fritos—as they were not marketed as a stand-alone snack. They were sold as an ingredient for casseroles. The inventor's wife, Mary Kathryn “Kitty” Doolin, even experimented with pouring chocolate over Fritos and baking them on a cookie sheet.

Kitty also is credited with coming up with the original chili pie recipe. We know this because her daughter, Kaleta Doolin, wrote the most thorough history on the subject you can find, her 2011 book *Fritos Pie: Stories, Recipes, and More*. It's an incredibly detailed history that provides all manner of Fritos recipes you have never imagined. Maybe there's another classic in there, waiting to be popularized in today's world of spicy snack foods.

Along with her mother, Kaleta gives credit to another woman for popularizing the dish. She writes with admiration that Teresa Hernandez sold thousands of Fritos chili pies at the Woolworth's counter in Santa Fe, New Mexico, in the 1960s, reportedly selling 56,000 bags in one year.

And at the same time, it was all the rage in San Antonio and across Texas at football games as fundraisers for civic and student groups. Who knows how many kids were sent to college on profits from Frito pies. ■

One-Skillet Dinners

Where convenience and flavors unite for a delicious cause

BY VIANNEY RODRIGUEZ, FOOD EDITOR

Growing up in Aransas Pass, home of the Shrimptree Festival, we enjoyed the freshest harvest delivered by the shrimp boats daily from the Gulf Coast. We grilled, fried and sautéed shrimp in countless marinades and spices, and we always served them with plenty of fresh lime juice. This one-pan dinner is a family favorite.

Spicy Shrimp and Rice

2 tablespoons olive oil
1 small onion, diced
1 yellow bell pepper, seeds removed, diced
2 cloves garlic, minced
1 cup uncooked white rice
2 cups chicken or vegetable broth
½ cup salsa verde
1 teaspoon ground cumin
1 teaspoon ground oregano
1 teaspoon salt
1 teaspoon ground black pepper
1 pound shrimp, peeled and deveined
Juice of 1 lime
Cilantro leaves, for serving
Lime slices, for serving

1. In a skillet, heat oil over medium-high heat. Add onion, bell pepper and garlic. Cook until onion is light and translucent, stirring often, about 5 minutes.
2. Add rice, stir and continue to cook 2 minutes. Stir in broth, salsa verde, cumin, oregano, salt and black pepper.
3. Bring to a boil. Reduce heat to simmer, cover and cook 15 minutes.
4. Remove lid, place shrimp over rice, cover and cook until shrimp are opaque, about 5–7 minutes.
5. Add lime juice and fluff the rice mixture. Serve with cilantro and lime slices.

SERVES 6

TCP Follow Vianney Rodriguez as she cooks in Cocina Gris at sweetlifebake.com, where she features a recipe for Skillet Chicken Fajita Rice.



Cider Stew

THERESA SHELDON
CHEROKEE COUNTY EC

Stews are good for the soul and the belly. This one-skillet wonder starts with chunks of beef that are seared then simmered with vegetables and herbs in a rich and savory broth that tastes complex in flavor but is actually simple to make. The whole family will love it.

- 2 tablespoons (¼ stick) butter
- 2 pounds beef chuck stew meat, cut into 1-inch pieces
- ¼ cup flour
- 2 cups water
- 1 cup apple cider
- ½ cup steak sauce
- 2 teaspoons dried thyme
- ½ teaspoon ground black pepper
- 1 bay leaf
- 3 medium potatoes, peeled and cut into 1-inch pieces
- 3 medium carrots, sliced
- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 1 package frozen cut green beans (10 ounces)

1. Heat butter over medium-high heat in a large skillet. Add beef and brown on all sides, 2–3 minutes per side.
2. Stir in flour. Gradually stir in water, apple cider and steak sauce. Bring to a boil.
3. Stir in thyme, pepper and bay leaf. Reduce heat to low, cover and simmer 2 hours.
4. Add potatoes, carrots, onion and green beans. Cover and cook an additional 30 minutes or until vegetables are tender. Discard bay leaf before serving.

SERVES 8

CONTINUED ON PAGE 28 >



\$500 WINNER

Egg Roll Stuffing Stir Fry

JENNIFER CURTIS
PEDERNALES EC



This might just be my new favorite dinner. It takes everything delicious in classic egg rolls and turns it into one ridiculously easy, healthy and flavor-packed meal with no rolling required. Spoon the stuffing into lettuce cups or over rice. The leftovers are a great lunch the next day.

- 2 tablespoons avocado oil or other neutral cooking oil
- 1 large yellow onion, diced
- 2 pounds ground pork or ground chicken
- 2 teaspoons salt
- 2 teaspoons ground black pepper
- 1 teaspoon red pepper flakes

- 2 teaspoons ground ginger
- 4 cloves garlic, minced
- 2 teaspoons white sesame seeds
- 2 teaspoons black sesame seeds
- 1 cup shredded carrot
- 2 tablespoons rice vinegar
- 4 tablespoons honey
- ½ cup coconut aminos or soy sauce
- 2 cups shredded purple cabbage
- 2 cups shredded green cabbage
- Lettuce leaves or rice, for serving

1. In a large skillet, heat oil over medium-high heat. Add onion and cook until light and translucent.
2. Add pork or chicken and cook, breaking meat up into small pieces with a spoon, until cooked through, about 6 minutes. Season with salt, pepper, red pepper flakes and ginger.
3. Reduce heat to medium and stir in garlic, sesame seeds and shredded carrot and cook 3 minutes.
4. Make a well in the center of the skillet and add the rice vinegar, honey, and coconut aminos or soy sauce. Stir to combine.
5. Stir in cabbage and cook 3 minutes to slightly soften cabbage.
6. Serve warm, spooned into lettuce cups or over rice.

SERVES 6

TCP \$500 Recipe Contest

CHEESECAKE DUE SEPTEMBER 10

Did you know they served cheesecake at the first Olympics 2,800 years ago? We want to serve yours while we watch the 2026 Games. The best recipe will score \$500. Enter by September 10.

UPCOMING: BARBECUE SIDES DUE OCTOBER 10





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Southwest Chicken With Toasted Orzo

GAIL PATTERSON
PENTEX ENERGY

One of the main reasons I enjoy cooking with orzo is its quick and easy preparation. I usually add a splash of lemon juice and a touch of grated Parm, but once I spotted Patterson's Southwestern spin, I knew I had to give it a try. Brothy orzo and blistered tomatoes combine with perfectly seasoned chicken.



½ teaspoon cayenne pepper
½ teaspoon ground cumin
½ teaspoon granulated garlic
½ teaspoon ground black pepper
1 teaspoon kosher salt
4 boneless, skinless chicken thighs, cut into 1-inch pieces
5 teaspoons olive oil, plus more as needed, divided use
1 cup cherry tomatoes
1 tablespoon (⅓ stick) butter
1 cup uncooked orzo
1 tablespoon chicken base
3 cups water, plus more as needed
1 cup corn kernels
1 can black beans (15 ounces), drained and rinsed
½ cup chopped cilantro, for serving
Tortilla chips, crushed, for serving

1. In a small bowl, mix together cayenne, cumin, granulated garlic, black pepper and salt.
2. Season chicken with half the spice mixture, reserving remaining half.
3. In a skillet, heat 3 teaspoons oil over medium-high heat. Sear chicken in 2 batches until lightly browned on both

sides, adding more oil if needed. Set cooked chicken aside in a bowl.

4. Add 1 teaspoon oil to skillet and add cherry tomatoes, stirring to coat in oil. Cover and cook, shaking pan occasionally, 5 minutes or until tomatoes slightly blister. Add tomatoes to bowl with chicken.

5. Add butter and remaining 1 teaspoon oil to skillet. Reduce heat to medium and stir in orzo. Cook, stirring occasionally, until orzo is golden and glistening, about 5–7 minutes.

6. Stir in chicken base and 3 cups water, bring to a simmer. Cover and cook, stirring occasionally, 6 minutes or until almost all liquid is absorbed.

7. Stir in corn, black beans, prepared chicken and tomatoes, and remaining spice mixture. Add water if orzo becomes dry. Cover and cook an additional 3 minutes. Serve warm, with cilantro and tortilla chips.

SERVES 4

Why I Love One-Skillet Meals

I tell myself I cook for a living, but in reality I wash dishes for a living. Not when it comes to one-skillet meals.

Less cleanup: Forget about the mess of juggling several pans on the stovetop.

More flavor: Mixing all the ingredients together in one skillet brings out richer flavors.

Budget friendly: Beans, rice, pasta and vegetables help make these recipes easy on the pocketbook.

—Vianney Rodriguez



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COURTESY CHET GARNER

Saga on the San Saba

The remains of Menard's Spanish fortification predate the U.S.

BY CHET GARNER

THE SMALL TOWN of Menard (population 1,300) sits along the blurry line where the Hill Country turns into West Texas. It's more than an hour from any major city, but if the Spanish had had their way, it might have become our largest metropolis.

As I stood in the middle of a dusty field, staring at the crumbling walls of the Presidio de San Sabá, I couldn't help but feel the dramatic story of conquest, bloodshed and what-could-have-been. Today, what remains of the abandoned Spanish fort covers a few acres on the north bank of the San Saba River.

The fort was constructed in 1757 to protect the Mission Santa Cruz de San Sabá, 4 miles to the east. Spain brought in a caravan of 300 soldiers and civilians to push their presence and control deeper into the heart of Texas.

Native Americans (and the French) didn't want the missionaries there. And in March 1758, 2,000 Comanche and other natives (likely armed with French weapons) attacked the mission and massacred its residents. A decade of fighting between the Spanish citizens inside the fort and the surrounding tribes followed, until the Spanish gave up and left in 1772.

Over the centuries, the ruins became a sort of roadside attraction. Famous Texan Jim Bowie even carved his name in the stone gate after supposedly hiding his silver cache, but that's another story. Sadly, the presidio's history began to fade as its stones were scavenged to construct Menard's growing downtown, and the grounds became an attraction on the city golf course. Seriously!

Luckily, it's now a protected site that's been extensively studied and cataloged.

If you're a lover of Texas history and want a glimpse into the past—but without the constant threat of death—it doesn't get much better than walking the grounds of the old presidio and pondering life on the Texas frontier. ■

ABOVE Chet in front of the ruins of Presidio de San Sabá in Menard.

TCP Watch the video on our website and see all Chet's Texplorations on *The Daytripper* on PBS.



Know Before You Go

Call ahead or check an event's website for scheduling details, and check our website for many more upcoming events.

SEPTEMBER

7

Gainesville [7–14] Fall Art Exhibition, (940) 613-6939, gainesvilleareavisualarts.org

11

Grapevine [11–14] GrapeFest, (817) 410-3185, grapevinetexasusa.com

12

Bryan [12–13] Brazos Bluebonnet Quilt Guild Quilt Show, (979) 776-8338, bbquiltguild.org

13

Chappell Hill Airing of the Quilts, (979) 337-9910, chappellhilltx.com

Luling Luling Foundation Youth Grill-Off, (830) 875-2438, lulingfoundation.org

Stephenville Local Art & Wine Walk, (254) 965-6190, downtownstephenvilletx.com

14

Yorktown Holy Cross Festival, (361) 564-2893, holycrossyorktown.net

19

Giddings [19–20] Happy Stitchers Quilt Show, (979) 540-8043

25

Grand Saline [25–27] Salt Festival, gssaltfestival@gmail.com, facebook.com/gssaltfest

26

Commerce [26–27] Bois D'Arc Bash, (903) 886-3950, commerce-chamber.com

27

Winnsboro [26-27] Cowboy Music and Poetry Gathering, (903) 342-0686, winnsboro.centerforthearts.com

Hallettsville Kolache Fest, (361) 798-2662, hallettsville.com

Lake Dallas 50th Anniversary Celebration of the Lake Dallas Library, (940) 497-3566, friendsoflakedallaslibrary.com

Lakehills Medina Lake Cajun Festival, (830) 460-0600, cajunfestival-medinalake.com

Woodville Ghosts and Legends of Texas Past, (409) 403-2025, heritage-village.org



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Meyersville Sts. Peter & Paul Catholic Church Fall Festival, (361) 275-3868, stspeterpaulalloysius.org

OCTOBER

3

Granbury [3-5] Oktoberfest, (682) 936-4550, granburysquare.com

4

Burnet Texas State Button Society Fall Workshop and Sale, texasstatebutton.society.com

Huntington Catfish Festival, shophuntingtontx.com

Johnson City Blanco County Wild Game Dinner, (830) 833-4138, facebook.com/wildgamedinner

Taylor Bluebonnet Horse Expo & Training Challenge, 1-888-542-5163, bluebonnethorseexpo.com

TCP Submit Your Event

We pick events for the magazine directly from TexasCoopPower.com. Submit your December event by October 1, and it just might be featured in this calendar.



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September 6
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Cars & Coffee @ the Courthouse

📍 Downtown Stephenville



Stephenville Farmer & Artisan Market
9AM-12PM



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Ranch Rodeo
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2 REAGAN FERGUSON
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Navigating Engineer Pass in Colorado, with a 1,000-foot drop on the right.

3 STEVEN MOORE
BLUEBONNET EC

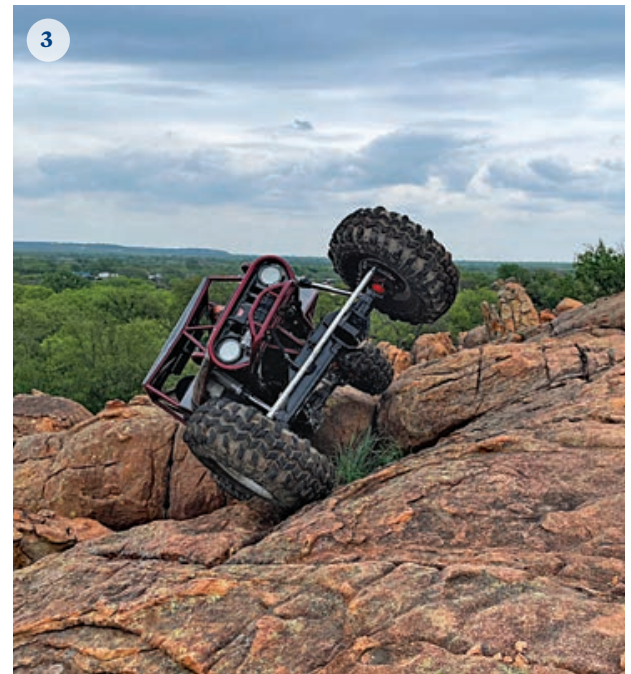
"Rock crawling Texas style at Wolf Caves off-road park in Mason."

4 LESLI SAN JOSE
PEDERNALES EC

At the end of a trail called Top of the World in Moab, Utah.



2



3



4

Upcoming Contests

DUE SEP 10 Snakes Alive!

DUE OCT 10 From the Oil Fields

DUE NOV 10 Still Life



Enter online at TexasCoopPower.com/contests.

TCP See Focus on Texas on our website for many more Off-Road Adventures photos from readers.



Ebb and Flow

People come and people go,
and when they do, nature reclaims

BY MARTHA DEERING
ILLUSTRATION BY
JONATHAN RICE

A SPRING BURBLES in a peaceful Central Texas valley. Hidden beneath the tall weeds and grasses around the spring are the foundation stones of old buildings.

They are all that is left of a small Texas town—a town that was once as alive as the mockingbirds that bicker in the live oak trees.

Two hundred years ago, someone dug a well near the spring where the unmistakable aroma of wild onions filled the air. A windmill built above the well pumped water into a trough for horses and cattle.

The well never went dry, and during the hottest, driest weather, settlers drove their wagons for miles to get its water. The families who came to live there built a small Baptist church out of logs.

Eagles made their nests in the oak trees

near the spring. And so the people who built their homes in the area called it Eagle Springs.

Before long, a post office and a general store were added. Since farmers near the spring grew lots of cotton, a cotton gin was built. Blacksmiths set up shop and fixed wheels, sharpened plows and put shoes on horses. A woodworking and harness shop opened, and a doctor set up his practice in town. Court was held, and a jail was needed when horse thieves arrived.

Eagle Springs had become a noisy, bustling town of more than 200 by 1884.

The well always had plenty of water, so ranchers drove great herds of cattle through the town on their way north along a branch of the Chisholm Trail. Parents worked together to build a school for the children, and one little boy named Pat Neff grew up to become the governor of Texas.

One day the railroad announced that they were building a track in the area, but it would not go through Eagle Springs. The railroad brought business to other towns, and Eagle Springs began to decline.

The stores and blacksmith shops moved closer to the railroad. The farmers took their cotton there, and the gin closed.

The children were sent to a bigger school. The cattle went north in railroad cars. Little by little, the old, abandoned buildings at Eagle Springs fell into ruin.

After nearly two centuries, little is left but the spring and the church, rebuilt in 1876 after the log church burned.

Bit by bit, nature has erased Eagle Springs, relegated to Texas' long list of more than 500 ghost towns.

The water still burbles cheerfully over stones, and wild onions grow all about. The evening breeze shivers the leaves of the live oak trees, making a sound like the soft whispering of voices from long ago. ■

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