Habersham EMC’s Legacy Continues

Habersham EMC is celebrating its 75th Anniversary this year. Join us as we continue our journey through this rich history. Part four of our series travels through the 1990s.

In 1991, HEMC employees began reading all electric meters. Before then, Members had written or drawn meter dial information on a card and mailed it to the co-op. Now, most meters transmit readings through the electric lines.

In March 1993, “The Storm of the Century” dumped 12 to 18 inches of snow and ice throughout HEMC’s service area, forcing crews to work around the clock to restore power. Mother Nature struck again in March 1994, when a tornado ripped through Lumpkin, White and Habersham counties.

HEMC linemen were named the best in the world at the International Lineman’s Rodeo competition in 1996. In 1998, another tornado left a trail of destruction through northern Hall and southern White counties, extensively damaging the Stringer substation near Clermont. While it should have taken more than a week to repair the substation alone, HEMC crews repaired it in only two days.

Watch for more historical reflections throughout 2013.

Visit Habersham EMC’s 75th Anniversary website for more history: habershamemc75th.com

Habersham EMC—Proud of our past, prepared for our future.
Habersham EMC has selected the Soque River Watershed Association as the recipient of the 2013 Habersham EMC Environmental Excellence Award. This distinction honors an outstanding Habersham EMC community member and environmental leader that has exemplified inspiration, vision, innovation, leadership and concern for the environment.

Founded in 1998, the Soque River Watershed Association’s (SRWA) mission is to work with individuals and organizations to protect and restore Habersham County’s Soque River, its tributaries and watershed.

One of the keys to their success has been an ability to engage dozens of community partners in projects that protect existing water quality and restore impaired

water quality. Since 2005, the Soque Partnership has completed 22 farm projects with cattle farmers, restored a 500-foot section of eroding stream bank, planted close to 3,000 trees, built two rain gardens, installed two 1,000-gallon cisterns and helped the new courthouse design three innovative stormwater features.

These efforts are paying off. A 29-mile segment of the upper Soque River will be removed from the state’s impaired waters list in 2013, thanks to reductions in fecal coliform bacteria. The SRWA protection and restoration program conducts extensive water quality monitoring to assess where to focus improvement efforts.

In addition to these streamside restoration projects, the SRWA also engages in numerous upland projects that have an impact on streams and rivers. Among these are efforts to encourage rainwater infiltration back into the ground, preventing problems stemming from stormwater runoff.

The SRWA partners with Coca-Cola, North Georgia Technical College and Habitat for Humanity to distribute hundreds of rain barrels for rainwater recycling through Habitat ReStores in Clarkesville and Clayton. SRWA also hosts an annual workshop at North Georgia Technical College to teach residents how to install rain barrels and rain gardens.

One of the SRWA’s fastest-growing projects teaches individuals how to grow plants and trees. This program built a 28-plot Green Way Garden on the Clarkesville Greenway. The garden encourages sustainable farm and food-based businesses that protect the natural environment, and is linked to a year-round, online farmers market also run by the SRWA called Northeast Georgia Locally Grown. Locally Grown generates $40,000 annually in local food sales.

The SRWA hopes these projects will inspire others to consider water conservation, restoration and growing plants as a routine aspect of community life. To encourage others to get out, enjoy and learn about natural resources, they host numerous workshops throughout the year, and an annual Soque River Festival. All events are open to the public, and information can be found on their website, www.soque.org.

If you would like to nominate an individual, business or organization in Habersham EMC’s service area for the 2014 Environmental Excellence Award, please submit the following to forinfo@hemc.coop:

• Name of individual, business or organization
• Contact name
• Email
• Phone number
• Reasons for nomination
• Your name and phone number

Visit the HEMC website: www.habershamemc.com

GEORGIA MAGAZINE

2013 Environmental Excellence Award Winner:
Soque River Watershed Association

Protecting a River Through Community Partnerships

From left, HEMC’s David Foster and Susan Baker present the 2013 Environmental Excellence Award to Soque River Watershed Association representatives Darrell Bennett, Jim Hudak, Randy Moser, Jean Holmes, Walter Matlock, Rocketroy Lowe, Brenda Hunt, John Bigelow, Bob Brooksher, Scarlett Fuller, Sam Irvin and Justin Ellis.
$4 a Month = Lasting Environmental Impact

That’s right! For only $4 a month, Habersham EMC Members can purchase a 150 kilowatt-hour (kWh) block of green power. This is electric energy produced by renewable, more environmentally friendly sources.

HEMC’s primary source of green power is biomass, utilizing landfill gas. Landfill gas is produced as organic matter and naturally decomposes in a solid-waste landfill. It is composed of about 50 percent methane (the main component of natural gas and a potent greenhouse gas), with the remainder being carbon dioxide, water vapor and other organic compounds.

Most landfills are required by law to collect and destroy landfill gas before it escapes into the atmosphere. When the methane is burned, it becomes a clean burning fuel. Using landfill gas as a fuel doubles the environmental benefit. First, it recycles a material that would otherwise be burned as a waste; and, second, it reduces the amount of energy that must be generated from fossil fuels such as coal and oil.

For comparison, the current average mix of resources supplying Habersham EMC includes: Coal (19.3%), nuclear (50.4%), oil (0%), natural gas (25.8%), hydroelectric (4.3%) and other (.2%).

The average home in the United States uses 900 kWh per month. [Source: U.S. EPA]


Green-e Energy certifies that Habersham Electric Membership Corporation Green Power Program meets the minimum environmental and consumer protection standards established by the nonprofit Center for Resource Solutions. For more information on Green-e Energy certification requirements, call (888) 63-GREEN or log on to www.green-e.org.
Improve the Energy Efficiency of Your Home with HEMC’s How$mart Program

Upgrade the efficiency of your home as you spring clean, without cleaning out your wallet. With the How$mart program, Habersham EMC—not the Member—makes the initial investment. The Member experiences a savings immediately, even with the added charge on their power bill. The program is designed so that the Member’s total monthly energy costs should drop by an average of 10 percent.

How How$mart works:
The Member calls for a free consultation with an HEMC representative.

1. The Member signs an agreement to allow the costs to be recovered through future power bills for the location and for such agreement to be legally recorded, in the event the property is sold. No credit checks. No loans. The repayment amount stays fixed to the location where the savings occur, not to the owner. Repayment periods range from two to 10 years, depending on the amount of upgrades. Members may take advantage of 3.95 percent interest for up to 10 years.

2. HEMC will arrange an energy audit of your home. This will identify the problem spots and let you know if you need numerous upgrades, or just a few. Depending upon the initial evaluation, a more extensive audit may be performed by independent weatherization auditor Ninth District Opportunity from Gainesville.

3. Choose your contractor. Along with your written audit report, HEMC will provide a list of participating contractors to make the improvements. A minimum of two bids is required.

4. Start saving the day your home is upgraded. The program is designed to result in immediate savings, assuming Member use patterns do not change. Members should realize an approximate 10 percent savings on annual energy costs. The other savings go to repay HEMC for the initial investment. After payback, 100 percent of the savings go to the Member.

What upgrades are available.
- New energy-efficient heat pump
- New windows, doors or other replacement parts
- New HEMC Marathon water heater
- Ductwork, vents, etc.
- Insulation (under floors and in ceilings)
- Caulking, other
- Heat-pump water heater
- Lighting improvements