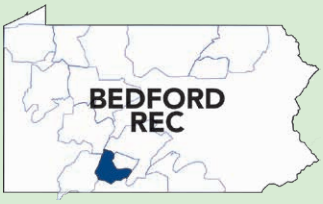
**Bedford Rural Electric Cooperative**

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative




One of 14 electric cooperatives serving Pennsylvania and New Jersey

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**OFFICE HOURS**
Monday through Friday
7:30 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

# The Cooperative's Annual Meeting

BROOKS SHOEMAKER

**THE COOPERATIVE'S 85TH ANNUAL MEETING** is scheduled Wednesday, April 10, at the Bedford County Fairgrounds, 108 Telegraph Road, Bedford. The fairgrounds is just west of downtown Bedford on Business Route 30, which is also West Pitt Street, and is adjacent to the Bedford exit of Interstate 99.

The drive-thru meeting begins at 10 a.m. and ends at 1:30 p.m. Please do not arrive before 10; we cannot have traffic backing up onto Route 30. At the fairgrounds, members should remain in their vehicle as they drive to various stations to register, pick up an annual report, receive a ballot to vote in the election of directors, enjoy free refreshments, pick up an attendance gift and finally turn in their completed ballot. Registered attendees will also be eligible to win door prizes. Lucky winners will be announced after the meeting.

Naturally, if you have already voted by mail, you will not be able to vote again at the annual meeting. You will, however, be able to enjoy all of the other attendance benefits.

Please make plans to join us. At this point, if you haven't returned your ballot by mail, it is probably too late for it to be received by the due date of April 8. So come to the meeting and cast your vote in-person. Whether you plan to vote in-person or not, you should have received the official notice of the meeting in mid-March. It is very important, to simplify registration, that you tear off the top section of the notice and bring it with you to the meeting. Remember: **Every** vote counts!

## Whatever it takes: powering life as a lineworker

Did you know that being a lineworker is one of the 10 most dangerous jobs in the country? Our lineworkers work in every weather condition — rain, snow, sleet, and hail — and endure frigid temperatures, heat, and humidity to ensure you have reliable electricity. Please join us in celebrating National Lineworker Appreciation Day on April 8.

Many people know linework is dangerous because these employees work near high-voltage electricity. Make a wrong move or lose focus for a split second and it could be deadly. Lineworkers must always be aware of their surroundings, while looking out for the safety of the people they are working with. They often work on energized power lines, requiring concentration with no margin for error. The environment compounds the pressure because when you need power the most, the weather is usually the worst.

Many may not realize it, but lineworkers undergo years of training. They typically start as apprentices and spend the next four or five years working under experienced lineworkers. After completing the apprenticeship, with more than 8,000 hours of training under their belts, lineworkers achieve journeyman status, but the education never stops. Lineworkers train throughout their careers on the latest safety requirements and the newest equipment and procedures.

Linework is also physically demanding, requiring these dedicated men and women to lift and load heavy materials, climb poles, and hike through woods carrying as much as 50 pounds of tools and equipment.

Linework involves a lot of sacrifice, too. They are often first on the scene of an

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# Using Technology to Study Turkey Population

**JENNA REFFNER,** OFFICE ASSISTANT

**MARY JO CASALENA HAS ALWAYS** been interested in conservation and wildlife. She grew up in New Jersey but vacationed in Pennsylvania.

"My family has a summer house in the Poconos that is close to state game lands," Mary Jo says, noting this is where she gained an appreciation of wildlife and their habitats and a desire to work for the Pennsylvania Game Commission (PGC).

"I've always been interested in birds in general," she says, "but I have particular interest in game birds."

## Wild for turkeys

She started working at Penn State University after graduating from there in 1990 with a master's degree. She then took a job with Arizona Game and Fish. During her time in Arizona, Mary Jo started hunting.

"I've always been into photography," Mary Jo says with a laugh. "When I started hunting, I transitioned away from using my camera to shoot wildlife."

When Mary Jo was offered a position with the PGC, she jumped at the chance. She began working on a pheasant study and moved on to waterfowl in the Poconos, where she had spent much of her childhood. When she was offered the opportunity to lead the wild turkey program, she took it.

**TURKEY SHOOT:** Mary Jo Casalena, a Pennsylvania Game Commission researcher, hauls a turkey she harvested while hunting a few years ago.

Mary Jo was given the option to live in various counties in southern Pennsylvania to conduct her research. She and her husband, Joe, chose Bedford, where Joe had found a job, and they became members of Bedford Rural Electric Cooperative.

"Turkeys are one of my favorite species to hunt," Mary Jo says. She loves calling them and the interaction with the species while hunting. She also enjoys watching the males gobble and strut for the hens.

One project Mary Jo leads for the PGC each winter is leg banding gobblers and jakes (young male turkeys) across all 22 Wildlife Management Units (WMU) in Pennsylvania. Male turkeys can be harvested during the spring gobbler hunting season. If a hunter harvests a turkey with a leg band, or someone finds a dead turkey with a band, there are instructions on the band on how to report it.

The PGC uses this data for its turkey population models and to keep track of spring harvest rates by age group and WMU. They track if the population is increasing, decreasing or stable. In return, the person who reports the band gets to keep it and receives a certificate of where and when the turkey was banded.

## Keeping track

Another project lead by Mary Jo, in cooperation with researchers at Penn State University and the University of Pennsylvania's Wildlife Futures Program, involves trapping female turkeys and fitting them with GPS transmitters that contain an accelerometer that provides movement data. Each female is also fitted with a leg band because the GPS transmitter can become hidden as the turkey preens her feathers. The leg band ensures the turkey will be reported if it is found dead or harvested.

"The GPS gives the exact location of the hen, and the accelerometer shows us if the turkeys are flying, walking, sitting or feeding," Mary Jo says.

The batteries typically last two breeding seasons, allowing researchers to gather information on one female turkey over a long period of time. The PGC has fitted more than 300 female turkeys with GPS transmitters.

Turkeys are fitted with GPS transmitters in four separate WMUs across Pennsylvania. WMU 2D is northeast of Pittsburgh and represents a mix of diverse habitats.

WMU 4D is north of Bedford and represents heavily forested public lands on the ridges and mainly agriculture in the valleys. WMU 3D is near the Poconos, representing a heavily forested area mixed with rural housing developments . WMU 5C, which is toward Philadelphia, represents a more urban area.

The turkey study team uses the information from the GPS transmitters to determine if hen habitat use and movement, particularly during the nesting season, vary as a function of landscape, weather patterns, predation rates, and disease. They also assess factors related to hen survival, particularly habitat, weather, and disease, and how disease may be related to productivity.

"We want to know why turkeys are doing well in one part of the state, but not in another," Mary Jo says. Turkey population trends over the past 20 years are stable in many parts of the state, while increasing in others and declining in a few.

The main goal of the study is to look at turkeys' behavior and habitats and how those affect turkey populations. This will help the PGC see what aspects of habitat can be managed to increase the population. If turkeys have a good habitat, the rate at which predators gobble them and their young drops, Mary Jo explains.

"One of the biggest complaints we get from turkey hunters is about predation rates," she says. "It's important to look at the entire ecological system."

When the turkey is fitted with a GPS transmitter, the team also collects samples of blood, tissue and feces. Researchers at Penn's Wildlife Futures Program conduct pathology and virology of the samples collected. In addition, Penn State researchers and graduate students analyze the GPS data and population modeling. Team members are also collaborating on hunter surveys to identify turkey behavior, hunter preferences and how they feel about the turkey population.

Neighboring states, including Maryland and Ohio, in cooperation with Ohio State University, joined the turkey study in 2023. New Jersey began this year, and Virginia and West Virginia, along with West Virginia University, will likely be joining soon. These researchers will be using the same GPS transmitters and methods, and each state has two to four study areas. The goal is to get directly comparable results across the mid-Atlantic region.

The PGC has also started fitting gobblers with GPS transmitters for a two-year study on disease, survival rates and crippling loss, which is when a hunter wounds a turkey that later dies from its injuries. There is currently no data on whether this is a factor in turkey survival rates.

The technology of the GPS transmitters affords a new way to study turkeys, giving insight into turkey behavior that wasn't possible before. All the data collected and analyzed is being used to determine where turkeys flourish. It also indicates how to manage their habitat for more productive nesting and brood-rearing success and ultimately better turkey survival rates.


**ON THE HUNT:** Mary Jo Casalena and Mitchell Blake hold wild turkeys participating in a study led by the Pennsylvania Game Commission.

**TRACKING TECHNOLOGY:** A GPS transmitter fitted onto a hen provides movement data as part of the wild turkey study led by the Pennsylvania Game Commission.

**FROM THE GENERAL MANAGER & CEO**

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emergency, witnessing devastating car accidents, structure fires or damage from severe storms. They never know what they are going to face or when they are going to face it. Calls come at all hours, even the middle of night. Every lineworker has missed ball games and family dinners. However, they make sure there is nothing standing in the way of helping their friends and neighbors.

Lineworkers enjoy the camaraderie of the job. The cooperative is their second family because they depend on their fellow lineworkers every day in life-or-death circumstances. It's a culture of trust, teamwork and service. It's all about keeping the teammate beside you safe and the lights on for everybody else.

Lineworkers take pride in their work. Regardless if it's cold, wet, hot or humid, they are working to keep people's homes comfortable. No matter how tired they are or how long they have been working, it's very satisfying to hear someone yell, "Thank you," from the window after the lights come back on.

Your cooperative and our employees are members of this community. We live in the same neighborhoods as our members. We shop at the same stores. Our kids go to the same schools. If your lights are off, there is a good chance ours are off, too. So, you can trust we are doing our best to get the lights back on as quickly and safely as possible. If you see one of our lineworkers on April 8, please say, "Thank you!"

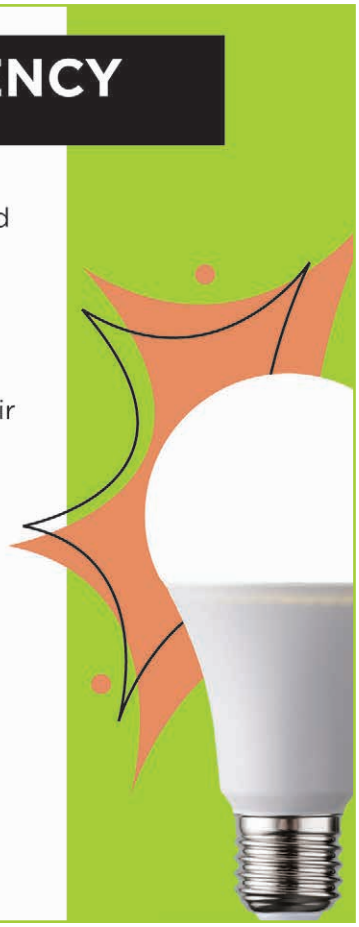
**BROOKS SHOEMAKER**
GENERAL MANAGER & CEO

## ENERGY EFFICIENCY
### TIP OF THE MONTH

A well-designed landscape can add beauty to your home and reduce home heating and cooling costs. Plant deciduous trees with high, spreading crowns to the south of your home to block sunlight in the summer and reduce the need for air conditioning. Deciduous trees lose their leaves in the winter, allowing sunlight to warm your home.

Plant evergreen trees and shrubs with low crowns to block winter winds. Dense evergreen trees and shrubs planted to the north and northwest are the most common type of windbreak and can help lower energy used for home heating.

*Source: energy.gov*



**Bedford REC's office will be closed April 10 for the Annual Meeting**

## OUTAGE REPORTING

**In case of an outage...**

1. Check your fuses or circuit breakers.
2. Check with your neighbors, if convenient, to see if they have been affected by the power failure.
3. Call the 24-hour number, 814-623-7568, OR call 800-808-2732* during office hours.

**(Please help us save money – only use this number if toll charges apply.)*

Please give the person receiving the call your name as it appears on your bill, your telephone number and your map number, if known. Any specific information about the outage will also be helpful in pinpointing the problem.

**To report an outage call:**
**814-623-7568**

*During widespread power outages, many members are calling to report power failures. You may receive a busy signal, or in certain cases, your call may go unanswered. This occurs in after-hours outages when the office is not fully staffed. Please be patient and try again in a few minutes.*