

South River EMC Communicator

May 2026

Wired for Growth:

Balancing Data Center Demand and Reliability

Data centers may feel like a big-city phenomenon, but more and more of them are showing up in rural communities like ours—and there's good reason for that. Rural areas offer what data centers need most: affordable land, room to grow and access to transmission lines that can move large amounts of power.

What makes data centers different from other large businesses is their appetite for electricity. These facilities run 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Servers must stay online constantly, which means power has to be reliable every minute of every day.

For electric cooperatives like South River EMC, powering data centers creates both opportunities and challenges.

On the plus side, data centers have the potential to bring steady, long-term load growth that helps support investments in the local grid. With proper planning and policy support, those upgrades—including new substations, stronger lines and smarter technology—could benefit all South River EMC members and help keep electricity rates steady.

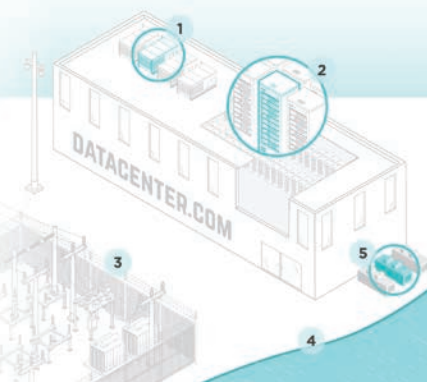
But providing power to data centers presents challenges, too. These large facilities can be constructed and operating in as little as one year, but ensuring the necessary infrastructure, equipment and electricity requires longer lead times and significant financial investment, which are covered by the data center developers.

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Big Data, Bigger Demands

Many companies are choosing rural areas for their data centers because of cheaper land, available power and potential tax breaks. Data centers require huge amounts of electricity to operate, which presents new opportunities and challenges for electric co-ops.

- 1 HVAC:** Constant cooling is needed to ensure the servers function properly.
- 2 Servers:** Servers run applications and process data 24/7. One server rack can consume enough electricity to power a small home. A large data center can house thousands of server racks.
- 3 Infrastructure:** Data centers often require new electrical infrastructure to meet their power needs.
- 4 Water Source:** Many large data centers are deploying evaporative cooling, which is more efficient than compressor-based systems.
- 5 Backup Power:** On-site generators keep data centers running during power outages and can also be used to help lower demand when electricity use spikes.



Mark Your Calendar:

South River EMC offices will be closed Monday, May 25, in celebration of Memorial Day.



South River EMC earns this award based on data modeled by the ACSI® in 2024. Award criteria are determined by the ACSI based on customers rating their satisfaction with South River EMC in a survey independent of the syndicated ACSI Energy Utility Study. For more about the ACSI, visit theacsi.org/badges. ACSI and its logo are registered trademarks of the American Customer Satisfaction Index LLC.

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Strategic planning and partnerships, as well as long-term power supply strategies, are essential to the process.

We, like other cooperatives, are fielding requests and inquiries from tech companies, and we anticipate continued requests in the not-too-distant future.

As a member-owned cooperative, our responsibility is twofold: to listen to the communities we

serve and to provide reliable, affordable electric service to all South River EMC members. Balancing those responsibilities is not always simple, especially as new types of large-scale energy users, like data centers, become part of the local landscape.

The energy landscape is changing, and with it comes both opportunities and challenges. The commitment of South River EMC's board and employees, is to continue listening, communicating

and working with our members and community partners to ensure all decisions reflect the best interests of the people we serve.

No matter what the future holds, our priority will be supporting growth with fairness—that means ensuring large-scale energy users pay their fair share so residential bills don't spike and our local communities feel invested in.

If you have any questions, please call 910.892.8071.



Meet Our Tourists

**Representing South River EMC
on the Electric Cooperative
Youth Tour in 2026**

Photo Unavailable

*June McIntyre
Junior • Gray's Creek High*



*Caleb Faircloth
Junior • Midway High*



*Cindy Gonzalez Hernandez
Junior • Sampson County Early College*

May is
ELECTRIC SAFETY MONTH

Stay Safe. Stay Aware. Stay Powered Responsibly.

Electricity powers our everyday lives—but it must be used with care. This month, take simple steps to protect your home and family:

-  **Never overload outlets or power strips**
-  **Keep cords and outlets out of reach of children**
-  **Stay far away from downed power lines**
-  **Always hire qualified professionals for repairs**
-  **Use appliances and extension cords properly**

Small actions can prevent big accidents.

Learn more:
sremc.com/electric-safety
Follow us for more safety tips!



Scholarships Awarded

Each year, South River EMC offers a scholarship opportunity to students living in the South River EMC area.

A committee reviewed applications and selected three students to each receive a \$1,000 scholarship.



Jordan Williams, son of Jimarr and Charmagne Williams of Stedman, will graduate from

Cross Creek Early College with plans to attend the UNC-Chapel Hill to receive a degree in Biology.



Emma Williford, daughter of Charles and Jennifer Williford of Newton Grove, will graduate from South Johnston High with plans to attend UNC-Chapel Hill to obtain a degree in Business Administration.



Lathan Warren, son of Daryll and Candace Warren of Newton Grove, will graduate from Hobbton High School, with plans to attend NC State University for a major in agri-business management and agricultural economics.

This scholarship opportunity showcases many wonderful attributes in our students each year. For details on this scholarship and others offered by South River EMC, visit sremc.com/scholarships.

10 Reasons To Apply for Bright Ideas

1. Bring Creative Ideas to Life

Have a lesson idea that goes beyond the textbook? Bright Ideas grant funding helps turn innovative concepts into real classroom experiences.

2. Fund Projects Big or Small

From flexible seating to STEM kits to outdoor learning spaces—grants support a wide range of classroom needs.

3. No Out-of-Pocket Costs

Stop spending your own money on supplies. This program helps cover the extras your students deserve. Educators can apply for grants up to \$2,500.

4. Boost Student Engagement

Hands-on, creative projects increase excitement and participation—making learning more meaningful and memorable.

5. Support All Subjects

Whether you teach math, science, reading, art, or career skills, Bright Ideas funds projects across all disciplines. It does not however, fund professional development.

6. Easy Application Process

The application is straightforward and designed for busy teachers. You can begin an application, save it and come back to it at any point before submitting it.

7. Stand Out Professionally

Winning a grant highlights your innovation and dedication—great for resumes, evaluations, and recognition.

8. Strengthen Your Classroom Resources

Build a collection of lasting materials and tools that benefit students year after year.

9. Connect with Your Local Electric Cooperative

Programs like the Bright Ideas grant program are funded by North Carolina's electric cooperatives—building stronger community partnerships.

10. Make a Lasting Impact

Your project could inspire students in ways that go far beyond the classroom.

Ready to apply? Each year, South River EMC funds up to \$50,000 in grants and public K-12 students could benefit.

Don't miss your chance to bring your ideas to life and energize your classroom.

To begin an application, scan the QR code in the image.





Less Waste. More Impact.

Conservation Voltage Reduction (CVR)

Over the past decade, South River EMC has saved **\$2.2 MILLION** by implementing a **powerful, cost-effective** efficiency tool: **Conservation Voltage Reduction (CVR)**.

CVR is a powerful, **cost-effective** efficiency tool that optimizes voltage levels across the grid to reduce energy waste while maintaining reliable service.

- ✓ Smarter system management
- ✓ Reduced energy waste
- ✓ Maintain reliable service

Learn more at [sremc.com](https://www.sremc.com).



Big Savings Possible Ahead

If you're in the market for a new heating and cooling system, now could be the time to do it.

In purchasing a high-efficiency unit that has a 16 SEER 2 rating or greater, you could tap into savings potential.

SEER 2, or Seasonal Energy Efficiency Ratio 2, rating measures the cooling efficiency of a unit.

The higher the SEER 2, the

more efficiently it will cool your home.

South River EMC offers rebates on air source and geothermal heat pumps, as well as central air conditioners.

Greater savings potential can be achieved by making efficient energy choices.

Pairing the unit with a smart thermostat can help you adjust

settings to meet your needs whether you're home, or not. That means you could set the thermostat a little higher when you're not home in the summer and have it gradually cool for when you come home.

If you're interested, learn more about the rebates offered by South River EMC by scanning the QR code.

Weatherization Work Handled

If you're looking for ways to improve your home and lower energy costs, working with Community Action might be a helpful step.

Community Action offers a weatherization package, which includes: air/duct sealing, improved insulation, an HVAC tune-up or replacement and a programmable thermostat in a home with a heat pump or an electric furnace/central AC.

Weatherizing your home can improve comfort as well as helping to cut costs.

The Community Action weatherization package is available for single family or manufactured low-income homes.

For details on the rebate, scan the QR code.



The High Efficiency Residential Option

The high efficiency residential option, or HERO, home is a home built 30% more efficient than those built to code.

Dealing predominately with the thermal enclosure, a HERO home is built tighter with slightly better insulation, fenestration, air sealing, equipment and lighting

packages to deliver even greater savings.

These savings are achieved in one of two ways:

The **prescriptive path**, which is straightforward but inflexible, involves full compliance with a list of specific requirements.

The **performance path**, on the

other hand, is more flexible. It requires an energy cost analysis as proof that the home being built will have energy costs that are less than or equal to that same home built to the HERO Code's prescriptive requirements.

For details on rebates offered, scan the QR code.

Replace Your Windows With A Little Help

Upgrading your home's windows isn't just about appearance—it's an effective way to improve energy efficiency and lower monthly utility bills.

That's why South River EMC offers a window rebate to help members make smart, energy-saving upgrades more affordable.

Windows play a major role in how much energy your home uses. Older or poorly insulated windows can allow conditioned air to escape, forcing your heating and cooling system to work harder year-round. In the

summer, heat from the sun can easily enter through inefficient windows, raising indoor temperatures and increasing cooling costs. In the winter, warm air can leak out, leading to higher heating bills and uncomfortable drafts.

By replacing outdated windows with energy-efficient models, homeowners can significantly reduce this energy loss. Modern windows are designed with advanced features such as double or triple panes, low-emissivity (Low-E) coatings, and improved sealing to better

regulate indoor temperatures. The result is a more comfortable home environment and noticeable savings on energy costs over time.

South River EMC's window rebate helps offset the upfront cost of these upgrades, making it easier for members to invest in long-term efficiency. If you've noticed rising energy use or drafty rooms, upgrading your windows could make a meaningful difference.

Scan the QR code for details and rebate information.



What Time? It's Pool Time

As we open pools for the summer, it's best to take stock of the situation.

If your pool has a pump, is it a single-speed pump? If so, it might be time to replace it.

Single-speed pumps have one speed and one level of water use. These are typically the highest and most inefficient, which tends to be ineffective.

Pool pumps perform many tasks and some need less water and energy than others.

By replacing a single-speed pump, with a variable- or two-speed pump, you can tailor your water and electric use. You don't always need the most water and most energy used.

Single-speed has one setting, a two-speed has two settings, which can help, and a variable speed pump gives you a little more than that and can be more effective.

Part of savings has to do with how you use your pool pump. For example, it doesn't need to run eight hours a day, try running it an hour less each day. If you cut off say, four hours and water appears cloudy, then five hours of run times might be the ticket and that means savings!

For details on the rebate offered by South River EMC scan the QR code.

The Choices To Consider In Water Heating

Keeping with the water theme, let's look at water heaters.

Water heating is the second-highest cost on your electric bill each month, and with that being said, installing a new water heater, could help you save.

Heat pump water heaters use electricity to move heat from one place to another instead of generating heat directly. Therefore, they can be two to three times more energy efficient than conventional electric resistance water heaters. To move the heat, heat pumps work like a refrigerator in reverse.

They require installation in locations that remain in the 40°–90°F range year-round and provide at least 1,000 cu. ft. of air space around the water heater.

Heat pump water heaters will not operate efficiently in a cold space since they tend to cool the space they are in. Installing them in a space with excess heat, such as a furnace room, will increase their efficiency.

Another option is solar water heating. It comes with many options to help you find what works best for you and your family.

Active solar water heaters have direct and indirect circulation systems or passive solar water heaters with integral collector storage and thermosyphon systems.

Then there are the types of storage tanks and solar collectors, including a flat-plate collector, an integral collector-storage system and an evacuated-tube solar collector.

Going through these systems can be a lot, so if they are up for consideration in your home, take your time and do the research. Speak with installers and when requesting quotes, make sure you compare apples to apples.

South River EMC offers rebates on both heat pump and solar water heaters. Information on the rebates can be found by scanning the QR code.



South River EMC
Communicator

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