

Claverack Rural Electric Cooperative

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 



One of 14 electric cooperatives
serving Pennsylvania and New Jersey

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7:30 a.m. - 4 p.m.

Jeff Fetzer, Local Pages Editor

Guest Column



Co-op preparing for EV test drive

by Brian Zeidner, *Director of Member Services*

SEVERAL years ago, my father bought a Toyota Prius hybrid. I rode in it sometimes, but I couldn't see myself driving an electric vehicle (EV). It just didn't seem cool to me. My opinions about EVs began to change after attending a member engagement conference and listening to some interesting statistics about connecting with members. Statistics show 20% of consumers are identified as "green innovators" who lead the way in saving energy through technology, and an additional 25% are receptive to changing energy habits and using technology if someone shows them how and they don't have to sacrifice comfort.

I was stunned. That's almost half of our membership. I began to wonder if my perception of electric vehicles was out of date and out of touch.

In the past six years, I've come a long way in embracing new technologies. I purchased a heat pump for my home, a heat pump water heater, and a split-system heat pump for the farm shop. Based on positive experiences, I recommend these products to members as energy-efficient, money-saving options.

I have also been very happy with the platform of cordless tools I've purchased over the past few years, adding a battery-powered weed trimmer, blower, grease gun, impact wrench and chainsaw to my tool kit. Why not an EV?


Along with a co-worker, Lynn Jennings, I began to investigate the possibility of purchasing an EV for the cooperative so we could provide an informed opinion to members who are interested in buying an EV.

We researched and test drove four cars: the Chevy Bolt, the Nissan Leaf, the Tesla Model 3 and the Hyundai Kona. There are many more manufacturers making EVs, but these seemed to be practical and affordable options.

We tried to make equal and fair comparisons in areas like mileage on a charge, ride quality, cargo area and price. An all-wheel drive option would be a bonus for reliable winter transportation in our area.

As we await delivery of our new EV, we are developing a program to help you, our members, get answers to questions related to owning and operating an electric vehicle. Our goal is to use the car to educate, inform and provide experience to our members regarding EVs, especially if they are considering investing in one.

One of the strategic goals your board of directors envisioned two years ago was to develop and implement a member communication and engagement plan that meets the needs and expectations of all generations of members. We think owning, operating and providing an experience-based assessment of EVs plugs right into that goal.

We want to be knowledgeable and helpful when it comes to discussing electric options, including electric vehicles, with our members. Be sure to keep an eye on our website, Facebook page and upcoming issues of *Penn Lines* to learn which EV we have selected and how you can take advantage of opportunities to check it out. You might even see me out and about looking cool in Claverack's new EV! 

Claverack member touts region's trekking potential

Hiking popularity climbs during COVID shutdown

By Jeff Fetzer

SO YOU think that there's not much to do during this period of social distancing and limited public gatherings? Take a hike. Literally.

The Endless Mountains and Pennsylvania Wilds regions possess an abundance of trails on public grounds, offering hikers options ranging from relaxed strolls on hard-packed gravel paths to strenuous climbs up steep, rocky ascents that showcase the area's bountiful waterfalls and breathtaking vistas.

Claverack member Jeff Mitchell of Falls has explored most of them. An avid hiker for over 20 years, Mitchell wrote the book on "Hiking the Endless Mountains." Literally. It's available on Amazon, and he says it has seen a resurgence in sales since the novel coronavirus sent folks scrambling for outdoor activities that, for the most part, don't require a face mask.

Mitchell, the district attorney for Wyoming County, says the popularity of hiking in Penns Woods has been on the upswing in recent years, propelled by the plethora of hiking information and photos of the state's scenic wonders exposed through social media.

But the COVID-19 pandemic and its resulting shutdown of social activities has taken hiking in the Keystone State to new heights.

"Since this (COVID-19) started, everything is off the charts," says Mitchell. "I'm seeing people hiking in places where I've never seen them before."

Stay-at-home orders, travel restrictions, the cancellation of sporting events and concerts, and reduced opportunities for public gatherings have prompted many people to look for ways to alleviate cabin fever.

"The outdoors have been deemed to be relatively safe, and people are gravitating toward that," Mitchell says. "Plenty of people are coming to rural areas with family members and friends and are looking for something to do."

When they travel to Northeastern and North-central Pennsylvania, their options include exploring the great outdoors, whether by foot, bicycle, kayak or canoe.

One popular area destination for all of these activities, along with camping, fishing and swimming, is Ricketts Glen State Park near Benton.



STOPPING POINT: Claverack member Jeff Mitchell of Falls takes a streamside break while exploring the Nothstein Preserve in the Poconos. Mitchell, the Wyoming County district attorney, has hiked extensively throughout the state for over two decades and has written books on hiking, backpacking and paddling in Pennsylvania and New York.

The park encompasses 13,193 acres of public land in Luzerne, Sullivan, and Columbia counties and is home to 26 miles of trails, including the spectacular Falls Trail, which takes trekkers past a series of 21 waterfalls.

Ricketts Glen has always been among the most heavily visited of the region's state parks, but since the COVID-19 outbreak, park attendance has increased 90% over the previous year, ac-

OVERLOOK: A pair of hikers take in the splendor at the summit at Frozen Run Gorge in Loyalsock State Forest in Lycoming County. During the COVID-19 pandemic, outdoor activities such as hiking have seen heightened interest as folks seek out recreation that avoids crowds. The hiking options abound in Northeastern and North-central Pennsylvania, home to over a million acres of public land and hundreds of trails.



PHOTO BY JEFF MITCHELL

ording to Terry Brady, press secretary for the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources.

“Attendance has been through the roof at Ricketts Glen,” Brady said. “All of our 121 state parks are showing major, major increases in usage.”

Ricketts Glen also happens to be where Mitchell’s hiking journey began more than two decades ago.

“I was out of college, working two jobs and didn’t have much money,” the Tunkhannock native recalls. “I had an afternoon off, so I thought I’d go hiking.”

His first hike took him up the fabled Falls Trail. He admits he was surprised to find such scenic splendor so close to home.

“You just walk up the trail, and it’s waterfall after waterfall, and it’s just beautiful,” he says. “A few weeks later, I went to Worlds End State Park — and I was again amazed at how beautiful this region was.”

Bitten by the hiking bug, Mitchell began scouring over hiking books and maps of Pennsylvania’s state forests and parks, picking out trails to explore and

setting off on new adventures. Back then, he says, hiking information was limited, especially for the Endless Mountains region.

“When I looked at the existing hiking materials and books available, they covered the same places — the Pennsylvania Grand Canyon or Ricketts Glen or Hickory Run State Park,” he says. “That’s just the tip of the iceberg. I’ve been hiking for over 20 years, and I’m still finding new places. And we’re not talking about nice little scenic places. We’re talking about incredible places of first class natural beauty.”

Out of a sense of pride for the region and its scenic beauty, and to expose the public to some of the area’s hidden hiking gems, Mitchell wrote “Hiking the Endless Mountains” in 2002, which has been updated with a second edition.

While Pennsylvania lacks the high peaks of the nation’s hiking hotspots, Mitchell contends in the book’s preface that “this region is home to a mosaic of landscapes found nowhere else.”

“In Pennsylvania, along with nice views, you also have waterfalls and old-growth forests and wetlands and beautiful streams and maybe some historical ruins,” he says. “The sheer diversity we have on our public lands easily rivals that of any state in the East. I can say with absolute certainty that we are living on an outdoor recreation gold mine, and, quite frankly, we need to start showcasing it.”

The desire to highlight the region’s outdoor opportunities set him on a quest to expose the splendor that can be found on the state’s 4 million acres of public land through his books, social media and public presentations.

The 45-year-old Tunkhannock native has written four books focusing on hiking, paddling and backpacking in



PHOTO BY JEFF MITCHELL

ROCKY ROAD: Hikers walk along the exposed bedrock atop the Bartlett Mountain “balds,” located on State Game Lands 57 near Forkston. Claverack member and veteran hiker Jeff Mitchell says Game Lands 57 is among his favorite hiking destinations in Pennsylvania.



PHOTO BY JEFF MITCHELL

OVERHANG: A hiker glances at a massive shelter rock while exploring State Game Lands 57 near Forkston in Wyoming County.

Pennsylvania, maintains an online blog, “Endless Mountains Experience,” and popular Instagram account, “hiking_mitch,” with more than 3,600 followers, and, for about a dozen years, has hosted an annual multi-media presentation featuring his hiking exploits at Dietrich Theater in Tunkhannock.

Mitchell says while popular hikes like the Falls Trail at Ricketts Glen and the Pine Creek Rail Trail in the Pennsylvania Grand Canyon attract throngs of visitors, he encourages hikers to explore the bevy of less-traveled paths in the region and, with the ubiquitousness of GPS, to consider bypassing the beaten path for bushwhacking hikes.

“I don’t care for crowded places,” he says. “I used to go to Ricketts Glen quite frequently but rarely go there anymore. I’m happy people are out there, and I’m happy it’s popular, but it’s not what I’m looking for.”

What Mitchell desires in a hike, he says, is solitude coupled with great scenery. Pennsylvania’s vast state

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HIKING POPULARITY CLIMBS

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forests, parks and game lands offer a wealth of options.

Hiking trails within the Northeast and North-central regions of the state the well-traveled hiker recommends include Loyalsock Trail, Old Loggers Trail, Jacoby Falls, the Haystacks Trail and Cold Run Trail in Loyalsock State



PHOTO BY JEFF MITCHELL

GORGES: Water cascades through the Catlin Brook Gorge near Lovelton. According to Endless Mountains hiking expert Jeff Mitchell of Falls, Catlin Brook is the steepest gorge of a stream of its size in the state, at one point dropping 800 feet in a quarter mile. The little known gorge features 10 waterfalls at least 10 feet in height. Mitchell recommends this steep and treacherous gorge to expert hikers only.

Forest; Rough Hill Trail at Worlds End State Park; Golden Eagle Trail in Tiadaghton State Forest; Gillespie Point and Sand Run Falls in Tioga State Forest; and Hammersley Meadows/Twin Sisters Vista Trail in Susquehannock State Forest.

Within Claverack’s service region, Mitchell recommends hiking the trails at Salt Springs State Park in Susquehanna County, and going off trail to explore State Game Lands 12 and 36 in Bradford County, and Bartlett Mountain on State Game Lands 57 in Wyoming County.

“State Game Lands 57 near Forkston is spectacular,” he says. “It’s one of the few places in the Mid-Atlantic that you have an almost alpine type of habitat at the top of that mountain. So you have red spruce, you have caves and overhangs, and you have rock chasms and all these waterfalls. It’s absolutely stunning.”

If someone needs further reasons to hike than splendid scenery, the district attorney argues the activity provides great exercise, relieves stress, is inexpensive and requires no special skills

“I hike to see new places that I hope to be spectacular,” Mitchell explains. “I also like the challenge of it. Just being alone and having that isolation is really nice in today’s world.”

Rebates available for Energy Star appliances

To encourage members to practice energy conservation and responsible energy use, Claverack is offering rebates of \$50 to \$100 to members who purchase qualifying Energy Star-rated refrigerators, washers and dryers.

With Claverack’s Energy Star rebate program, members not only benefit from energy savings generated from the product itself, they receive a direct rebate from the co-op for their purchase. For Energy Star-rated refrigerators, the rebate amount is \$100; for washers or dryers, members will receive a \$50 rebate.

To qualify for the rebate, the appliance must have been purchased in the current calendar year.

Members can apply for the rebate by filling out a rebate form available by

calling the office at 1-800-326-9799 or visiting claverack.com and clicking on the “rebate” button on the homepage. A copy of the receipt or invoice showing the date and purchase price of the item is required, as is a copy of the Energy Star label from the appliance.

Mail all documentation to: Claverack Rural Electric Cooperative, Attn: Appliance Rebate Program, 32750 Route 6, Wysox, PA 18854.

Once all documentation is received, a bill credit will be applied to your account. Rebates are available on a first-come, first-served basis. There is a limit of one rebate per appliance type per member account, and appliances must be installed within Claverack’s service territory

Co-op Connections Card: Your prescription for savings

One of the most valuable features of your Co-op Connections Card is the prescription discount offer. The card is your ticket to savings of up to 10% to 85% at over 60,000 participating pharmacies, including CVS, Rite Aid, Walmart, Weis, Wegmans and Walgreens, as well as many other regional chains and independent pharmacies.

Through the first six months of this year, Claverack members have saved an average of 65% off the retail price of their prescription purchases by simply showing their Co-op Connections Card.

Since we began participating in the Co-op Connections program in 2011, Claverack members have saved over \$95,000 in prescription drug costs. You can discover all of the participating pharmacies in the region by linking to the Co-op Connections website from our homepage, claverack.com, or by calling 1-800-800-7616.

The Co-op Connections Card also provides co-op members with discounts at over 160,000 dental locations and 20,000 vision providers nationwide, as well as with countless merchants, retailers and service providers nationally and regionally. To explore all of the benefits of this discount program, visit the Touchstone Energy Co-op Connections Card website at connections.coop.

If you do not have a Co-op Connections Card, please contact the Claverack member services department at 1-800-326-9799. You can also print off the discount card at home through the connections.coop website or download the mobile app for your Apple and Android devices.

