

2026 ANNUAL MEETING

Bluebonnet marks strong year of growth, reliability and service to members

Story by Connie Juarez

Photos by Sarah Beal

NEARLY 600 BLUEBONNET

Electric Cooperative members and guests filled The Silos on 77 event center in Giddings on Tuesday, May 12, for the co-op's 86th Annual Meeting. Attendees enjoyed refreshments, including Blue Bell ice cream and kolaches from Weikel's Bakery, while listening to live music and receiving cooperative updates. Some members took home door prizes donated by Bluebonnet's vendors.

Tammy Schroeder of Smithville has been a member for nearly 40 years, and this was her second annual meeting. "I like visiting with the people, and Bluebonnet has always been really good to us, so it's my way to connect with other people who feel the same way."

Board Chairman Ben Flencher opened the business session by thanking Bluebonnet's members and guests for their continued trust and support. He emphasized that the cooperative's strength is rooted in its commitment to serve its members' communities, where directors live and work alongside the businesses and families they represent.

"Thanks to our members for taking the time to participate in their cooperative's Annual Meeting in person or by proxy," Flencher said. "And thanks for the trust and faith our members put in my fellow directors. It's a great honor and privilege for us to serve our members, who make all the great things we do possible."

Flencher congratulated the three incumbent directors who were re-elected during the annual meeting: Roderick Emanuel, District 3, Bastrop County, who serves as Board Vice Chairman; Russell Jurk, District 4, Lee, Milam and Williamson counties; and Byron Balke, District 6, Austin, Colorado and Fayette counties, who serves as Board Assistant Secretary/Treasurer.

This year, nearly 6,000 members participated in the election by proxy or in person.

General Manager Matt Bentke's presenta-



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tion focused on the cooperative's financial strength and success, continued growth, inspection and maintenance programs, the resiliency and reliability of Bluebonnet's electric grid, and commitment to its members and communities.

"Bluebonnet has had a great year with continued growth and outstanding financial performance," Bentke said. "We strive every day to provide the best service and make our members proud of their co-op."

"One of the things that we are most proud of is being wonderfully positioned

to provide our members with one of the lowest electric rates in the state. We are absolutely focused on what this rate means to you, day in and day out. We do everything we can to maintain it and support our members."

Bluebonnet's members will receive \$11.9 million in capital credits in 2026, an increase of \$778,000 over the previous year.

"Our successful financial management and the extraordinary growth in Bluebonnet's service area have enabled us to return record amounts in capital credits



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1. Lineworkers Thurston Bennett and Kyle Kasper pose with Kyle Daniels from Giddings for a photo.

2. Micah Chandler from Lexington gets ready to dive into his Blue Bell chocolate ice cream.

3. Annie Avila, a member service supervisor, helps a member register for the meeting and hands her a welcome bag.

4. Ben Flencher, Bluebonnet's Board Chairman, shares cooperative updates.

5. Johnnie and Tammy Schroeder of Smithville wait for the meeting to begin.

6. The Nathan Colt Young band performs country music at Bluebonnet's Annual Meeting.

7. Lockhart-area community and development service representative Jo Anna Gilland helps Mary Lou Alexander of Cedar Creek with a door prize donated by Bluebonnet's vendors during the Annual Meeting.

to our members during the past several years," Bentke said. "These credits, combined with some of the lowest electric rates in the state, provide true value and directly benefit Bluebonnet's member-owners."

Ruth Jatzlau, a Bluebonnet member

since the 1970s, said she and her husband, Clarence, have attended the Annual Meeting for years. "I'm retired now, but I used to take off work at Orsag's to come," Jatzlau said. "We always attend because we like what we hear."

A BIG
Thank You!

FROM BLUEBONNET

for your generous donations toward the 2026 Annual Meeting prizes!

ABC Professional Tree Services Inc.

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Titan Utility Services

TNT Crane & Rigging

Triple T Refrigeration Inc.

Virginia Transformer Corp.

Wade Custom Steel Buildings



Just add water!

Hot enough for you? Splash into some summer relief at these Bluebonnet-area rivers, lakes, pools and splash pads.

Story by Connie Juarez and Mindy Merten

Bluebonnet Electric Cooperative members know what July means: The days are long. The heat is serious. And sooner or later you're going to need to find some cool, refreshing water. Preferably sooner. From the more than 11,000-acre Lake Somerville to the easy-to-access splash pads in Giddings and Manor or the slow treks down the Colorado or San Marcos rivers, the Bluebonnet region offers plenty of ways to cool off without going far.

In Bastrop, an escape from the soaring temperatures is as close as the Colorado River. Bastrop River Company, founded in 2012, offers guided kayak and canoe trips that make it easy to get out on the water, paddle and take a dip when you please. "It's about giving people a chance to enjoy the river at their own pace, whether it's families, beginners or experienced paddlers," says owner Lee Harle. "Even on our busiest days, you're not going to feel overwhelmed like you might on some of the more crowded tubing trips on other rivers." With plenty of space to spread out and a backdrop of cypress and oak trees, river trips here offer a more relaxed alternative.

Whether you and your crew want to lounge, paddle, swim, fish or just splash around, it's easy to find an oasis in the Bluebonnet service area that suits your mood. From lakes to splash pads, we rounded up the coolest options for beating the heat without emptying your gas tank.

BASTROP RIVER COMPANY

Address: 1200 Willow St., Bastrop
Phone: 512-321-4661 **Website:** bastropriverco.com



Above: Canoers and kayakers pass beneath Bastrop's Old Iron Bridge during a day trip with Bastrop River Company which offers excursions along a six-mile stretch of the Lower Colorado River.

Left: A group of Boy Scouts who traveled from the Houston area prepare to launch their canoes at Fisherman's Park in Bastrop.

Sarah Beal photos



San Marcos River Resort photo

SAN MARCOS RIVER RESORT

Address: 745 S Main St., Fentress
Hours: Day camp passes for 10 a.m.-8 p.m. access daily
Phone: 512-213-0112
Website: sanmarcosriverresort.com
Admission: Day-use passes: \$29 weekdays, \$39 Saturdays; peak season (May 23-Aug. 16): \$35 weekdays, \$49 Saturdays and holidays; overnight lodging priced separately

Cool off in the San Marcos River with a day-pass, or extend your stay in a cozy cabin, or at a tent or RV site. Swim, fish or enjoy a two-hour tubing adventure with shuttle service. On-site amenities include a swimming pool, mini golf, basketball courts and shaded picnic areas. River currents and depth can vary, so don't forget life jackets for the kids.

Why it's cool: The San Marcos River is spring-fed, keeping the water clear and 72 degrees year-round.

Trip tip: Stay in one of the treehouse-style cabins for an elevated view of the river.

LOCKHART STATE PARK & POOL

Address: 2012 State Park Road, Lockhart
Hours: Park open daily, 6 a.m.-10 p.m. Pool open Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday, 11:30 a.m.-6:30 p.m.; Saturday and Sunday, noon-6:30 p.m.
Phone: 512-398-3479
Website: tpwd.texas.gov/state-parks/lockhart
Admission: Park entry \$3; free for children 12 and younger. Swimming pool admission free for children 5 and younger, \$1 for children 6-12, \$2 for 13 and older



Lockhart State Park photo

If the heat allows, explore the park, then cool off with a dip in the swimming pool. The pool facility includes a separate 2-foot-deep kiddie pool, with lifeguards on duty during operating hours. It's a family-friendly spot to unwind after hiking the trails or playing the nine-hole golf course.

Why it's cool: The park was developed by the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), with construction beginning in 1935. Many of its stone structures and overall layout still reflect CCC craftsmanship, with picnic tables, dams, bridges and trailheads scattered throughout the park.

Trip tip: After your swim, head into Lockhart to enjoy some of the best barbecue in Texas.

MORRIS MEMORIAL POOL

Address: 802 N. Ave. C, Elgin
Hours: Varies with lifeguard availability, pool maintenance requirements and weather
Phone: 512-281-5724
Website: elgintexas.gov/270/Morris-Memorial-Pool
Admission: \$2 cash per person; free with recreation center membership

Cool off at Elgin's go-to summer water escape. From late May through early fall, the lifeguarded pool invites swimmers of all ages. Its swim hours, lap sessions and evening swims make it a hub of summertime fun and neighborhood gatherings. Its relaxed atmosphere and multigenerational programming make it a perfect, affordable spot for anyone ready to dive in or dip their toes.

Why it's cool: Adjacent to the pool, the renovated Elgin Community Hospital (circa 1938) now serves as the Fleming Community Center, showcasing its original Texas Deco style.
Trip tip: Step out of the pool and into the sights and flavors of historic downtown Elgin, where you can enjoy a freshly baked kolache and hunt for unique treasures in boutiques and antique shops.



City of Elgin Parks and Recreation photo

VETERANS PARK SPLASH PAD



Kraftsman Commercial Playgrounds & Waterparks photo

Address: 191 Raymond St., Giddings
Hours: 10 a.m.-8 p.m. daily
Phone: 979-540-2710
Website: giddings.net/veterans-park/
Admission: Free

Bursting with pure summer energy, the Veterans Park Splash Pad is fun for everyone in the family. With an array of sprayers, arches and playful splash zones, this free attraction is an ideal stop for anyone wanting to relax and recharge while exploring the area.

Why it's cool: The community pool is just steps away, giving visitors the chance to dive even deeper into a day of water-filled fun.
Trip tip: Don't miss Veterans Honor Park nearby, where visitors can get an up-close look at historic military tanks.

BASTROP STATE PARK POOL

Address: 100 Park Road 1A, Bastrop
Hours: Park open 6 a.m.-10 p.m. daily. Pool open 2:30-6:30 p.m. Wednesday-Thursday and 1:30-7 p.m. Friday-Saturday.
Phone: 512-321-3689
Website: tpwd.texas.gov/state-parks/bastrop
Admission: Pool pass: Children 5 and under free; children 6-12 \$3; 13 and older \$5

After hiking trails or biking scenic Park Road 1C connecting Bastrop and Buescher state parks, stop by the swimming pool to cool off. Completed in 1937, the Bastrop State Park pool was built during the Great Depression by the Works Progress Administration under the Texas State Parks Board and is part of the park's National Historic Landmark designation. Lifeguards are on duty during operating hours, a separate shallow wading area is available for younger visitors.

Why it's cool: The park is home to the famous Lost Pines, a rare stand of loblolly pines and hardwoods isolated from the forests of East Texas.
Trip tip: Extend your stay in one of the park's Civilian Conservation Corps-built cabins for a glimpse into the craftsmanship of the era.



Sarah Beal photo

LAKE SOMERVILLE STATE PARK AT BIRCH CREEK

Address: 14222 Park Road 57, Somerville
Hours: 6 a.m.-10 p.m. daily
Phone: 979-535-7763
Website: tpwd.texas.gov/state-parks/lake-somerville
Admission: Adults, \$5; children 12 and under, free; campsites available for an additional fee

Escape to the north shores of Lake Somerville at Birch Creek, where sparkling waters meet rolling woodlands. Spend your day fishing, kayaking, swimming or hiking scenic trails. At Birch Creek, visitors can also enjoy sunrise paddling or boating and evening campfires.

Why it's cool: The lake covers more than 11,000 acres, making it one of the largest recreational lakes in Central Texas. Fishermen will like that its waters are home to bass, crappie and catfish.
Trip tip: Turn a day trip into a full getaway with an RV or tent campsite.



Photo courtesy of Lauren Kubica

BLUE BELL AQUATIC CENTER



City of Brenham Parks and Recreation photo

Address: 1800 E. Tom Green St., Brenham
Hours: 12:30-6:30 p.m. Monday-Friday; 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Saturday; 1-5 p.m. Sunday
Phone: 979-337-7250
Website: cityofbrenham.org/city_government/departments/parks_and_recreation
Admission: \$5 for residents; \$8 for nonresidents; children 3 and under, \$3 for residents; \$5 for nonresidents

Whether you're there for a quick dip or a full day of water fun, the center delivers a sweet summer escape. The ice cream-inspired outdoor leisure pool boasts a beach-style entry and water up to 3½ feet deep. Stroll along the Popsicle Walk, glide down the Sundae Slide or tackle the twists and turns of the Big Yellow Slide.

Why it's cool: There are also heated indoor competition and therapy pools, and the aquatic center welcomes swimmers year-round. All pools are accessible via chair lifts or wheelchair ramps.
Trip tip: Make time for a stop at Blue Bell Creameries, open 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. weekdays, and treat yourself to a \$1 scoop at the ice cream parlor. It's less than a mile from the pool.

LAKE FAYETTE OAK THICKET PARK

Address: 4819 W. State Hwy 159, Fayetteville
Hours: 7 a.m.-7 p.m. daily
Phone: 979-249-3504
Website: vista-rec.com/parks/texas/lcra/oak-thicket-park/
Admission: Day passes are \$7 for adults; free for children 12 and younger; \$4 for 65 and older. Cabins available for an additional fee

Just 15 minutes from La Grange, Lake Fayette is great for bass-fishing enthusiasts. Its warm waters keep bass active year-round, while the occasional redear sunfish or catfish bite can add variety to the day. With accessible piers, boat ramps and quiet shoreline spots, Lake Fayette is fun for trophy fishing or a laid-back day on the water.

Why it's cool: At over 2,000 acres, Lake Fayette was built in the late 1970s as a cooling reservoir for the Fayette Power Project, operated by LCRA.
Trip tip: Bring your topwater bait for the best chance at a bass strike.



Lake Fayette Oak Thicket Park photo

FISHERMAN'S PARK SPLASH PAD & COLORADO RIVER ACCESS



Finlay Peck and Lyndon Azar of Bastrop cool off at Fisherman's Park splash pad. Sarah Beal photo

Address: 1200 Willow St., Bastrop
Hours: 10 a.m.-8 p.m. daily
Phone: 512-332-8920
Website: cityofbastrop.org/page/parks.parks_and_trails
Admission: Free

This go-to spot for fishing, boating and cooling off is part of the LCRA Colorado River Trail and Texas Parks & Wildlife Department project. Cast a line from the riverbank, or use the public boat ramp to launch kayaks, canoes or small boats. Families can head to the on-site splash pad. With shaded pavilions, playgrounds and direct river access, the park offers a laid-back way to spend time chilling outdoors.

Why it's cool: Since the park is just minutes from downtown, it's easy to pair river time with live music, shopping and restaurants.

Trip tip: Check river conditions before you go at hydromet.lcra.org. Water levels, flow and wind can change quickly, so make sure conditions are safe.

EAST METROPOLITAN PARK LAKE & SPLASH PAD

Address: 18706 Blake Manor Road, Manor
Hours: Park and wading pool open 8 a.m.-sunset daily. Pool open noon-6 p.m. Tuesday-Friday, 1-7 p.m. Saturday-Sunday.
Phone: 512-854-7275
Website: parks.traviscountytexas.gov/parks/east-metro

Admission: Pool: Children under 3 free; children 3-17, \$5; adults 18 and older, \$10

The park, on 273 acres about 19 miles east of Austin, offers a range of family-friendly water recreation activities. A wading area features interactive spray elements and gentle fountains where kids can cool off. More experienced swimmers may prefer the main draw: the park's lifeguarded pool. The park also features two stocked ponds, where anglers with a valid license can fish from the banks or pier as part of the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department's Neighborhood Fishin' program.

Why it's cool: Offering family fun since 2006, East Metropolitan Park's wide open green spaces, picnic spots and playgrounds can make your trek to water spots into an outdoor day trip.
Trip tip: Start early to enjoy cooler temperatures and the most active ponds.



Travis County Parks photo

OFFICE CLOSINGS

Bluebonnet offices will be closed Friday, July 3, in observance of Independence Day. If your power goes out, you can report it by texting OUT to 44141, online at bluebonnet.coop, on the MyBluebonnet mobile app or by calling 800-949-4414. You can pay your bills anytime online, on the mobile app or by calling 800-842-7708 (select option 2 when prompted).

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