



# VIGILANTE ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

P.O. Box 1049, Dillon, MT 59725-1049  
 (406) 683-2327 or (800) 221-8271  
 Web site: [www.vec.coop](http://www.vec.coop)  
 E-mail: [contact@vec.coop](mailto:contact@vec.coop)

OWNED BY THOSE WE SERVE

## A Message from Your Manager

# Treaty, sage grouse among co-op concerns



Rollie Miller  
 General Manager

### Columbia River Treaty

As I write this article, we and our partners are having discussions with the "U.S. Entity" concerning the Columbia River Treaty. The U.S. Entity is comprised of representatives from the Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. For those unfamiliar with the treaty, it is a 1964 agreement between Canada and the U.S. on the development and operation of dams in the upper Columbia River basin for power and flood control benefits in both countries. Four dams were constructed under this treaty: three in Canada, and one in the United States (Libby Dam). The treaty provided for the sharing with Canada of one-half of the downstream U.S. power and flood benefits, and allows the operation of treaty storage for other benefits. The treaty has a 10-year notice period for termination or any modifications, and the first opportunity for that notice is September 2014. It is our contention that the benefits to our Canadian friends have changed over time and greatly outweigh the benefits received by us here in the U.S. The worst part of this is that those benefits to Canada are paid for in our wholesale power rates through BPA, to the tune of \$250 million to \$350 million per year. In any case, the U.S. Entity will make a final recommendation in the next couple of months to the U.S. State Department, who will make the ultimate determination about the treaty.

### Sage Grouse

Recently I attended a meeting in Billings concerning Montana's Electric Cooperatives' efforts related to the listing of the sage grouse on the Endangered Species List. Gov. Steve Bullock has created the Greater sage

grouse Habitat Conservation Advisory Council to review options and formulate a management plan so as to limit the possibility of the sage grouse being listed. The listing of Sage Grouse within the Endangered Species Act would have a dramatic negative impact on this cooperative's ability to extend, replace or rebuild power lines, not to mention the negative impacts on ranching and residential activities. Incidentally, I was surprised at the amount of sage grouse activity and habitat in our service areas, primarily in the Centennial Valley and the Big Hole. Our effort, coordinated through the Montana Electric Cooperatives' Association, has been to promote the state management plan adopted in Wyoming, and endorsed and supported by the Bureau of Land Management and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The Wyoming Management Plan allows for the extension of power lines for residential and agricultural purposes within core sage grouse habitat areas within .6 miles of sage grouse mating areas, called leks, but additional requirements may be required to be met. For instance, construction is restricted during the mating season, it may be required to be put underground, and/or additional raptor perch restrictions must be incorporated. Although the cost of extending power lines in these areas will increase with this plan, we feel it is manageable from our perspective and shows a good faith effort on our part to help the sage grouse habitat areas.

### Budgeting and Rates

As stated earlier, we are seeing an increase in our wholesale rates from

*Continued on page 6*

## Trustees

### President

*Dean Peterson*

### Vice President

*Dean Hanson*

### Secretary/Treasurer

*Sharon Lasich*

*Tom Helm*

*Andy Johnson*

*Don Jones*

*Allen Martinell*

*Jim Petersen*

*Norm Tebay*

### General Manager

*Rollie Miller*

## Outage Notification Numbers

M-F 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

**683-2327 or  
 (800) 221-8271**

### Dillon

After Hours Mon. - Thurs.

*Dan Snellman* .....683-6222

*Tim Myllymaki* .....683-6369

*Charles Wharton* .....660-1878

### Weekends

**683-2327 or  
 (800) 221-8271**

### Whitehall

After Hours and Weekends

*Marty Simons* .....287-3950

*John Moos* .....266-3605

*Justin Bair* .....266-3351

### Townsend

After Hours and Weekends

*John Moos* .....266-3605

*Justin Bair* .....266-3351

*Marty Simons* .....287-3950

# WHERE DOES ALL THE ENERGY GO?

By Rod Siring, Member Services

The Department of Energy estimates that families spend close to \$2,000 a year on their home's utility bills, and that residential energy consumption accounts for 22 percent of the energy consumed in the United States. It is also estimated that a large portion of that energy, as much as 25 percent, is wasted every year. The good news is that there is a lot we can do to save energy and money.

The first step is to understand how we use energy in our homes and taking a whole-house approach in reducing energy consumption. Current estimates have 54 percent of all energy used in homes for heating and cooling, 23 percent for lighting, electronics and appliances (including refrigeration), 18 percent for water heating and 5 percent other.

The following are some easy low-cost and no-cost ways to save:

## Heating and Cooling

- Have your furnace cleaned and tuned so that it is functioning properly.
- Change your furnace filter

- Make sure that air intakes are not blocked and the system has adequate amounts of fresh air.
- Have the ductwork inspected; make sure ducts are properly insulated and that no holes or gaps exist. Ductwork that leaks air into unheated spaces can add hundreds of dollars a year to your utility bill.
- When heating, keep the thermostat as low as comfortably possible, and when cooling keep the thermostat as high as comfortably possible.
- Installing a programmable thermostat can aid in saving energy.

## Lighting and Appliances

- When buying new appliances, buy Energy-Star-rated appliances.
- Use compact fluorescent light bulbs instead of incandescent bulbs.
- Air dry dishes instead of using your dishwasher drying cycle.
- Air dry clothes when you can.
- Turn off your lights.
- Minimize phantom loads. Phantom loads are a fast-growing segment of energy usage in the home. This is the power consumed by electronic devices even when they are not on.

You can reduce phantom loads by plugging home electronics, such as computers, monitors, TVs and DVD players, into a smart power strip.

## Water Heater

- If purchasing an energy-efficient model is not an option, insulate the tank and pipes of the old one. Make sure not to cover the thermostat or burner compartment.
- Drain a quart of water from your tank every three months to remove sediment that impedes heat transfer and lowers the efficiency of your heater.
- Lower the thermostat on your hot water heater to 120°F.
- Take short showers instead of baths.
- Wash only full loads of dishes and clothes.

These are only a few of the ways you can take control of your home energy usage. If you would like more ideas on low-cost/no cost energy-saving ideas, the Internet has numerous sources. The ones that I use as references are TogetherWeSave.coop by Touchstone Energy, and [energysavers.gov](http://energysavers.gov) which is sponsored by the U.S. Department of Energy.

# CELEBRATING SERVICE TO OUR COOPERATIVE

By Rod Siring, Member Services

Each year the Montana Electric Cooperatives' Association (MECA) hosts its annual meeting in Great Falls. This is a three-day event providing today's and tomorrow's cooperative leaders with valuable insight and education. MECA also takes time to honor individuals who have made a significant contribution to rural electrification, and cooperative trustees and employees for their years of dedicated service. This year, one trustee and two employees were recognized for their years of service.

## Jim Petersen - 35 Years

Jim joined the Board of Trustees in January 1978, and has served in every capacity on the board. He is the trustee for the Dillon south area, where he is a farmer/rancher.

## Dan Snellman - 35 Years

Dan came to work at Vigilante Electric Cooperative as a journeyman lineman at our Townsend shop in May



Jim Petersen



Dan Snellman



John Moos

1978. In 1993, Dan became the line superintendent, and has worked out of our Dillon office ever since.

## John Moos - 25 Years

John came to work at Vigilante Electric Cooperative as a journeyman lineman in February 1988. John has worked his entire career with us at our Townsend shop. In 2006, John became

the area foreman for the Townsend area.

*"These men are great examples of the type of leadership and dedication you find at rural electric cooperatives. It is my honor to be working with them," said General Manager, Rollie Miller.*

On behalf of Vigilante Electric Cooperative we would like to congratulate and thank these men for their services and dedication to our organization.

# Concerns

Continued from page 3

BPA of approximately 9 percent. That increase took effect October 1, in line with BPA's fiscal year. The good news is that we will not see a rate increase for 2015 as this BPA rate period is for two years. Our fiscal year is on a calendar year basis, and therefore we have been working to prepare a budget and revenue requirements using the higher cost wholesale power rate. By the time you read this, we will have submitted our budget proposal to the Board of Trustees, and will be finalizing it in the next month. We will then determine the retail rates for the coming year based on that budget. At this point, it appears that there will be a nominal increase in retail rates for next year, subject to trustee approval in late November. Please keep in mind that we are doing everything we can to control our costs and operate VEC in a financially sound and efficient manner.

We hope you will find the time to honor our veterans on their special day, and hope you will have a very happy Thanksgiving. Our offices will be closed for those days as well. If you need to contact me for anything, feel free to call me at the office or on my mobile at (406) 925-1085. You also can reach me via email at [rollie@vec.coop](mailto:rollie@vec.coop).

## Prescription Discount Tracker

Total Paid Claims YTD .....	123
Total Savings YTD.....	\$3,276.19
Total Savings Percentage .....	31%
Sept. 2013 paid claims .....	11
Sept. Savings .....	\$350.62
Sept. Savings Percentage ..	46.76%



# Co-op Connections

## My Co-op Deals

By Rod Siring, Member Services

If you have been on the Co-op Connections website, and/or have been following this series of articles, you know that there is a broad variety of discounts available to you because you are a member of Vigilante Electric Cooperative. This month we will look at the discounts available from two extremely well-known and trusted businesses.

If you are in the market for office supplies, you have to check out the offers from Office Depot. The Co-op Connections member benefit program has permanently negotiated amazing rates to help you save. Participants receive up to 80 percent off preferred product (online see Best Value list), 15 percent off retail Web pricing for 3,000 commonly used products and other below-retail discounts on more than 93,000 products. You also can receive next day delivery with free shipping on orders of more than \$50.

These discounts are available online or at one of Office Depot's store locations. You can access the Office Depot website through the Co-op Connections website, and then follow the online guidance. To secure savings when shopping at one of Office Depot's locations, you will need a Store Purchasing Card. This card has the Co-op Connections account number and instructions for the Office Depot associate. This card can be printed off from the website. If you do not have Internet access, contact our

Dillon office and we will send you one.

One of the most unique collaborations with the Co-op Connections member benefit program is with mortgage lender Quicken Loans. JD Power and Associates ranked Quicken Loans "Highest in Customer Satisfaction for Primary Mortgage Orientation" — three years in a row. They have over 28 years in direct lending experience. They have an A+ rating with the Better Business Bureau, and Quicken Loans, also has been in *Fortune* magazines top 30 for the 100 best companies to work for, for 10 consecutive years.

Co-op Connections and Quicken Loans have teamed up to bring you the benefits of fast closings, a dedicated mortgage banking team, award-winning service and \$500 cash back after closing your mortgage with Quicken Loans! To receive these benefits and make this your best mortgage experience yet, call your dedicated Quicken Loans mortgage line at (800) 646-1044.

These and all of the discounts that have appeared in this publication are part of the Co-op Connections program, and can be found in the My Co-op Deals on the website [www.connections.coop](http://www.connections.coop). This will be the last in this series, but not the last story highlighting all the benefits available from this program. In coming editions, we will look at what is available through My VIP Savings and the *Coupon.com* program.

### Affordable. Innovative. Member Focused.

It's hard to predict the future, but one thing seems certain—**new government regulations will increase the cost of electricity.**

We want to work with you to keep your electric bills **AFFORDABLE**. We're controlling costs and no matter what the future holds we'll continue to put you, our members, **FIRST**.



Vigilante Electric Cooperative



Looking Out for YOU

Find out how we're Looking Out for You at