



# VIGILANTE ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

P.O. Box 1049, Dillon, MT 59725-1049

(406) 683-2327 or (800) 221-8271

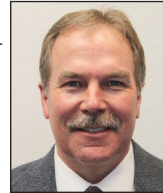
Web site: [www.vec.coop](http://www.vec.coop)

E-mail: [contact@vec.coop](mailto:contact@vec.coop)

OWNED BY THOSE WE SERVE

*A Message from Your General Manager*

## No rate increase proposed for 2017



Rollie Miller  
General Manager

### 2017 Budget

The staff and I have prepared and submitted to the Board of Trustees the 2017 Capital and Operating Budget in draft format. The primary component of next year's budget is that we are not recommending a rate increase for 2017. Although we will see an increase, which is yet to be determined, in our wholesale power costs in October 2017, we feel we will have adequate provisions in place to avoid passing this increase on to the members. We have numerous powerline construction projects planned for next year throughout the service territory in addition to replacing some expensive trucks. We have the lowest retail residential and irrigation rates in the state, and this proposed budget will not change that.

### Capital Credit General Retirement

At the October board meeting, the Board of Trustees approved a capital credit general retirement totaling \$537,705. This is retirement of excess margins from 2000 and a portion of 2001. Capital credits are net margins above our costs for a given year. As a non-profit, we use those margins for a period of time to keep our

rates low, but ultimately return them to the members. So if you were a member in 2000 or 2001 and have not accepted the discounted capital credits offered previously, you will be receiving a check from us in early December.

### Vigilante Electric Cooperative Needs Your Assistance

The dams of the Federal Columbia and Snake River systems are under serious attack by various extremist groups. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, The Bureau of Reclamation and Bonneville Power Administration have begun an operations environmental impact study scoping process where these entities are accepting comments until January 17, 2017. In an effort to ensure we have reliable low-cost power well into the future, we need your participation in submitting comments. The dams provide significant benefits, including recreation, flood control and, most importantly, carbon-free electric generation. We think the dams can co-exist with the fish migration in every case. Nearly one-third of our current wholesale power cost goes to fish mitigation efforts, and those efforts have shown tremendous success in dam fish passage. Please see

the information below and, if compelled to do so, submit comments as you see fit. Email comments can be sent to [comment@crso.info](mailto:comment@crso.info). Letters can be mailed to U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Attn: CRSO EIS, PO Box 2870, Portland, OR 97208-2870. We need to keep our power costs affordable. If you agree, please submit your comments accordingly.

### Fast Facts: The Columbia-Snake River Hydropower System

Northwest hydropower is the region's largest source of carbon-free, renewable electricity

- Nearly 60 percent of the energy produced in Washington, Oregon, Idaho and Montana is generated by hydropower dams on the Columbia and Snake rivers.

- The next largest contributors to the region's power mix each contribute only a quarter of that amount (coal — 16 percent, natural gas — 11 percent) (EIA).

- The majority (90 percent) of the Northwest's renewable energy comes from hydropower dams, which generate carbon-free electricity without releasing measurable amounts of methane.

### Hydropower backs up

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## Outage Notification Numbers

M-F 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.  
**683-2327 or  
(800) 221-8271**

### Dillon

After Hours Mon. - Thurs.  
Justin Bair .....925-1540  
Charles Wharton ..660-1878  
Gary Ferris.....683-6321

### Weekends

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

### Whitehall

After Hours and  
Weekends

Marty Simons .....287-3950  
Chuck Romerio ....491-5466  
Zach  
Maershbecker ...701-290-9265

### Townsend

After Hours and  
Weekends

John Moos .....266-3605  
Chase White .....459-3892  
Marty Simons .....287-3950

VIGILANTE ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE, INC.

## No rate increase

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### other renewables; wind/solar cannot replace hydro generation

- Hydropower is a vital partner for other renewables that allows them to be integrated into the power grid.

- Hydropower cannot be replaced by wind or solar because they are intermittent resources and the technology doesn't yet exist to store them.

- The Northwest can use more wind and solar than other parts of the country because hydropower is always available to back up these less-constant energy sources.

### The federal hydrosystem helps fuel the region's economy

- Dams make the rivers navigable for barges that move Northwest products to port.

- The Columbia-Snake River System supports the movement of more than 42 million tons of commercial cargo, valued at more than \$20 billion, every year.

- The Columbia-Snake River System is the nation's top wheat export gateway. Nearly 10 percent of all U.S. wheat exports move through the lower Snake River dams.

- Low-cost hydropower keeps traditional jobs in the Northwest, including those at Boeing, wood and chemical companies and aluminum manufacturers, and has helped attract newer employers such as Intel, Google, Facebook, Amazon and BMW.

### Salmon and dams are co-existing and thriving

- New salmon friendly technologies, such as fish slides, bypass systems and fish-friendly turbines have vastly improved survival of salmon through the dams.

- Now, overall survival of young salmon through the hydrosystem is akin to that in free-flowing rivers with no dams, according to NOAA Fisheries.

- A \$1 billion program to restore habitat in the Columbia Basin has improved salmon nurseries and spawning habitat.

- All Columbia and Snake river dams are equipped with

ladders and other safe passageways for returning adult salmon.

- A new record of more than 2.5 million returning adults was set in 2014, the most since Bonneville Dam was built.

### Fast Facts: Snake River dams

#### The Snake River dams keep millions of tons of carbon dioxide out of our skies annually

- The four dams on the lower Snake River generate more than 1,000 average megawatts of energy annually — enough for more than 800,000 average U.S. homes — with no carbon emissions.

- It would take three coal-fired or six gas-fired power plants to replace the power produced by the Snake River dams, according to the Northwest Power and Conservation Council (NWPCC).

- Removing the Snake River dams would mean adding 3 million to 4 million metric tons of carbon dioxide to Northwest skies each year (NWPCC).

- That figure doesn't include the increased carbon

dioxide emissions from the additional 43,610 railcars, or more than 167,000 semi-trucks, that would be needed to replace barges on the Lower Snake.

### Claims that the dams should be removed to help Puget Sound whales are unfounded

- Dam breaching is not necessary for orca recovery: As stated in NOAA Fisheries' 2016 Southern Resident Killer Whale Fact Sheet: "Neither opinion [2008 and 2014 Biological Opinions], nor the NOAA Recovery Plans that NOAA Fisheries has developed for individual salmon species and stocks, concluded that breaching the dams is necessary for recovery of Snake River salmon or Southern Resident killer whales."

- The dams are not depleting food for orcas: "The biological opinions concluded that hatchery production of salmon and steelhead in the Columbia and Snake systems more than offsets any losses of salmon from the killer whale prey base caused by the dams," according to NOAA.

## VEC Leadership Award and MECA Memorial Scholarship Providing Opportunities

By Rod Siring,  
Member Services

Vigilante Electric Cooperative has long been committed to providing educational opportunities to young people in our service territory. Each year, I research the costs of a higher education and each year I am amazed at where current costs are, and how they have escalated over the years. The figures vary depending on the source, but there is no denying that there are definite financial challenges when it comes to

paying for college.

CollegeData, an online college advisory site, estimates that a moderate budget for an in-state public school is \$24,061 per year. They even break down this budget into different expenses, \$9,410 for tuition and fees, \$10,138 for housing and meals, \$1,298 for books and supplies, and \$3,215 for personal and transportation costs.

Thankfully, there are many organizations such as ours that want to help. We understand the importance of a

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# Scholarships

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higher education, and understand that one of the biggest challenges is just getting your student to fill out applications. This is why we have paired our Leadership Award with the Montana Electric Cooperatives' Association (MECA) Memorial Scholarship. This gives deserving students the opportunity at two scholarships with one application.

The VEC Leadership

Award/MECA Memorial Scholarship is given to students who not only excel in the classroom, but in their communities. Judging is based on grades, ACT/SAT scores, activities in school and community, high school and/or college employment, a personal statement and one letter of recommendation. The application is available online at [www.vec.coop](http://www.vec.coop) and at your area high school.

All applications received are eligible for Vigilante Electric Cooperative's Leadership award. The appli-

cation judged the best will be forwarded to the Montana Electric Cooperatives' Association to compete for one of four \$500 scholarships.

All of our educational opportunities are funded by unclaimed capital credits, which we are required to retain for five years. At the end of this period we can either use the funds for educational purposes or turn them over to the state of Montana. The balance of this fund fluctuates year to year, but is the determining factor

in the number of scholarships we offer and the dollar value of each. Last year the Board of Trustees approved 19 scholarships worth \$500 each.

To be eligible, the student must be a member or the dependent of a member of Vigilante Electric Cooperative. Judging criteria is set forth in the application. The deadline for applications is January 13, 2017. If you have any questions, contact our Dillon office at 683-2327 or (800) 221-8271.

## Help us to Help Others

### Investing in the Safety of our Communities

By Rod Siring,  
Member Services

Electric cooperatives adhere to seven core principles — principle seven is concern for community. As a former volunteer firefighter and department officer, I am very aware of the importance of donations from organizations such as Vigilante Electric Cooperative. In many situations donations are needed to fund items that cannot be purchased because of budgetary constraints. This is one of

the reasons why we are proud to introduce Vigilante Safety Roundup.

Vigilante Safety Roundup will provide our members with a way to donate to the organizations in our communities that keep us safe. Members can "voluntarily" allow Vigilante Electric to round their monthly bill up to the next whole dollar. They also can voluntarily round their bill up plus add a few extra dollars each month, or make a one-time donation.

Regardless of how the donations are made, 100

percent of the money will be presented to worthy organizations through grants. Grants will be awarded through an application process and will be reviewed by the Vigilante Electric Board of Trustees.

Many electric cooperatives have successful "roundup" programs that provide assistance to a broad variety of organizations. From their experience, the average roundup donation is about 50 cents per month.

We know that in today's world everyone's budget is

tight and every penny counts — this is why Vigilante Safety Roundup is such a fantastic way to make your pennies work to benefit others. Individually pennies don't go far, but when we add up all of the donations, we can help many organizations.

To sign up for Vigilante Safety Roundup, you can go to our website ([www.vec.coop](http://www.vec.coop)) or complete the form below and return it with your bill payment or mail it to:



**Vigilante Electric Cooperative**  
**PO Box 1049**  
**Dillon MT 59725**

**Please sign me up for Vigilante Safety Roundup. Here is how I want to help:**

- Round my bill up to the nearest whole dollar each month.
- Round my bill up to the nearest whole dollar plus take an extra \$ \_\_\_\_\_ each month.
- I would like to make a one-time donation of \$ \_\_\_\_\_ which is enclosed.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Account Number \_\_\_\_\_

# Tesla Comes to Lima

Over the past few years, most of the major auto manufacturers have started to produce and sell all electric or hybrid electric vehicles. The casual observer might not see an electric vehicle as practical considering battery issues, charging times and the availability of charging stations. It would be understandable to view electric vehicles as a mere commuter option. Tesla Motors, however, is doing its best to change this perception.

Tesla, based in Palo Alto, California, produces premium electric sedans and SUVs, and is on the leading edge of not only automotive innovation but of battery storage and charging technol-



ogy. Tesla has been investing in a nationwide network of supercharging stations. Touted as the world's fastest charging stations, these superchargers are free connectors that charge Tesla vehicles in minutes instead of hours.

At the time of this article, Tesla had 734 supercharging stations, with each station

having multiple chargers. This includes seven in Montana, and one soon to be open in Lima. Supercharging stations are strategically placed to minimize stops during long-distance travel and are located where at least some basic amenities can be found.

For current Tesla models with the supercharger

technology, an 80 percent battery charge will take approximately 30 minutes. There are several variables (speed, outside temperature, heat or A/C use and wheel size) that affect the travel distance between charges, but this should be good for about 170 miles.



*Merry Christmas*  
AND HAPPY NEW YEAR

*to all of our members!*