



# 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)

*A Message from Your General Manager*

## Rate Pressures



Rollie Miller  
General Manager

As I write this article, there are two key issues affecting your electric cooperative that I wanted to bring to your attention. The first involves Montana Senate Bill 363, allowing for funding for an Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) mitigation measure. The AIS impact funding is part of a broad funding package targeting fishing licenses and a new tax on hydropower generation in Montana. The new hydropower generation tax is imposed on generators located within the state of Montana and, in the case of electric cooperatives, those that have a generation portfolio of a more than 50 percent hydropower mix. This means that Vigilante Electric and all of the Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) customers in western Montana will be affected. One positive note on the funding source for this legislation from the cooperatives in Montana is that it is for a period of just two years.

We think that the AIS problem within the state of Montana involves all of us. We are committed to doing our part for the long-term viability of our natural resources, but the funding should come from all of us within the state, not just those using hydropower generation. This additional tax on Vigilante Electric will have an adverse effect on our budget, as the legislation will take effect immediately, without any opportunity to plan for it. Furthermore, we are fighting to ensure that there are not more taxes or proposals for this AIS measure placed on BPA itself through the Northwest Power and Conservation Council, an advisory council to BPA from the individual north-west region states. Through the Montana Electric Cooperatives' Association (MECA), our statewide association, we are vigorously fighting any new or additional taxes or levies placed on the kWh energy we distribute to you, the members.

The second key issue is the possibility of what is called a CRAC, or Cost Recovery

Adjustment Clause, within our wholesale power provider BPA. This is a one-year adder to our monthly wholesale power bills, which can be significant. Due to complex pricing and generation issues, BPA may not receive enough revenue to meet its regulatory obligations. Primary drivers in this CRAC determination are a combination of wholesale market energy pricing, mild temperatures, significant snowpack in the northwest (and thus water for hydropower generation), significant wind generation and lower than planned usage within the region. Due to significant installation of wind generation in the region, BPA may be in what is called an oversupply situation, whereby some wind generation may be directed to be curtailed. In this case, BPA is required to pay the wind generators to shut off. The result of all this is higher wholesale power costs that are unbudgeted or unplanned for.

From our perspective, the end result is that we may need to raise our retail rates to compensate for both the AIS and CRAC measures. We are doing everything we can to control our costs and keep our rates as low as possible, but some things are out of our control. We will know much more on the CRAC impacts in the next couple of months. I will provide updates as they become available to me, and will do what I can to keep you informed so you can do the planning you need to do in operating your own budgets. Having said that "bad" news, our residential and irrigation retail rates continue to be the lowest in the state and some of the lowest in the country, and we aim to keep it that way.

We hope you enjoy the start of your summer, and if you need to contact me for any reason, feel free to call me on my mobile phone at (406) 925-1085, or email me at [rollie@vec.coop](mailto:rollie@vec.coop).

## 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 Romero* ....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.

# Power strips versus surge protectors

By Tom Tate

As the proliferation of electronics impacts our daily lives, we realize there simply are not enough outlets in our homes. This is particularly true for older homes. As a result, we end up with a number of “outlet expanders,” more commonly known as power strips.

Power strips are generic and fulfill a very simple function. They are inexpensive and the quality, I suspect, is on par with the price.

Keeping this in mind, let’s look at factors to consider when purchasing a power strip or a surge protector, the power strip’s more talented cousin.

Important tip: Make sure you know the amperage rating of the outlet into which you are connecting the strip and other equipment. A residential circuit can overload if you are not careful.

### Purchasing a power strip:

- Look for power strips with a built-in circuit breaker. If you connect too many electronics and devices, the strip will kick out the circuit breaker rather than causing the breaker in your electric panel to trip.
- Pay attention to the orientation of the outlets. The typical design is along the length of the strip, facing the bottom or end of the strip. I recommend power strips with the outlets perpendicular to the length of the strip.
- Get a smart strip. These are becoming more common and less expensive. With smart strips, one outlet serves as a master, receiving power all the time. The other outlets do not receive power until the master device is turned on. This is ideal for home entertainment setups.

If you are connecting expensive electronics, you may want to consider a surge protector. Here, price is even more important because a cheap surge protector can be worse than



none at all for two reasons. One, they use cheap, small surge-fighting components. Two, these components can fail and the strip still will provide power, all without any indication that its protective side is gone.

Like power strips, there are some key factors to consider when buying a surge protector.

- Go for a significant joule (pronounced jewel) rating. This is a measure of how much energy it can withstand.
- Cable and internet connection protection. You may want to consider this for your entertainment and computing needs as surges can enter via any wired connection. Be sure the protector is designed to handle a digital television. Otherwise, it can cause pixilation if it’s only designed for analog signals.
- Indicator light that shows if protection has burned out.
- The same outlet orientation as previously mentioned.
- Power-conditioning feature (for PCs, this is a nice-to-have feature, but not a necessity).
- A smart capability as mentioned above.

Power strips and surge protectors are worth the investment when you follow these simple suggestions. Don’t get “burned” by purchasing cheap, inefficient strips and protectors — pun intended.

## Cooperative Outreach

### Career Talk

By Rod Siring, Member Services

Recently, Vigilante Electric Cooperative was asked to participate in a career fair organized by Beaverhead County High School. The fair was for current sophomores and juniors, and designed to open the students minds to not only career options but the skill sets needed by area businesses.

This year, the school was interested in having a lineman and an engineer talk with its students. In true cooperative spirit, two of our managers found time to take part in this event. As an organization, we would like to thank Manager of Engineering Gary Ferris and Line Superintendent Justin Bair for taking time out of their busy schedules to participate in this event.



Line Superintendent Justin Bair



Manager of Engineering Gary Ferris

# Strengthening Our Future

*Reno-Morast Graduates from the Management Internship Program*



*Office Manager Raquel Reno-Morast receiving her certificate of completion from Gary Pfann, director, executive and staff education at National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.*

**W**e would like to congratulate Vigilante Electric Cooperative Office Manager Raquel Reno-Morast for successfully completing an intensive program in electric utility management at the University of Wisconsin, Madison.

The Robert I. Kabat Management Internship Program (MIP) is a series of workshops offered by the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association in conjunction with the University of Wisconsin. The program guides participants through all facets of the electric utility industry, including the many changes occurring around the nation.

According to General Manager Rollie Miller, "The MIP training is intense, advanced training, and I am happy to have my management team complete it, and am especially proud of Raquel for her effort related to this. We work very well together as a unit, and this training can be attributed to some of that success. I would also like to thank the board of trustees for allowing budget funding for this type of training."

Raquel is one of only a few electric utility management staff that will graduate from the Management Internship Program this year.

MIP participants go through three 10-day sessions designed to challenge and educate participants in new, innovative management techniques. Participants leave with a better understanding of what consumers want — and how to ensure they get it.

By also covering the unique principles that govern the operations of electric cooperatives, the program helps the co-op analyze other business ventures it may want to enter, as well as enhancing the core organization.

Only rural electric cooperative CEOs and top-level management participate in the program. This allows greater emphasis of study on management challenges and the aspects of consumer-ownership that cooperatives enjoy. Participants learn to focus on member value as part of day-to-day decision making.

Raquel has completed one of the most exclusive educational programs in the nation for electric cooperative management. We congratulate her for this accomplishment and thank her for her dedication to our organization.

# On the Clock

**Chelsey Hutchison**



Chelsey Hutchison

**V**igilante Electric Cooperative would like to take this opportunity to introduce you to our newest employee, Chelsey Hutchison.

Chelsey will be working in our Dillon office as the consumer clerk. She is a Montana native raised in Helena, and she has a Bachelor of Arts Degree in literature from the University of Montana-Western. Most recently, she worked as the Admissions Coordinator for the Montana Youth Challenge Academy.

Chelsey and her husband, Adam, have two daughters, Raylee Ann and Stevie Jo. We would like to welcome Chelsey and her family to our organization and look forward to a long association.

# Noel Earns Journeyman Certification

**I**n February of 2016, Morgan Noel joined Vigilante Electric Cooperative as an apprentice lineman working out of our Dillon shop. We would like to take this opportunity to congratulate Morgan on successfully completing his apprenticeship and earning his journeyman lineman certification through the Mountain States Apprenticeship Program.



Morgan Noel

This apprentice program is quite intensive, taking about four years to complete and a minimum of 7,000 hours of on-the-job training and related instructional class work. General Manager Rollie Miller stated, "This is a major milestone for any lineman to achieve, and I am proud of Morgan completing the program with such high success. He is a great employee and we are happy he is a part of our team."

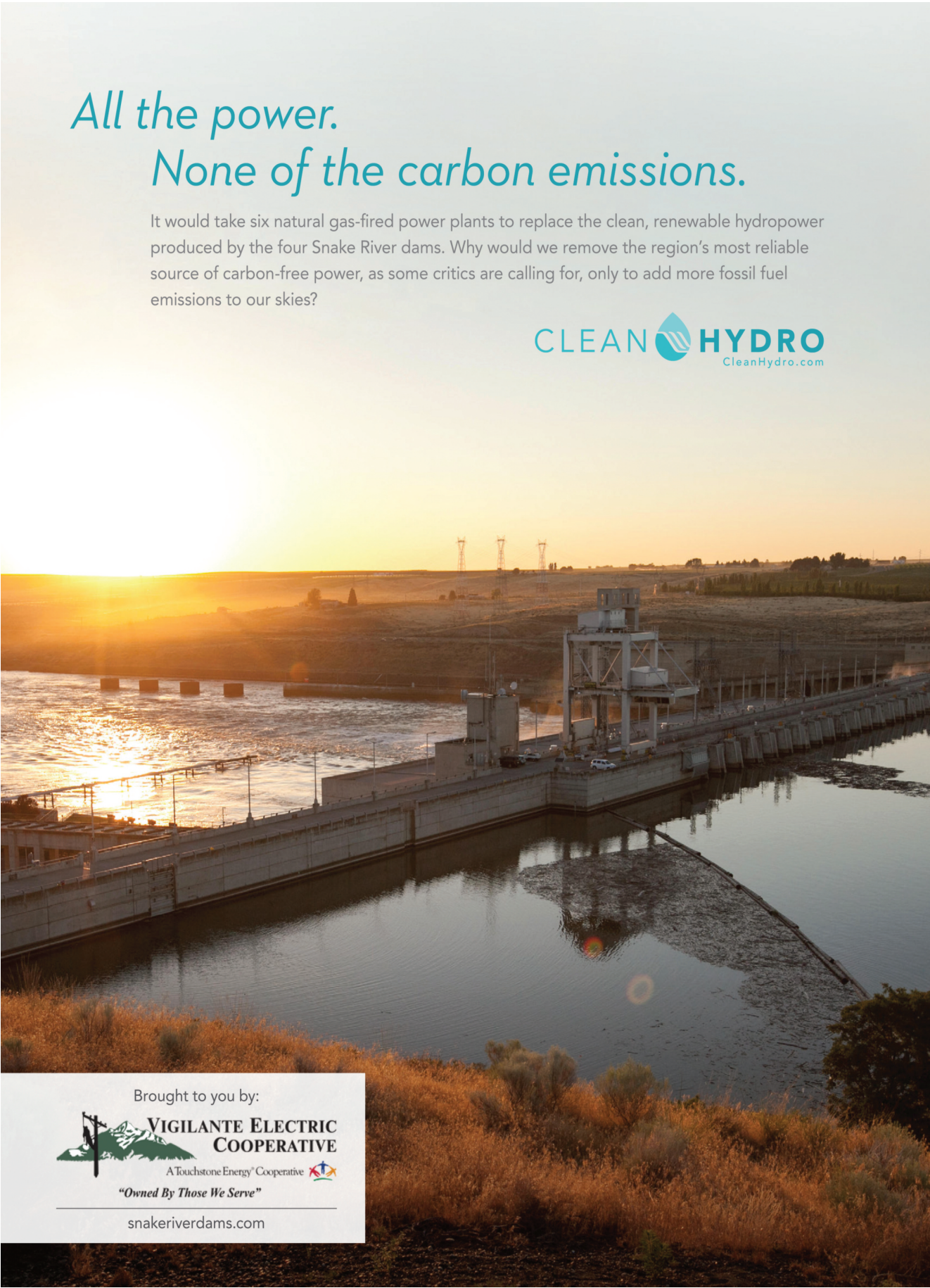
## Co-op Connections

### Prescription Discount Tracker

Total Paid Claims YTD .....	574
Total Savings YTD .....	\$21,891.31
Total Savings Percentage.....	42.51%
February Paid Claims .....	7
February Savings .....	\$1,700.70
February Savings Percentage .....	60.74%

# All the power. None of the carbon emissions.


It would take six natural gas-fired power plants to replace the clean, renewable hydropower produced by the four Snake River dams. Why would we remove the region's most reliable source of carbon-free power, as some critics are calling for, only to add more fossil fuel emissions to our skies?



Brought to you by:



**VIGILANTE ELECTRIC  
COOPERATIVE**

A Touchstone Energy<sup>®</sup> Cooperative 

*"Owned By Those We Serve"*

[snakeriverdams.com](http://snakeriverdams.com)