



Vigilante Electric Cooperative

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

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'21 District Meetings

By **ROD SIRING** | *Member Services*

DESPITE the uncertainty due to the current pandemic, Vigilante Electric Cooperative is preparing for our 2021 annual meeting. The first steps in our annual meeting process are the district meetings. District meetings serve two important functions; they are where nominations are made for district trustee, and they provide a forum for open discussion about the affairs of the cooperative.

Vigilante Electric's service territory is divided into nine districts. Each district has an elected representative on the board of trustees who serves a three-year term. Terms are staggered to maintain six experienced trustees at all times. District meetings provide members interested in running for the board the opportunity of securing a nomination. The actual election is held at the annual meeting.

The district meetings also provide those who are not able to attend the annual meeting a chance to hear about the state of the cooperative from General Manager Rollie Miller. This is an excellent opportunity to interact with the manager because they are less formal than the annual meeting and the group size is small, making the interaction more intimate.

Members residing within these districts will be notified by mail. If you would like further information regarding the district meetings or running for district trustee, please call us at (800) 221-8271 or 683-2327.

RM

TRUSTEES SEEKING REELECTION

This year, the following districts have trustees up for nomination. The dates and locations for each district meeting are provided, as well as a brief bio for the trustees seeking re-election.

District #4 Twin Bridges/Point of Rocks



Meeting Date: January 26, 2021

Location: Montana Room, Twin Bridges High School

Trustee: Sharon Lasich was elected to the Board of Trustees in 2003, and currently serves as vice president. Sharon and her husband Doug reside south of Twin Bridges, where they ranch. She currently represents Vigilante Electric on the Montana Electric Cooperatives' Association Audit Standing Committee and the Montana Council of Cooperatives.

District #5 Melrose/Wise River/Silver Bow



Meeting Date: January 18, 2021

Location: Big Hole River Retreat

Trustee: Cheyenne Garrison was elected to the Board of Trustees in 2015 and currently serves as secretary/treasurer. Cheyenne and her husband Jim operate a ranch near Glen, where they raise Angus Cross cattle.

District #7 Wisdom/Jackson



Meeting Date: January 19, 2021

Location: Community Center, Wisdom

Trustee: Dean Peterson was elected to the Board of Trustees in 2009. He and his wife Dianna live and ranch between Jackson and Wisdom. During Dean's tenure he has served as president and vice president of the Board of Trustees, and currently represents Vigilante Electric on the MECA Legislative and Communications Standing Committees.

Board of Trustees & General Manager

Tom Helm, President

Dist. #3

Townsend/N. Helena/Lump

Gulch

Sharon Lasich, Vice Pres.

Dist. #4

Twin Bridges

Cheyenne Garrison, Sec./Treas.

Dist. #5

Wise River/Silver Bow/Melrose

Norm Tebay, Trustee

Dist. #1

Cardwell/Whitehall/Three Forks

Dean Hanson, Trustee

Dist. #2

Silver Star/Waterloo

Andy Johnson, Trustee

Dist. #6

Dillon North/Glen

Dean Peterson, Trustee

Dist. #7

Jackson/Wisdom

Tom Mitchell, Trustee

Dist. #8

Dillon South/Grant

Allen Martinell,

Dist. #9

Dell/Lima

Rollie Miller – General Manager

Let's connect

Reap all the benefits of being an electric cooperative member

Column by **ANNE PRINCE** | For Vigilante Electric

WHEN we say that we live in a “connected” world, most of us think about technology, such as our smart phones and other devices and gadgets. But when you’re a member of an electric co-op, there’s so much more to being part of our connected co-op community.

As member of Vigilante Electric Cooperative, you help to power good in our communities through initiatives such as our Safety Roundup program, a member-driven program where members donate and grants are awarded for safety-related projects.

We greatly value our connection to our members. We strive to help you maximize the value you can get from Vigilante Electric through a variety of programs, products and services that we offer our members. For example, we can help you save money on your energy bill through our free energy audits and rebates on a wide variety of energy-efficient improvements. When you download our SmartHub app, you can monitor and manage your home energy use, pay your bill online and communicate to us through the app.

When you follow us on the pages of the *Rural Montana* magazine, through our website and on Facebook, you will find information on political issues that could impact rates, information on programs and services, information on cooperative events, and be updated on current outages.

By connecting with us, we create a much better flow of information. That’s why we want to make sure we have your most current contact information. If we can’t connect with you, you could miss out on potential savings or important outage information.

Vigilante Electric relies on data for nearly every aspect of our operations, and up-to-date contact information from our members helps ensure that we can provide the highest level of member service.

We hope you will connect with us whenever and wherever you can — whether that means attending our annual meeting, providing feedback on a recent visit or call with our employees, or by simply downloading the SmartHub app.



Stay connected, save money, manage your home energy use and pay your bill online with our SmartHub app.

We exist to serve our members, and when we’re better connected to you and our local community, we’re better prepared to answer the call. We depend on you because you power our success. When Vigilante Electric does well, our communities thrive because we’re all connected.

To update your contact information, you can manage it through the SmartHub app, call us at 683-2327 or 800-221-8271, or you can use the space provided in the return stub for your payment.

We look forward to connecting with you! 



Vigilante Electric Cooperative
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Vigilante Safety Roundup Tracker

Participating members: 396
Total Contributions: \$6,905.83

To apply, contact our office at
(800) 221-8271 or 683-2327
An online application is available at www.vec.coop.

Advanced power strips

Purchase some peace of mind and save energy

By **ROD SIRING** | *Member Services*

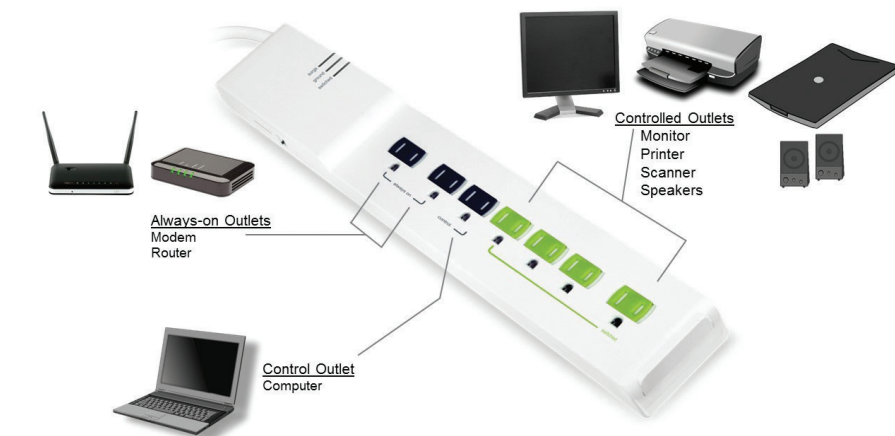
TAKE a look around your home. Is there an entertainment center or a home office – or both? With this in mind consider the costs of operating your electronic stockpile, and what it would cost if you had to replace these items. For a little peace of mind with your plugged-in electronic load, consider the use of an advanced power strip (APS).

Electronics are the fastest growing source of electrical load in your home. Some reports estimate it at about 12 percent of the total electricity use in an average home. The problem is, many electronics continue to draw power after they've been turned off. The term for this wasted energy is "vampire loads." Basic power strips simply allow you to plug more than one item into a wall outlet. Advanced power strips are a convenient, low-cost solution for reducing the electricity wasted when these devices are idle.

While there are a variety of different types of APS, they share common base functions. APS come with a control outlet where you plug in your most used device. In a home entertainment center this would be the television. In a home office this would be where you plug in the computer tower.

Then there are the controlled outlets, which are for accessory devices used together with the device plugged into the control outlet. In an entertainment center this would be things such as gaming consoles and sound bars, and in home office items such as monitors, printers, scanners and speakers.

Finally, there are outlets that are always on for devices that require



constant power. For an entertainment center this would be where your cable box/DVR would be plugged in, and for the home office the modem and router.

Beyond the base elements you can buy APS with an array of advanced feature such as activity monitoring and motion sensors that detect the presence of people in the room. While some electronics interact better with advanced power strips than others, you can impact your vampire load through their use.


Another important feature to look for is rated surge suppression. Consider all of the electronics load in a home entertainment center or home office. Now think about the cost associated with replacing this equipment because it was damaged by a power surge. That bill can add up quick.

A power surge is basically a brief spike in your home's electrical voltage. There is a variety of things that can cause a power surge in your home. Overloaded outlets and circuits, damaged or exposed wiring and motor load turning on such as that

from refrigerators, heating or cooling systems and space heaters. It is worth the investment of an APS with rated surge suppression.

Basic surge suppressors are designed to divert the spike to the outlets' grounding wire. When purchasing an APS with surge suppression look for an Underwriter's Laboratory (UL) rating, specifically UL 1449, and also look for product warranties. Many manufacturers will provide product warranties and connected equipment warranties. Carefully read through the warranty information and follow the recommendation, in the owner's manual.

Next time you're sitting down watching TV or working from your home office, take a mental inventory of what is plugged into your power strips.

While an APS won't eliminate all vampire loads or stop all power surges, they are a very convenient way to save energy and money, and protect valued electronics. If you have any questions regarding this please feel free to call. 

Salmon may actually need dams to survive

By **KURT MILLER** | Executive Director
of Northwest River Partners



ONE of my friends and colleagues suggested a headline for me over a year ago, “Our Salmon Need the Dams to Survive.” Given conventional wisdom, this sounds like a contradiction.

We all know dams kill salmon, don’t we? Why would salmon advocacy groups be fighting so hard to breach the lower Snake River dams if they are actually helping salmon?

But the point my friend was making is that significant research points to hostile ocean conditions caused by climate change as the primary driver of diminishing adult salmon returns across the West Coast of North America.

In fact, in 2020, three separate studies have shown the ocean is likely where we should be focusing our attention.

The first study, released by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Fisheries Service, showed Chinook salmon populations may face extinction in 20 to 30 years if the observed relationships between ocean temperatures and salmon survival remain steady, given the rapidly warming ocean. It also highlighted that climate change appears to be a much bigger threat to Chinook salmon in the ocean than in rivers.

The second study was released in *Nature Communications* and conducted by scientists at the University of Alaska. The researchers found the size of Chinook salmon in Alaska’s rivers had declined significantly over the past 60 years, largely because salmon are returning after fewer years at sea. The scientists point to a more hostile ocean environment due to climate change and increased competition from hatchery-raised pink salmon.

During an interview with *Clearing Up*, one of the authors of the Alaskan study explained their findings have significant meaning for Columbia and Snake river salmon. He stated, “We know that fish in the Columbia have also gotten smaller – the so-called spring hogs that would migrate way upstream are gone,” he noted. “Something is going on in their shared environment, which, of course, is the ocean.”

A third study published in the *Journal of Fish and Fisheries* conclusively demonstrated what many scientists have been speculating – declines in Chinook salmon popula-



tions are not confined to the lower Snake River. Most of the rivers up and down the Pacific Coast have seen very similar declines of about 65 percent over the past 50 years.

This finding is consistent with NOAA Fisheries scientist Lisa Crozier’s analysis. In 2019, Crozier noted researchers are seeing “near-synchronous declines” in worldwide salmon populations.

It’s easy to understand why many people would blame the lower Snake River dams for salmon declines – because the construction of the dams coincided with this 50-year timeframe. But, if you look at the larger geographical scale, the conclusion of this peer-reviewed study is dams are not the limiting factor for Chinook salmon populations, despite our historical thinking.

Because of the tendency to blame Columbia Basin dams for poor salmon survival, we continue to spend hundreds of millions of dollars a year trying to mitigate their supposed harms. Environmental advocacy organizations also dedicate a tremendous amount of their energy and political capital to try to get the lower Snake River dams breached.

However, these three separate but reinforcing studies demonstrate the most recent science on this issue and have major implications for how Northwest policymakers now need to shift their thinking about endangered salmon and orca populations.

If these new studies are correct, surely, we are wasting precious time and resources that should be dedicated to further reducing our carbon footprint and fighting climate change. In that case, the dams which produce millions of megawatt-hours of carbon-free electricity each year, are a major part of the solution, not the problem.

It’s time to adapt our thinking to what science is now revealing, and consider salmon may in fact need the dams to survive. **RM**