

P.O. Box 1049,
Dillon, MT 59725-1049
(406) 683-2327
(800) 221-8271

Website: www.vec.coop
E-mail: contact@vec.coop



Vigilante Electric Cooperative

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

HOW DO WE GET THERE FROM HERE?

Navigating the energy-efficiency process

In last month's edition of this publication, we described how energy efficiency started in the Pacific Northwest, and our collaboration with the Bonneville Power Administration (BPA). Over the years, our energy-efficiency program has been highly successful, returning millions of dollars back to the cooperative and its members. While successful, navigating this process comes with challenges.

BPA maintains a portfolio of cost-effective, energy-efficient measures that focus on reducing electrical consumption in existing services. Each measure has its own guidelines that need to be followed to secure an incentive. Each year, BPA issues an implementation manual (206 pages) that spells out these guidelines.

The implementation manual is the same for all 134 utilities within the BPA service territory. These utilities are all consumer-owned, but wildly different demographically and geographically, and have



quite different climates. One of the biggest challenges is disseminating the information in the implementation manual to determine what is relevant to our service territory, and where our biggest opportunities are.

Our biggest opportunity currently is in the utility distribution sector, specifically in distribution system re-conducting. While we are immensely proud of the reliability of our distribution system, there are opportunities for improvement. We have a significant amount of old copper wire around our service territory, and upgrading these wires makes our system more

efficient. While we have successfully completed several reconducting projects, the investment and time in these projects is substantial.

Vigilante Electric Cooperative places the largest demands on the transmission and distribution system during the summer months due to the amount of irrigation we have in our service territory. The ag base measures through BPA are well-rounded, have generous incentives and are the easiest to administer. There are, however, external forces that impact the activ-

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VIGILANTE ELECTRIC

REFLECTIONS FROM OUR PARTICIPANTS

An experience I will never forget

By **KENNADY PERRENOUD** |
Youth Tour participant



THE Youth Tour of 2023 was a wonderful experience for me, and I am forever grateful to Vigilante Electric to get the opportunity to be a part of it. We had four amazing chaperones and a kind bus driver who took us all to many historic monuments and museums around town. I think I speak for everyone on the tour when I say that we all learned a lot about our country's history during the tours of the National Museum of the Marine Corps, the Naval Academy, and the National Archives.

We did so many activities while on the Youth Tour, and I got the opportunity to meet new people that I will hold close as friends for a lifetime. One of the many chances I got to meet new people was the boat cruise with dinner. It was apparent that a lot of effort was done to make this a memorable experience. A dance was held downstairs as well as a dinner, and during this time I spoke to many people from all over the country.

Although there was never a dull moment, one of my favorite memories from the tour is the mansion tour at Mount Vernon. Mount Vernon is the house George Washington lived in, and it was truly wonderful to experience such a rich piece of history firsthand. On the fourth day we got seats to the Nationals baseball game, which was one of the best opportunities we had to get to know one another even better, and enjoy a fun sports game as a group of friends.

In conclusion, the Youth Tour of 2023 is something that I will be forever thankful to be a part of, and I consider myself lucky to meet the wonderful people I got to experience it with. Not only was it a very educational trip, but it was also very fun. Because of the tour, I have a new understanding and respect for electric cooperatives around the state of Montana. I will definitely recommend to fellow classmates to try to be a part of it, because it is something that they will never forget, and it will make their summer the best summer they've ever had. The youth tour was an experience I will never forget. RM



Laura Martin, left, and Kennady Perrenoud stand in front of the U.S. Capitol building. Laura and Kennady were Vigilante Electric Cooperative's Youth Tour Participants this year. | PHOTO BY RYAN HALL



REFLECTIONS FROM OUR PARTICIPANTS

Every minute a different memory

By **LAURA MARTIN** | Youth Tour participant

It is hard to describe my trip in just one article because it was a truly unforgettable experience, and every minute accounts for a different memory I made. Going into this adventure I was excited to see the monuments and buildings that I had learned so much about in school. I didn't realize how much more impactful it would be than just learning about famous sites.

I am, by nature, an outgoing person, and this quality served me well on my trip. Along with meeting other delegates from Montana, there were 48 other states represented at the conference, ranging in size anywhere from 1 to 100 plus members. Being able to interact with other young people from around the country was one of my favorite parts of the trip, you could argue that I learned more from them than any tour guide – things like southern casual dress is very different from Montana casual and to not, under any circumstances, inform someone they speak with an accent.

An activity every state participated in pin trading. Every state tried their hardest to outdo the others with the most creative pins to represent themselves, and then proceeded to trade the pins with other states. This was a very serious activity, and you did not want to mess with any pin transactions – some delegates went as far as to stop groups we saw on the streets of D.C. just to secure a rare pin.

The people on the trip were amazing – and so were the sights. One of my favorite views of the city was from the top of the Forest Service headquarters. It is one of only two towers in the city that you can look over the whole National Mall with an unobstructed view, and it did not disappoint.

We were not confined to just the city of Washington, D.C., though. We had our very own bus driver/ tour guide (who everyone loved) that drove us all around the surrounding area – places such as the Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland, and up to Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, for a tour of the battlefield.

One of my favorite memories from the trip would have to be the boat cruise and dinner on the Potomac River. After a long day of walking and sightseeing, our chaperones told us there was a surprise waiting for us past cute shops and



Laura Martin, left, and Kennady Perrenoud pose at the Lincoln Memorial. | PHOTO BY RYAN HALL

toward the bank of the river. There, waiting, at the end of the dock was a three-story open-air bright yellow boat just calling our names. As soon as we reached the water, we met up with North Dakota and Georgia, and began our journey. The view from the deck was breathtaking, with clear skies and a perfect view of the monuments from the river. We thought the boat could not get any better – then we walked to the second floor. A DJ and flashing lights were waiting for the Montana kids to show everyone up with our line-dancing abilities.

I am so thankful for this experience and again want to thank everyone at Vigilante Electric Cooperative who made it possible for me to attend this trip and meet so many amazing people that I know I will be able to call friends for the rest of my life. RM

EFFICIENCY

Continued from page 5

ity within this sector, making it difficult to predict potential budgetary needs.

While the highest system demand is for irrigation, residential services account for most of the kilowatt hours sold over the year. Several measures are available for residential services, but they can be complicated and hard to administer.

With existing residential services, the first thing we establish is how the structure is heated. We have a lot of natural gas and propane in our service territory, and for most measures, this disqualifies them from consideration. Even within the measures that clear this hurdle, additional criteria can keep a project from being considered.

There are also opportunities in commercial areas, but the rural nature of our service territory and the type of businesses we service limit the number

of practical measures we can implement. Custom projects are also available through every sector, and we will address this topic in a later article.

Navigating all of this while staying within our budget takes coordination. This is why we prefer to talk to our members about projects they are considering, establish if they fall within the guidelines set by BPA, and then do our best to guide them successfully through the process so they receive an incentive. RM

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DILLON MEMBER APPRECIATION BBQ

August 23rd
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225 East Bannack Street
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An online application is available at www.vec.coop.