BY THE COMMUNITY, FOR THE COMMUNITY
October is National Co-op Month

By Kevin P. Owens, PE, Beartooth Electric General Manager

When you think of October, pumpkins, Halloween and beautiful fall foliage naturally come to mind. But October is notable for another reason—it’s National Co-op Month! This is the time of year when cooperatives across the country, including Beartooth Electric Cooperative, celebrate who we are and more importantly, the members we serve.

Cooperatives are different than other types of businesses. When the market declines to offer a product or service, or does so at a very high price, co-ops intervene to fill the need.

Similar to how Beartooth Electric was built by members who came together to bring electricity to our community, cooperatives are conveners for the common good. Your electric co-op exists to provide safe, reliable and affordable energy to you, the members of the co-op. Equally important is our mission to enrich the lives of the members we serve.

As a co-op, we are well-suited to meet the needs of the community because we are locally governed. Beartooth Electric’s leadership team and employees live right here in the community. Our board of trustees, who helps set long-term priorities for the co-op, live locally on co-op lines. These board members have been elected to the position by neighbors like you.

We know our members (that’s you!) have a valuable perspective. That's why we are continually seeking your input. Whether through community events, our social media channels, the annual meeting (save the date—our next Annual Meeting is May 2, 2020), or serving on board committees (be sure to read about the Risk Management Committee’s current initiative—Rate Design on the back, come join us), we want to hear from you.

Our close connection to the community ensures we get a first-hand perspective on local priorities, thereby enabling us to make more informed decisions on long-term programs like Shares du Soliel—Beartooth Electric’s Community Solar program, equipment and technology upgrades, and projects such as member meter upgrade, vegetation management, and coming soon our new takeCHARGE! PrePay Program.

Another feature that sets our co-op apart from a traditional utility is one of our core principles, “Concern for Community.” We partner with local organizations like the local Chambers of Commerce, Yellowstone Bank, and local citizens for and worthy programs such as community solar credits for low income, monkey bars at Granite Peak Park, and new lighting at the Red Lodge Ice Rink. We participate in the Electric Cooperative Youth Tour, where we take our community’s brightest young people to Washington, D.C. for a week-long immersion to experience democracy in action.

Ultimately, the larger community benefits from these programs because of you and your neighbors. You empower the co-op through your membership and through your participation in and support of these programs. We hope you will think of Beartooth Electric as more than your energy provider, but instead as a local business that supports this community and powers economic development and prosperity for the people.

We will continue to learn from our members about their priorities so that we can better serve you – because your electric co-op was built by the community, for the community.
Come Join Us. BEC is examining rate design.
By Arleen Boyd and Bill Pascoe, Risk Management Committee Co-Chairs

The BEC Risk Management Committee is looking at rate design and how to examine potential alternatives. Our current residential and commercial rate design includes an energy charge and a base charge that provides all other revenue. Is there a rate design model that could more accurately assign costs and more fairly bill members for the power they use and the cost of getting it to them reliably?

The BEC Cost of Service Analysis (COSA) shows that current revenue supports BEC budget forecasts without a general rate increase. BEC costs include paying for electricity, maintaining the system to deliver the power and providing necessary member services. COSA assigns these costs to members by class. Rate design analysis asks how we can most fairly and predictably bill each class of members to collect that revenue.

BEC has five member classes: residential, small commercial, large commercial, industrial and irrigation. Under the current rate design some members may be paying more than their fair share, some less. The goal is equity within each BEC member class with all members paying their fair share.

We are working hard. Come help examine information and answer important questions (See the list to right). Board and committee meetings are open. For rate design analysis we will enlist help from experts and likely hear directly from Montana co-ops that have implemented rate design changes. We welcome member perspective and expertise.

Schedule—In October (10/24, BEC Red Lodge Office, 2PM), November and December, the Risk Management Committee will review and analyze various rate structure alternatives. The Committee will make its recommendations to the Board by the end of the year. The Board will consider these recommendations and other relevant information with a decision expected by the end of February. If new rate designs are recommended by the committee and approved by the Board, implementation would be in the spring of 2020.

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