



# BEARTOOTH CONNECTS

beartoothelectric.com | June 2020

 Feature Article

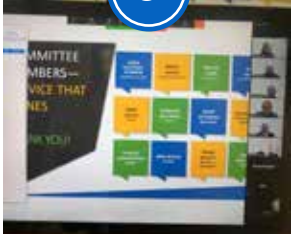
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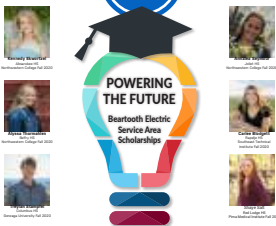
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## AMERICAN WHITE PELICANS BEC Power Line Collision Mitigation

By Kaaren Robbins, Member Communication & Services



**S**pring is in the air, literally. Every April the migratory American White Pelicans (*Pelecanus erythrorhynchos*) come to rest and forage along the banks of the Clarks Fork River, making their long trek to their Montana breeding grounds. Without fail, April would also bring midnight blinks and outages to members served by BEC power lines crossing the river, particularly from Edelweiss in Wyoming north to the state line.

The American White Pelican, being a daytime migratory bird, was never a suspect in the midnight power escapades until the spring of 2009. The BEC line crew had a hunch that these pelicans shared the river banks with predators such as the Coyote, Red Fox, and Great Horned Owl. These nocturnal predators would most certainly enjoy a pelican dinner causing the great white pelicans to suddenly take flight and encounter a power line collision in the darkness of night.

American White Pelicans, being one of the largest of the boreal birds, can weigh as much as 30 pounds with wingspans exceeding nine feet. A line collision by such a large creature would definitely cause a blink and possibly cause an outage. Evidence suggested a high probability of a pelican line collision, so the initial BEC protective plan encompassed installing bird diverters across the high incident area, from Edelweiss north to the Wyoming, Montana state line. These Birdmark afterglow diverters not only spun and turned swinging on lines high above the river, but they also glowed in the dark, warning the pelicans of the river crossing power lines obstructing a safe getaway. In 2009, 13 river crossing power lines were outfitted with the pelican saving devices. BEC Members and the line crew alike found well-earned relief with noticeable blink and outage reductions.

The pelican line collisions and their blink and power outage menace remained quiet for many years. Nine quiet years to be exact were enjoyed along the Clarks Fork River.

It was April of 2018 when frequent nightly blinks and numerous outages plagued the BEC system again. The midnight menace had returned. Surprisingly, the trouble was occurring north of the previous diverter installations. It took only one line patrol to discover the great White Pelicans had returned in all their splendor, now perched near the banks of the Clarks Fork just over the state line. Once again, the line crew extended their booms high across the river and installed diverters on the next 13 river crossing lines headed north. And again, silent nights prevailed.

During the summer of 2018, BEC Line Superintendent Eric Elton kept a watchful eye on the river running north, particularly from the Clarks Forks Yellowstone access site toward Edgar. He watched groups of juveniles on forage adventures and the local colony breeding pairs frequent the area for overnight getaways and frequent midnight escapes, causing blinks and outages on the river crossing power lines.

The all too familiar midnight menace prompted the installation of diverters on seven additional river crossing lines, now spanning from Edelweiss in Wyoming north to Edgar, Montana.

A total of 33 river crossing power lines are illuminated at night with over 200 diverters to keep pelicans safe in their midnight flights for life.

Continued on page 8.



*The Birdmark afterglow diverter. One of over 200 diverters installed on 33 of BEC's Clarks Fork River power line river crossings.*

# HIGHLIGHTS

The Coronavirus issue is dominating world news and impacting many areas of our lives. In fact, Governor Steve Bullock, amongst many U.S. Governors, issued orders restricting all mass gatherings in the State. Based on the governor's directive, the Board of Trustees at Beartooth Electric Cooperative decided this year's 82nd Annual Member Meeting was to be held virtually via Zoom webinar and Facebook LIVE. In addition, BEC Members without online access would be able to participate by phone and view the hard copy meeting presentation mailed to each member's billing address on file. If you were unable to watch during the live broadcast, the recording is posted on our website at [www.beartoothelectric.com](http://www.beartoothelectric.com) under the 2020 Annual Meeting link.

"We didn't take this decision lightly, but the health and well being of our employees and members must come first," stated BEC General Manager Kevin P. Owens. "We thank you for understanding during these special circumstances, and it is our hope you enjoyed this year's meeting from the comfort of your home."

One of the most popular parts of BEC's annual meeting are the door prizes. During the live broadcast, members had the opportunity to register via Zoom, Facebook comment, email, and by calling the BEC office. Congratulations to the \$100 bill credit winners—Julie Claborn, Janet Luloff, and Roger Ferguson.

This historical online meeting was well received. The quorum was more than met with 71 member registrations and a total of 78 attendees. Thank you to all members that joined us on May 2. We encourage your comments at [bec@beartoothelectric.com](mailto:bec@beartoothelectric.com) or call the office at 406-446-2310. To view this year's Annual Member Meeting presentation, audit report, and supporting documents visit the 2020 Annual Member Meeting page on the BEC website.

You were able to keep things moving, had set up a good audiovisual context via Zoom and Facebook, and for those that joined in I am sure it was overall a very positive experience. And it worked!

*Burt Williams  
BEC Member*

## VOTING RESULTS

*Voting details are available on the bec website on the 2020 Annual Meeting page.*

**District 1  
Trustee  
Daniel Dutton  
Re-elected**

**District 7  
Trustee  
Ralph Lewis  
Re-elected**

**30  
Proposed  
Bylaw  
Amendments  
ALL PASSED**

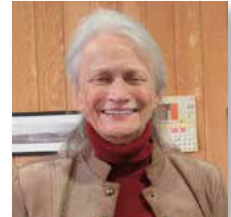
## YOUR BEC 2020-2021 BOARD OF TRUSTEES



**DANIEL DUTTON**  
District 1  
President



**BILL PASCOE**  
District 6  
Vice President



**ARLEEN BOYD**  
District 5  
Secretary/Treasurer



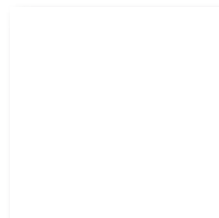
**RALPH LEWIS**  
District 7



**ROXIE MELTON**  
District 2



**DICK NOLAN**  
District 4



**TO BE APPOINTED**  
District 3



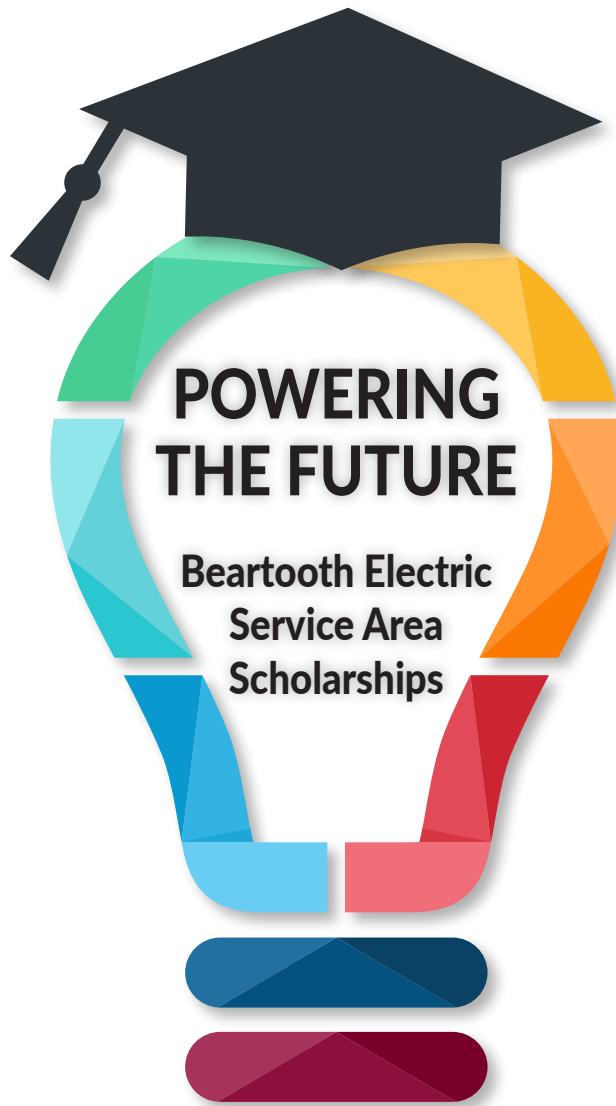
**Kennedy Ekwortzel**  
Absarokee HS  
Northwestern College Fall 2020



**Alyssa Thormahlen**  
Belfry HS  
Northwestern College Fall 2020



**Treylan Stampfel**  
Columbus HS  
Gonzaga University Fall 2020



**Annalea Seymour**  
Joliet HS  
Northwestern College Fall 2020



**Carlee Blodgett**  
Rapelje HS  
Southeast Technical Institute  
Fall 2020



**Shaye Salt**  
Red Lodge HS  
Pima Medical Institute Fall 2020

*Congratulations*  
**Class of 2020**

Beartooth Electric Cooperative (BEC) powers the future of our service area seniors with the Beartooth Electric Scholarships program and participation in the Montana Electric Associations' Cooperative (MECA) Memorial Scholarship. Each year, local students who are seeking to advance their career goals by attending college or a trade school are encouraged to apply.

In 2020, six local students were selected to each receive a \$1,000 scholarship from BEC to help them in the pursuit of higher education. Also, Carlee Blodgett, the BEC candidate for the MECA Memorial Scholarship, received an additional \$500 scholarship from BEC. The applicant's parent or guardian must be a BEC member-owner. Applicants were selected based upon financial need, their personal essay, academic excellence, activities, and community service.

"BEC is more than your local energy provider," said Kevin P. Owens, general manager. "It's important that BEC is actively involved in supporting our local communities, and the Beartooth Electric Scholarship program is a great way to help our youth." Congratulations to all BEC graduates in the Class of 2020.

*The American White Pelican*, continued from page 5.

When asked if the diverters are working to eliminate pelican line collisions, Elton replied, "Absolutely. The diverters are working. Our members once again enjoy quiet nights without blinks and outages along the Clarks Fork River waterway."

I have to say that I've always associated pelicans with the ocean and never considered them an inland bird nor to discover that thousands of pelicans spend their breeding season in Montana. Migrating long-distances from as far south as Central America and faithfully returning to their natal habitat every spring.

Montana's four breeding colonies are located at Medicine Lake National Wildlife Refuge (NWR), Canyon Ferry Lake, Bowdoin NWR, and Eyraud (Arod) Lakes Waterfowl Production Area, just northeast of Choteau. The Medicine Lake and Bowdoin colonies winter along the Gulf of Mexico, departing in stages during late October, while the two western colonies cross the Rocky Mountains to winter on the coast of southern California and western Mexico, according to FWP.

General Manager Kevin P. Owens, "These bird diverters are just one of many choices BEC uses to support its avian protection program."

Citations for data in this article:

*Dr. Marco Restani, Professor Emeritus, St Cloud State University*

*American White Pelican — Pelecanus erythrorhynchos. Montana Field Guide. Montana Natural Heritage Program and Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks. Retrieved on May 14, 2020, from <http://FieldGuide.mt.gov/speciesDetail.aspx?elcode=ABNFC01010>*



*American White Pelicans preening and foraging along the river bank.*

# Rate Design Vote scheduled for June 30 BEC Board Meeting

*By Risk Management Committee Co-chairs Arleen Boyd and Bill Pascoe*

At the Beartooth Electric Cooperative Board Meeting on Tuesday, June 30, 2020, Trustees will vote on proposed co-op rate design changes that include transition to a new 3-part rate for Residential and Small Commercial rate classes and minor changes to existing 3-part rates for other member classes. The rate design changes, implementation plan, and anticipated impacts are detailed in the rate design brochure, *A Closer Look at Rate Design*, and in the Annual Member Meeting Participation Guide that were mailed to members in April and are posted on the BEC website ([beartoothelectric.com](http://beartoothelectric.com)).

The changes are designed to be revenue-neutral to the co-op, i.e., no increase in revenues, and provide more equity within a rate class. The proposed 3-part rate for residential and small commercial class members moves revenue. The addition of the System Charge allows the co-op to lower both the Base and Energy Charges approximately 10%.

BEC Bylaw Article XI, Section 5, requires the co-op to send members official notice 30 days in advance of any Board vote to adjust rates. Member notice was mailed on May 11, 2020. A vote on rate design changes and time for member comments will be included on the agenda for the June 30 BEC Board meeting that starts at noon. BEC General Manager Kevin Owens (406-446-2310) and all Trustees also welcome comments and questions any time before the meeting.



## BIRD NESTS + POWER POLES = OUTAGES

Call us for BEC utility pole nest removal 406-446-2310

Photo By: Sam Walkowiak, BEC line foreman

### CONNECT WITH US!

Beartooth Electric Cooperative, Inc.  
PO Box 1110, 1306 Broadway Ave N  
Red Lodge, MT 59068  
406-446-2310 | 800-472-9821  
email: [bec@beartoothelectric.com](mailto:bec@beartoothelectric.com)  
website: [www.beartoothelectric.com](http://www.beartoothelectric.com)

