



# BEARTOOTH COCONNECTS

beartoothelectric.com | February 2020



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## Steep increase in NWE transmission rate hits BEC's bottom line

### Board looks at cost pass-through to members

By Arleen Boyd & Bill Pascoe, co-chairs risk management committee

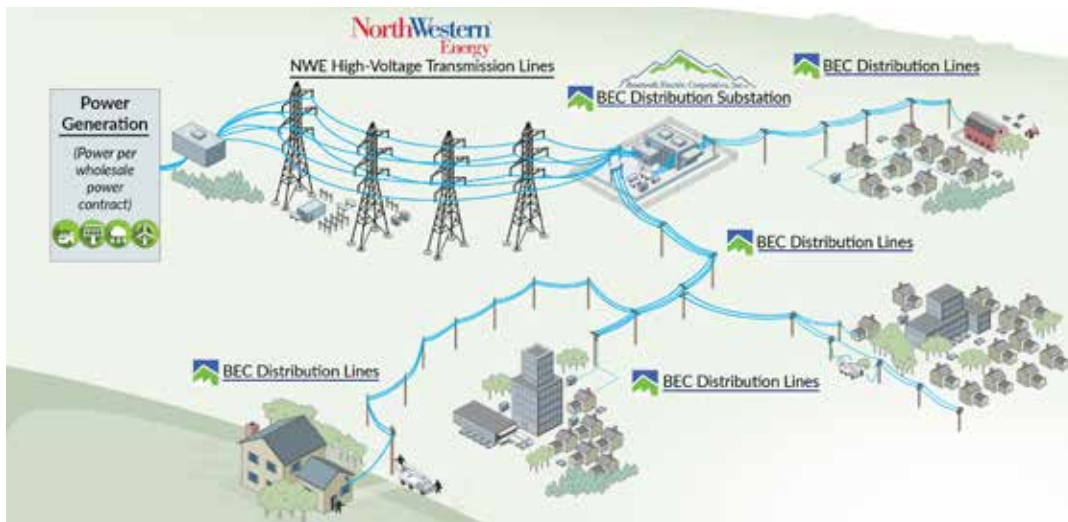
Last year, a 53.8% increase in the NorthWestern Energy Corporation (NWE) transmission rates increased BEC transmission delivery expenses by approximately \$250,000 annually. BEC uses the NWE transmission system to bring power from wholesale power contracts to the co-op for distribution to members. BEC has notified members that the BEC board of trustees will vote at their February 25 meeting on a proposal to pass the increased transmission cost through rates to members.

NWE's transmission rates are regulated by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) in Washington, D.C. On May 1, 2019, NWE filed with FERC for a 53.8% increase in its transmission rates, which FERC allowed NWE to implement July 1, 2019, while it considers objections from

NWE's transmission customers, including BEC. FERC is expected to make a final decision on the requested increase sometime in 2020 or later. If the final rate allowed by FERC is less than what NWE has requested, NWE must refund any overcharges.

**Revenue Increase**—At its February 25, 2020, meeting the BEC board will vote on a proposal to increase annual revenues by \$250,000 by increasing the energy (kWh) charge for all rate classes (residential, small commercial, large commercial, industrial and irrigation) by \$0.003616/kWh. The increase would go into effect March 1, 2020. The monthly impact of this increase to the average residential member using 800 kWh per month is \$2.89.

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BEC purchases power through wholesale power contracts. The purchased electricity is delivered from the power generation facilities to our substations via the bulk transfer of electrical energy across transmission lines. Most transmission lines in Montana are owned and operated by NorthWestern Energy (NWE). The rates NWE charge for the high voltage transmission are managed by the Federal Regulatory Energy Commission.





# OPERATION NO PERSON LEFT BEHIND OUTDOORS



LIFE CHANGING FOR OUR VETERANS.  
LIFE CHANGING FOR THE VOLUNTEERS.

# HOORAH!

By Kaaren Robbins, Member Communication & Services

Through a Montana antelope, deer and elk hunt experience, Operation No Person Left Behind (NPLB) Outdoors builds lasting relationships with those directly impacted by combat during our nation's armed conflicts in order to promote positive outcomes and lifelong successes.

Touchdown Billings, Montana. Travelers, some serene with the comfort of being home. Some, like the veteran's arriving for Operation No Person Left Behind Outdoors (NPLB), are also in a familiar place—a foreign city, an unknown adventure, but it's now takeoff time for them. Upon arrival, each hunter spends a day on the shooting range, getting familiar with their hunting gear, the sound of firearms, and facing new challenges with a boy still foreign to them.

These veteran's are welcomed to the NPLB program with some traveling from their home after months or more of rehabilitation, while oftentimes, some traveling directly from discharge out of Walter Reed Hospital. These veteran's have suffered unimaginable injuries—severe head trauma, double- or even triple-amputation, and paralysis. It is not surprising to hear that most vets arrive with the thought their hunting days were well behind them, but once they get to camp, they are more than excited to get the adventure underway. Volunteers note the vets often forget what they cannot do and they are ready to take on the challenge of what they came to do.

*I never realized how much the sound of an explosion affected me until after I was home for a while. For me, healing began behind the gun and associating the blast sounds in a positive way...*

*Combat Veteran NPLB Participant*

The next four days of hunting big game in Montana is the core mission of NPLB, to build lasting relationships with those directly impacted by combat during our nation's armed conflicts in order to promote positive outcomes and lifelong successes. At camp, each veteran is accompanied by one or more NPLB volunteer guides, plus support people who take care of medical and logistical issues.

Hunt camp opens with introductions amidst a stoic atmosphere—these veterans are use to new camps and the routine of new surroundings and new comrades. This is how the stories from Marty Tomlin, BEC staking engineer and Markus Urbanik, BEC warehouseman both NPLB volunteer guides, begin when they return to the office. We all listen silently as they share the emotional journey that takes place for both hunter and guide. We witness how they have been changed through this

experience—while their stories of the veterans they served change us all.

We hear of the nights at camp full of tales of the day, and veteran stories of incredible human courage. There are battlefield stories, like one vet who took four bullets while saving an entire base under attack by multiple insurgents. There are stories from the home front, like one vet trying to traverse his home entryway for the first time in a wheelchair and takes a backwards tip, instilling fear in a family not sure how to help and of the two long weeks it took for his young daughter to approach the father she loves. And there are stories from the hunting field, about new found capabilities, fears of the sound of gunshot overcome, and the tears of joy shown with a hug and thank you uttered after a successful shot.

In his presentation to the BEC board of trustees, BEC warehouseman Urbanik, now serving on the NPLB board shared, "If the board, staff and members of BEC ever question whether or not the donation of our time to volunteer to the NPLB program makes a difference—it truly does. It is a big deal to each veteran we serve to give back to them with this experience." He added, "I have a whole different respect for our military personnel. I understand these soldiers choose to go into the military, but they do not choose where they go, what their assignment will be, or the circumstances and situations that they will serve. I am amazed when most who come to the program say they would do it all again—even with the injuries, they would do it again in a heartbeat."

A frequent question asked of the program is if women veteran's participate. The answer is all veteran's are welcome to participate in the NPLB program. There are a lot of women on the front lines, but at this time, the majority of veterans participating in the program are special operations individuals including Rangers, Green Berets and Snipers, which happen to be mostly men. However, for the first time this upcoming 2020 season, the program will host a female veteran. She is known to many by her no quit reputation. She participates in the Invictus Games, created to use the power of sport to inspire recovery, support rehabilitation and generate a wider understanding and respect for wounded, injured and sick servicemen and women. She has won numerous gold medals in archery. And she will bring another first to the NPLB program, as both she and her husband will participate together. Both Purple Heart recipients. Both wheelchair bound. But neither bound by the chair, nor by their challenges.



© 2019 NPLB Outdoors

Markus Urbanik, NPLB board member, presents the BEC Board of Trustees with this plaque in appreciation of their program support during the January 7, 2020 board meeting.



Operation No Person Left Behind Outdoors (formerly known locally as Operation Second Chance) is a local 501(3)c charity operating to support veteran recipients of the Purple Heart, enduring 70% mobility injuries. The program licenses and permits are obtained through the Montana Fish & Wildlife Wounded Veterans Program. If you are interested in donating your hunting tags, please visit [www.fwp.mt.gov](http://www.fwp.mt.gov), Donation of Hunting Licenses for Disabled Veterans & Armed Forces Members page. If you would like to support NPLB with a donation, you may purchase a Trophy Mule Deer Hunt raffle ticket now through March 1 at True Value, Red Lodge: The Fort, Big Timber; and at Townsley Electric, Billings. You may also make money donations directly at [www.nplboutdoors.org](http://www.nplboutdoors.org) or by mail to NPLB Outdoors, PO Box 132, Libertytown, MD 21762 (designate Montana Adventures).

A very special thanks to BEC's own Marty Tomlin and Markus Urbanik for their volunteer service to the NPLB program. Hoorah! 🟩



*Dressed for success, these hunters are ready for action along with their NPLB volunteers including Markus Urbanik, BEC warehouseman (second row, first on left) and Marty Tomlin, BEC staking engineer (second row, fourth from left).*

*Getting to the right position isn't always easy—volunteers Markus Urbanik, BEC warehouseman (left) and Mark Vomund, U.S.A. Retired, previous NPLB program participant now volunteer guide (right), give this veteran a lift to the perfect trophy shot location.*



# The Purple Heart

The Purple Heart medal is presented to service members who have been wounded or killed as a result of enemy action while serving in the U.S. military. According to the National Purple Heart Hall of Honor, more than 1.8 million Purple Heart medals have been presented to service members since the award was created in 1782. Here are eight facts about the history of the Purple Heart Medal and its recipients:



## 1. It's the Oldest Military Award Still Presented to American Service Members

The Purple Heart's first predecessor, the Fidelity Medallion, was created in 1780 by the Continental Congress.

## 2. By the People, For the People

Beginning in 1782, the Purple Heart was one of the first awards in military history that could be given to lower-ranking, enlisted soldiers or noncommissioned officers for their outstanding service.

## 3. Today's Purple Heart

The Purple Heart officially received its modern-day look and name in 1932. In 1944, the qualifications for receiving a Purple Heart changed to what we know today: an award given only to those wounded or killed in enemy action.

## 4. Who Received the First Purple Heart in U.S. History?

The first service member to receive the modern-day Purple Heart was Army Gen. Douglas MacArthur for his service in the Pacific during World War II.

## 5. Famous Recipients

Although each Purple Heart recipient deserves widespread recognition, a handful of honorees stand out as household names, such as the legendary Lewis Burwell "Chesty" Puller, actors (such as James Arness, Charles Bronson, James Garner, Rod Serling), writers (Kurt Vonnegut, Oliver Stone), athletes (Warren Spahn, Pat Tillman, Rocky Bleier), politicians (John Kerry, Colin Powell, Tammy Duckworth, John McCain) and even animals (Sergeant Stubby the dog and Sergeant Reckless the horse).

## 6. The First Woman Recipient

In 1942, Cordelia "Betty" Cook was the first woman to receive both the Purple Heart and the Bronze Star.

## 7. Only One Presidential Recipient

President John F. Kennedy is the only U.S. president with a Purple Heart.

## 8. Ten is the Record

Curry T. Haynes currently holds the record for the largest number of Purple Hearts bestowed upon a single service member.



Continued from Page 3.

BEC is diligently participating in the FERC review process to be sure that NWE transmission rates are no higher than justified. If FERC determines that the NWE requested increase is too high, the board intends to pass any savings on to the membership and ensure that a transmission pass-through accurately reflects transmission costs to BEC.

**To get informed**, the risk management committee and board recommend visiting the BEC website ([www.beartoothelectric.com](http://www.beartoothelectric.com)). Two financial reports posted there, the general manager's 2020 Budget Narrative and the Financial Assumptions pages for the most recent version of the BEC Financial Forecast, provide clear and concise expense and revenue summaries, a framework for understanding current budget items, and an initial look at projected financial results and plans. The budget forecast uses the increased NorthWestern Energy transmission rate to calculate transmission expenses for 2020 through 2028. The impact of the NWE increase, which BEC has paid since July 2019, is reflected in lowered bottom-line margin forecasts going forward. The entire budget and the recent what-if versions of the comprehensive forecast are posted on the website and are available from the co-op on request.

**For more information**, call Kevin Owens, general manager at (406) 446-2310, or contact any member of the Beartooth board of trustees. All documents related to NWE's request to increase transmission rates are available on the BEC website, [www.beartoothelectric.com](http://www.beartoothelectric.com), under My BEC, Member Notices, and financial reports are available under My BEC, Cooperative Financials.

**Rate Design**—Article X, Section 5 of the BEC Bylaws requires notice to be given to Members at least 30 days before a vote by the Board to approve any change in Beartooth Electric rates. The risk management committee and the board continues the examination of rate design options and is focused on the possible replacement of the current rate design with a rate structure that clearly separates costs for energy from other revenue categories. Any proposal for change in rate structure would carry the same requirement for member notification that the transmission pass-through is currently meeting. ▲▲



## ENERGY EFFICIENCY Tip of the Month

*Take a BITE out of your energy bill—  
Keep energy efficiency in mind as  
you cozy up next to the fireplace this  
winter.*

**Are you using your fireplace efficiently?** Remember to turn down the thermostat when burning a fire, and close the damper when a fire is not burning.

Source: [energy.gov](http://energy.gov)



## WANT TO JOIN THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES?

### Nominations Open for Districts 1, 3 & 7

Represent your District and all members on the BEC Board of Trustees.

Nomination deadline is March 13, 2020. Elections take place at the 83rd Annual Member Meeting, May 2, 2020 at the ANIPRO Event Center, Absarokee.

Visit [www.beartoothelectric.com](http://www.beartoothelectric.com) today for all the details and download the Nomination Petition. Click the ANNUAL MEETING on the home page. Petitions also available from the BEC Red Lodge Office.

## CONNECT WITH US!

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