

Watts New

September, 2019

From The Desk Of... Don Smith, Manager

It is hard to believe that as you read this, we are well into September and the official end of summer! Kids are back in school, the NFL season is underway, even the State Fair has come and gone. Snowy weather is just around the corner.

It has been an interesting summer for the REA and our energy sales. As I write this, the most current information we have is for July, which shows irrigation is down 40% from last year, but only 1.5% down from the same time in 2015. The loss of irrigation has been offset by overall gains in other rate classes. We continue to watch and adjust, as the year goes on, to ensure we are running the Cooperative within our means.

Last month I told you about Tri-State and the move toward federal regulation. Tri-State has filed with FERC, and they are currently in a comment period. As expected, some entities are not happy with the move Tri-State has made. Those entities have formally intervened in this case, and I do not believe they have the best interests of Wheatland REA in mind; most are only interested in their worlds. As I said last month, the whole concept of voluntarily being regulated by any agency other than YOUR Board of Directors, let alone federal regulation, is unappealing to me. But with the attitude and influence of others, such as Colorado, this regulation is a necessary move. To reiterate the section from our letter to Tri-State, in which we stated:

"...While we feel we can better regulate ourselves through our local control, this is no longer an option as some states have made it clear of their intent. Typical of more conservative values, we are generally not supportive of oversight from outside entities. However, given the intent of the states, we support the concept of Tri-State being federally rate-regulated rather than having oversight from the regulators of the individual states..."

We will continue to fight the good fight and keep you posted as the situation moves forward.

On a more positive note, several months ago, a wind farm development started on the far-west side of our territory. The actual service point for the farm was in an area not assigned to any utility. A fact that most people are not aware of: wind farms require electric service from utilities to keep the wind equipment running. I won't go into detail here, but if you want to know, stop in and I'll put my engineering hat on! In addition to picking up another service, having a substation on that side of our system would give us the option of extending a connecting line to the far end of our Palmer Canyon line. If you recall, last year we had to shut this line down for nearly a week due to the Britania Mountain Fire. This left our members along the line without power. In order to serve this wind farm, and then build the back-up line, we had to file with the Wyoming Public Service Commission, (yes, more regulation) to move our territorial boundary and include this area. At the end of July, REA staff met with the PSC, and our request to expand was approved! This expansion added over 260 square miles of territory to the REA. Granted, right now there is not much up there, but seeing what is coming, this should be good territory for the REA. The possibility of a back-up to the Palmer Canyon line will provide improved service to our members. This will not happen right away, but the territory addition is the first step for long term gain.

I hope everyone has had a great summer! It has been a wild one! With all the extreme weather, various projects at the REA, activities in the communities, as well as the general day-to-day operations here at the REA, we all continue to work for you, our member-owners. We continually look for ways to most efficiently take care of the system and operate safely. Thanks for being such great member-owners! You take an interest in the REA, as well as the community, and serve in many areas, while always working to improve services and quality of life in the region. It is always a pleasure to serve you!



Watts New is a publication of
Wheatland Rural Electric
Association
2154 South St.
Wheatland, WY 82201
www.wheatlandrea.com
(307) 322-2125
(800) 344-3351
Tammy Gonzalez, Editor

REA SUMMER HOURS

Monday - Thursday
7:00 AM - 5:30 PM
Friday
CLOSED

OUTAGES-OPEN 24/7
OUTAGE PHONE NUMBERS
(307) 322-2125
(800) 344-3351
24 hours a day

STAFF

Donald E. Smith
General Manager

Jason Wright
Operations Manager

Rhonda Apodaca
Office Manager

Al Teel
Member Services

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Robert Brockman 322-2220
President

Britt Wilson 331-8405
Vice President

Jack Finnerty 331-2100
Secretary/Treasurer

Sandra Hbranchak 322-4393
Director

Candy Geringer 307-351-8716
Director

From the office of RKA....

Happy September 2019! The summer is nearing its end, and everyone is gearing up for fall. Time for school, fall sports, and harvest season.

Your cooperative was very busy in August. We participated in the Platte County Fair parade, then spent the week at the State Fair, and participated in that parade. Touchstone Energy once again brought their hot air balloon. If you were in Douglas for the State Fair, we hope you got an opportunity to stop by the Wyoming Electric Cooperative's booth.



When September hits here at the cooperative, it means it is time for us to plan for the next year.

This year, we as management, with the Board of Directors, are holding a strategic planning session. This session will involve not only planning for the year ahead, but also looking down the road and asking the question, "Where do we see our cooperative in 5, 10, even 15 years down the road?" Other items we review are our strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. It is a very intense planning session, but a lot of interesting thoughts and ideas come out of this process.

After the strategic session is completed, we will continue down the "2020 road" and start on the budget. The most difficult part of the budget is estimating operating revenue for the next year. For the most part, every year has been a little bit different. You never know what Mother Nature has planned or what the oil industry has going on in its area. Expenses are much more predictable as you plan for your larger expenses, and have a very good idea on the cost of them. You also know what your fixed expenses (property taxes, insurance, payroll, etc....) are going to be for the next year. So, the liability side of the cooperative is "relatively" easy.

If you recall, every September, the cooperative runs the capital credit allocations for the previous year's margins. This year, the capital credit allocations will take place in October. We run these after the audit has been approved by the Board of Directors. Because of various conflicts, the audit will not be approved until the September 30th board meeting. Once it is approved, we will be printing out the allocation notices and sending them to our member-owners. Remember, this is only an allocation notice showing what you will receive in capital credits for the 2018 operating year. It is not a notice of the amount of your capital credit check that we will be issuing in March, 2020. If you have questions about this information, please do not hesitate to call me.

On the home front, in August, I headed up to Canada and did a little fishing. I had a great time, except it certainly ruined me to come back and fish here. The biggest walleye I caught was 28". The first day we were there, Lee and I caught approximately 30 fish. We had 5 doubleheaders (no, not baseball, LOL!) which kept us busy. We were told by the local fishermen that August is their slow time. I am going up next year when it is their busy time. If this was their slow time, I can't imagine what it is like during the high time of fishing! I believe that I did "out fish" my hubby one day, but he says no. Like, he is going to say something different?!?!?

Until next month....



Wyoming Rodeo Hall of Fame
Connie Kersting presents a certificate to Jack Finnerty, recognizing his induction into the Wyoming Rodeo Hall Of Fame.



Rebates

Have you bought any new appliances in the last 120 days? If you have, don't forget we offer rebates. If you have any questions, please give LaRon a call at 322-2125.



TRI-STATE



WE ARE BETTER TOGETHER!

Do you lease a meter socket or a direct-wired surge protector? It is hard to remember to do this, but you should check the indicator light (or lights) on the outside of your surge protector at least once per month, and after every thunderstorm. This is something the REA can't do for you. If the lights are on, your surge protector is working properly.

If a light (or lights) is out, the surge protection needs to be replaced because it clamped-down on a surge and protected your appliances. If you have leased a surge protector from the REA, and any of the lights are out, call us and we will replace it. **You must have additional protection for your other items such as computers, TV's, game consoles, etc.**

No light means no protection!



← The light is on the side.

Here is the light. →



Madison Wright was presented the Teigen Finnerty Above and Beyond Award, for her hard work helping others. Dean Finnerty (Teigen's father) presented the award to Madison.



#wheatlandrea

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative  **3**
 The power of human connections®

Platte County Fair 2019



Bob Anderson (Apprentice Lineman), Clay Becker (Journeyman Lineman), and Jeff Loseke (Journeyman Lineman) won the 2019 Businessman's Challenge.



Everyone pitches in to get ready for the parade on parade day.

The Linemen showing off their team names for the 2019 Businessman's Challenge. We had the "Troubleshooters" and the "One Liners".



Power waves to everyone as he goes through the parade.



Al Teel gives the crowd a big wave as he walks along with Power.



You are never too old to play musical chairs. That is what Scott Struempler (Apprentice Lineman), Chris Urbanek (Apprentice Meter Technician), Clay Becker (Journeyman Lineman), and Bob Anderson (Apprentice Lineman) found out.

