

# HIGHLINE ELECTRIC ASSOCIATION

*The Beacon*

OCTOBER 2020



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facebook.com/HighlineElectric

**Our mission** is to provide our members with reliable, high-quality electricity and other needed services, which will improve their economic and social well-being and provide significant long-range benefits for our communities, our state and our nation.



HIGHLINE ELECTRIC ASSOCIATION  
IS AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY  
PROVIDER AND EMPLOYER



Touchstone Energy®

# NEW DECISION GIVES CO-OP A VOICE

BY DENNIS HERMAN GENERAL MANAGER

I want to thank our membership. We requested that you make your voices heard at the Colorado Public Utilities Commission regarding United Power and La Plata Electric Association's complaints requesting exit terms from its contracts with Tri-State Generation and Transmission, and you responded. The letter writing campaign that was orchestrated with our neighbors to the south, Y-W Electric Association and K.C. Electric Association, resulted in several thousand public comment letters being filed in the docket at the PUC.

On July 27, the PUC issued an interim decision postponing the recommended decision of the administrative law judge (ALJ). In the decision, the commission committed to acting on the ALJ's recommended decision by November 5, 2020.

While all of this was transpiring at the Colorado PUC, Tri-State was taking steps to become regulated by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission. If you've been around a while, I'm sure this move will leave you scratching your head. Distribution electric cooperatives, and the generation and transmission cooperatives that supply their power, have historically argued that they should not be subject to regulation. The belief was that cooperatives are governed by trustees who are elected from among the consumer-members of the cooperative. This governance model resulted in self-regulation. Who better to decide on electric rates than the consumer-members who are ultimately paying those rates?

This model worked well for several decades. Unfortunately, disagreements between Tri-State's members in recent years have threatened this self-regulation model. Tri-State members that were unhappy with consensus decisions made by the Tri-State board filed complaints with, and asked for the intervention of, state regulatory commissions in New Mexico and Colorado. These actions created a situation that was problematic for a couple of reasons:

- State regulatory commissions were



DENNIS HERMAN

exercising influence in cases that had impacts on cooperative members in other states within Tri-State's four-state region.

- As I pointed out in my letter to our membership last month, the Colorado PUC denied Tri-State members a voice in the United and La Plata docket when the outcome would clearly have a large financial impact on those members and their retail consumer-members.

A summary of recent events includes: Tri-State became subject to FERC jurisdiction in September 2019. United and La Plata filed their complaints with the Colorado PUC in November 2019. In the spring of 2020 FERC issued an order stating that while they had jurisdiction over Tri-State's rates, including contract exit fees, its jurisdiction was not exclusive, allowing the case at the Colorado PUC to continue. FERC issued a new order at the end of August 2020 clarifying that it had exclusive jurisdiction over Tri-State's rates and contract exit charges.

This most recent FERC ruling essentially stops the case at the Colorado PUC in its tracks, subject to a potential appeal. A settlement process to negotiate a contract exit fee has begun at FERC, one in which Highline Electric Association and all Tri-State members will be allowed to participate. While I don't know what the result of the FERC process will be, I don't believe it will be as detrimental as the recommended decision by the ALJ at the Colorado PUC. Even though I would prefer the previous model of regulation by our consumer-members, I believe that FERC regulation is the best of the potential resolutions for our membership.



# Before You Say Yes to Solar

If you are considering a photovoltaic “solar system” for your home, there is more to consider than promised monthly savings. Here are some of the many aspects to consider:

- Know all the costs, not just those for equipment and installation.
- Understand any “soft” costs, which may include permit acquisition, financing charges and “pass-along” marketing, advertising and research costs.
- Does my utility charge a monthly facilities charge?
- Thoroughly investigate the company: Is it backed by the Better Business Bureau? How long has it been in business? Is it licensed to do business in Colorado?
- Collect objective opinions about the pros and cons of installing a solar system.
- What happens when it’s cloudy? How does that impact energy supply?
- Are installers specially trained and certified to install solar?
- Is the work supervised by a master electrician?
- Who maintains the equipment and how much does that cost?
- Does the company carry major insurance for individuals working on my property?
- How does the system interface with my electric utility and its requirements?
- Should I buy or lease the system and what happens if I move?
- What are the safety issues surrounding solar?
- How is the power safely disconnected if needed?
- Does my utility require me to carry special insurance?

Please contact us with any questions about installing a new solar system. We are happy to walk you through the process to interconnect with Highline and provide you with a detailed payback analysis.



Contact Tad at 970-854-2236  
for more information

### Anniversaries

Congratulations to the following employees who observe an employment anniversary in October:  
**Jill Baumgartner ..... 31 years**  
**Lukas Bracelin ..... 3 years**  
**Tadius Huser ..... 2 years**  
**Justin Wert ..... 1 year**

### Cooperative Principles

**Highline Electric adheres to these seven cooperative principles:**

1. Voluntary and open membership
2. Democratic member control
3. Members' economic participation
4. Autonomy and independence
5. Education, training and information
6. Cooperation among cooperatives
7. Concern for community

## Load Control Update

**Load control for 2020 is over.** Please note these important dates for Highline Electric's 2021 Load Control Program.

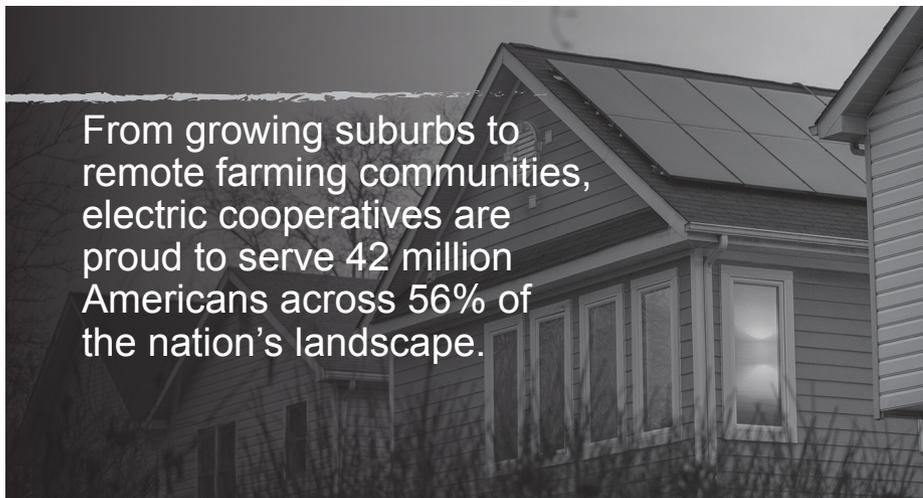
Letters will be sent to all irrigators mid-November. All irrigation wells that were in the 2020 Load Control Program will be **automatically** enrolled in the 2021 program on the same option unless

Highline is notified by January 31, 2021. Included in the letter will be a fact sheet detailing each load control option. If you have changes for the 2021 program, including tenants, please call the HEA office and contracts will be sent to you.

The deadline to return executed contracts for the 2021 Load Control Program is January 31, 2021. No option

changes, additions or deletions will be allowed after January 31, 2021.

**Please watch for your letter and notify us of any changes you want for the 2021 program.**



From growing suburbs to remote farming communities, electric cooperatives are proud to serve 42 million Americans across 56% of the nation's landscape.



## Logan County

# CRIME STOPPERS

ANONYMOUS TIP LINE—CASH REWARDS

**970-522-3937**

**Did you know** there is something you can do to help fight crime in your community, remain anonymous and possibly earn a reward of up to \$2,500? Logan County Crime Stoppers pays rewards for information leading to the arrest of criminals. It's easy — you give your information, not your name. **Call 970-522-EYES (3937).**

## Co-op Month Promotions

**H**EA is celebrating National Co-op Month with two promotions. Enter online, by phone or in person for these two giveaways:

- Consumer-members who sign up for auto pay and paperless billing any time in the month of October will be entered to win a 32GB seventh generation iPad.
- Join Highline's email contact list in the month of October for a chance to win a care package valued at over \$100, which includes a host of previous annual meeting gifts, hand sanitizer, masks and more.

## Storm Survival

Prepare now for future storms. Assemble an emergency kit with necessary supplies to survive prolonged power outages. By staying tuned to the National Weather Service, you can better judge if inclement weather is approaching so you can take necessary steps to keep your family safe.

## Heat Help

**T**he Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program helps low-income households stay safe and healthy by providing financial assistance to offset the costs of heating and cooling. This program particularly helps households that pay a high portion of household income for home energy to meet immediate home energy needs. Heating season runs from October 1 to March 31.

**Colorado LEAP (Low-income Energy Assistance Program) is a federally-funded program that helps eligible hard-working Colorado families, seniors**

**and individuals pay a portion of their winter home heating costs.** The goal is to help bring warmth, comfort and safety to your home and family by assisting with heating costs. LEAP will begin accepting applications for the 2020-2021 season on November 1, 2020. Colorado residents can call 1-866-HEAT-HELP (1-866-432-8435) for more information.

Nebraska residents can apply to receive assistance from LIHEAP by calling 1-800-383-4278 or filling out an application via the ACCESSNebraska website.

## Shredding Event

**I**n the spirit of the seventh cooperative principle, concern for community, we want to encourage members to take sensitive documents needing shredding to the Logan County Crime Stoppers Annual Shred-A-Thon on Saturday, October 10. The event will be held in

the south parking lot of the Sterling City Hall, located at 421 N. 4th St., from 10 a.m. until 2 p.m. The cost of shredding is \$5 per box with a limit of two boxes. Businesses and individuals are welcome to participate. Provision is made for drive-up delivery of your shredding.



# FALL BACK

## Daylight-saving time ends

## November 1.