

# HIGHLIGHTS

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DECEMBER 2023

## Big Horn REA Board Authorizes a \$519,000 Capital Credit Retirement

Each year, your democratically elected Board of Directors reviews the Co-op's financial condition to determine if money can be returned to the members – YOU!



**Our office will be closed  
December 25th and  
January 1st  
for the Holidays.  
Please call 1-800-564-2419  
in case of outage or  
emergency.**

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### You own this cooperative.

Did you realize you are a member of a not-for-profit electric utility? When you signed up to receive electricity from Big Horn REA, you became a member-owner of your Co-op. Member-owned utilities are very different from investor-owned

utilities. Investor-owned utilities return profits to their investors, not to the customers they serve. Member-owned utilities exist only to provide low-cost, reliable electricity to members – not to make money for investors.

### What is a capital credit?

One benefit of being a co-op member is that you share in any excess revenue (not profits, because cooperatives are not-for-profits). This excess is allocated back to members as "capital credits." Each year, the Board of Directors meets to review the financial condition of the Cooperative. If they determine that it is financially sound, the Board of Directors discuss the general retirement of capital credits.

This year, the Board determined that your Co-op is financially sound and elected to retire the capital credits allocated to member accounts for the years 2003 through 2008. That means about \$519,137.00 from unretired capital credit balance will be returned to members in December 2023. The retirement includes a percentage of our power supplier's (Tri-State Generation & Transmission) allocations.

### How are capital credits returned to me?

Most capital credits are returned to members via check through the mail. Members with large capital credit

refunds, along with inactive members, will still receive a check.

### Why are these capital credits from 2003 through 2008? Why aren't they from last year?

Capital credits are not typically returned the year they are earned so that they can be used to fund future needs, such as electric lines, bucket

trucks, and other needed equipment. This reduces the Co-op's need to borrow money and helps keep rates low for members.

### Do you have unclaimed capital credits?

Because capital credits typically aren't retired for several years, it's important that you keep the Co-op

informed of your current address – even if you move out of the area.



**EV Charger**

We always get asked if our EV charger is actually getting used. Although, it doesn't get used very often, we do get a few people that stop in to use the charger!



Big Horn recently had two students job shadow with them - Hunter Aagard and Thomas Winters.

The crew was building a 3 phase line re-route and stringing new overhead conductor.

Top right: Our lineman Rusty Burden and students Thomas Winters and Hunter Aagard. Rusty was

explaining to the boys about the top ties that are used to tie the wire.

Middle right: Rusty, Thomas and Hunter are all watching lineman Clint Getzfreid, as he puts the wire in dollies so that the crew could bring it up to sag.

Bottom right: Hunter and Thomas are pictured tying preforms on guy wire.



**Help Make Fellow Co-Op Member's Lives A Little Brighter By Signing Up For OPERATION ROUNDUP®**



Operation Roundup gathers voluntary contributions from participating co-op members by "rounding up" their monthly bill to the nearest dollar. For example, your bill of \$65.63 would be automatically rounded up to \$66.00, with the additional \$0.37 cents going to the Operation Roundup Fund.

All of these donations are placed in a trust and are administered by the Big Horn REA Operation Roundup Foundation Board. This board is separated from the Big Horn REA Board of Directors, and all areas of Big Horn REA's service territory are represented on the Roundup Foundation Board. The current board members are Lisa Cook, Veda Gerrard, Sherry Firnekas, Sharon Fech, and Jennie Rael.

The roundup foundation receives and evaluates all requests, determines who receives the funding and how all Operation Roundup monies will be distributed. The funds are to help the less fortunate, and charitable organizations in need.

Giving help to those in need has never been easier. The Big Horn REA Roundup Foundation has the potential to make an overwhelming difference for those in need throughout our service area.

To sign up for OPERATION ROUNDUP®, complete this form and return with your payment.

Print your name \_\_\_\_\_

Account Number(s) \_\_\_\_\_

*~small change that changes lives~*



Over \$82,000 donated to worthy causes since 1999!

All donations stay local!



**Energy Efficiency**  
Tip of the Month

Get smart with a better way to heat and cool your home! Smart thermostats are Wi-Fi enabled and automatically adjust heating and cooling temperature settings in your home for optimal performance. Smart thermostats learn your temperature preferences and establish a schedule that adjusts to energy-saving settings when you're asleep or away.

For maximum energy savings, look for smart thermostat models with the ENERGY STAR® label.



Source: Dept. of Energy

2023



2024

Your Touchstone Energy Cooperative



# Manager's Message



As the year of 2023 is coming to a close, Big Horn wants to thank our members for their patronage and support of their cooperative.

In 2023, Big Horn still faced supply chain issues in securing necessary line materials. Big Horn worked diligently with vendors in securing the needed materials in order to build and upgrade services in 2023. We are proud to state that requests and building of new services were not delayed as needed materials were in inventory. However, it is still important that our members contact Big Horn in the early planning stages for any new services/upgrades.

The ever increasing costs for such things as material, equipment, and other operating items has impacted Big Horn's financials. Also, Big Horn's power supplier Tri-State Generation and Transmission announced a wholesale rate increase of approximately 7% effective January 1, 2024. Big Horn had our rate consultant prepare a cost of service study. Your board of directors have reviewed and analyzed the need for our first rate increase since 2017. The results of the study show that an overall average rate increase of approximately 9.45 percent will be necessary and be effective January 1, 2024. The rate increase to each rate class is based upon a cost of service study prepared by a rate consultant. The change to each rate class and ultimately to each member is partly determined by the demand (kW) used each month. Hence, the rate change to each members' monthly bill could be higher or lower than the overall average of 9.45%. Big Horn's power supply costs each month are based upon our total demand (kW) and total energy used (kWh). Of every dollar Big Horn receives in revenue, 65% or \$0.65 is paid towards power costs. Your board members and employees will continue to work diligently in maintaining and managing costs. Big Horn will also continue to provide quality electric service.

The analysis of a potential consolidation of Big Horn REA,

Carbon Power & Light, High Plains Power, and Garland Light & Power is nearing completion by a consultant. The consultant will be meeting with representatives of the involved cooperatives in December 2023 and provide an initial review. Big Horn will provide information and updates in the upcoming months.

Big Horn reported during district meetings in 2023 that one item that is of concern is our power lines on the National Forests. Big Horn has over 90 miles of lines on Forest Service property. Trees and vegetation that are in the right of way area and outside the right of way create outages and the potential for forest fires. It has been noted that along with trying to secure permission to remove trees on the Forest Land, Big Horn is considering burying the overhead lines. Such a project would be at considerable cost. One area that was evaluated for the burying of lines was the Ten Sleep Canyon area. The trees pose considerable risks to the integrity of our facilities. Further, many of the poles in the area are of 1950s vintage and will be in need of replacement. Big Horn applied for Federal infrastructure funds to help offset some of the costs and has been notified of a potential grant award in the amount of \$2,000,000. We will keep our members updated on the progress of maintaining and operating lines on the Forest Service.

On behalf of the board of directors and employees, we want to say we sincerely appreciate working for you, the member/owners and want everyone to practice safety near electric lines and equipment.

Merry Christmas, Be Positive, and Best of Wishes for 2024. We look forward to serving you in 2024.

## HIGHLIGHTS

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### For Outages or Trouble

Call the office number: ANYTIME  
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After 5 p.m., weekends and holidays all calls will be answered by our professional answering service, who will contact the appropriate person(s).



Make sure to check out our QR Code to reach our website quicker, and make sure to follow us on Facebook for any outage updates!



[www.facebook.com/BigHornRuralElectric](http://www.facebook.com/BigHornRuralElectric)



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