

# You Are a Member...

*As a cooperative, our "customers" are actually our members and our owners.*

## Electric Cooperatives...

### Accountable, Responsible, Reliable

Oregon's electric cooperatives share the common goal of bringing reliable electrical power to their communities at the lowest possible cost. These locally-owned Oregon companies also share a deep sense of community and a responsibility to the well-being of their members. Born in the 1930s, the electric cooperative movement is now represented by 21st century corporations that retain old-time values of community — values reflected in the contributions that electric cooperatives make to Oregon's people, its economy and the environment.

## Contributions to the Community

Oregon's electric cooperatives provide much more than electrical service to their communities. As community-based organizations, co-ops contribute directly to the Oregon economy through taxes, through the creation of jobs, by purchasing materials and supplies locally and through charitable donations and community sponsorships.

- Oregon's electric co-ops directly employ hundreds of people, creating an annual payroll in the tens of millions and paying millions annually in payroll taxes (excluding benefits). Each year, electric cooperatives pay additional taxes, franchise fees, and other fees to governments in Oregon.
- On average, electric co-ops purchase 75% of their goods and services from Oregon companies.
- The majority of electric co-ops return money directly to their members in the form of capital credits. Since their initial formation, Oregon electric co-ops have returned a total of over \$150 million in capital credits to current and former members.

- Electric co-ops place considerable importance on encouraging energy efficiency. Co-ops spend millions of dollars annually on energy efficiency rebates and incentives — generating an annual energy savings of close to 30 million kWh.
- Co-ops also assist their communities through donations of money, time and material. Co-op employees donate thousands of hours volunteering on community programs and projects. As responsible local businesses, co-ops contribute annually in dues and donations to civic and community organizations. In addition, electric co-ops provide electric bill payment assistance and weatherization programs to assist low-income members.

## Commitment to Youth

Children are an important part of the cooperative community. Each year, Oregon's electric co-ops donate scholarships to young people and annually send students from their communities to a national Youth Leadership Conference, science camps, energy seminars, 4-H programs, and provide career development opportunities. They also provide regular electric safety demonstrations to school children and their parents.

Co-ops help support a variety of school programs ranging from renewable energy projects to athletic programs. They regularly donate items, such as computers and drafting equipment, and provide assistance to schools through energy efficiency incentives and lighting rebates.

## Economic Development

As community-based Oregon businesses, electric cooperatives are naturally interested in the economic health of local communities. In addition to providing energy-related incentives for businesses in their territories, co-ops also directly invest in economic expansion.

In recent years, co-ops invested in local businesses and economic development projects including paying for a percentage of underground service or line extensions to new businesses, assisting with additional infrastructure (such as water and sewer lines) and helping with economic development project costs. Co-ops also awarded thousands of dollars in economic and community development loans.

By helping to stimulate Oregon's economic growth, co-ops expand commerce, create jobs and strengthen local communities.

## The Environment

Oregon's electric cooperatives have more than a passing interest in the areas they serve. Co-ops promote environmental stewardship, invest in environmentally sound practices and have always been interested in clean, economical energy sources. Their main source of energy comes from the region's largest renewable resource: the Federal Columbia River Hydroelectric Power System. The system is operated by the Corps of Engineers with the power marketed by BPA. In addition, co-ops participate in Bonneville's Conservation and Renewable Discount Program and several offer their members the option of purchasing a portion of their energy needs from renewable sources or include environmentally-preferred power in their rate base.

Other co-op efforts protect and enhance Oregon's wildlife such as the Habitat Improvement Program and the placement of special bird habitat structures on power poles to benefit birds of prey.

## Electric Co-op Basics...

You might wonder what the difference is between a cooperative, or co-op, and other types of utilities, such as investor-owned (PGE or PacifiCorp) or other consumer-owned utilities, like Peoples' Utility Districts and Municipal Utilities.

*What Is A Cooperative?* An electric cooperative is a private, non-profit corporation organized under the laws of the state and owned by the customers, or members it serves. It is governed by a board of directors elected from and by the membership. It is guided by principles including voluntary membership, local control, autonomy, member participation and concern for community.

*What They're Not:* As consumer-owned utilities, electric co-ops differ from investor-owned utilities, in that they are non-profit companies, owned by their members—not stockholders. They are governed by locally-elected boards and are not rate-regulated by the Oregon Public Utility Commission as are the investor-owned utilities. Unlike other types of consumer-owned utilities electric co-ops are not government entities and do not have governmental powers such as taxing authority or the ability to issue bonds. Co-ops are private companies.

## Oregon Electric Co-ops...

Oregon's 18 electric cooperatives are distribution utilities serving approximately 10% of the state's electricity consumers. Electric co-ops are located in 32 Oregon counties, covering 65% of the state's geography and traversing some of its most rugged terrain.