

GOLDENWEST ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE HI-LINES

WIBAUX, MONT. | 406-796-2423

SEPTEMBER 2025



Celebrating YOUR annual meeting

CEO **Jason Brothen** introduces the Goldenwest Electric Cooperative team during the annual meeting.

Goldenwest Electric Cooperative holds annual meeting

Goldenwest Electric Cooperative (GWEC) celebrated its 77th annual meeting July 16. It was an incredibly successful event, enjoyed alongside community members and complemented by a delicious brisket meal from Tastee Hut in Wibaux.

Guests from Lower Yellowstone Rural Electric Cooperative, Mid-Yellowstone Electric Cooperative, Upper Missouri Power Cooperative, Basin Electric Power Cooperative, HDR Engineering, Slope Electric and McCone Electric were also in attendance.

The meeting commenced under the leadership of GWEC President Dale Schweigert. Attorney Rich Batterman announced the quorum, the notice of the meeting and confirmed the proof of mailing.

CEO Jason Brothen discussed the future of GWEC and introduced the guest speaker, Brent Battenfeld, a lineworker from Mid-Yellowstone Electric, who shared his experiences and journey to Guatemala to bring power to a small village and a school.

President's report

Schweigert gave the report on financials, stating after years with Brenner, Averett and Co., a new auditing firm, Summers, McNea and Co., was hired, providing an "unmodified opinion" on the cooperative's financials.

The total utility plant is valued at over \$24.9 million, with long-term debt at \$10.5 million and 2024 margins at \$647,000.

The cooperative improved reliability through system upgrades and is consolidating offices to enhance efficiency. Growth in commercial accounts necessitates increased power, covered by contracts with Upper Missouri and Basin Electric. Western Area Power Administration's rate increase in January prompted a rate adjustment to cover higher wholesale costs.

Grassroots efforts led to successful legislation on wildfire liability, and a new fire mitigation plan was adopted. Collaboration with Lower Yellowstone and Mid-Yellowstone Electric has

fostered strong relationships and resource sharing. The board and staff remain committed to dependable service and strategic planning, ensuring the cooperative's financial health and readiness for the future.

Brothen at the podium

"Goldenwest aims to provide safe and reliable power for its members through various upgrades and tools, including a new metering system for accurate billing and outage management," Brothen said.

Brothen reported ongoing grid updates, such as pole replacements and equipment maintenance, enhance reliability, especially during storms. While updating facilities incurs costs, this cost is managed over 35 years to minimize member rate impacts. Despite rising power costs from suppliers, GWEC has maintained lower rate increases compared to larger cooperatives. The organization appreciates member support and is committed to controlling costs in the future.

Brothen made it apparent all this is possible by relying heavily on the GWEC staff. He thanked them for their hard work and dedication to the cooperative.

"I am proud to be part of this group and get the privilege to work with them daily," Brothen said.

Trip to Guatemala

Brothen introduced Battenfeld, who experienced the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association's international program in Guatemala. As a representative of Mid-Yellowstone Electric Cooperative, Battenfeld stepped into a world different from the electrically connected environment to which he was accustomed in Montana.

"Encountering communities without power was a humbling reminder of the basic conveniences we often take for granted," Battenfeld said.

The challenging Guatemalan terrain, with its steep hills and dense rainforests, presented a difficult challenge for the lineworkers, as



CEO **Jason Brothen**, right, introduces **Brent Battenfeld**, a lineworker from Mid-Yellowstone Electric, who shared his experiences about bringing power to a small village in Guatemala.

they undertook the task of setting poles and stringing lines.

This unfamiliar environment demanded heightened attention to safety, relying on teamwork and the use of proper equipment to ensure everyone's wellbeing. Battenfeld's journey not only highlighted the importance of electricity in modern life, but also highlighted the value of collaboration and vigilance in achieving common goals in challenging circumstances.

In the end, Battenfeld and a dedicated team of lineworkers successfully brought electricity to the small village, including the school, where they installed two fans and lights. Additionally, they collaborated to purchase windows for the school. Battenfeld was so moved by the experience, he donated his climbing equipment to a Guatemalan

lineworker with whom he became close.

Director election

Two directors were nominated for election during the annual meeting, including David Franz from District 1 and Kent Kahl from District 3. Both have served on the board of directors for many years. Attorney Batterman asked for nominations from the floor. After no other nominations, a unanimous ballot was cast for Franz and Kahl.

Luck-of-the-draw scholarships

Goldenwest Electric Cooperative awarded five \$1,000 luck-of-the-draw scholarships to students who attended the 77th annual meeting. Recipients were Elorah Amsler, Austin Gaub, Kaytlynn Gaub, Will Ree and Wyatt Ree. ■

Saving energy during peak times benefits all

Reducing electricity consumption during peak hours not only lowers your monthly expenses, but it also benefits our entire community.

Understanding peak times

“Peak times” refer to those periods during the day when electricity demand is at its highest. This typically includes early mornings when people prepare for work or school, as well as evenings when families return home to cook dinner and unwind with electronic devices. When everyone uses energy simultaneously, it places additional strain on the electric grid.

The role of your cooperative

Goldenwest Electric Cooperative (GWEC) operates continuously to ensure electricity is available in your home whenever you need it. Behind the scenes, a vast and complex system is in operation.

One of the most complex machines in the world is the U.S. power grid. This grid consists of three major interconnections that span the country, each managing supply and demand through regional authorities to maintain reliable electricity and a smoothly functioning economy.

Electricity is generated from a diverse array of sources, including hydropower, natural gas, coal, solar, wind and more. While some power plants

can quickly respond to spikes in demand, others are less adaptable. Once energy is produced, it travels through high-voltage transmission lines to local utilities like GWEC, which then distributes it to your home or business through distribution power lines.

Reducing energy use

When electricity demand peaks, generating or purchasing power becomes more costly. If supply fails to keep pace, the risk of outages increases. Therefore, using less energy during peak hours is more crucial than ever. It not only lessens the strain on the grid, but also helps you save money.

Tips to beat the peak

So, how can you help reduce peak demand? Here are a few strategies:

- Adjust your thermostat by a few degrees during peak hours. Smart thermostats can automatically do this for you.
- Delay using energy-intensive appliances, such as ovens, clothes washers and dishwashers until later in the evening.

Small actions taken by many households can have significant results. When we all collaborate to reduce energy consumption during peak times, we protect our power grid, help control costs and ensure reliable electricity for our communities. ■



A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

GOLDENWEST ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE INC.

P.O. Box 177, Wibaux, Mont. 59353

Phone: 406-796-2423

OFFICE HOURS:

Mon. through Thurs. 7 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.

DIRECTORS

Dale Schweigert President
 Kent Kahl Vice-President
 Bob Makelky Secretary-Treasurer
 David Franz Director
 Lana Maychrzak Director

EMPLOYEES

Jason Brothen CEO
 Travis Bakken Operations Manager
 Dwayne Van Vleet Line Foreman
 Casey Begger Lineman
 Cole Olson Lineman
 Garrett Johnson Lineman
 Travis Wojahn Lineman
 Carter Sarsland Apprentice Lineman
 Patti Goroski Customer Service Representative
 Lisa Tousignant Billing Clerk
 Tori Wyman CFO
 Albert R. Batterman Attorney
 Summers, McNea and Co, PC Auditor
 Jessica Welch Centerpage Editor

Reporting outages

Trouble calls may be placed to the office 24 hours a day. After normal working hours, the phone will be forwarded to one of our lineworkers who are on call. Please check with your neighbors to see if they have power, along with resetting your breakers below the meter prior to calling Goldenwest.