Valley Rural Electric Cooperative, Inc.

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

VALLEY REC

One of 14 electric cooperatives serving Pennsylvania and New Jersey

Valley Rural Electric Cooperative, Inc.

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Co-op ready for a busy 2017

By Doug Roles, *Vice President, Member Services*

"**ARMED FORCES** or muscle cars?" That was the choice of 2017 calendars recently offered to members at our front counter. It was a tough choice too, since military pride runs high in co-op territory. But who doesn't like hot rods?

If you received one of these calendars, we hope you enjoy the great photos. But sooner or later, you'll have to fill it with appointments and "to-do" items. Valley REC's calendar is already packed. Here's a glimpse of 2017:

January begins a new round of tree trimming, and we need the cooperation of members to be successful. The first notification letters of 2017 were mailed to members in the Williamsburg (Blair County) and Harrisonville (Fulton County) areas. Please contact us with any questions.

February's nominating meetings are in director Districts 1, 3 and 5 this year. Invitations are in the mail now. Members will enjoy a great meal and get an update on co-op happenings.

Are you a high school senior or an adult student applying for one of Valley REC's Brighter Future scholarships? The turn of the calendar to March means you should be submitting your applications soon.

The 2017 annual meeting is set for April 7 at Huntingdon Area High School. Watch the mail for your invitation. April also means statewide department meetings. These biannual sessions (also held in the fall) sharpen skills as employees hear presentations and spend time with counterparts from sister co-ops.

May is National Electrical Safety Month, a time when we visit area elementary schools to talk to kids about the do's and don'ts of electricity.

High school juniors and seniors from across the U.S. head to Washington, D.C., in June for the weeklong Rural Electric Youth Tour. Valley will sponsor up to 18 students. Interested? See your guidance counselor. The co-op also hosts a charity golf tournament in June.

While a lot of line construction will be completed in the hot months, July and August also bring a welcome break for many of our employees who take a well-deserved vacation. Aerial patrolling and pole inspection work is ongoing.

Several county fairs take place in Valley territory as summer turns to fall. Be sure to visit our booth at the Huntingdon and Juniata county events in August and September. This is also a good time of year to have your heating systems inspected.

In October, National Co-op Month, we provide a listing of businesses that participate in our Co-op Connections Card discount program. See how much you can save! It's also time for the co-op to put together next year's budgets, so, department heads, sharpen those pencils and see how much we can save, too!

Valley's board members participate in monthly meetings as well as a number of Pennsylvania Rural Electric Association and Allegheny Electric Cooperative, Inc., meetings, including their annual meeting in November.

December brings us to our annual retiree breakfast and the holidays. Say, you're going to need a new calendar … Why not stop by the co-op for a freebie, while supplies last.

What's at the end of the line?

Take a tour of Valley territory

Valley Rural Electric Cooperative
Huntingdon, PA

Editor's note: Across the country, electric co-ops serve 42 million people, about 13 percent of the U.S. population. To serve those members, 838 electric co-ops cover 75 percent of the U.S. landmass.
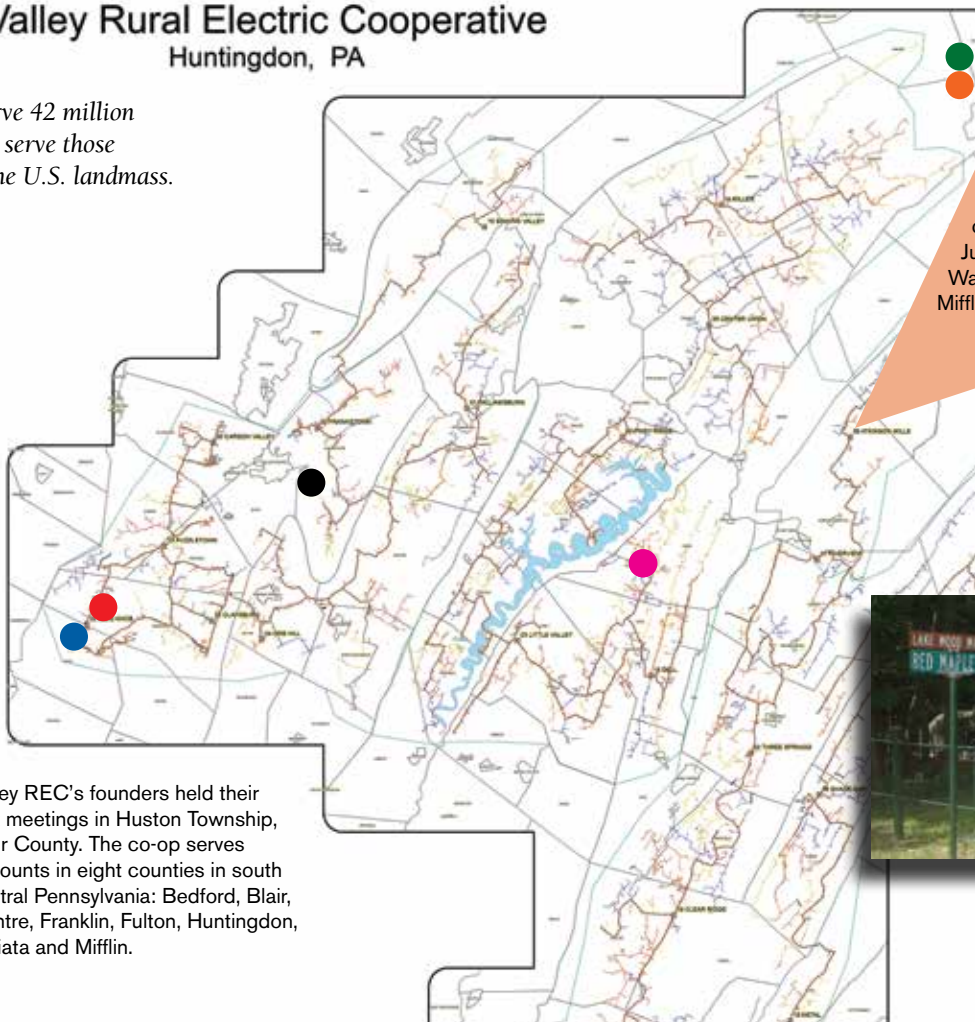
By Doug Roles
Vice President, Member Services

ANYONE who has ever flown over central Pennsylvania has seen how terrain impacts our daily lives. A bird's-eye view of the landscape shows that mountains, valleys and gaps send motorists along winding roads or up steep inclines. It's the same for power lines. Our topography means power lines are as likely to run through wooded hollows and hills as they are to be placed in cleared areas along main roads.

Since the co-op energized its first lines (Nov. 17, 1939), Valley REC's system has grown to provide electric service wherever it was needed. Now the co-op's poles and equipment dot the landscape within the boundaries set by the Territorial Protection Law of 1975 — a state ruling that delineates utility borders. Valley REC is responsible for providing safe, reliable, affordable service to members in an area nearly the size of Rhode Island.

"We stretch from near State College in the north to seven miles north of the Maryland line," says Matt Andrasi, Valley's geographic information systems (GIS) technician. "Then we have from Port Royal, Juniata County in the east to the

Valley REC's founders held their first meetings in Huston Township, Blair County. The co-op serves accounts in eight counties in south central Pennsylvania: Bedford, Blair, Centre, Franklin, Fulton, Huntingdon, Juniata and Mifflin.

Intermedia Communications owns several radio towers in Harris Twp., Centre Co.

Blue Knob Ski Resort

By the numbers: Valley REC service territory

23,383 — Accounts served by VREC

2,379.63 — Miles of overhead line; add in the co-op's 372.31 miles of underground line for a total of 2,751.94 and you eclipse the distance from New York to San Francisco (2,565 miles)

55,851 — Total number of poles in VREC's system

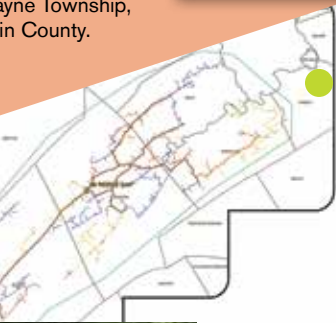**About a minute** — Length of time it took Mapwise software to calculate the number of poles

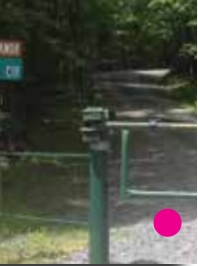The lowest point in VREC territory is the location of two camps where our line crosses the Juniata River in Wayne Township, [Miffl]in County.

Red Maple Circle (marked by the dot) is VREC's center point.

Legend

Cambria County line on the west."

The co-op serves 23,383 homes, farms, businesses, churches and schools. The system includes 22 substations.

Valley uses the latest computer technologies, including digital metering, to keep track of system components. Another cooperative, National Information Solutions Cooperative (NISC), provides mapping services that help tie it all together. For example, Matt can use NISC's Mapwise software to conduct a pole count very quickly.

"There are 55,851 poles on the system," he says. "Prior to modern software, determining miles of line would have taken a map and a ruler and the assistance of our staking engineers."

Of course all the equipment and technology exists to serve the members, no matter where they are located within the service territory. Here's a look at some topographical points of interest by meter location and by member:

Westernmost member

There are a lot of quiet country roads on Valley's system but maybe none more serene than Piper Hollow Road, which runs to the home of Roy and Theresa Frampton. Their Greenfield Township, Blair County, home is Valley's westernmost residential account. In June 1972, the Framptons moved to their present location from Clearfield County, where they had been members of REA Energy Cooperative.

"We like it back here," Roy says. "It's quiet and out of the way. The Bedford County, Blair County and Cambria County lines all come together right out here."

Valley REC has one more account beyond the Frampton's, a seasonal hunting camp adjacent to their property not far from Portage, Cambria County.

Roy, a Cambria County native, and Theresea, a Somerset County native reared in Cambria County, have been Valley members since 1968. Theresa worked as a monitor and secretary for 20 years at Wesleyan Holiness Academy in Portage.

Roy worked for about 25 years with Helsel Lumber Co. in Blue Knob. He worked in the treatment plant, which supplied ties for mines. He also drove a log truck and a coal truck.

The Framptons are the parents of five grown children and have

Roy and Theresa Frampton

15 grandchildren and six great-grandchildren. Now in his early 80s, Roy still hunts, though he uses a vehicle permit from the state game commission to get around.

The couple says they're happy to be members of Valley Rural Electric.

"I can't complain about the service," Roy says. "Any time there was a problem, they were always on the ball with it."

Highs and lows

As the crow flies, Valley REC's territory spans 64 miles east to west and 67 miles north to south. If that crow was to descend from our highest to lowest points, it would take off from Blue Knob All Seasons Resort (3,120 feet above sea level), a ski resort in southern Blair County, and alight along the Juniata River in Wayne Township, Mifflin County. Our bird's landing point, 520 feet above sea level, is at the site of several camps just downriver from the borough of Newton Hamilton.

Easternmost member

Further east is some of Valley REC's finest farm country. On the easternmost end of Valley REC's lines, in Spruce Hill Township, Juniata County, Cloyd and Sharon Lilley raise 100 head of beef cattle on the family farm. Cloyd was born in Lewistown, Mifflin County, and lived in Milroy until the family moved to the farm. Sharon is from Horse Valley, East Waterford (Juniata County).

"We moved here in 1963," Cloyd says as he looks over a herd in a pasture. "This is my home farm."

Cloyd served 26 years in the Army. He was a tank mechanic in the active-duty Army and then served in the Army Reserve as an equipment section chief.

Cloyd and Sharon reared their children in Uniontown (southwestern Pa.) while he worked for Texas Eastern Transmission (Texas Eastern), a gas pipeline company. Sharon worked for Country Charm, a furniture store in Chalk Hill. After Cloyd retired from Texas Eastern as a chief mechanic, the family moved back to Juniata County, where they have raised beef for the past 11 years.

Cloyd & Sharon Lilley

What's at the end of the line?
(continued from page 14c)

The Lilleys are the parents of three grown sons. Two have served in the Marine Corps and another is soon retiring from the Army as a lieutenant colonel.

"I like Valley Rural Electric," Cloyd says. "Price is right, friendly staff, and I don't have power dips like I had in

SHADY SPACE: The clearing around the Little Flat Fire Tower offers shade for Mid State Trail hikers. The cabin in the background was formerly used by forestry personnel.

Western PA. We were always resetting the clocks."

North and south

The Rothrock State Forest dominates much of Valley's northernmost territory. Laurel Run Road, a forestry road, winds by several hunting camps before cresting Greenlee Mountain (often referred to as Pine Grove Mountain) northeast of Whipple Dam State Park. The meter at the north end of the system is located at the site of several radio towers owned by Intermedia Communications of Columbus, Ohio. The site in Harris Township, Centre County, is co-located with the Little Flat Fire Tower site on the Mid State Trail. The clearing offers hikers a panoramic view of the Boalsburg area.

It's a two-hour drive from those radio towers to Route 522 in Belfast Township, Fulton County, the southernmost boundary of Valley's territory. Drive 1.5 miles south of Needmore and the Valley poles at Bard's Auto Sales are the

last you'll see, unless you turn north onto Sipes Mill Road and go back into the co-op's area.

The dealership's owners, co-op members Mike and Jonie Bard, have operated their sales and service business from the present location since 1997.

"We used to be one and a half miles north of Needmore," Mike says. "I've been in business for 33 years."

Jonie is a Maryland native whose family moved to Bethel Township, Fulton County. Mike grew up on the family dairy farm in Belfast Township. His start in the auto business began as he was repainting his Chevrolet Camaro. He had bought a Plymouth Roadrunner to drive around in the meantime. When he sold the Plymouth for a profit, he realized he was onto something.

"It was easier than working cows," Mike says. "I started out my lot with two cars, a Ford Escort and a Dodge Colt. And then I went to three cars."

As a dairy farmer would grow a herd, the Bards expanded their inventory to 230 used vehicles in two locations (in Needmore and Greencastle). The business operates from what was the site of Peck's Farm Equipment, a John Deere dealership. The Bards added 10,000 square feet of building space and expanded the parking area.

SOUTHBOUND: Jonie and Mike Bard represent Valley REC's southernmost commercial account. Bard's Auto, along Route 522, Needmore, Fulton County, offers used vehicle sales and service.

"I remember helping with that," Jonie says. "We did a lot of work on that project. I drove the dump truck."

The family business employs 17 people. Bard's Auto offers vehicle sales, vehicle rental, service work and collision repair. Jonie also offers title, tag and notary service.

"This is your one-stop shop," Mike says. "We have it all."

Mike remembers that a former Valley REC director, Don Hill, assisted the Peck family with getting a power line to the equipment business from what was then one of the co-op's southernmost poles.

"They wanted to be on Valley Rural lines," Mike says. "We're definitely the farthest points down here." ☀

You're Invited
2017 Valley Rural Electric Co-op District Nominating Meetings

District 1: Monday, Feb. 6 - Morrison's Cove Memorial Park

District 3: Tuesday, Feb. 7 - Marklesburg Fire Hall

District 5: Thursday, Feb. 9 - Shavers Creek Community Building

Return your reservation card today!

Invitations were mailed earlier this month