

Valley Rural Electric Cooperative, Inc.

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 



One of 14 electric cooperatives
serving Pennsylvania and New Jersey

Valley Rural Electric Cooperative, Inc.

10700 Fairgrounds Road
P.O. Box 477
Huntingdon, PA 16652-0477
814-643-2650
1-800-432-0680
www.valleyrec.com

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

James Stauffer
Chairman

Kevin States
Vice Chairman

Cindy Bigelow
Secretary

Robert Holmes
Treasurer

Leroy Barnes
PREA Director

James Stauffer
Allegheny Director

Gregory Henry
Randall Huntsman
Linda McMath
Joanne Whitsel

Corporate Office Hours
Monday - Thursday
7 a.m. - 5:30 p.m.

Huntingdon/Martinsburg/Shade Gap
Office Hours
Monday - Thursday
7 a.m. - 5:30 p.m.

Outages & Emergencies
1-800-432-0680

From the President & CEO



Being prepared for winter storms

By Rich Bauer

AS I began thinking of a topic to write about, Hurricane Matthew came barreling up the East Coast causing extensive damage from Florida through Virginia. It also caused major damage and took more than 1,000 lives in Haiti and the Caribbean before reaching the U.S., where nearly 50 people lost their lives.

At its peak, over 2.2 million U.S. households were without power, and many more outages are being reported due to the flooding. Linemen from 10 states have been called in to assist in the repair work; many cooperative linemen from Pennsylvania are in North Carolina assisting the hardest-hit cooperatives. Many of these people knew the hurricane was coming days in advance, and I hope they prepared for what was about to transpire.

At Valley REC, we rarely have to worry about hurricanes, but we do have the threat of severe snow and ice storms. Thankfully, we haven't had a severe storm in several years, but no one can predict what Mother Nature has in store. We are constantly preparing ourselves, and we hope you are, too.

Ice storms can happen anytime, though they are most common this time of year (early November). Valley REC builds our lines to a specific design code called the heavy loading district design. Our lines are built to withstand 1/2 inch of ice loading on our wires and poles. This is the strongest design, but I have seen storms produce up to 3/4 inch of ice. Even though our lines are built to withstand heavy ice, many trees are not. I love the fall and the changing of the foliage

in our area, but as soon as I get a few photos of the trees, I pray all the leaves fall off the trees the following day. Leaves on trees are the No. 1 cause of outages in an ice storm. When freezing rain falls, the leaves provide a much larger surface area for the ice to stick to, therefore causing additional weight to the tree, and usually either the tree or many limbs fall onto the power lines and cause outages. When all the leaves are off the trees, the bare tree can handle the weight of the ice load because there is less surface area for the ice to stick to. A heavy, wet snow also causes excessive weight on the trees and wires, which causes outages to occur.

Please take the time, while the weather is still nice, to prepare a plan in case of an extended outage this winter. Hopefully, you will never have to use it, but it is always better to be safe than sorry. Some of the items you should set aside are: batteries, flashlight, water, basic first aid kit, a few blankets and a charged cellphone. As part of the plan, have a secondary location you can go to in case of an extended outage and phone numbers of the important contacts you may need. Please don't forget to include your pets in your plan.

Here at Valley REC, we are working hard to keep the lights on all the time but Mother Nature sometimes throws us all a curve ball. Please take the time, to be prepared if a severe storm is predicted in your area. Please have a safe and enjoyable Thanksgiving, and hopefully all the leaves will be off the trees before the first ice/snow storm visits. Take care and God Bless. 🙏



PEDAL POWER: Brendan Treffinger of Hesston, a member of Raystown Mountain Biking Association, climbs a grade at the newly opened Raystown Mountain Bike Skills Park Sept. 14. The park is located adjacent to the Raystown Lake Visitor Center, Hesston. Brendan provided a demonstration of the park's features during a ribbon-cutting ceremony.

Skill park offers practice area to Raystown's mountain bikers, extends tourism season

By: Doug Roles
Manager of Member Services

RAYSTOWN Lake officials, tourism promoters and mountain bikers are all celebrating the opening of a mountain biking skills park near the lake's visitor center in Penn Township, Huntingdon County. The park will increase biker safety and further extend tourism beyond the traditional summer vacation months associated with the lake.

At first glance the new facility may look like something for professional bikers only, but the park — like the Allegrippis Trails at Raystown Lake — has paths for beginners as well as advanced riders. Valley REC member Ron Rabena, president of Friends of Raystown Lake, said riders who prac-

tice at the skills park will be better able to navigate Allegrippis.

"The features in the skills park imitate a lot of the features in the trail system," Ron said while speaking at the opening ceremony held Sept. 14.

Ron said the skills park is the result of a lot of work and cooperation between lake officials and volunteers. The project was supported by the Southern Alleghenies Planning and Development Commission (SAP&DC), Appalachian Regional Commission and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

"This is something we should all be proud of," said U.S. Army Col. Edward Chamberlayne, Baltimore District commander who was honored to be part of the local project. He said the Raystown

Lake project and the trail system are known across the U.S. and beyond.

"This trail (Allegrippis) has gained world-class acclaim," he said. "The completion of this park is about safety. This was a mission that was greater than ourselves."

Construction of the Raystown Lake Mountain Bike Skills Park began in mid-spring. The facility officially opened with the ribbon cutting but was available to cyclists starting in July. The skills park helps riders learn fundamentals, such as body movement and balance.

The Allegrippis system opened in 2009 and draws thousands of bikers to Raystown Lake annually. The trail was designed by mountain bikers and built



ABOVE: The skills park course, built by Dirtsculpt Bike Park & Trail Development, features a number of humps, bumps and bridges. The park enables riders to hone skills before heading out to the Allegrippis trail system.



TOP, RIGHT: September's ribbon-cutting ceremony draws a crowd of volunteers and lake officials.

RIGHT: Visitors to the skills park are encouraged take a minute to read instructions and familiarize themselves with the course.

by the International Mountain Bicycling Association. It is touted as the premier single-track system in the eastern United States.

Huntingdon County Visitors Bureau Executive Director Matt Price said that, since the opening of the Allegrippis Trail, Huntingdon County's inventory of hotel rooms has increased by 61 units. From 2009 to 2014, an additional \$31.3 million tourism dollars have been spent in Huntingdon County.

"Additionally, there are more than



100 additional tourism-related jobs," Matt says. "The bike skills park will better build Huntingdon County's status as a destination."

Not only has biking provided an economic boon, but the availability of the trail system, and now the skills park, is also contributing to a local resurgence

in the popularity of bicycling.

Evan Gross, president of Raystown Mountain Biking Association and coordinator of the annual Dirt Fest event that raises money for trail maintenance, told the audience at the ribbon-cutting ceremony that years ago he didn't see much cycling activity in Huntingdon.

"Today," Evan said, "you see kids biking all around town." ☀



RIBBON CUTTING: Taking part in the opening ceremony are, from left: U.S. Army Col. Edward Chamberlayne, Baltimore District commander; Ron Rabena, president of Friends of Raystown Lake; Huntingdon County Commissioner Jeff Thomas, Southern Alleghenies Planning and Development Commission president; Matt Price, Huntingdon County Visitors Bureau executive director; Evan Gross, president of Raystown Mountain Biking Association; and Katie Kinka, SAP&DC community and economic development program manager.



Photos by Luanne Eckenrode

LEFT: Excavator Matt Harmon (in machine) and Valley REC's Martinsburg District Manager Mike Shawley remove an old cabinet. ABOVE: The Ward industrial park is home to several commercial manufacturers and businesses.

Underground service upgraded at Claysburg industrial park

By: Doug Roles
 Manager of Member Services

VALLEY REC crews spent a recent Saturday morning upgrading electrical service to an industrial park in Claysburg, Blair County. The project increases service reliability for half a dozen businesses and manufacturers located in the William W. Ward Industrial Park.

The underground line work was completed during a planned outage on Sept. 10. The service interruption was coordinated with businesses to not interfere with production. The planned outage lasted from 7 a.m. to about 10:30 a.m. Crews set new cabinets and connected new underground electrical cable to the service lines that run to the cabinets.

Martinsburg District Manager Mike Shawley says that in the past year and a half crews have had to do repair work at the Ward site several times. Twice, underground faults have necessitated an outage while repair work was completed.

"It was becoming a reliability issue," Mike says. "It's the original cable that was put in back in the 1970s. The cable was not put in conduit and it has a bare neutral (ground) wire that has

deteriorated over time."

Crews worked with local excavator Matt Harmon to remove the old cabinets and equipment and pull new wire.

The project included installing fault indicators on the wire ends inside the cabinet. The sensors save a lot of time and trouble. In the event of a service disruption, crews will be able to check the indicators and more quickly pinpoint the source of a problem.

The industrial park in Greenfield Township is home to half a dozen businesses, including National Industrial Lumber Co. (NILCO), National Imprint Co., Shirley's Cookies, Dixon Electric and Claysburg Medical Associates. The companies offer a variety of products and services but all depend on a reliable source of electricity to do business.

"It's a significant load for us," Mike says. "The system was deteriorating and we decided to be proactive. We're not just putting a Band-Aid on it. We want to think ahead and keep outages from happening,"

BELOW: Fourth Class Lineman Trevor Eichelberger (kneeling) and Journeyman Lineman Ryan Dodson connect service inside a cabinet near Shirley's Cookies.



RIGHT: Staking Engineer Jason Hey, left, and Journeyman Lineman Bill Bogel install an elbow on a new piece of underground line.

VREC members can rate their co-op through ACSI survey

Valley Rural Electric Cooperative is again asking a sampling of members to rate their business. American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI) surveys were mailed to a random sampling of 1,000 consumers at the start of this month.

If you receive a survey, please take a moment to complete the questionnaire and return it, either in person or by dropping the postage-paid card in the mail.

Valley REC has conducted the ACSI survey of its consumers since 2011. This year's surveys are due back in the

corporate office by Wednesday, Nov. 23.

The late November deadline ensures all responses are collected in time for the tabulation to be completed prior to the start of 2017.

The survey asks consumers to rate the co-op on a scale of 1 to 10 in four areas: how their experiences with the co-op have been; whether or not their expectations have been met; how Valley REC compares to the ideal electric utility; and how likely they would be to choose Valley for their electric service

if they had other choices.

Valley REC has posted stellar scores so far. In 2011 and 2012, the co-op received satisfaction scores of 91 out of 100. Valley posted a score of 92 in 2013 and 90 in 2014. Survey respondents collectively gave the co-op a 91 last year. These ratings put Valley REC in the top 10th percentile among electric co-ops!

To learn more about the ACSI survey, visit the www.acsi.org website. Once there, you can check the ratings of other companies and industries. ☀

Heating assistance program begins accepting 2016-17 applications

The 2016-2017 Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) began accepting applications Nov. 1 and will continue to do so through April 1, 2017. The U.S. Department of Human Services may extend or shorten the program depending upon the availability of federal funds.

LIHEAP helps low-income families pay their heating bills by offering assistance in the form of a cash grant, sent directly to the utility company, or a crisis grant for households in immediate danger of being without heat. Income guidelines have changed from last year. (Please see the chart at right.)

Emergency situations covered through the LIHEAP Crisis Program include:

- ▶ Broken heating equipment or leaking lines that must be fixed or replaced;

- ▶ Lack of fuel;
- ▶ The main heating source or second heating source (a source that is used to operate the main heating source or used if the main heating source is not working) has been completely shut off;
- ▶ Danger of being without fuel (less than a 15-day supply) or of having utility service terminated (receipt of a notice that service will be shut off within the next 60 days).

Applications may be completed at local county assistance offices or online at www.compass.state.pa.us

For more information, please contact your local county assistance office or call the LIHEAP hotline at 1-866-857-7095, Monday through Friday. Individuals with

hearing impairments may call the TDD number at 1-800-451-5886.

2016-17 Income Levels

Household Size	Household Income
1	\$17,820
2	\$24,030
3	\$30,240
4	\$36,450
5	\$42,660
6	\$48,870
7	\$55,095
8	\$61,335
9	\$67,575
10	\$73,817

Jump start your holiday shopping

VALLEY REC GIFT CERTIFICATES make great gifts for the co-op members on your list.

To purchase one, complete the information below. If you'd like to surprise more than one person, please list the names, addresses and amounts for each on a separate sheet. Then mail this form with your check or money order for the total amount to: Valley REC, PO Box 477, Huntingdon, PA 16652-0477.

After we receive your payment, the co-op member's account will be credited in December with the amount you've specified. The certificate may be mailed directly to the recipient, or it can be sent to you for personal delivery.

Recipient's Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Amount of Gift (\$5 minimum) \$ _____

(Make check or money order payable to Valley REC)

Your Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone (including area code): _____

- Return certificate to me.
- Send certificate directly to recipient prior to _____ (date).
- I wish to remain anonymous.

