

# PARK SPARKS

JUNE 2021

PARK ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE, INC.

 Touchstone Energy Cooperatives

## RENEWABLE INTERCONNECTION

Among our membership we continue to see increasing interest in interconnecting renewable energy generation to the grid. Park Electric offers two options for members wanting to interconnect self generated renewable energy; Net Metering and Direct Purchase.

**Net Metering** – This program allows members to interconnect a system up to 15 kW. The energy generated is either used at the time of generation or sent back over the meter to the grid. Energy generated and sent over the grid is netted against energy delivered from the cooperative. Each billing period, self generated electricity not used is credited against cooperative delivered electricity at the full retail rate. If a system generates more than is used in a billing period it is banked for future use. For example, if a system generates 1000 kWh of electricity in one month and the member uses 500 kWh of electricity, the 500 kWh used is offset from the 1000 kWh generated and the remaining 500 kWh is “banked” and saved for a future month. At the end of one year any surplus banked generation is zeroed out. If a system is sized to meet the members needs correctly, at the end of the year there will be nothing left to zero out.

The base rate for a net metered 200 or 320 amp service is \$32.00. The base charge is higher for net metered accounts because Park Electric recovers its infrastructure maintenance costs partially through the kilowatt hour charge. Through net metering,

a service uses fewer delivered kilowatt hours. To ensure all rate classes are equitably contributing to the required maintenance to keep our distribution system reliable, a higher base rate is charged. Interconnecting to the grid is like having a back up battery for the home and ensures consistent, reliable power all the time.

**Direct Purchase** – This program would apply to any system larger than 15 kW up to 150 kW. For those wanting a system larger than 15 kW, Park Electric works out an individual plan to directly purchase the generated power from the member at the PURPA (Public Utility Regulatory Policies Act) rate.

Park Electric encourages our members to educate themselves on the benefits and drawbacks of deciding to add renewable energy to their home. While Park Electric does not install any systems, we are a good source of information about renewable generation in Montana. Any time our members may be thinking about adding renewable energy to their homes, they should talk to us first. Have more questions? Feel free to contact the office or check out [www.parkelectric.coop](http://www.parkelectric.coop)!

### Here are a few things to keep in mind when deciding on whether or not renewable energy is right for you:

- In Montana, the angle of the sun and the number of sunny days limits us to an average generation for a 10 kW system to around 16,000 kWh a year.
- Most renewable systems in our area are solar. Believe it or not, it can actually be too windy in this area for wind generation.
- When you decide to install a renewable source of electricity, if you have a heat meter installed, this must be removed. The heat meter program and the net meter program cannot work in tandem.
- It is a very good idea to keep track of your electrical usage over a 12 month period before contacting an installer. This helps you and the contractor work together to find the right size system for your needs.

# Why a Cooperative makes the best electric utility

## by Matt Haggerty, General Manager

One question we often get is why are we a cooperative and what's in it for me? This is a very reasonable question with a very complex answer. First, let's go over what a Cooperative is and how they function.

A cooperative is a member owned entity. In our case it's an electric company that was established in 1939. Park Electric operates serving 3,950 members to provide at-cost electric service. Investor-owned utilities operate to show profits for the shareholders. A co-op's net margin above expenses and reserves does not belong to the utility; it belongs to the individual consumer-owners of the co-op. The margins must either be used to improve or maintain operations or be distributed to the co-op's consumer-owners in the form of capital credits. Co-ops are owned by the members they serve.

A major difference between co-ops and other businesses is in their business model. A private owned utility makes decisions with their shareholders in mind, a co-op makes decisions with its members in mind. To help ensure our decisions meet the needs of our members, the cooperative is governed by a board of trustees. They are members themselves who reside in one of Park Electric's seven board districts and



are served by our lines.

Park Electric's staff and board of trustees work continually to ensure our mission is met. I'm sure some of you are wondering what is our mission? Park Electric's mission

statement covers why we are here. ***“Our cooperative’s mission is to bring value to our member-owners and communities by providing reliable electricity, superior customer service, at fair and reasonable prices.”*** Now what else is in it for you? In short, co-ops “look out” for the members they serve. A few of the many ways we look out for our membership include the following: Our staff focuses on system reliability, customer service needs, education of our membership, helping with community projects, energy efficiency tips and rebate programs, providing training of our local first responders of electric hazards, providing opportunity for scholarships, and much more. We manage all of these services while maintaining low electric rates. Our ultimate goal at Park Electric is to meet the needs of our members. If you would like to share your experiences or expectations with you board of trustees they can be reached at our E-mail: [info@parkelectric.coop](mailto:info@parkelectric.coop).



Park Electric will be sending out another round of ASCI Customer Satisfaction Surveys next month! Your opinion matters, please be sure to return them to us by mail or in person at the office.

### Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

Let the sun work for you!

Consider solar lights for outdoor lighting. Solar cells in the light convert sunlight to electricity which is stored in a battery for nighttime use. Make sure your solar lights are situated to receive sufficient sunlight to recharge during the day.

Source: [www.energy.gov](http://www.energy.gov)

