



VIGILANTE ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

P.O. Box 1049, Dillon, MT 59725-1049
(406) 683-2327 or (800) 221-8271

Web site: www.vec.coop

E-mail: contact@vec.coop

False Symbolism Won't Save Salmon — or Orcas *Science, Not Emotions, Must Guide Next Steps*

By Terry Flores, Executive Director,
Northwest River Partners

The image of an orca mother carrying her dead calf in Puget Sound was a visceral and heartbreaking reminder of the plight of these iconic animals. It's also a reminder that if we hope to save the orcas, we need to focus on science-based actions that we can take now. Emotion and passion are understandable but unhelpful — unless they translate into clear-eyed thinking and measures that will benefit the orcas as soon as possible.

Unfortunately, some groups are taking advantage of the passion swirling around the whales' plight to push their own spill and Snake River dam removal agendas, which won't help the animals now or later:

- Spilled water at the federal dams has reached levels that put young salmon in jeopardy, yet these groups seek higher spill levels that would violate water-quality standards explicitly established to protect salmon and other aquatic species. Why? Because spill increases the dams' operating costs — and increasing costs boosts prospects for dam removal.
- Everyone familiar with these issues knows that dam removal would require an act of Congress and millions of dollars of federal funding, which would take years. Deconstruction of the dams, even proposals to “dig a ditch” around them, would take even longer.

Most importantly, Snake dam removal doesn't equal a safe future for the orcas. There simply is no scientific basis for such claims. In fact, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Fisheries scientists have been clear as recently as August (see *Clearing Up*, Aug. 24 issue) that three factors are equally responsible for the orcas' decline — prey availability, toxic contaminants, and noise and vessel traffic. Moreover, Snake River Chinook are not the only or most important part of the whales' diet, according to NOAA.

Yet anti-dam groups continue to present Snake dam removal as a silver bullet that will save the salmon and the orcas. It is both a false promise and a powerful fundraising tool.

Don't take my word for it; I head up an advocacy group that supports the Snake dams. Listen instead to Dr. Peter Kareiva, who last fall co-authored an article with UCLA graduate student Valerie Carranza entitled: “Fealty to Symbolism No Way to Save Salmon” (and I submit, by extension, orcas). It should be required reading for anyone involved in salmon or orca restoration in the Northwest.

Kareiva has an impeccable science vita: Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and National Academy of Sciences, former chief scientist at The Nature Conservancy, current director of UCLA's Institute of the Environment and Sustainability. He knows the Northwest's endangered salmon issues intimately. As Director of Conservation Biology at NOAA's Northwest Fisheries Science Center from 1999 to 2002, he was charged with examining management options for Snake River salmon.

Here are key points from the paper:

- “There is no doubt that dams have caused salmon declines, but the operators of the dams have spent billions of dollars to improve the safety of their dams for salmon, and it is not certain that dams now cause higher mortality than would arise in a free-flowing river.”
- “The problem is that a complex species and river management issue had been reduced to a simple symbolic battle — a battle invoking a choice between evil dams and the certain loss of an iconic species.”
- “...it has become clear that salmon conservation is being used as a ‘means to an end’ (dam removal) as opposed to an ‘end’ of its own accord.”

The paper also describes how, in 1999, environmental groups supporting Snake dam removal ran a full-page ad in *The New York Times*, stating that if the dams were not promptly removed “wild Snake River spring Chinook salmon, once the largest run of its kind in the world, will be extinct by 2017.” Kareiva and Carranza point out: “As we write this, it is 2017, the dams remain, and spring/summer Chinook numbers are much higher than they were when that confident prophesy of extinction was printed.”

The authors continue: “Symbolism is visceral and compelling. Another advertisement used in 1999 to advocate dam breaching depicted a young girl looking at a salmon mounted on the wall with the epithet ‘extinct 2017’ and was captioned, ‘if we do not remove the dams our children will never be able to see a wild salmon spawning.’ But symbolism makes everything a black-or-white choice. It also makes it harder to negotiate and sustain solutions that must satisfy diverse stakeholders with diverse values...It need not simply be a choice between fish and hydropower.”

Salmon face myriad obstacles to survival in the rivers and ocean, throughout their complex lifecycle. Unfortunately, there is no silver bullet for restoring them or the orcas — not dam removal, not added spill. Anti-dam groups that continue to oversimplify one of the Northwest's toughest challenges do a huge disservice to the public, the science and the species.

Providing Opportunities for Education

VEC Leadership Award and MECA Memorial Scholarship

Each year when we announce the opening of our scholarship period, a question comes to mind — how much does a college education cost today? Regardless of the source, the answer is sobering. In a survey recently commissioned by the College Board, an education trade association, a student is living on campus while attending an in-state, four-year school can expect to pay more than \$25,000 annually.

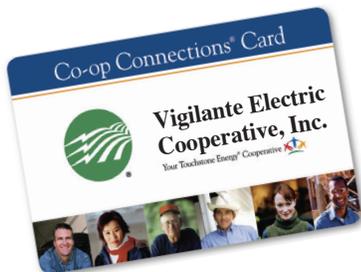
At Vigilante Electric Cooperative we understand the importance and costs of a higher education. We also understand the challenges of just getting your student to fill out applications. This is why we are again pairing our Leadership Award with the Montana Electric Cooperatives' Association's (MECA) Memorial Scholarship, giving deserving students the opportunity to win two \$500 scholarships while filling out one application.

The VEC Leadership Award/MECA Memorial Scholarship are given to students that not only excel in the classroom, but in their communities. Judging is based on academic strength, activities in school and community, awards and honors, employment, volunteerism, community service and a personal statement.

All educational opportunities through Vigilante Electric are funded by unclaimed capital credits, which we are required to retain for five years. At the end of this period we can either use the funds for educational purposes or turn them over to the state of Montana.

The deadline for this scholarship opportunity is January 18, 2019. The top applications will receive our Leadership Award, and the best application will be forwarded to MECA for consideration for its Memorial Scholarship. Past recipients are not eligible. The application can be found on our website at www.vec.coop/content/scholarships.

If you have any questions regarding this, please contact our Dillon office at (800) 221-8271 or 683-2327.



Prescription Discount Tracker

Total Paid Claims.....	647
Total Savings	\$24,807.03
Total Savings Percentage....	43.11%
Sept. Paid Claims	3
Sept. Savings.....	\$146.14
Sept. Savings Percentage...	52.01%

SAFE DÉCOR FOR A HAPPY HOLIDAY SEASON

It's almost time to deck those halls! Statistics show that home fires and electrical accidents typically increase during winter months, so keep these holiday lighting tips in mind for a safe holiday season.

Carefully inspect all electrical decorations before you use them. Cracked or damaged sockets and/or loose or exposed wires can cause serious shock or start a fire.



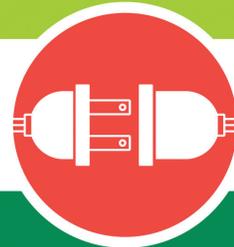
Consider purchasing LED lights, which use less energy and run cooler than traditional incandescent lights.

Never mount or support light strings in a way that might damage the cord's insulation.



Make sure that cords are not pinched in doors, windows or under heavy furniture, which could damage the cord's insulation.

Always unplug electrical decorations before replacing bulbs or fuses.



Turn off all indoor and outdoor electrical decorations before leaving home or going to sleep.

Source: Electrical Safety Foundation International



The road to self discovery

Youth Tour reflections

For many teens, the Rural Electric Youth Tour is full of “firsts.” It may be the first time they left the state, flew on a plane, visited the nation’s capital or have been away from their family for an extended period of time. Even more are seeing and experiencing the larger world through their own eyes, rather than through their parents’ perspective. That’s the most important first, as it’s truly a “leap” to their next phase and where their journey to adulthood begins.

In preparation for Youth Tour, teens learn about cooperatives, our history and grassroots advocacy. Youth Tour sprang from a suggestion of then Senator Lyndon Johnson to a national gathering of co-ops. Johnson felt youth from rural areas would benefit by visiting Washington to see first-hand how government works and gain a wider perspective through the experience. From this idea, Youth Tour evolved. High school juniors selected by their electric co-ops participate in a weeklong trip to the nation’s capital. The program has grown exponentially since its inception, and this year we saw more than 1,900 high school students participate from co-ops in 44 states. Our state typically sends a delegation of about 30 students.

Clean slate

The week is interspersed with visits to many D.C. monuments and sites, including Capitol Hill. Activities with Youth Tour delegations from across the country enable teens to meet a broad spectrum of co-op kids. Our program creates a safe space for teens to discover the adults they are striving to be. Teens leave behind their hometown identity and venture forward with a fresh slate. Students are encouraged to stretch themselves by talking to those they wouldn’t ordinarily interact with.

A highlight of Youth Tour includes a meeting with our congressional delegation. Teens learn first-hand that their elected officials work for their hometown community.

Students often have the opportunity to discuss issues with legislators, and our chaperons are always impressed with the interactions and questions asked by our students. Youth Tour culminates in a farewell evening featuring national co-op partner organizations from the financial and insurance sectors and National Rural Electric Cooperative Association International, an organization bringing electricity to rural areas in developing countries. The evening centers on challenging and inspiring teens to make an impact in their communities. As conversations evolve, so too do the teens’ world view — their definition of community often changes from their hometown to a broader meaning.

I can say that nearly all teens who have participated in our Youth Tour program look back with fond memories of an educational, interesting and eventful week. Many make lifelong friends. For a few, Youth Tour is a transformational experience. Parents remark how their child returned noticeably different — more mature and more confident with bigger goals and aspirations; they have a sense of purpose.

Take the leap

Youth Tour is one of the most important programs that Vigilante Electric Cooperative undertakes. I am constantly impressed by the caliber of students that our co-op sponsors. Our teens are our future, and it’s looking brighter every day. I hope you will consider urging your teen to “take the leap” and join our next Youth Tour delegation.

More information about the Youth Tour program is available at area high schools, on our website at vec.coop or you can contact Rod Siring at 683-2327 for more details.



Vigilante Safety Roundup Tracker

Participating members: 150
Total Contributions: \$1,351.46

To apply contact our office at (800) 221-8271 or 683-2327. An online application is available at www.vec.coop.

Congratulations



Recently, at the Montana Electric Cooperatives’ Association annual meeting, two of our own were recognized for their years of service to our organization. Vigilante Electric Trustee Jim Petersen received his 40-year service award and Townsend Foreman John Moos received his 30-year service award (pictured with wife Lorrie). We would like to thank and congratulate both men for their dedication to Vigilante Electric Cooperative.

Residential Solar — Things to Consider

As prices decline and technology improves, installing a residential solar system — also called a photovoltaic, or PV, system — makes sense for some consumers. Even with these recent improvements in PV, however, it is important to find out the facts before committing to a purchase. Consider these points as you explore whether solar is right for your situation:

CONTACT US FIRST

We want to help you make an informed decision when it comes to installing solar. We can answer basic questions, provide you with information on your house's energy usage, and provide you with our net-metering policy and interconnection requirements.

BEFORE YOU START, FIRST ADDRESS THE ENERGY EFFICIENCY OF YOUR HOME

By reducing the energy requirements of your home, you save money on your energy bill and supplement a higher percentage of your energy needs through your solar installation.

DO YOUR RESEARCH

Several online resources are available. One that we use and recommend is the National Renewable Energy Lab's PVWatt Calculator. This site estimates the energy production and cost of energy of grid-connected photovoltaic (PV) energy systems.

UNDERSTAND THE INTERCONNECTION REQUIREMENTS AND WHY THEY ARE IN PLACE

For reliability and safety reasons, each utility — including Vigilante Electric Cooperative — has policies and procedures regarding grid-tied systems. Take some time to thoroughly read this document and, if questions arise, contact us.

ACCEPT SHORT- AND LONG-TERM RESPONSIBILITIES

If you purchase a PV system, you will need to meet the requirements of your electric cooperative's interconnection agreement. That includes paying any costs of connecting to the cooperative grid. State officials are responsible for conducting the electrical inspection, and it is your responsibility to notify them in advance about your installation. As the owner of the system, you will be responsible for maintenance and system repairs.

FOLLOW ALL SAFETY PRECAUTIONS

With grid-tied solar systems, electricity flows two ways. Improper connection and maintenance of your system may endanger people and the reliability of the grid.

CHOOSE A REPUTABLE CONTRACTOR/INSTALLER

These types of installations are only as good as the equipment installed and the quality of the installation. The Internet makes it easy to compile a list of installers, many of whom provide names of trade associations on their websites that list their members and provide their contact information and certifications. Contact several installers in your area to explore options and to receive detailed bids for your project. Also ask if they will provide you with a payback analysis for the system they are recommending, based on our energy rates.



UNDERSTAND ALL OF THE COSTS

Vigilante Electric does not sell, install or maintain PV systems, so you will either purchase or lease a system from a contractor. If you purchase a solar system, you will be the owner and you will be responsible for ongoing maintenance and repair costs. If leasing is the option you prefer, you will pay less initially, but you will likely have higher ongoing costs. In either case, it pays to spend time figuring out all of the expenses you will be responsible for during the life of the system.

MAINTAIN GOOD RECORDS

Keep files on your pre-purchase research and pre-installation data, as well as bids, contracts, inspection reports, maintenance records, tax information and all other details you may need to refer to in the future.

At Vigilante Electric, we fully support the implementation of distributed generation, if done properly. We want our members to be informed consumers, and we are here for you when you have questions.