



Rio Grande Electric Cooperative, Inc.

Update



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A Message From The General Manager/CEO

By Dan Laws

International Year of Cooperatives

The cooperative business model plays such an important role in our world today that this year has been named the International Year of Cooperatives, by the United Nations. United Nations Secretary, General Ban Ki-moon said, "Cooperatives are a reminder to the international community that it is possible to pursue both economic viability and social responsibility". I have long been a fan of cooperatives. For all of my adult life I have done my banking with credit unions. I am a proud member of Rio Grande Electric Cooperative. I like what cooperatives stand for. Cooperatives are not about making money for investors, but rather saving money for their member-owners. It's a complete paradigm shift.

Since the first cooperative hung its shingle out, the goal has been to supply goods and services that either no one else was willing to supply, or could not supply economically. In particular, electric cooperatives came about because, in rural regions of the United States, electric energy simply was not available. It was not cost effective for investor-owned providers to build the infrastructure necessary to meet the energy needs of rural folks. With the New Deal as a launching pad, farmers and ranchers came together to form their own electric utilities -- businesses that would put their needs first. They would not be hamstrung by the limitation of investor-owned business models that must first consider profit. Cooperatives are non-profit organizations and can place the needs of people first. I encourage you to visit uncooperativesnews.org on the World Wide Web, you will find it interesting.

Cooperatives are owned by those who utilize their services. As such, there is a clear connection between the business and its member-owners. Goal-setting is simple; strive to meet the needs of the membership. There is no balancing the interests of investors and customers in a cooperative, because those two groups are one and the same. Am I suggesting a cooperative cannot run afoul of its objectives? Certainly not. What I am saying is members have authority and can correct a path entered into errantly. In fact, Rio Grande Electric Cooperative is living proof of that fact. In the late eighties, the membership rose up and seized control of the Cooperative. They altered its course. I was hired in the aftermath of that event and we have worked hard to build trust and earn our members' confidence. I hope you are a satisfied member of Rio Grande. If you are not, I hope you will seek resolution of whatever is troubling you. I can assure you it's our desire to play a valuable role in your life, and be a service of which you can be proud.

Oh, one last thing. My January bill from the Cooperative revealed that during the holidays I paid \$6.46 per day for the electric energy I received. We had our sons and their families in for Christmas and entertained. We had a cold snap, but we were kept cozy and warm by electric heat. Our food in both the deep freeze and the refrigerator was preserved and available. When I was hungry, electric energy was a ready servant to cook our food. It heated our water and lit our home, all for \$6.46 per day. That's a lot of bang for the buck! I cannot think of a single thing I spend money on that provides a greater value. I will be eating out tonight, and I can assure you what I spend for electric energy today will be far less than what I spend on that one meal.

