

Sullivan County Rural Electric Cooperative, Inc.

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 



One of 14 electric cooperatives serving Pennsylvania and New Jersey

Sullivan County REC

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BOARD OF DIRECTORS

David L. Aumen – CCD*/BLC/Gold*****
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Jay Lewis – CCD
Vice Chairman
Kathy A. Robbins – CCD/BLC/Gold
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*Credentialed Cooperative Director
 **Board Leadership Certificate
 ***Director Gold Certificate

Office Hours
 Monday through Friday
 7 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.

From the CEO



My least favorite topics

By Craig A. Harting

I'M SURE you're not surprised that my least favorite topics are rates and rate increases.

Recently, you've probably seen where PPL had a 26% power-cost increase due to rising costs in the wholesale market. I had a number of calls asking whether this would affect our cooperative. The answer is no because we get our power from Allegheny Electric Cooperative, Inc. (Allegheny) in Harrisburg.

PPL and Penelec are only used to move our power to us.

Allegheny

As rural electric members in Pennsylvania and New Jersey, we own 10% of the two nuclear units in Berwick. This portion produces 60% of the power we need. Another 10% comes from our hydroelectric plant on Lake Raystown and a share of the Niagara Falls and St. Lawrence hydro plants.

Allegheny buys the remaining 30% from the wholesale market, but has the next several years already contracted at fixed prices. In the future, we may be affected as we continue to purchase this 30%, but Allegheny spreads pricing risks through multiple contracts, which expire at different times.

Allegheny estimates power costs (the generation portion on your bill) will remain steady for the next several years. Because of Allegheny's ownership and supply portfolio, we have kept

generation rates the same since 2013 with a few more years of stability looking ahead.

Sullivan

The distribution portion on your bill pays for the operations at Sullivan County Rural Electric Cooperative. This includes everyone from the office to the field staff and all of the substations, poles, lines, buildings, trucks, and equipment.

Our last distribution increase was in June 2017. We are planning a rate increase in June this year in the distribution charges, but no change in generation rates. The basic service charge will increase \$5, but the distribution kilowatt-hour (kWh) rate will decrease 4%.

The net effect will be a \$2.73, or 1.8%, bottom-line increase in the monthly bill for the average consumer using 930 kWh. The percentage increase will be larger for smaller use levels and less for higher use levels.

We are adjusting our rates since all of our costs are fixed, and do not vary with the amount of power sold. The basic service charge collects equally from all members since we all need to pay for the availability of the grid whether we use any power or not.

Rate changes are never done lightly, and you can be assured we will continue to work hard to hold down costs and deliver a reliable source of power. ⚡

Protecting the wildlife and rural areas of Pennsylvania

By John Zelewicz
Penn Lines Writer

MANY people enjoy the wildlife and natural beauty of Pennsylvania, but it takes a lot of different people with different responsibilities to ensure our wildlife and rural areas are protected.

One of those individuals is Rick Finnegan, the game warden for Sullivan County since 2008.

Becoming a game warden isn't an easy task. It takes dedication, commitment and time ... a lot of time. The process of just being accepted for training takes a year. First, applicants must take a civil service test. There's also an oral test, a psychological evaluation, a physical fitness test and a background investigation. After all that, there's a panel interview in Harrisburg.

"If you're lucky enough and pass all the tests involved," Finnegan says, "you're informed whether or not you'll be able to participate in training to become a warden.

"Once you're accepted," he explains, "you go to training in Harrisburg for a year. Recently, though, they shortened training to 44 weeks. While there, you undergo a wide range of training ... firearms, verbal skills, human and wildlife management, Pennsylvania history, and Pennsylvania Game Commission history."

Training begins in late March or early April. In early October, trainees undergo field training for 10 weeks. They're assigned to three different field training officers. Upon completion of field training, there's a final exam and finals. Graduation usually happens in February.

Upon graduation, wardens can submit requests for where they'd like to be assigned. There are a lot of factors involved as to where wardens are assigned. Although they get to pick up to five places, they go where they're told to go.

"Once we have our assignment, we're responsible for moving there and



MEET THE GAME WARDEN: Rick Finnegan, the game warden for Sullivan County, has held the job since 2008.

setting up an office within one week after graduation," Finnegan says. "I wanted to be in this district. I wanted to be in a rural area, and didn't want to work in a big city. I got my first pick."

Once a warden is assigned, they're on probation for one year and go through quarterly evaluations. Wardens are "locked-in" to where they're assigned for a year. After the year is over, they can transfer to any open district. But if a warden likes where they're at, they can stay there as long as they want or transfer at a later date.

The county population determines

how many full-time game wardens are assigned to an area, and wardens also may be assigned deputy game wardens. Finnegan is the only game warden in Sullivan County and has two deputy game wardens assisting him.

"Sullivan County can be as busy as you make it," he says. "I have great deputy game wardens to take care of things when I'm away."

Training continues

You may think that once a game warden is assigned to an area and is done with probation, the training would finally come to an end. But

wardens are required to participate in yearly mandatory training on firearms, defensive tactics, verbal skills and legal updates. Also, other training is available for those who are interested.

Finnegan is responsible for enforcing Title 34 game laws, which include such things as unlawful activities, protection of game and wildlife, dogs pursuing, injuring or killing game or wildlife, protection of persons, and protection of property. They can also enforce Title 30 fish and boat laws and enforce state park and state forest regulations.

Wardens can also enforce Title 18 (criminal code) and some Title 75 (vehicle code) as it relates to misdemeanors and felonies, but they do more than just enforce laws. They also provide educational programs for schools, nursing homes, state parks and civic organizations. Game wardens also administer the Pennsylvania hunter-trapper education in their district, which is taught by a dedicated group of volunteer instructors.



NOT YOUR AVERAGE BEAR: The Pennsylvania Game Commission traps bears for several reasons. Once a bear is captured, officials do a wide range of tests to gain valuable information, including the bear's weight, age and overall health.



GOBBLE, GOBBLE: Another species game wardens catch and study are wild turkeys. This is done to track and manage disease, study population movement and determine the start of the fall hunting season.

Finnegan spends a great deal of time with cases that involve the illegal taking of game, such as deer and bears.

“You put a lot of hours into everything involved with that, including search warrants,” he says. “Occasionally, we do come across violations accidentally. Usually, though, it involves a lot of work ... interviewing people and gathering evidence.”

Living in such a rural area of Pennsylvania, Finnegan has to deal with a wide variety of animals. One species of wildlife that requires a lot of time and attention is bears. He says bears are live-trapped for a number of reasons.

“If we receive a bear nuisance or damage complaint, we may trap that bear and relocate it. Another reason we trap bears is for biological research,” he says. “We decide where to place traps for research based on history. We'll place traps where they've been successfully set before, usually in summer and in swampy areas where bears have an abundant food source.”

Occasionally, bears can cause problems, like knocking over trash cans, destroying beehives or knocking down bird feeders to eat the seeds. One thing to remember is that while bears may look cute and cuddly, the best thing to do is to leave them alone.

“People like to feed bears,” Finnegan says. “Not only is it illegal to do so, it's dangerous for both bears and people. They very seldom attack someone, but they are wild animals.”

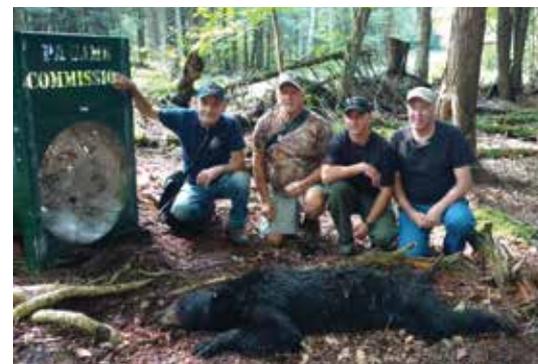
Bears have a sweet tooth

So, exactly what does the game commission use for bait to trap a bear? Bears enjoy many foods, such as berries, reptiles, insects and fish, but the fact of the matter is, one food is more successful than all others: doughnuts!

“We use anything we can get to bait the traps for bears,” Finnegan says, “but if we're lucky, we get doughnuts from a bakery that's disposing of them. Doughnuts seem to work well.”

So, what do they do after they've successfully captured a bear? A lot.

Once the bear is sedated, wardens will note its sex and check its overall general health. If it's injured and there's something they can do, they'll go ahead and treat it. They also make note of the bear's age by pulling a



SETTING A TRAP: When it comes to trapping bears, it's always good to have a little extra help on hand. Shown, from left, are Joe Sharon, Jim Finnegan, Rick Finnegan and John Swingle.

tooth and sending it in for evaluation. A bear's tooth is much like a tree, the number of rings in the tooth helps determine the animal's age.

To keep a record of the bear and help track it, two ear tags are attached. One of the numbers is also tattooed inside its lip because the tags often end up getting pulled off over time.

Wardens sometimes work with deputy wardens and neighboring officers, but they still end up working alone a lot of the time. One of the most dangerous parts of being a game warden is the unknown. Wardens routinely talk to armed hunters.

“We treat each person as being a
(continues on page 18d)”

Prepare for winter storms

By John Zelewicz, *Penn Lines* Writer

POWER outages can happen any time and in any season. No one enjoys being without power, especially during frigid winter months. That's why it's always a good idea to plan ahead in case power goes out.

Here are some steps you can take to prepare for a possible power outage:

- 1) Stock up on batteries. It's always a good idea to keep a variety of batteries on hand for things like flashlights, radios, clocks and smoke detectors ... basically anything that runs on battery backup.
- 2) Make sure your flashlights and radios are ready to go during an outage. A flashlight may be something you don't use that often, but you don't want to wait until you need it to discover the batteries are dead. Avoid using candles during a power outage. They may produce light, but they could also start a fire.
- 3) Over the past few years there have been times when large areas have been without power. If a major storm is predicted, it's a good idea to fill up your vehicle with gas. During large, widespread outages, it may be difficult to find a gas station with power to fuel your vehicles.
- 4) If you don't have one, you may want to consider purchasing a car charger for your cellphone. Cellphones are an integral part of life for many people. They not only provide communication, but also give you access to weather reports. You can also use them to view the co-op's outage map to see where outages are occurring and where crews are working.
- 5) Stock up on water. Many co-op members have to depend upon well water. If there isn't any power, water pumps won't work and that means you won't have water. When a major storm is predicted,



it's a good idea to fill up containers or fill the bathtub with water. This ensures you have water to drink, cook and wash with, and flush toilets.

- 6) Prepare for cooking. Most people have a stove that is either propane/gas or electric. Those with a propane stove have no difficulty preparing food. Of course, it's a different matter for those who own an electric stove. If you have an outdoor grill or open fire that you can use to prepare food, make sure you have an adequate amount of fuel on hand.
- 7) If a major storm hits and you anticipate that you may be without electricity and heat for some time, you may want to consider protecting your water pipes. If you're worried about your water pipes freezing, you should turn off the main water valve in your home and open all the facets to allow the water to drain from the pipes.

We at Sullivan County Rural Electric Cooperative do all we can to prevent outages, but there are times when power outages will still occur. Also, while crews work to restore power safely and quickly, it may take a while to get power back on to all our members. Being prepared ahead of time will help you weather the storm until power can be restored. ❁

Protecting the wildlife

(continued from page 18c)

safe and lawful hunter, but we don't know what we're walking into or the background of the hunter," Finnegan says. "We expect the best, but are prepared for the worst. We have to stay on our toes. Often, we have to deal with multiple people in remote areas by ourselves."

While some may not like the responsibility or the hours spent being a Pennsylvania game warden, Rick Finnegan enjoys what he does for a living.

"I like what I do," he says. "I like being outdoors ... the freedom of setting my own schedule. I enjoy not being locked behind a desk all the time."

So the next time you come across Game Warden Finnegan or any other representative of the Pennsylvania Game Commission, wave and say, "Hi." Remember: They're there to protect the wildlife and great outdoors that we all enjoy. ❁

Director Robbins recently certified

Sullivan County Rural Electric Cooperative Director Kathy Robbins has obtained director gold credentials from the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.



Kathy Robbins

Director gold is the newest credential, and it recognizes directors committed to continuing their education beyond the credentialed cooperative director and board leadership certifications. The courses are offered through the Pennsylvania Rural Electric Association.

Director gold demonstrates Kathy's ongoing commitment to advancing her knowledge and performing her fiduciary duty to the best of her ability. Kathy is the board representative from District 5, which includes Shrewsbury and Davidson townships in Sullivan County and Penn, Franklin, and Jordan townships in Lycoming County. ❁