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04/07/2026

## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Council Members

**FROM:** Brian Dekiep: Senior Energy Analyst, Montana Office

**SUBJECT:** Discussion with Montana Electric Cooperative Association (MECA) and Member Utilities

## BACKGROUND:

Joe Kolman, Director of Government Affairs at The Montana Electric Cooperative Association, will lead a discussion about topics and issues the Electric Cooperatives are facing in Montana and regionally. Mr. Kolman will be joined by representatives from Flathead Electric Cooperative and Lincoln Electric Cooperative, both cooperatives service members in Northwestern Montana.

## Montana Electric Cooperative Association:

The Montana Electric Cooperatives' Association is a not-for-profit, statewide trade association representing 3 generation and transmission cooperatives and 25 customers owned distribution cooperatives. Electric cooperatives provide electrical service to more than 400,000 Montanans. The cooperatives' service areas cover all 56 Montana counties. Collectively, Montana's electric cooperatives own and operate more than 48,000 miles of distribution power lines in Montana. MECA is the publisher for Rural Montana magazine, the state's largest circulation publication at 133,000 copies each month.

## **Flathead Electric:**

The mission of Flathead Electric Cooperative, a not-for-profit, member-owned cooperative, is to provide competitive and reliable services, achieve the highest level of member satisfaction, and enhance the quality of life in our communities. Your Co-op works 24/7 to provide reliable access to electricity for our members. This includes protecting critical infrastructure, upgrading and maintaining our distribution system, advocating for public policy that supports our mission, and making investments to ensure we have sufficient electricity generation and transmission to meet load growth. Innovation is our middle name. Your Co-op is continually looking for ways to partner with our members for unique energy solutions. From our Landfill Gas-to-Energy Plant to Community Solar Projects, we're always searching for creative ways to provide electricity and make our electric system more efficient and sustainable. Providing electric service the cooperative way distinguishes electric cooperatives from investor-owned and municipal electric utilities. Flathead Electric Cooperative operates for the benefit of its members, rather than investors. Our members, staff, and trustees are all part of the community we serve.

On September 20, 1937, a group of neighbors formed Flathead Electric Cooperative to bring power to their homes and farms. In December 1938, the initial 82 miles of line were energized and 117 Flathead farm homes had electricity for the first time. In 1998, Flathead Electric Co-op purchased investor-owned utility PacificCorp, expanding its service area to the municipalities of Kalispell and Whitefish, all of the Libby area, and Cooke City, Montana. FEC currently has nearly 77,000 meters, 59,000 customers, 169 employees and over 5000 miles of energized wires.

While many utilities struggle to find a clean, reliable, and affordable power supply, Flathead Electric Cooperative's members in Northwest Montana enjoy the benefits of hydropower generated by the Federal Columbia River Power System through the Bonneville Power Administration (BPA). As a result of being served primarily by hydropower, we have one of the least carbon-intensive electric grids, and our members enjoy some of the most affordable electric rates in the country.

## **Lincoln Electric Cooperative:**

Lincoln Electric is a rural electric cooperative in northwest Montana. As a cooperative, we're different from many energy companies. We're owned by those who use our service – our members. Providing reliable, affordable energy safely to our members is why residents created Lincoln Electric in 1948. Although many things have changed in how we do it, that mission remains our focus now and into the future.

Counties Served: Lincoln & Flathead

Total Members Served: 5,216, Total Meters Served: 6,529

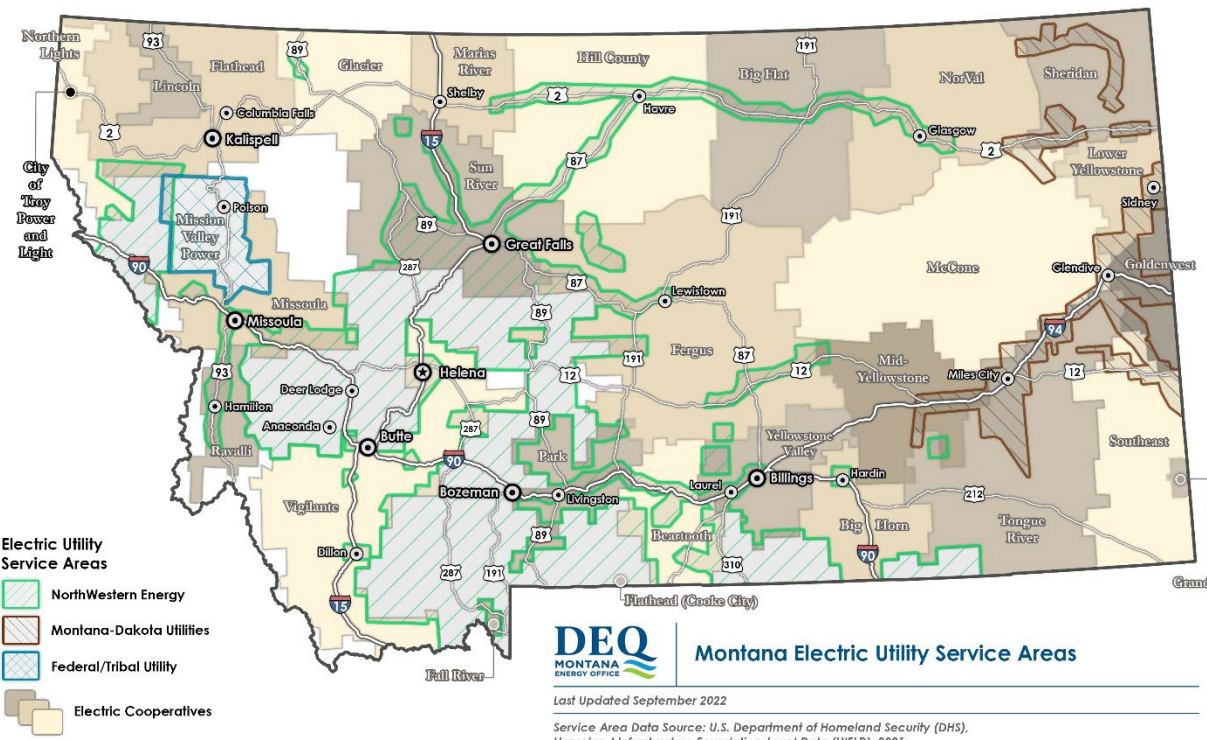
Miles of Line: 1,013, Members Per Mile: 6.45

Year Incorporated: 1948, Date First Energized: November 1949

Total Employees: 26

Resale kWh sold: 133,033,134

Power Supplier: Bonneville Power Administration



Utility service area boundaries shown on this map are approximate