

# SPARKS

## 2024 OUTLOOK: PROJECTED RATE ADJUSTMENT SET FOR FIRST QUARTER

High West Energy is proud to serve you and provide safe, reliable, and competitively priced energy and services. We have consistently monitored the cooperative's expenditures and have been meticulous in allocating our funds. However, given the escalating costs within our industry attributable to inflation and the added strain of our power supplier's rate increase, we find ourselves compelled to implement a rate increase at High West Energy. On January 1, 2024, Tri-State Generation and Transmission Association, our power supplier, implemented a 6% increase for its members. Although we have consistently maintained our rates since May 2016, we must accept a 6% rate increase in purchased power costs.

Although we are receiving a 6% increase from Tri-State, we will be increasing our overall revenue by 4.4%, including a 7.5% increase for our residential members, effective March 1, 2024. Our Board of Directors has approved the new rate design to protect your access to safe, affordable, and reliable power, and we hope you understand the necessity of this rate change for both members and the cooperative.

High West Energy's retail rates have been revenue-neutral since 2016, but despite our best efforts to refrain from raising rates, the time has come when it is necessary. This decision is crucial for maintaining the cooperative's financial stability and enabling us

to consistently deliver a reliable power supply to our members.

We have done many things to lower our costs for the cooperative including acquiring less expensive fleet vehicles, transitioning to a paperless environment, utilizing one software package for operations, reducing unused equipment, minimizing new long-term debt, negotiating cost increases with suppliers and agencies, consolidating employees and workload, utilizing training grants, seeking multiple bids on products/materials, and limiting work to projects that can primarily be funded or performed with current material inventory. In addition, we have increased savings by moving to an online annual meeting and designing our Sparks newsletter in-house rather than outsourcing this publication. Through the implementation of these measures, we hope that you understand the complexity of the rate increase.

We are unified in this endeavor and value your membership of the High West Energy Cooperative. We recognize the challenges that many are facing during this period, but we do have to acknowledge the necessity of this change. High West Energy offers various resources, such as rebates for acquiring energy-efficient appliances/tools, and there are local organizations available to assist if required. For any inquiries or concerns, please feel free to reach out to our office at 307-245-3261.

### INTRODUCING

# POWER PAGES



Empower our community, one page at a time! We are starting a library in our office to ignite the love for reading throughout our neighborhood, foster growth, and empower the youth in our communities. Take a book or trade a book to power our library!



### HIGH WEST ENERGY



#### Board of Directors

Michael Lerwick	District 11	307-630-1277
Gary Smith	District 12	307-649-2375
Ed Prosser	District 13	307-630-8364
Jerry Burnett	District 14	970-895-3386
Damon Birkhofer	District 15	308-235-7296
Kosha Olsen	District 16	307-214-4940
Kevin Thomas	District 17	308-879-4396

*\*Meetings are typically held on the fourth Monday of each month.*

#### Leadership Team

Jared Routh	CEO/General Manager
Dave Crouse	Chief Information Officer
Josh Gorman	Chief Financial Officer
David Golden	Engineering Manager
Konnie Keehnen	Member Services Manager
Carol Macy	Employee Services Manager
Marv Powell	WAFB Operations & Wiring Manager
Nate Begger	Operations Manager

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# SPARKS

## EMPOWERING YOUTH THROUGH DYNAMIC PROGRAMS

It is that time of year for youth activities and we are excited to offer many different programs to the youth in our community including Youth Tour, our scholarship program, and Youth Energy Leadership Camp. These programs, which are available to dependents of High West Energy members, offer amazing opportunities for students that will provide lifelong knowledge, build leadership skills, and give an idea of different career opportunities within the electric cooperative world.

Youth Tour is an incredible opportunity for high school juniors and seniors to travel to Washington, D.C. to learn about American history, meet representatives and senators, as well as meet students from other states. Not only do students learn about the United States, but they will also learn about the crucial role of cooperatives in our communities. The 2024 Youth Tour will be held from June 17 to 23 and is an all-paid expense by High West Energy. If your child is a junior or senior in high school, the application can be found on our website. Along with the application, two letters of recommendation need to be sent to Wyoming Rural Electric Association by **Friday, January 19<sup>th</sup>**. From there, interviews will be held via Zoom on January 25<sup>th</sup>.

In addition, High West Energy offers scholarship opportunities to both high school seniors and college students, a tradition that has been ongoing since 2012. We have awarded on average \$10,000 per year to commendable students within our service territory. This year, there is a notable change in the application process, all submissions, including the general application, appraisals, and the specific scholarship application for those interested in line work and attending line school, are to be completed through a web form on our website. This modification



*Photo by NREA.*

Students gathering in a huddle at NREA's Youth Energy Leadership Camp.

aims to enhance efficiency for applicants and provide easier access. Discover more details and access our scholarship applications at [www.highwest.coop](http://www.highwest.coop). Be sure to submit your application and appraisal by **Thursday, February 1<sup>st</sup> at 5 pm**.

Explore our industry further through the Youth Energy Leadership Camp, an all-paid expense by High West Energy, presented by the Nebraska Rural Electric Association in Cozad, Nebraska. Open to current 9th, 10th, and 11th grade students, the camp runs from July 22 to 26. Immerse yourself in workshops, demonstrations, and presentations by industry experts, while also enjoying activities like swimming, banquets, and dances. This camp offers a unique opportunity to enhance your leadership skills and expand your industry knowledge. Keep an eye on our website for the upcoming availability of applications, **due in June**.

We encourage you to take advantage of these enlightening opportunities that are readily accessible to the youth in our communities. These experiences provide an opportunity to learn about our industry, gain leadership experience, and explore possible career options. Please be mindful of each deadline and if you have any questions please contact Brooke Darden at 307-245-3261.

**Upcoming events for 2024  
will be coming soon!**

### Lobster Mac & Cheese

#### Ingredients:

- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil
- Kosher salt
- 1 pound cavatappi or elbow macaroni
- 1 quart whole milk
- 8 tablespoons (1 stick) unsalted butter, divided
- 1/2 cup all-purpose flour
- 4 cups grated Gruyere cheese (12 ounces)
- 2 cups grated extra-sharp Cheddar (8 ounces)
- 1/2 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- 1/2 teaspoon ground nutmeg
- 1 1/2 pounds cooked lobster meat, 1/2-inch diced
- 1 1/2 cups fresh white bread crumbs (5 slices, crusts removed)

#### Instructions:

Preheat the oven to 375 degrees F. Add the oil to a large pot of boiling salted water, add the pasta, cook, and drain well. Heat the milk in a small saucepan, but don't let it boil. In a large pot, melt 6 tablespoons of the butter and add the flour. Cook over low heat for 2 minutes, stirring constantly with a whisk. Still whisking, add the hot milk and cook for 1 to 2 minutes, until thickened and smooth. Off the heat, add the Gruyere, Cheddar, 1 tablespoon salt, pepper, and nutmeg, and stir until the cheese melts. Stir in the cooked pasta and lobster. Pile the mixture into 6 to 8 (2-cup) gratin dishes. Melt the remaining 2 tablespoons of butter, combine with the breadcrumbs, and sprinkle on top. Bake for 30 to 35 minutes, until the sauce is bubbly, and the pasta is browned on top.

*\*Recipe from foodnetwork.com.*