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**MISSION STATEMENT**  
 Blue Ridge Electric Cooperative will operate as a competitive provider of energy services and a partner with local communities, with a focus on safety, service and integrity.

**BOARD OF DIRECTORS**  
 Joel R. Davis, *Chairman*  
 Joel Spencer Dalton, Jr., *Vice-Chairman*  
 Len D. Talley, *Secretary*  
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 William G. Elrod  
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 J. Mendel Stone

**PRESIDENT AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER**  
 Jim Lovinggood

This organization is an equal-opportunity provider.



A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative



## Engineering work plan finalized

**RECENTLY, BLUE RIDGE** Vice President of Engineering Mark Waters provided a comprehensive report on the cooperative's 2021-24 Engineering Work Plan. These four-year EWP's represent an endeavor that is essential to the co-op's mission of supplying quality service to our members.

Two important goals are addressed in every EWP: 1) Improvements are scheduled for our in-place power-delivery facilities, with a view toward raising the level of service to existing members; and 2) more capacity is to be built into the system to accommodate the considerable electrical load that's expected to be added during the four-year period.

As enumerated in this latest EWP, here are some of the projected outcomes we expect to see by the end of 2024:

- ▶ 6,652 net new members to be added to the co-op's power lines.
- ▶ 203 miles of new-line extensions, bringing our total line mileage to 7,313.
- ▶ Four new substations to be erected.
- ▶ Four existing substations to be rebuilt to compensate for increased electrical loading on the portions of the Blue Ridge grid receiving service from those facilities.

Once all is said and done, the cooperative will have expended tens of millions of dollars to accomplish everything that's outlined in this EWP. Factually speaking, ours is a capital-intensive business. It takes large sums of capital to maintain and expand electrical-utility plant. The growth in kilowatt-hour sales on the system enables the cooperative to address those costs, while also keeping the electricity rates you pay as stable as possible.



**Blue Ridge Electric Cooperative was a trailblazer with its first ever drive-through registration at the 2020 Annual Meeting. Considered to be overwhelmingly successful by both BREC employees and members, drive-through registration will be used again at the 2021 Annual Meeting.**

I do commend Mark and staff for a job well done in compiling this report. Their professionalism served them and the co-op well during all the preparation that went into the document.

On another subject, I want to give you a special invitation to attend the cooperative's Annual Meeting on April 21 and 22. Your registration card is on the front of this month's magazine, and additional information is included on the back cover. We'll again use the "drive-through" method to register members for the meeting as we continue to be mindful of the health and safety of our members and employees. While I will not be able to greet each of you, you will have the opportunity to see and talk with one of our employees when you come by. Please mark your calendars now and plan to be part of the Annual Meeting experience!

**JIM LOVINGGOOD**  
 President and CEO

# The year in review

**MOST OF US** were likely glad to see 2020 come to an end. On the bright side, however, Blue Ridge Electric Cooperative experienced another year of progress. As members of your cooperative's board of directors, it's our privilege to cover some examples that contributed to that progress.

**SAFETY & JOB TRAINING** The Blue Ridge workforce finished 2020 without a single lost-time accident. At the co-op, safety is our number one concern. Directors, management, and employees have all embraced the ideal of safe work practices.

**FINANCIAL** Despite two major storms in 2020 that inflicted almost unheard of damage on the Blue Ridge system, our retail electric rates remained stable. It's been more than 12 years since the last change in our per-kilowatt-hour charge.

**CONSTRUCTION & MAINTENANCE** Operations crews stayed busy all year on impressively large construction jobs that served to build added strength into the cooperative's network of power lines. These improvements have a twofold purpose—to bring better service reliability to existing members and to position Blue Ridge to meet the demands of added growth on our electric grid.

**SERVICE RELIABILITY** The cooperative's vegetation-control program ended the year with 1,546 miles of powerline right-of-way maintenance addressed. The goal is to clear the entire Blue Ridge distribution system of 7,100-plus miles in no more than eight years.

**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT** We recognize the positive impact large commercial and industrial accounts locating on our system can have on all our co-op members and their retail electric rates. Consequently, both board and management continued to place emphasis on economic development in 2020. Through these efforts, Blue Ridge was able to welcome new industries to the co-op family and see sizable expansions in others.

**MEMBER SERVICE** Our member services personnel are doing an outstanding job of adapting to the restrictions related to COVID-19. Although we closed our lobbies to walk-in traffic, we have many options for members to transact business. The drive-through windows, recently installed kiosks, after-hours depositories, and online and over-the-telephone contacts are just some of the methods members are using.

**CAPITAL CREDITS** For the 39th straight year, your board of directors approved the payment of capital credits in 2020. Checks totaling \$1,000,000, were mailed to many of our members last spring. Another \$1,000,000 in refunds is scheduled for distribution in April. Board members are unanimous in their support for regular rotations of capital credits.

**BROADBAND SERVICE** Member surveys and other analyses conducted by the cooperative within the last two years opened our eyes to a particular community need—unserved and underserved high-speed internet. After much consideration, our cooperative joined in a partnership with West Carolina



## Your Board of Directors



Joel Davis  
Chairman



Spencer Dalton  
Vice-Chairman



Len Talley  
Secretary



Frank Looper  
Treasurer



Ben Bolt



Jimmy Lee Dodgens



William Elrod



Kenneth Southerlin



Mendel Stone

Telephone Co-op of Abbeville. Our goal is to provide fiber-to-the-home broadband service to everyone within our five-county service area who wants it. It likely will be several years before broadband becomes a reality in the region's remotest areas. However, we're intent upon ensuring that high-speed internet service is within the reach of every Blue Ridge member.

As directors, we're keenly aware of the obligation we have to the 68,000-plus members who receive service from Blue Ridge. You expect your cooperative to operate like a member-owned utility should. Our experience tells us that the board, the management, and the entire employee team are all intent on being true to that mission. We're constantly striving to get even better at what we do, and we welcome your feedback. Our business is service.