

The creation of a community utility

Nearly 7 decades of providing electricity - the cooperative way

Nearly 70 years ago, George Jenkins, Coos County extension agent and Ivan Laird, considered the father of Coos-Curry Electric Cooperative, Inc. (CCEC), began to discuss the idea of forming an electric cooperative with their neighbors and with the REA.

Ivan lived with his wife Daisy on a 20-acre ranch bordering the East Fork of the Coquille River. The road running by their Sitkum Valley ranch was built in 1872 to serve as the main artery between the rich coastal mining and logging operations and the inland valleys. Sitkum Valley is exactly halfway between Roseburg and Coos Bay.

Even now, it is remote; but in those early days before electricity, it was nearly the last frontier. When Ivan first began thinking and dreaming about bringing electricity to the valley, he had no idea that he would become a leader in power development. In his words, "In 1929, the California-Oregon Power Company (COPCO) came right down this road (Coos Bay-Roseburg Wagon Road) by our place with a main transmission line to bring power into parts of Coos

County. When I went to town (Coquille) and asked about getting service, I was told it would be just about impossible to run distribution lines off the main transmission line to serve Sitkum."

But after meeting with COPCO, Ivan and an REA field engineer toured the farms in rural Coos County and the field engineer explained that loan money was available for providing service to perhaps all of the rural areas in Coos and Curry Counties and maybe even Del Norte County in Northern California. The idea of Coos Curry Cooperative was really born then, according to Laird.

The outcome was Coos Electric Cooperative, Inc. which was incorporated on June 1, 1939 to serve 255 members in the Daniel Creek, Sumner, McKinley, Fairview and Sitkum areas of Coos County. The cooperative acquired the Port Orford Electric Light and Power Company in 1942 and the Brookings Light and Power Company in 1945. In 1946, the name was officially changed to Coos-Curry Electric Cooperative, Inc. That next

year, the cooperative acquired the Rogue River Power Cooperative located in Gold Beach. Through existing and new distribution lines, most of the rural areas were served by the late 1950s with the exception of Agness, which was added in 1961.

The cooperative philosophy - a commitment to join together for the common good of the membership as a whole - is the cooperative's foundation. Now, CCEC has 1619 miles of lines, including 52 miles of transmission line between Gold Beach and Brookings. Employees in four offices provide service to nearly 15,000 members. Wholesale power is purchased through the Pacific Northwest Generating Cooperative (PNGC), which consists of power primarily obtained through the Bonneville Power Administration.

Rates are set to recover the cost to provide power as well as to cover the costs of conducting business. Costs are recovered in a fair and equitable way, which means each member pays for the investment the cooperative has made on behalf of the entire



Ivan Laird, a Sitkum Valley logger, helped trailblaze a path for creation of Coos-Curry Electric Cooperative over 65 years ago.

membership.

A Board of Directors, elected by the membership, guides the cooperative, sets rates and establishes policies. With their leadership, your electric cooperative has adapted to changing times both good and bad for nearly 70 years. Yet, the commitment to doing things that are in the best interests of the membership as a whole while respecting each member's needs is still there. That's the heart of the cooperative philosophy and it hasn't changed since the very beginning.

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