

## Power of the People

By W. Marc Farmer, General Manager,  
West Oregon Electric Cooperative



### WOEC Santa Photos a Success!

Thank you to everyone who came to see Santa Claus and support the annual fund raiser for our WOEC "Care to Share" energy assistance program. We were able to raise \$1,000 to help families in the West Oregon Electric Co-op community pay their electric bills this winter.

Thanks to a generous donation from our new headquarters building contractor, Five Star Builders, many families were able to take advantage of getting their initial \$5 photo for free.

Not only did the Santa Photos raise money for energy assistance, but it provided a local place to get quality photos for keepsakes and Christmas presents. Many members expressed their appreciation of having a local Santa, so they did not have to drive out of town to the mall. During the three days of the fund raiser, over 78 groupings of kids and families were photographed by our fantastic volunteer photographer, John Murray. WOEC employees Kellie Murray, Michael Benedict and Sarah Rossi volunteered their time, putting in extra hours to make the fund raiser a success. All their hard work paid off, as members were pleased with their Santa Photos and we were able to raise \$1,000 to further help WOEC members through our Care to Share energy assistance fund.

If you are in need of assistance, find yourself in a difficult situation, and are unable to pay your electric bill, please call the West Oregon Electric Cooperative office at 503-429-3021, before the last day to pay prior to being disconnected for non-pay. We would like to help by making payment arrangements with you. If you are disconnected, the costs increase and you will have to pay all past due amounts up front to get your power back on. Oregon Heat, St. Vincent de Paul, and WOEC's Care to Share energy assistance funds are available to qualifying members. If you are in need of assistance paying your electric bill, please call Mary at 503-366-8014.

If you are on a fixed or limited income and need help paying your electric bill, the Low Income Energy Assistance Program (LIEAP) may be your answer. LIEAP funds are used to help pay electric, oil, wood, natural gas or propane heating bills. Eligibility is based on the number of people and total gross income within a household. Gross income is money from all sources before taxes and other deductions. To qualify, a household must meet federal income guidelines.

A list of utilities, state and local social service agencies, community and charitable organizations, and other resources are on the Department of Energy's web site at [www.oregon.gov/energy](http://www.oregon.gov/energy), or call 1-800-221-8035.

To learn more about the LIEAP or to schedule an appointment, call one of these numbers:

Columbia County – 503-397-4951  
Clatsop County – 503-325-1400  
Washington County – 503-648-6646  
Yamhill County – 503-472-0457.

## Willamette sturgeon not open yet

For a second straight year the traditional January 1 opener for white sturgeon retention on the lower Willamette River, including Multnomah Channel and the Gilbert River, has been delayed because of an anticipated cut in the harvest quota.

ODFW fishery managers will consult with the Fish and Wildlife Commission at the January 6 meeting regarding 2012 sturgeon management. Based on Commission guidance, dates for the retention season in the lower Willamette will be announced around mid-January.

According to John North, ODFW Columbia River fisheries manager, when the retention season does open in February it's likely to be even shorter than the 12 day season in 2011, "With the reduced catch quota and more anglers targeting Willamette River sturgeon, I

expect the retention season to last just a couple of weekends," he said. "However, the lower Willamette and other sturgeon fisheries are currently open to catch-and-release fishing all year."

In the meantime, the Columbia River below Bonneville Dam and the reservoirs between Bonneville and McNary dams did open to white sturgeon retention on January 1 under permanent rules. The seasons below the Wauna power lines and in the three pools above Bonneville Dam will initially be open seven days a week while the area from Wauna upstream to Bonneville Dam will be open three days a week (Thursday – Sunday). Final 2012 retention seasons for mainstem fisheries will be discussed and set at a Joint State Hearing on January 26.

## New transportation laws in effect now

Drivers accustomed to sneaking a phone call in here and there — hoping they might get away with it — now have few, if any, excuses left after January 1, 2012. That's when a law modifying Oregon's ban on cell phone use went into effect, along with a few other transportation-related laws aimed at increasing safety on our roads. Here's an overview of several specific laws:

HB 3186, Cell phone use and texting while driving modifications. For most drivers, it is already against the law to use a hand-held cell phone while driving in Oregon. The original law, however, allowed cell phone use "in the scope of the person's employment if operation of the motor vehicle is necessary for the person's job." That exemption is removed with House Bill 3186 effective January 1, 2012, so that the only drivers allowed to use a hand-held mobile communications device are those over 18 who are 1) operating a road-side assistance or tow vehicle

or 2) operating a utility vehicle for the purpose of servicing a utility.

In addition, the bill outlaws texting for all drivers. In essence, it is illegal for nearly everyone to use a cell phone and/or text while driving, unless it is a hands-free device (no exemptions for drivers under age 18). See the enrolled bill at <http://www.leg.state.or.us/11reg/measures/hb3100.dir/hb3186.en.html>. The violation is a Class D offense, with a new base rate, effective January 1, 2012, of \$110.

HB 3590, Child safety seat  
**See New on page 9**

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**TALK(8255)**

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**866-397-6161**

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**888-HLP-4-VET**

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