

PowerLines

February 2024

Rate and Weather Changes

We have made it through about one-half of another winter season. February weather can be mercurial, let's hope the month does not have too much snow and ice conditions in store for us. This year is a leap year, so we get an extra February day. I am always envious of those with a February 29th birthday – as they only age one-quarter the rate of the rest of us.

In early February, the media spectacle of Groundhog Day will be upon us. Punxsutawney Phil and all the other groundhogs may have mystical powers about seeing their shadows or not, but either way the calendar indicates there are about 7 weeks of winter left from that day forward (the vernal or spring equinox is on March 19th this year).

EIEC initiates our revised rate structure with meter readings beginning on February 26th. As previously discussed, future billings will include a demand charge for all members, in addition to the base charge and energy charge presently utilized. This rate structure will more equitably distribute the cooperative's fixed cost among all members and the various rate classifications. You may reference additional information on the Eastern Illini website: www.eiec.coop

Through the end of 2023, EIEC members have installed 426 solar systems totaling 6,864 kw, which ranks our cooperative among the leaders in the density of solar installations in the state. Solar generated energy now offsets 2.5% of our annual energy sales. Occasionally,

we come across a solar installation of which we were unaware. Our bylaws and regulations require certain notice and safety requirements be in place before a member can interconnect solar on the EIEC system. If you have installed solar without notifying us, please let us know. This is a safety issue for both our workers and you as a member.

The Illinois legislature has reconvened for their 2024 session. Based on input from our statewide cooperative association, there appears to be minimal likelihood of any major utility related legislation that might impact cooperatives.

Just prior to the end of 2023, we had the retirement of two long-term employees who have served Eastern Illini well during their 37 plus year tenure: Cliff Miller, serviceman in the Gilman area, and Denny Kingren, warehouseman in Paxton. Interestingly, both were hired on the

same day. Cliff and Denny, thank you for everything you did for the members and our employees. We all wish you a long, fruitful, and happy retirement!

Enjoy the leap year and longer daylight hours and hopefully warmer weather as February progresses.

Cooperatively,

Bob Hunzinger



**MESSAGE FROM
THE PRESIDENT**

In this issue:

- Valentine's Day Expenses
- Manage your account with SmartHub
- Sharing Success Award: Goat Producers
- Eastern Illini & CoBank donate \$5,000
- Nominating petitions available soon



- View your bill
- Make a payment
- Compare usage by month
- Review known issues
- Report an outage
- Update account information

SmartHub is available online or through an application on your cell phone. Sign up today!

BEWARE OF SCAM CALLS!

If you receive a phone call from someone pretending to be Eastern Illini and threatening to shut off your electricity or offering Federal program assistance, do not provide any information or agree to immediate payment; instead hang up and check with us at 800-824-5102.

Your Touchstone Energy[®]
Cooperative 

HOW DO I LOVE THEE? LET ME COUNT THE WAYS, I MEAN DOLLARS

Happy Valentine's Day

Some of us reading this article are seasoned enough to remember that when we were kids, Valentine's Day was simple — it meant exchanging tiny, store-bought valentines at school and perhaps seeing our parents exchange greeting cards.

Fast forward to today: Valentine's Day is America's third largest spending holiday, with more than half of us celebrating the day and spending nearly \$26 billion, according to the National Retail Federation. Chocolates and flowers are the top gifts for the day, but jewelry has also become popular with 21% of gift-givers buying that perfect piece of jewelry for their special someone.

Before the 1840s, Valentine's Day was just another forgotten Old World saint's day with very few, if any, celebrating the day. It was nothing like the commercialized holiday we see today with stores housing isles upon isles of paper valentines, stuffed bears holding hearts in their paws and every type of chocolate you can imagine.

The Valentine's Day we know is very different from the holiday at its origin. Its roots derive from Christianity. There have been multiple St. Valentines, so it is unclear who is the true namesake for the holiday.

One Valentine was a priest in Rome who defied Emperor Claudius II after the ruler outlawed marriage for young men. St. Valentine would perform marriages in secret ultimately leading to his death.

Another Valentine, St. Valentine of Terni, was a bishop who was beheaded by Emperor Claudius. Many believe he is the namesake behind the holiday.

There are many other legends of "St. Valentine," including one of an imprisoned saint sending the first "valentine" greeting after falling in love with a woman who often visited him.

Not Just Greeting Cards Anymore

According to the National Retail Association (NRA), more than half of U.S. consumers celebrate Valentine's Day.

VALENTINE'S DAY
GIFT GIVERS SPEND
\$26B

HOW DO I LOVE THEE?
Let me count the ways,
I mean dollars.



It is the third largest spending holiday in America (behind Christmas and Halloween).



Shoppers spend an average of \$175.41 per person.



Holiday spending was expected to reach \$25.9 billion in 2023.



Around 67% expect their partners to get them something.



Around 36% expect their sweetie to spend at least \$50.



Valentine's Day flower sales account for 30% of total annual flower sales.



Many people, especially millennials, buy gifts for their pets.



CANDY

TOP GIFTS



AN EVENING OUT



FLOWERS



CARDS



JEWELRY

Before his death, the saint allegedly wrote her a letter signed: "From your Valentine."

The shift in the holiday's modern-day meaning occurred because influential advertisers saw an opportunity to commercialize the valentine. Hallmark, the well-known and ever-popular card company, first introduced the Valentine in 1910 when founder J.C. Hall sold postcards for Valentine's Day. In 1912, Hallmark switched over to greeting cards and the company's first official Valentine's Day cards hit store shelves in 1916.

Regardless of your relationship status, consider splurging on yourself for Valentine's Day. Make that restaurant reservation, get fancy carryout, indulge in a box of fancy chocolates or buy flowers just because. Indulge in a bubble bath and sip your favorite wine. Or do something you have always wanted to try like painting or yoga.

Valentine's Day is not just for lovers anymore. Grab a pal or gal, buy your own gifts, spend it with your sweetie or all of the above.

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SmartHub will help you save time and money by managing your account at anytime from anywhere. Here is a checklist to put you in control of your account from day one. Please reach out if you have any questions. We can be reached at 800-824-5102.

What you will need for REGISTRATION

- An **email address**
- Your **account number**. You will be able to find your account number on your latest bill. You can also call a Member Care representative at 800-824-5102.

Download the SmartHub APP

Follow these instructions if you would like to use SmartHub on your mobile device.

- Open up the Apple or Google Play app store (depending on your device)
- Search for "SmartHub" in the app store and install the app on your device.

REGISTER your account in SmartHub

The first thing you will need to do is register your account in our new SmartHub system.

- Mobile: Click the "Don't have an account? Register now" link on the app's log in page.
- Web: Visit www.eiec.coop
- You can also find instructions on that page.

Consider trying AUTO PAY

You can use our Auto Pay program with a debit/credit card or bank draft. Follow the steps below.

- On either web portal or app, click on Bill & Pay.
- Click on Auto Pay Program link.

Consider trying PAPERLESS BILLING

Save time by getting your bills instantly through SmartHub and save the cost of printing and mailing your bill.

- You can activate paperless billing during your account registration.
- Select settings and Paperless Billing.

Set up NOTIFICATIONS

Choose how you receive notifications from SmartHub (email or SMS)

- Under Settings, click Contact Method to add email and/or text numbers.
- Enter verification code to activate.
- Click on Manage Notifications to set up email and/or SMS alerts using the contact info you entered.

Reminder
Rate Restructuring
coming in March

- Overall there will be a 2.3% increase in rates.
- We are lowering the kWh charge, increasing our base charge, and adding the demand component.
- Charging for demand more equitably distributes costs based on each member's impact to the distribution system.
- Our distribution system must be able to handle each member's demand even if the peaks only occur a few times.
- Our goal is to get to 100% fixed-cost recovery through non-kWh sales.
- We expect modest rate changes every 2 - 3 years.

DONATION WILL ENHANCE THE IROQUOIS COUNTY GOAT BARN

Sharing Success award to Goat Producers



other items that will enhance the goat barn. In 2023, 186 head of goats were part of the Iroquois County Fair and Wagner is optimistic that the numbers will continue to increase in the years to come.

The Iroquois County Goat Producers are an active group of individuals that are dedicated to the promotion of goats. The leadership includes Norvin and Leslii Wagner, Jill and Roger Ritzma, Justin and Jessica Grabow, Rodney and Denise Larou, and Holly Borges.

A great deal of time, effort, and money was invested by members, fair board leadership, and people in the community interested in promoting goat production to erect the new goat barn and the Sharing Success funding will provide the next level of enhancements to make the goat barn a showpiece on the fairgrounds.

According to Mike Wilson, Vice President of Member and Community Relations at Eastern Illini, EIEC is focused on the communities within our service territory and the organization's they are involved in. Eastern Illini has a long history of supporting the Iroquois County Fair and other worthwhile organizations and our contribution to the goat barn is just one more way we can make a difference in the lives of our members and the community.

Eastern Illini's donation was matched by CoBank through its Sharing Success program. Sharing Success was established in 2012 to celebrate the International Year of the Cooperative.

Since the program's inception, CoBank and its customers have together provided more than \$76 million in support to charitable organizations across the United States.

If you are aware of a 501 (c) (3) or a non-profit organization that is located in the Eastern Illini service territory that might benefit from the Sharing Success program, call Melinda Garrelts at 800-824-5102 to obtain an application for 2024.

The goat is thought to be one of the first domesticated animals. Goats are found on every continent and in all parts of the world, except for the Arctic. They are a very important part of many cultures and ethnic groups.

The first goats were brought to North America into the southwestern U.S. in the 17th century by the early Spanish explorers. Early settlers to America brought goats over on the Mayflower, serving as a source of milk and meat along the way.

The seventh cooperative principle is **CONCERN FOR COMMUNITY**. Eastern Illini is committed to fulfilling the 7th principle and one way we do that is by supporting and developing the communities where we live and work. Every year Eastern Illini seeks out non-profit organizations that are making a difference in our service territory and we submit their application to the Sharing Success program sponsored by CoBank.

Eastern Illini then matches the funds provided by CoBank and awards this money to projects that improve and enhance local communities or augment already existing programs that are making a difference within our 10-county service territory. The Iroquois County Goat Producers are one of the recipients of the Sharing Success program from Eastern Illini Electric Cooperative and CoBank, a cooperative bank serving vital industries throughout rural America. The Iroquois County Goat Producers received \$5,000 to help enhance their new Goat Barn on the grounds of the Iroquois County Fairgrounds.

According to Norvin Wagner, President and Superintendent of the Iroquois County Goat Producers, the money is much appreciated and will be used to purchase fencing and gates, as well as



SEVENTH COOPERATIVE PRINCIPLE: CONCERN FOR COMMUNITY

Eastern Illini and CoBank donate \$5,000

GOAT BARN



There are four basic types of goats: dairy, meat, fiber, and pygmy. Dairy goats are milked, and the fluid milk can be consumed or made into other dairy products. Any type of goat can be used for meat, but meat goats are noticeably more muscled than other goats. Fiber goats are raised for the fiber from their fleeces. Pygmy goats are small and can be used for milk, meat, or kept as pets.

There are over 200 breeds of goats around the world and 14 common goat breeds in America: Alpine, LaMancha, Nubian, Oberhasli, Saanen, Sable, Toggenburg, Nigerian Dwarf, Boer, Myotonic (2 types), Angora, Crossbred and Pygmy. Toggenburg, a dairy goat breed, is the oldest known registered breed in the world. LaManchas have very small ears (it almost looks like they don't have ears), while Nubians have long ears that extend at least 1 inch past their muzzle. Nubian goats are the most popular breed of dairy goats in the U.S.

The goat inventory in the U.S. totals 2.55 million. Illinois has over 30,000 goats. Internationally, China, India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh have the largest number of goats. These four countries constitute about 45% of the world total of one billion goats.

For those considering raising goats, it is good to know they are not as high maintenance as they are made to seem. They need shelter, fencing, nutrition, and healthcare. Contrary to popular belief, goats do not eat everything! They are herbivores, so they only eat plants. They are ruminant animals, having four stomach compartments. Goats have rectangular pupils which help them to see almost a complete 360-degree view of their surroundings.



Raising goats can be a fulfilling and gratifying experience for those who are committed to investing their time and energy. Goats are resilient creatures that can serve as a valuable source of sustenance, revenue, and amusement.

By selecting the appropriate breed, conducting thorough research, and offering them a well-rounded diet, you can guarantee that your goats will flourish. Whether you intend to establish a modest homestead or introduce some playful companions to your outdoor space, goats are an excellent pick for any aspiring farmer. On average, goats live between 10 and 12 years and goats are very social.

The mission of the Iroquois County Goat Barn is to educate the public about the care, maintenance, and production of meat and dairy goats. The organization has a Facebook page called Iroquois Goat Barn Fan page. Eastern Illini is proud to support the efforts of Iroquois County Goat Producers. We wish them continued success in the endeavors.

The 2024 Iroquois County Fair will be held July 16 – 24, 2024 and the Iroquois County Goat Producers are hoping for fairgoers to stop by to see the goat barn and all the enhancements along with what they anticipate being a record number of entries.

NOMINATION PETITIONS AVAILABLE SOON FOR EIEC BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Nominating petitions will be available on Thursday, February 22, 2024 for the June 6, 2024 director election. Nominating petitions can be obtained by calling 217-379-0423 or you may stop by the Eastern Illini headquarters in Paxton between 7:30 a.m. and 4:00 p.m., Monday - Friday.

Each member who desires to be elected to the board of directors must have a petition signed by not less than 25 members of the co-op. Petitions need to be returned to Eastern Illini by Friday, April 5, 2024.

Directors in Directorate Districts 3, 4, and 6 will be elected at Eastern Illini's annual meeting events in June. Incumbent directors Steve Meenen, Melvin, District 3; and Bruce Ristow, Cissna Park, District 4; have indicated they will seek re-election. Current District 6 Director, Bradley Ludwig, is retiring from the board of directors, and his replacement will be elected at the annual meeting events in June.

The Credentials Committee will meet at Eastern Illini's headquarters to review the qualifications of all candidates who file nominating petitions. The Credentials Committee will determine the eligibility of the candidates to serve as an EIEC director.

The nominating process is conducted in accordance with the following provisions of the EIEC Bylaws, Article III, Section 3.5: Nominations: Any member of the Cooperative in good standing who desires to be elected to its Board of Directors may be nominated by petition signed by not less than twenty - five (25) members and filed with the Secretary/Treasurer of the Cooperative not less than sixty (60) days prior to the annual meeting of members.

Nominations from the floor shall not be permitted. The Secretary/Treasurer of the Cooperative shall cause to be prepared and posted at the principal office of the Cooperative at least forty-five (45) days before the annual meeting, a list of the nominations for Directors thus filed with him or her.

A specimen ballot marked "Ballot for Directors" containing the names and addresses of all candidates listed in the order of priority determined by the date and time when the Cooperative received the respective completed candidate information shall be printed in or mailed with the notice of the meeting.

In the event that multiple candidates' completed information is received on the same date and at the same time for the same directorate district, the ballot order shall be determined by lot conducted by the Board of Directors.

The Secretary/Treasurer shall also have printed in or mailed with the said notice of the meeting or separately not less than seven (7) days prior to said annual meeting, a statement of the number of directors to be elected and the district from which they are to be elected.

If a particular directorate district does not have a contested election, that director can be elected by a voice vote as provided in Section 2.6 of Article II of the Bylaws. In such case, the name of the candidate for that specific directorate district shall not be required to be placed on the specimen and actual ballots.