

NEW EMPLOYEES



**Jim**  
Network Department



**Kirk Dige**  
New Board member representing Big Sky

3 RIVERS INFORMATION

Service Information

3 Rivers Communications Divisions  
 3 Rivers Telephone, Internet and Long Distance  
 Fairfield: 406.467.2535 or 800.796.4567  
 Great Falls: 406.216.2535  
 Conrad: 406.271.2535 Shelby: 406.424.8535  
 Payments: P.O. Box 489, Fairfield, MT 59436-0489  
 Correspondence: P.O. Box 429, Fairfield, MT 59436  
 3 Rivers DBS - Satellite TV/Internet Services  
 406.467.2535 or 800.796.4567  
 P.O. Box 159, Fairfield, MT 59436-0159

Website: www.3rivers.net  
 E-mail: 3rt@3rivers.net  
 On-line Billing: https://ebill.3rivers.net

Board of Trustees

- Darren D. Moser, General Manager, 467.2535
- Harry R. Barnes, Browning, 338.3440
- Kirk Dige, Big Sky, 995.4769
- William Dringle, Ennis/Harrison, 682.7489
- Brian D. McCollom, Choteau/Pendroy/Dupuyer, Valier, 466.2443
- Keith Good, Carter/Highwood/Great Falls, 734.5371
- Howard Johnson, Brady/Conrad/Power East Conrad/Valier/Shelby, 627.2121
- Michael Johnson, Fairfield/Augusta/Ft. Shaw/Helena, 467.2350
- Mary Hill, Raynesford/Geyser/Neihart/Belt/Stockett, 738.4220
- Loren Tucker, Melrose/Sheridan/Twin Bridges Lima/Virginia City, 843.5566

# Try a Feature, Buy a Feature

3 Rivers has lots of ways to make your life easier. Visit [www.3rivers.net](http://www.3rivers.net), click on the Local Telephone/Features page and you'll find a list of more than 20 features you can add to your phone service that will save you time and stress. Caller ID on Call Waiting, Message Center Voice Mail, Call Forwarding, Speed Calling and more with prices ranging from \$2 to \$8 per month (some have activation fees).

For a limited time, 3 Rivers will let you try out any feature you'd like free for two months (and we'll waive any activation fees). When the two months are up, if you don't feel it was worth the extra expense, just give us a call and we'll turn it off, no questions asked (well, we might want to know why just so we can figure out how to provide more valuable services in the future).

And if you want to try one of our available feature-packed phone packages, we'll knock \$5 off the package price for two months.

Call a 3 Rivers customer service representative today at 800-796-4567.

## Telecommunications Service Priority Program

The Telecommunications Service Priority (TSP) Program was established in 1988 to provide national security and emergency preparedness (NS/EP) user's priority authorization of telecommunications services that are vital to coordinating and responding to crises. Telecommunications services are defined as the transmission, emission, or reception of intelligence of any nature, by wire, cable, satellite, fiber optics, laser, radio, visual or other electronic, electric, electromagnetic, or acoustically coupled means, or any combination thereof. In the event of floods, earthquakes, and other natural or man-made disasters, 3 Rivers may become overwhelmed with requests for new telecommunications services and requirements to restore existing telecommunications services. A TSP service user is any individual or organization supported by a telecommunications service for which a TSP assignment has been requested or assigned.

NS/EP telecommunications services within the federal, state, local, or foreign governments, as well as private industry, are eligible for TSP.

The TSP Program provides 3 Rivers with an FCC mandate for prioritizing service requests by identifying those services critical to NS/EP. Should there be a natural or man-made disaster, a telecommunications service with a TSP assignment is assured of receiving full attention by 3 Rivers before a non-TSP service.

For more information regarding the TSP Program or to receive a TSP assignment, please contact Janice at our business office at 1-800-796-4567 ext 4011 or on the web at <http://tsp.nc.gov>.

### Montana Homefront Contributors Acknowledgment

We'd like to acknowledge and thank the following individuals who contributed to the Montana Homefront this issue:  
 Callie Moss, Susan Wilson,  
 Don Serido, Janice Torgerson



# Montana homefront

3 RIVERS COMMUNICATIONS NEWSLETTER

MAY / JUNE 2007

## Meet 3 Rivers' Engineering Department

*No man is an island, entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent.*  
 John Donne, Devotions, 1624

As we continue our series on the different components that make up 3 Rivers we're discovering how each department contributes to bringing you the communication services you need. In this issue we will explore the Engineering division and what their role is in making your phone ring, your internet go faster and developing new technologies for the future.

When asked exactly what the engineering department does Larry Meyer, Engineering Supervisor, explained, "Engineering designs, coordinates, and supports the other departments to provide voice, data and ultimately video services to our customers. We also determine how new technology can be implemented into our existing services."

Then Larry thought for a moment, smiled, and said, "We handle everything from A to Z, we're like a Leatherman tool."

Engineering works closely with the other departments at 3 Rivers. In fact, in some ways they are the foundation of the services we provide. This section of the company encompasses 3 different areas of responsibility: clerical support staff, drafting and engineering.

The clerical support staff are the "paper chasers and retrievers," joked Denny, an Engineering Clerk. The start of the paperwork trail begins and ends with the clerical staff, which also includes Diana and Stephanie.



They are involved in assisting engineers with obtaining rights of way and easements along with numerous other federal and state permits. This group also pays attention to delineating the location of underground facilities. "It's not just phone lines we have to look for," said Denny. "There are also sewer lines, electric, natural gas and water lines that we need to preserve." He went on to add, "It's our job to update and maintain proper records to prevent accidents when people start digging."

Denny has noticed over the past 7 years that technology is making the departments at 3 Rivers become more integrated. As no man is an island neither is any department within the company. Each division depends on others to provide our customers with the services they want. "I enjoy this part of my job," Denny commented. "I like dealing with employees from the other departments and helping them to complete a job."

*continued inside on page 2...*

## Upcoming Events

- |               |  |
|---------------|--|
| Butte         | May Fair Home Show<br>May 11, 12, 13               |
| Virginia City | 3 Rivers' Community mtg<br>May 22                  |
| Virginia City | Summer Kick Off parade<br>May 26                   |
| Conrad        | Whoop-up parade<br>June 9                          |
| Neihart       | 3 Rivers Customer Appreciation picnic -<br>June 16 |
| Belt          | Rodeo parade<br>June 17                            |
| Augusta       | Rodeo parade<br>June 23                            |

**Come see us!**

...continued from front "Meet 3 Rivers' Engineering Department"

As Denny mentioned, having complete and accurate information is vital to 3 Rivers. It is the engineering and drafting personnel that maps the location of not only our equipment but also other utilities, houses, subdivisions and entire towns. This is no small task as it involves 26 ILEC exchanges, 5 CLEC exchanges, 14 counties, comprising approximately 8,544 route miles of cabling. The people responsible for mapping these elements are Adam and Cameron. Adam summed up his job as a draftsman as "making a visual representation of our records." Adam continued, "It's sometimes easier to make sense of a map than the written data." These maps are used by many departments within 3 Rivers for various purposes such as qualifying customers for new services like high speed Internet, cable locates, tracking the equipment that we already have in place, and for use in the state and federal permit process. After 7 years at 3 Rivers Adam still enjoys the challenge of his job. He commented, "You can make anything work on paper but to see it work for a customer is really cool." With the Engineering Department working closely with the construction crew, the network department and other outside personnel, the plans drawn by Adam come to life as new or improved services for our customers.

As for the engineers at 3 Rivers, their duties on any given day reflect the progress of the project they are working on. They coordinate their work load to correspond with the other departments involved in getting new service started or upgrading existing service. Some of the varied jobs they perform include researching the records for any existing facilities at the job site or locating the nearest equipment when planning for new service; personally surveying the area where service will be provided; drafting a staking sheet for the construction crews which will basically tell them how to build it; ordering materials for individual jobs; and completing the paperwork for the ever present easements, rights of way or other permits. To sum it up, Sally, an Outside Plant Engineer, said, "We work to get reasonably priced services to the customer that will meet their needs, in a timely manner."

Just as no department at 3 Rivers is an island unto itself; neither is the company an island unto itself. Meyer noted that with the current pace of change in our world, 3 Rivers is exploring new technologies to stay ahead. In fact he mentioned that, "from what I see going forward we will soon have all our audio/ video devices integrated. In our homes our radios, TV's, computers, cell phones, and landline phones will merge and one provider will offer all these services." It's engineering's task to make sure 3 Rivers is ready for the future. He continued, "We're putting fiber to the home now because we're not building something just for today but looking to what you'll need five to ten years from now." ■



Russ DeRemer with plaque presented during annual meeting

## Board Member Russ DeRemer Retires

At this year's Annual Meeting 3 Rivers bid goodbye to Russ DeRemer. "He served for nine years on the 3 Rivers Board of Trustees and was a great asset in moving us forward with our Strategic Technology Plan," commented Board of Trustees President Michael Johnson.

Russ mentioned that he has seen a lot of growth within 3 Rivers in the past decade and called modernization the biggest change. He went on to explain, "With the advent of new technology it has changed what we do and how we do it. It revolutionized our voice service and persuaded us to expand into providing data service." Before serving on the Board DeRemer was a professor of physics for many years and retired as the Dean of

## 3 Rivers' Community Meeting



The 3 Rivers staff is once again hitting the road with our General Manager. Next stop, Virginia City, for a town hall-style meeting. We're looking forward to meeting cooperative members from throughout the Ruby Valley and beyond to discuss the issues that are important to you.

The meeting is set for Tuesday, May 22 at 7 p.m. in the Virginia City town gymnasium located at 119 West Idaho Street. There will be drawings for door prizes and refreshments will be served.

Among the topics to be discussed are the new Fiber Optic projects taking place in Sheridan and Twin Bridges this year. 3 Rivers' General Manager Darren Moser will be on hand with an update on 3 Rivers future plans and will answer any and all questions.

If you have any questions about the meeting or would like more information please contact Susan at 1-800-796-4567, ext. 4133.

**We look forward to seeing you on May 22<sup>nd</sup> in Virginia City!**

Whitman College in Walla Walla, WA.

His most recent position was the General Manager of the Big Sky Homeowners Association. He plans to take his experience with him to Arizona by staying active in a local homeowners association in the Tucson area where he and his wife Ilona will be living.

As Russ said farewell he mentioned that the biggest challenge that he foresees for 3 Rivers is "to keep our roots firmly in rural Montana while we develop ways to provide more technologically based services for our members." He went on to add, "This is a good, bright, diverse Board. They are well equipped to deal with the future." ■

## 54th Annual Meeting Stresses Change (again)

Yes, we know, you've heard that before. In fact, this has been the headline for the two previous annual meeting wrap up articles. We could make this the headline for our annual meeting follow up story for the next ten years. (We won't, however—our editor says we have to come up with something new next year!) The 54<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of 3 Rivers Telephone Cooperative, Inc., took place on Monday, March 19 in Fairfield. The beautiful spring weather contributed to excellent attendance—480 meals were served.

Board of Trustees President Michael Johnson opened the business meeting by welcoming everyone and laying out the day's agenda. Johnson opened some eyes with his comment that in the past it was probably more dangerous to be a pioneer than a settler, but today, particularly in the telecommunications business, the opposite is true—if you're a settler, the world is going to pass you by. 3 Rivers needs to continue to be a pioneer in bringing advanced technology to its members.

After various housekeeping duties, the group got down to the business of electing Trustees. A nominating committee made up of cooperative members and chaired by former board member Ethel Parker put together this year's ballot, which featured four nominees running unopposed to represent their respective districts:

- Michael Johnson, Fairfield/Augusta/Fort Shaw/Helena
- Harry Barnes, Browning
- Loren Tucker, Melrose/Sheridan/Twin Bridges/Lima/Virginia City
- Kirk Dige, Big Sky

Johnson, Barnes and Tucker are all returning board members, with a combined quarter century of service between them. Dige is a newcomer to the board, nominated to replace the retiring DeRemer. A motion was made to accept the entire slate, which was quickly seconded and approved. The officers of the board for the telephone cooperative remain the same for 2007—Michael Johnson, Fairfield, is board president, Harry Barnes, Browning, is vice president and Mary Hill, Raynesford, is Secretary.



Start of Annual Meeting - 3 Rivers employee, Terry Scott sings the National Anthem

Following a report by 3 Rivers' accounting firm Moss Adams, which found the cooperative to be in fine financial condition, General Manager Darren Moser addressed the gathering. He began by thanking retiring long time board member Russ DeRemer for his service to the cooperative. DeRemer served on the board of directors representing Big Sky for nine years.

Moser then got right to the heart of the matter. He started out by saying that of course 3 Rivers has seen change in the past...from party lines to dedicated lines, from mechanical switching to digital switching, from copper pole lines to buried fiber exchange routes, from basic telephone services to the addition of custom features and, finally, the addition of internet services. But these changes did not happen in one short period of time, with some taking place over decades.

According to Moser, "3 Rivers is now facing an unprecedented paradigm of change that requires upgrades and changes to the local infrastructure as we have begun rebuilding the core areas of our exchanges from copper to fiber to the premises. At the same time we are migrating to a new switching platform from our digital switches to soft-switches (switches controlled by software). The backbone infrastructure must have electronics upgrades to handle the new types of traffic that will be digitized in a new format—Internet protocol." All these changes will ultimately allow 3 Rivers to bring the latest telecommunications services to our customers, such as 3RTV, which uses Internet protocol to deliver video.

There are other challenges faced by the cooperative, Moser continued. Two of them are the preservation of the Universal Service Fund (USF), which allows 3 Rivers to bring affordable and advanced telecommunications to its members, and Intercarrier Compensation, which is how telecommunications companies reimburse each other for use of their respective networks. You'll recall that 60-65% of 3 Rivers' revenue comes from these sources so even small changes to the programs can be critical. A Congressional re-write of the 1996 Telecommunications Act seemed possible in 2006 but post election results indicate it is not likely to happen soon. However, certain elements, such as who contributes to the fund, are getting a lot of attention from Congress and the FCC as demands on the fund continue to increase.

The FCC is mulling options to limit those that may not be investing USF dollars in network and equipment upgrades in rural areas as mandated. Moser commented that 3 Rivers is certainly using the funds appropriately as shown by the \$16 million capital expenditure budget for infrastructure upgrades across the 3 Rivers service area in 2007.

It was another changed-filled year for 3 Rivers in 2006 and, as Moser indicated by his comments during the annual meeting, 2007 won't be any different. Moser expressed confidence that the cooperative, under direction from the board, through the leadership of management, and by the hard work of its employees, is more than up to the tasks it faces in the future. ■



Excellent attendance at Annual Meeting — 480 meals were served