

# May 2021



**Choptank Electric  
Cooperative**

A Touchstone Energy  
Cooperative



**Members First. Every day.**

*Introducing*

**Choptank  
Fiber**





By Elizabeth Hallett  
Manager of Marketing & Communications

# Choptank Electric Debuts Choptank Fiber!

**Choptank Fiber is the newest contender in the race to provide broadband to the Eastern Shore.**

Choptank Fiber, Choptank Electric Cooperative's wholly-owned broadband subsidiary, was introduced to the Maryland General Assembly's Eastern Shore Delegation on Friday, February 12, 2021. The new broadband provider boasts true Gigabit speed with no data caps and plans to begin hook-ups as early as Summer of 2021 to selected areas.

Choptank Fiber's goal is to install broadband one community at a time, by reinvesting monthly subscription revenue into developing the infrastructure for the next community, until the entirety of the rural Shore is served.

"We are excited to begin installations this coming summer for the many members who are without adequate internet access," said Mike Malandro, President and CEO of Choptank Electric Cooperative. "Our plan is to reach our membership on the Eastern Shore in a ten-year period, but we are also aggressively pursuing grant funds at the federal and state levels to accelerate our deployment."

The business plan is finalized, and Choptank Electric Cooperative is now reviewing existing fiber infrastructure and developing the technical specifications necessary to deliver broadband service.

"The Board is proud to undertake this long-term project on behalf of the membership" said Jeff Rathell, Chairman of the Board and Talbot County representative. "We know how important broadband is, not only to our members, but to the entire Eastern Shore."

To learn more about Choptank Fiber please visit [www.choptankfiber.com](http://www.choptankfiber.com).

P.O. Box 430 | Denton MD | 21629

Toll-Free: 1-877-892-0001

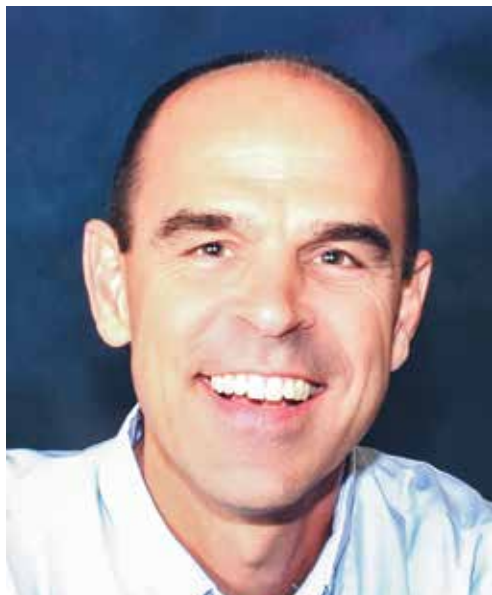
Outage Reporting: 1-800-410-4790

Automated Member Service: 1-866-999-4574



# Shawn Sparks Appointed to Miss Utility Board

*Sparks will be adding this appointment to his impressive career at Choptank Electric.*



Shawn Sparks  
Manager of Operating Services

Shawn Sparks, Manager of Operating Services at Choptank Electric Cooperative, joined the Board of Directors of Miss Utility of Delmarva in December of 2020.

Miss Utility, short for “miss the utilities,” exists to help protect the underground utilities. Their “Call before you Dig” motto, reminds anyone engaged in digging that it is Maryland law to call Miss Utility toll free at 811 prior to the start of any excavation.

With 60% of Choptank Electric’s electric lines underground, the Co-op has been a long-term supporter of

Miss Utility. “With our move into Broadband, Choptank Electric will be installing extensive fiber infrastructure,” said Leroy Sverduk, Vice President of Engineering Services. “Shawn’s vast utility experience make him the perfect candidate for the board.”

Choptank Electric Cooperative responds to over 20,000 requests from Miss Utility for underground electric line marks per year. Most are generated by commercial excavators, but that also includes private homeowners, who are required to use the service if a digging activity is planned. April has been designated as National “Call before You Dig” month as a reminder to homeowners to call 811 prior to digging.

Starting this summer, as the Cooperative expands into the broadband business through Choptank Fiber, additional underground activity will occur. With broadband, Choptank will potentially double its underground facilities, increasing the reliance on Miss Utility to protect those assets.

“I am looking forward to serving on the Board of Directors for Miss Utility,” said Sparks. “I know that I can add value between my experience at Choptank Electric and the relationships that I have built working with our contractors.”

With a term limit of two years, Sparks will be adding this appointment to his impressive career at Choptank Electric Cooperative. He has worked for the Cooperative for over 30 years and has been the Manager of Operating Services for the last 15 years. Sparks also has a Bachelor of Science in Business Management and an MBA in Organizational Leadership from Wilmington University.

## 2021 Power Supply Rate Changes

*These important billing changes took effect on February 1.*

Good news! Most Choptank Electric Cooperative members should have seen a slight decrease in the cost of power supply, beginning on February 1st.

The monthly bill of a residential member who uses 1,000 kWh per month decreased by \$4.90. These changes reflect an adjustment in wholesale power cost from our generation and transmission supplier, Old Dominion Electric Cooperative (ODEC). Standard Offer Service (SOS) charges have been updated for most rate classes and can be found in Choptank Electric’s current tariff. The Power Cost Adjustment (PCA) has also been updated and is a credit of \$0.00072/kWh. Additional information about the rate changes can be found on the Rates page of the Cooperative website at <https://choptankelectric.coop/rates>.

# Commitment to a Cleaner and Stronger Environment

*Current renewable investment and smart public policies.*



By **Matthew Teffeau**  
Manager of Government Affairs

Inclement weather events that continuously shatter expectations, such as the snow “anomaly” in Texas this past winter, have become a part of everyday life. For decades, electric cooperatives have been deeply involved in addressing climate change issues, because when inclement weather occurs as a byproduct of climate change, it directly affects power infrastructure. When the primary goal is to supply reliable and cost-effective energy to their members, cooperatives must adapt, and advocate for legislation that addresses climate change.

Recently, Old Dominion Electric Cooperative (ODEC) announced strategic goals to reduce its carbon footprint and enhance its use of clean energy resources. Focusing on smart public policy, significant advances in technologies and strong business leadership, ODEC’s goals are to reduce its carbon intensity (pounds of CO<sub>2</sub> emitted per MWh of electricity generated) by 50% from 2005 levels by 2030. ODEC’s overall goal is to achieve net-zero carbon emissions by 2050. Choptank Electric Cooperative and the other electric cooperatives that are member-owners of ODEC, support these ambitious goals.

To put these goals into present-day perspective, more than



ODEC’s plant in Cecil County, Wildcat Point, provides clean, reliable power for more than 390,000 homes in the region.

35% of ODEC’s energy was generated by non-CO<sub>2</sub> emitting resources in 2020. The investment into renewable energy such as wind, solar, and landfill gas has translated into cost-effective successes. These investments take several years and many resources to obtain and must be proven to not disrupt the reliable electric service ODEC and Choptank Electric provide to their members. The continuous flow of electricity to power the region is vital to the everyday needs of our members.

ODEC has gone to great lengths to ready their generation plants for challenging weather conditions, such as the polar vortex in 2014. Building a strong power supply portfolio, including natural gas generation, is one of ODEC’s objectives. ODEC’s plant in Cecil County, Wildcat Point provides clean, reliable power for more than 390,000 homes in the region annually. Online since 2018, Wildcat Point is one of the cleanest natural gas facilities of its size in the country.

Further commitment to a cleaner and stronger environment must also include smart public policies that consider the impact of achieving net-zero CO<sub>2</sub> emissions goals and the effects it would have on electric grid reliability. Choptank Electric Cooperative and ODEC advocated for these types of smart policies during the 2021 session when many climate change bills made their way through the legislative process. In the future, we expect other states, including Maryland, to continue developing plans to achieve net-zero greenhouse gas emissions.



# Everything You Need to Know About Auto Pay Programs

*Sign up for one of these auto pay programs to hit your due date every time!*



By Elizabeth Hallett

Manager of Marketing & Communications

Since the beginning of the pandemic, the post office has been overloaded trying to deliver mail, and many of our members have reported that their bills were delivered late, or not at all. Choptank Electric Cooperative has multiple auto pay programs which are a great way for members to ensure that their payments are made on time every month.

Auto pay programs are convenient, easy to use, and once set up, automatically schedule, and make your payments on your behalf. How do they work?

## **Auto Bank Draft**

Automatic bank draft is an electronic way to pay your bill fast, efficiently, and safely directly from your personal bank account of choice – just complete the Credit Card and Band Draft Authorization form. When you fill out the form, you are giving Choptank Electric Cooperative permission to directly withdraw funds from your checking, savings and loan, or credit union account.

## **Recurring Credit Card**

Recurring credit card is another electronic payment program that is just as efficient as automatic bank draft if you are interested in building up your cash back or miles!

Members can pay with their Visa, MasterCard, or American Express credit cards and signing up is extremely easy – just complete the Credit Card and Bank Draft Authorization form. When you fill out the form, you are giving Choptank Electric Cooperative permission to directly charge your credit card.

## **OR**

If you would like to sign up for the recurring credit card online, you can do so directly on SmartHub. Once you are logged into SmartHub, Choose Billing & Pay-

Ready to sign up?  
Download the Credit Card and Bank Draft Authorization form by scanning the QR code below!

For the best experience using the Credit Card and Bank Draft authorization form, please download Adobe Acrobat Reader.



ments, Auto Pay Program, then Add.

## ***Tips, Tricks, and Reminders***

### **When does Choptank Electric withdraw the funds?**

Once you are signed up successfully, your next bill will reflect the draft date on your payment stub which is approximately five days before your bill's due date.

### **Where do I find the form to sign up for either of these programs?**

The Credit Card and Bank Draft Authorization form can be found on our website at [www.choptankelectric.coop](http://www.choptankelectric.coop) under Your Service, Payment Options and Your Bill.

## **OR**

There is a link to the form in your SmartHub web portal. The form is located on the left-hand side, in the box labeled, "Quick Links." Just don't forget to enclose a voided check for the bank draft option when you return the paperwork! Mail the form and the voided check to:

Choptank Electric Cooperative  
Auto Pay Program  
P.O. Box 430  
Denton, MD 21629

### **Don't forget to update your credit card when the expiration date changes!**

An honest mistake that happens often is forgetting to update credit card information, especially the

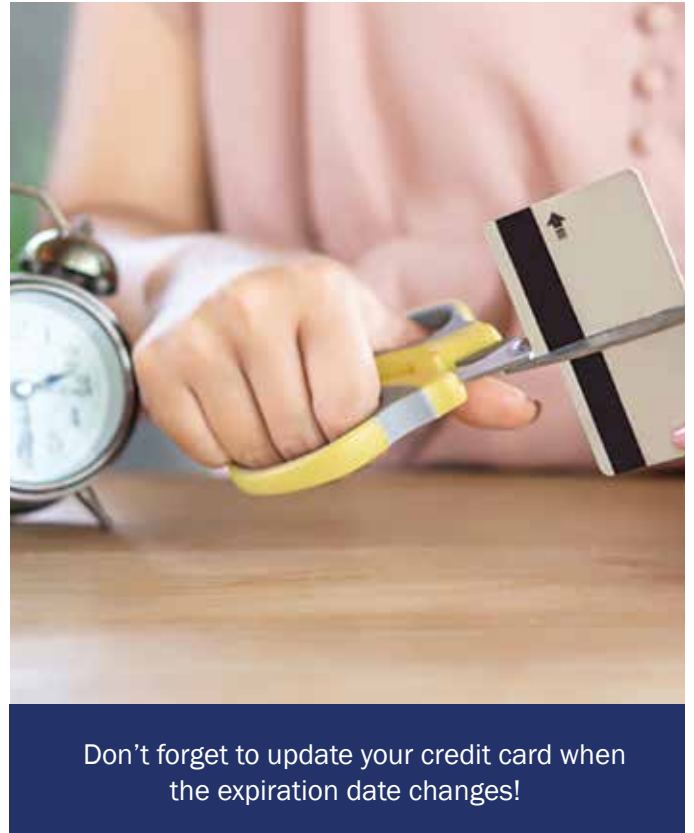
expiration date. Unfortunately, members don't realize until they have missed a payment. It's super easy to update your credit card information, and you can do it all through SmartHub!

Log into your SmartHub account and add a credit card by going to Billing and Payments, Auto Pay Program, and Edit from there.

**With these automatic payment plans, are there other ways to pay?**

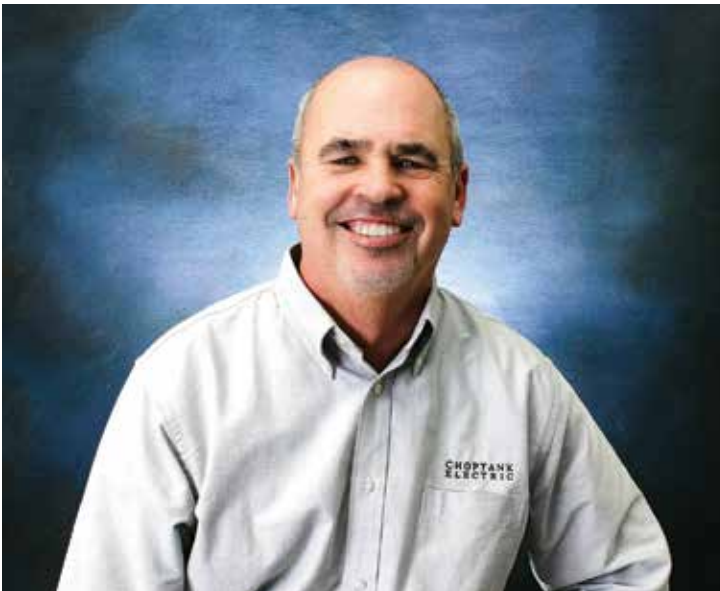
Yes! SmartHub is our online account management and payment system that is safe, secure, and fast for your desktop or your phone. To download the app, it's available in the App Store and Google Play. You can pay your bill, look at your energy usage, set usage markers, and so much more!

The best part is, no matter how you pay your bill with Choptank Electric, all the ways you pay are free of fees. If you need to stop an automatic bank draft payment, call the Member Service Center at 1-877-892-0001 or to stop your credit card payment, visit your SmartHub account. You can also go to [www.choptankelectric.coop/payment-options-your-bill](http://www.choptankelectric.coop/payment-options-your-bill) for more ways to pay your bill.



## Clark Andrews Retires

**Andrews retired March 5, 2021, after 36 years of service.**



William "Clark" Andrews  
Supervisor of Controls

Clark Andrews started his career at Choptank Electric Cooperative as a 3rd Class Meter Tester on September 10, 1984. He obtained his 2nd and 3rd Class Meter Tester certification respectively in 1985 and 1986, and was later promoted to Meter Technician in 1987.

In 1989 he earned the title of Electronics Technician, and subsequently recognized as Sr. Meter Technician in 1991. He accepted the position of Supervisor of Controls in 1992, from which he retired March 5, 2021. He oversaw multiple projects on the operations side, including our load control program.

Clark Andrews's career exemplifies the professionalism and passion that characterizes our employees.

***We wish Clark a happy retirement and thank him for his wealth of knowledge, service and experience for the last 36 years!***

# May is Electrical Safety Month

*Keep a close eye on your home to safeguard what's important.*

## HOME ELECTRICAL SAFETY

**Safety is Smart, Prevention is Power**



Each year, electrical malfunctions account for **35,000 home fires** causing over **1,130 injuries, 500 deaths, and \$1.4 billion in property damage.**

The average American home was **built in 1977**. Many existing homes **simply can't handle** the demands of today's electrical appliances and devices.

### ! Learn the warning signs of an overloaded electrical system:



**Frequent tripping of circuit breakers or blowing of fuses**



**Dimming of lights when other devices are turned on**



**Buzzing sound from switches or outlets**



**Discolored outlets**



**Appliances that seem underpowered**

### ⚡ How to avoid overloading circuits:



**Label your circuit breakers** to understand the different circuits in your home



Have your home **inspected by a qualified electrician** if it's older than 40 years or has had a major appliance installed



Have a qualified electrician **install new circuits** for high energy use devices



Reduce your electrical load by using **energy-efficient appliances and lighting**

# Member Notes

Our members are the reason Choptank Electric Cooperative exists. Without their support, it would be hard for us to move forward with current or new initiatives. Whether on social media, on the phone, or via old-fashioned letters sent along with their paper bills, our members love to let us know when their Co-op is doing a good job!

**Cay W. from Wicomico County** called in and said that [Choptank Electric] has helped him several times with his account and he wanted to express that the “positive mental attitude [our staff] has is brilliant”. He said he knows how hard it has been on all parties concerned throughout the pandemic and he appreciates that we are working with him and that we have helped him throughout the last year!

**Kathleen and Bruce A. from Taylor’s Island** sent an appreciative email to Choptank Electric : “...Your service people never fail to amaze us...We are planning to move to a smaller house/property and will not unless it is serviced by Choptank. Please let your road technicians know that we SO appreciate their work!”

*Our offices will be closed  
on Monday, May 31, 2021,  
to observe Memorial Day.*

## Choptank Electric Trust Awards

The Choptank Electric Trust is a 501(c)(3) charitable foundation funded by Operation Round Up donations from members of Choptank Electric. Funds from the Trust are distributed in all nine counties of Maryland’s Eastern Shore.

### February 2021

- Choptank Holiday Helpers - \$13,200.00
- Bay Hundred Community Volunteers Inc - \$3,300.00
- Delmarva Discovery Museum - \$5,000.00
- Snip Tuck Inc - \$1,238.00
- His Hope Ministries - \$4,752.50

The total of approved applications was \$47,191.47, which included \$19,700.97 for individual home and medical expenses.

### March 2021

- Whitehaven Heritage Assoc Inc - \$2,000.00
- Betterton UMC - \$5,000.00
- Easton High School Class of 2021 After Grad Party - \$300.00
- Maryland Food Bank - \$15,000.00

The total of approved applications was \$42,350.33 which included \$20,050.33 for individual home and medical expenses.

### Choptank Electric Cooperative, Inc.

Choptank Electric, a Touchstone Energy Cooperative, is a not-for-profit, member-owned, electric distribution Co-op serving approximately 54,000 residential, commercial, and industrial members in all nine counties on Maryland’s Eastern Shore.

#### President and CEO

Micheal E. Malandro

#### Board of Directors

Jeffrey D. Rathell Sr.  
Chairman, Talbot Co.

John J. Burke Jr.  
Vice Chairman, Cecil Co.

Douglas D. Scott  
Secretary-Treasurer, Dorchester Co.

Robert E. Arnold  
Queen Anne’s Co.

Amy I. Brandt  
Caroline Co.

Olin S. Davis, III  
Kent Co.

Matthew R. Holloway  
Wicomico Co.

Robert B. Thompson  
Ocean Pines District

Donna R. West  
Worcester Co.

Craig N. Mathies Sr.  
Somerset Co.