# RBC Cable News

Robinson Brothers Construction, Inc.

December 2019 Edition Volume #10

### Merle Sorenson Chairman & CEO

Well we just about got this year in the books I want to thank all of you, RBC Team, our customers, subcontractors, suppliers, vendors and everyone else that continues to support and help make RBC successful. 2019 got off to a rough start with record snowfall in February. Almost all of operations from Seattle to Medford and east to Idaho were shut down for most of the month.



The whole year wasn't without its changes and challenges but with that being said many people on the RBC team stepped up to

meet the challenges to move RBC forward in a big way. I want to say thanks to those managers who stepped up to help make 2019 a successful year.

We continue to always want to do the best we can do for our TEAM. We continue to invest in our employees with updated training and technology. We also continue to invest in our trucks and equipment to ensure we have the most modern fleet in the industry.

When you read Mary Hargrave's (HR page) in the newsletter you will recognize all the benefits RBC offers and we will always look for more ways to improve them even more. I would like to thank all our office staff from everyone in the corporate office in Vancouver to our other 5 satellite offices. You all do a great job supporting our team in the field.

We ring in the New Year with the largest backlog of work RBC has ever had. We have over 550 miles of Underground Fiber Cable to place over the next two years. This is primarily due to the expansion of the CLOUD and the roll out of Cellular 5G Network, also the Connect America Fund (CAF) that brings high speed internet to rural America. All this work along with several potential wind parks to build we are going to be one busy company.

I'm very proud of our safety/DOT records and ratings and commend the diligent work of Safety Supervisor/Manager Joe Bergren and our V.P. of Logistics and Operations, Marvin Porfily. Safety is number one and we want you all to go home safe to your families each day. I hope you enjoy this newsletter and make sure you read about the drawing we are having for some very cool things. Also, thanks to Martina, our Executive Assistant and everyone else that contributed to this newsletter.

To all of you and your families I wish you a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year, Merle Chairman and CEO





### Mike Rakoz President



Merry Christmas and Happy New Year,

As we end the 2019 year and usher in 2020, Robinson Brothers Construction is in a very good position for success. We began the year with great optimism and plan to end the year with positive results.

RBC has two years of project backlog to help stabilize our future. In addition, we provide service to multiple MSA contracts, we anticipate providing service to these customers for many years to come. We have diversity in our future, including Communication contracts while adding projects in the Energy sector. We intend to continue pursuing opportunities in these fields and will be adding multiple new customers which will add to our client base.

We enjoy the competitiveness of our industry and we are proud to have all of you on our team to represent RBC. In addition to all your talents, we have a great support team in our offices, key advisors on our board, support from our bank, bonding and insurance companies. Due to these strengths, it allows us to be a major player in the market place.

We intend to finish the year strong and make next year even better. We will continue to provide updated equipment and do our best to support the field and families as we enter the New Year. Please reach out and spread the word if you know of others like yourself, looking for a future with RBC.

We wish all of you and your families the very best,

Mike Rakoz



In this newsletter we are doing a little something different and extra. If you would like to enter the raffle all you have to do is submit the correct count for either the Seahawks or Trail Blazers logos in the newsletter for a 1 (one) night hotel in either Seattle or Portland with tickets to either the Seahawks or Trail Blazers game.

If you prefer 1 (one) of the 4 - \$50 gift cards, all you have to do is submit the correct count of "Happy New Year" is printed in the newsletter. We will also be raffling off 4 buck knives as well.

You will have until January 11, 2020 to enter the raffle. Submit all entries to mtarango@rbc-utility.com.

Good Luck!!







# Fishing on Kodiak with Columbia Bank







Mike Rakoz and Casey Moltrum



Mike Rakoz



Fishing with Columbia Bankers on Kodiak Island, AK.

Caught over 1,100 pounds of fish in 2 days.





Jeff Bertalotto



Marty Miller





From the HR Desk -Mary Hargrave

Money, money, Noney....MONE

I had worked thirty years in construction related fields prior to starting at RBC but never experienced the level of employee benefits that RBC had

in place. In 2016, their generous list of employee benefits included: Medical/Vision/Dental Insurance, \$500 Referral Bonus, Vacation and 401(K) Profit Sharing Plan (PSP) with up to 2% company match.

Starting in January 2018, RBC owners decided to reward those long term, dedicated employees with a Five- and Ten-Year Long-Term Incentive Bonus (please see related article in this Newsletter).

Still searching for increased employee benefits, in October 2019 RBC owners changed their 401(K) Plan Provider from American Funds to Empower to better serve their employees.

Empower offers employees:

- Greater Fund Selection increased fund selection from 22 American Funds to 29 Empower Funds
- Better Technology a personal employee website to incorporate all individual investments; ability to grasp clear understanding of retirement goals
- Improved Platform Model benefiting employees with an overall retirement plan platform versus American Funds money management

Striving to retain and recruit employees, RBC owners will increase the 401(K) company match from 2% to 3% beginning January 1, 2020. This is an important investment opportunity for all employees to start or increase their 401(K) participation. Also, if employees need investment advice either prior to participating in RBC's 401(K) or for investment strategy once enrolled, they can contact Rafik Fouad, our Investment Advisor with First Pacific Financial at 360-254-2585. This is another benefit offered by RBC as Rafik's services (for RBC Empower 401(K) PSP Investments) are free of charge to employees.

If you're interested in participating, want to increase you 401(K) PSP elective to 3% or check your current 401(K) PSP investments, go to the following Empower website link: <u>www.empowermyretirement.com</u>

Please contact me at 360-576-5359 ext. 240 or email <u>mhargrave@rbc-utility.com</u> if you have any questions about RBC's employee benefits.



## Long Term Incentive Bonus



In addition to our traditional employee benefits (Medical/Vision/Dental Insurance, 401(K) PSP 3% match beginning 1/1/2020, Referral Bonus and PTO) RBC created the Long-Term Incentive Bonus in January 2018. It was important to RBC owners to reward those long term, dedicated employees monetarily. In RBC's Employee Handbook, both Five- and Ten-year Long-Term Incentive Bonus is explained:

Employees who achieve Five years of Continuous Full-time Employment with RBC will receive an Incentive Bonus equal to 40 hours of pay at their current rate on their 5th Anniversary annually to their 9th Anniversary. Continuous full-time employment includes layoff or termination and re-hire within 6 months. An employee is paid their Incentive Bonus the week of their anniversary date separate from their regular payroll check.

Employees who achieve Ten Years of Continuous Full-time Employment with RBC will receive an Incentive Bonus equal to 80 hours of pay at their current rate on their 10th Anniversary and annually beyond. Continuous full-time employment includes layoff or termination and re-hire within 6 months. An employee is paid their Incentive Bonus the week of their anniversary date separate from their regular payroll check.

Bryson Hill

The following employees have reached either the Five Year or Ten-Year milestones:

Holly Akimseu-Leitgeb	05/20/13
Joe Bergren	03/15/08
Marvin Porfily	07/28/09
Mike Rakoz	05/01/06
Toland Severson	07/22/13
Craig Sorenson	05/01/06
Merle Sorenson	10/27/08
Martina Tarango	12/26/12
Mark Vermeulen	01/26/13
Jonathan Jensen	08/18/08
Dave McMillen	07/08/12
Jose Esparza	02/26/01
Julio Lluvias	07/10/03
Bill McCoy	07/18/06
Carlos Pinto	07/16/04
Dave Beardslee	05/20/09
Tim Cooper	08/13/09
Ron Hanson	04/06/14
Shawn McMillen	06/11/12
Kendal McMillen	06/11/12
Cory Rosenow	06/02/14
Fred Steinbach	06/03/14
Mike Kendall	06/09/14



09/22/14

This Incentive Bonus reflects our appreciation of your hard work and dedication to RBC.



### Hard at Work The Vancouver Team





Hanging UP Railroad Bridge, Portland OR Carter Sullivan III



Hanging UP Railroad Bridge, Portland OR Carter Sullivan III



Hanging Sandy River Bridge L: Carter Sullivan III R: Brandon Rutherford



Paving corner of SW 4<sup>th</sup> & Caruthers L to R: Brandon Rutherford, Carlos Pinto, Jose Esparaza, Julio Lluvias,Tyler McMahan, Taylor McCallum, Owen Barnes. Operator: Fred Steinbach





UP Railroad Bridge Jose Esparza



## Craig Sorenson **Executive Vice President**



#### Happy Holidays Everyone,

As we close out an exciting year I wanted to share with you some of the projects I have been working on recently. Before I do, let me share a little background information with you. My primary role with RBC is centered around Risk Management (liability, property, vehicle, equipment, and workers compensation insurance), managing all claims and litigation, selection of health & dental benefits, and designing our project and equipment costing systems. I have held other executive leadership roles with RBC in the past, but currently I am more of a specialist.

I spent much of 2017 & 2018 engaged in a legal action with one of our ex-customers that had not held up their end of the bargain. RBC completed one of the most challenging projects it had ever undertook on the North Slope of Alaska. Throughout the course of that project we were required to perform a lot of work that was outside the scope of our contract. Our customer reassured us on many occasions that a change order to compensate



us for the additional efforts and cost would be issued. At the completion of the project the customer balked, refusing to even negotiate a fair settlement. For the first time in RBC's fifty-five year history we were force to file a law suit. It was the only way to get them to treat us fairly. The legal process was long, tiresome, and expensive but ultimately RBC prevailed and we received at least a portion of what we had coming.

#### Large Project Tracking

When our law suit finally settled I saw the opportunity to engage with our executive, administrative, and operational teams to develop new systems that would help RBC to achieve success. With the support of our board of directors, I engaged in developing new processes and refining existing ones.

As a starting point we choose a single large project that could be used a test case, then we would add other projects as the systems were refined. We selected the Zayo Umatilla to Prineville project and soon added the Prineville to La Pine project. These two projects will include over 247 miles of plowing, trenching, and boring in very challenging conditions

The key elements of this system are:

- 1. Having a detailed bid/estimate as a starting point. RBC uses a custom estimating system that breaks a project down into types of work then applies production levels and crew cost to arrive at our bid. Estimates are a more of an educated guess than an exact science, they are just the starting point in the process.
- Breaking the project into Phases (smaller sections of the project) and each Phase into separate Categories of work (plow, trench, cutting rock, bore, place fiber, and splicing). Each Phase and Category is assigned a budget in our job cost system based upon our estimate.
- Developing a production tracker for the Project Management team to track and invoice the work as it is completed. We also developed separate trackers for major subcontractors.
- 4. Comparing our estimated cost to our actual cost on each phase/category of the project while it is under construction and adjusting our budgets as the real cost become known.

Our goal is to keep it simple, understandable, and reduce the amount of reporting required so that the project management team and crews can focus on productivity and profitability. The only paperwork impact to the crews is adding a couple numbers and decimal points behind the job number on timesheets and invoices. So far the project has gone well, and is getting better every month.

This project has been a team effort. I want to extend my thanks to Bill McCoy and Nate Woolsey for their embracing and participating in this new system. Many thanks as well go to Toland, Katie, Mary, Hope, all of the RBC administrative team for their input, engagement, and understanding while we developed the new system.

#### **Utility Damage Claims**

I have been working with Joe Bergren on improving our reporting system on utility hits and property damages. We spend a lot of time fighting these claims and minimizing the impact to our bottom line. RBC is committed to preventing these types of things from happening, but the fact is there are a lot of buried utilities out there, and we are going to have some incidents. The majority of the time we are not at fault, but the utility still tries to hang the cost on RBC. We need to do a better job of documenting all the evidence immediately and accurately. Joe and I will be visiting with all of our operations teams in the new year and will be training our area managers and crews on the best way to collect information that will help.

I want to thank all of you for your hard work, dedication, and loyalty. Your commitment to quality is the core value that makes our company successful. We are a preferred vendor with many of the nation's largest communications and utility companies. The employees of RBC are what make us stand out amongst our peers.

Let's make 2020 our best year ever.





Happy New Year **2020** 



Tree Trimming Crew Vernonia, WA



Tree Trimming Crew - l to r: Mike Baker, Cory Williams, Griffin Riutta, Dylan Hix, Tony Gonzalez, Al Bean, & Rick Brockamp







Tucannon Wind Farm Tony Jensen



Tucannon Wind Farm Tony Jensen





RBC's latest piece of equipment - Bridge Hanging Trailer



### A message from Joe Bergren Field Safety Supervisor

Team RBC,

With 2019 coming to a close and 2020 fast approaching, I am very pleased to report the improvement in all aspects of safety, over the last year we have spent a great deal of time and resources improving our safety program from industry related certification classes to and through OSHA 30 for some of our managers, we also now have in-house Traffic Control Specialist (Julio Lluvias) in Oregon and Washington with Reciprocity in other states.

Another exciting fact is that our safety rating and occurrence of utility damages has also steadily improved over the course of the last 3 years and as we continue to improve as individuals we become safer and stronger as a company, lets continue to collectively improve as a whole and keep the communication open and overcome any and all potential issues.

Have a safe and happy holiday season! Continue with the safe and prosperous work out there! Sincerely, Joseph Bergren – Safety Supervisor

1/15/19 Sandy Oregon 17-ZAY-027 Entire crew received gift cards for excellent Safety minded job set up: BJ Hill, Mark Lawson, Jerry Jones, Jose Esparza, Brandon Rutherford, Devin Bird

1/22/19 Roseburg OR 19-CHA-021 Jacob Franke and Jacob Thompson both received RBC Knives for safe job set up, JHA and P.P.E

1/23/19 San Juan Island Al Johnson received RBC Buck knife for excellent JHA and site safety set up

1/24/19 Orcas Island Obie Garza received RBC Buck knife for excellent inspection on aerial safety

1/29/19 Mukilteo Yard Nate Meyers received RBC Buck knife for excellent and safe work wrapping up the yard

4/17/19 Vancouver yard bays 1 and 2, Nate Meyers received gift card for excellent organization of materials and tooling

4/30/19 Anacortes 18-MIS-027 David Klinkenberg received RBC Growler for excellent safety conscious job set up and tooling inspection.

7/22/19 Prineville 19-ZAY-030 Bill McCoy received RBC Tote Bag for excellent follow up on Safety reporting and associated documents.

7/31/19 Tucannon Wind Farm Dayton WA Tony Jensen and Florentino Martinez both received RBC Tote Bags for excellent planning and regard to Fire Danger and Mitigation onsite.

9/3/19 Coeur D' Alene Idaho 19-MIS-010, Kendall and Shawn McMillen both received RBC Waterproof tote bags for excellent clean up and detailing of RBC Truck Asset 13019.













### HAPPY NEW YEAR



Rock Saw - Bend OR



Rock Saw - Bend OR







Micro Duct - City of Anacortes WA



Moving back to re-start The Dalles to Portland phase.



Placing fiber on Clay & 4<sup>th</sup>, Portland OR L to R: Tyler McMahan & Fred Steinbach



Pulling fiber (figure 8) on Jefferson & 4<sup>th</sup>, Portland OR L to R: Carlos Pinto & Bob Fisher





# Marvin Porfily VP of Logistics

Team,

I would like to start out by introducing you to our new field mechanic, John White. He has been in the construction field for over 27 years. He has a vast knowledge in equipment repair, engines, hydraulics, fabrication and DOT. He is currently working on the Hermiston to Reno Project. If you have anything that needs to be fabricated or help with figuring a problem out, he can do it. He will be a great fit for the RBC team.



I would like to thank you all for your attention to detail on our fleet. Starting out in the mornings with our gate checks and keeping the trucks spotless clean. It has really reflected on our DOT rating and the way we look as company. I really appreciate all of you.

VP of Logistics, Marvin Porfily



John White - Prineville Mechanic

CenturyLink 7<sup>th</sup> Annual Links for Tots Golf Tournament L to R: Merle Sorenson, Hope White & Mike Rakoz







Vancouver WA Office Front: Lauren Rakoz L to R: Mary Hargrave, Dani Steinbach, Toland Severson, Martina Tarango, Craig Sorenson, Katie Myers, Marvin Porfily, Holly Akimseu-Leitgeb, Mike Rakoz & Marty Miller



### Southern Oregon Medford Region



Winchester Pole Transfer -Front Bucket: Kyle Walker Back Bucket: Joe Diaz Ground: Duane Schoeneck III



Lakeside, OR State Parks & Rec. Ladder: Kyle Walker; Pole: Joe Diaz





Cutting Asphalt for bore pit Oak & Main St, Medford OR Jacob Thompson, Hurley Morehead & Patrick Wiggins



Jacob Wildey VA Dom White City Entering Manhole pushing fiber





Oak & Main St., Ashland OR - Cutting Asphalt Brendan Boaz & Sam Farra

Ken Rogers pulling lasher









Dave McMillen and his twin sons; Shawn and Kendal (27 years old) have been part of the RBC Team now going on 8 years. They all have homes and reside in Santa, ID near St Marie's. All three have worked on numerous large RBC projects. Most notably the project in Pruhdoe Bay Alaska for what seemed an eternity (Very tough conditions).

Dave now is area manager for the Eastern WA, ID Region while overseeing the Puget Sound Area and has a office and yard location in Rathdrum ID. Currently Shawn and Kendal are working on two power projects RBC has under contact for Kootenai Electric Cooperative in Coeur d'Alene, ID. In their spare time they love to hunt, fish, work on their property, hot tubbing, riding their snow-mobiles, and Dave enjoys putting lots and lots of miles on his company truck. We value there commitment and loyalty to RBC greatly!





William (Bill) McCoy is RBC's Project Manager for the major fiber build running from Umatilla, OR to Bend, OR, currently and continue on to Reno, NV in 2020. Bill has over 20 years' construction experience and is experienced in all of RBC's fascists in our industry.

Bill was born and raised in Bay City, MI and is 43 years old. He has been with RBC since July 2006. He has a black lab named Snowflake and resides in Redmond, OR and has been in the construction industry since 1992. He likes to relax by either hunting, fishing and/or riding snow-mobiles.



His first project was Hwy 20 Build for Touch American going from Bend, OR to Ontario, OR back in 1997. He has run long-line fiber crews for over 8 years with RBC. He started as a ground-man and has worked his way up, learning all the positions; ground-man, operator, foreman and currently project manager.



Julio Lluvias is RBC's In-House Traffic Control Specialist (TCS) in Oregon and Washington with reciprocity in other states. He has over 16 years' experience in labor and flagging.

He has been with RBC since July 2003 and has been on numerous projects doing fiber drops, hand-holes and performing numerous other tasks.

He was born and raised in Acapulco, Mexico and has been living in the United States since 1985. He is bi-lingual in Spanish and English. He and his wife Carmen share 7 kids and one very spoiled grand daughter. He loves spending time with his family, cooking and eating in his spare time.





### **TELECOM NEWS**

## USDA Opens Application Portal for New ReConnect Rural Broadband Infrastructure Program

n April 23, Agriculture Secretary Sonny Perdue announced that the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is now accepting online applications for funding through the new ReConnect Rural Broadband Pilot Program. These funds will enable the federal government to partner with the private sector and rural communities to build modern broadband infrastructure in areas with insufficient internet service. Insufficient service is defined as connection speeds of less than 10 megabits per second download and 1 megabit per second upload. Beginning April 23, ReConnect funding applications can be submitted at reconnect.usda.gov.

"Reliable, high-speed broadband internet e-Connectivity is critical for economic prosperity and quality of life in the 21st century, from education to health care to agriculture to manufacturing and beyond," Perdue said. "We at USDA are very excited to begin accepting applications for funds from this new and innovative program, which will bring critical infrastructure investments to homes, farms, ranches, schools, and health care sites in rural America."

Congress first appropriated funds for the new Rural e-Connectivity Pilot Program, known as ReConnect, in 2018. The program will be a proof-of-concept, enabling USDA to create and implement innovative options for rural connectivtivy by providing various financial packages to its customers.

In this first round of funding, USDA is making available at least \$600 million in rural broadband projects, through \$200 million in grants, \$200 million in loan and grant combinations, and \$200 million in low-interest loans. The application deadlines for each of these funding packages are as follows:

- May 31, 2019, for projects seeking federal funds from the grants-only package;
- June 21, 2019, for projects seeking a combination of federal loans and grants; and
- · July 12, 2019, for projects seeking low-interest federal loans.

This \$600 million appropriation from Congress more than doubles federal funding available through USDA's longstanding broadband programs. Future rounds of funding for ReConnect will be announced later this year.

In April 2017, President Trump established the interagency Task Force on Agriculture and Rural Prosperity to identify legislative, regulatory, and policy changes that could promote agriculture and prosperity in rural communities. In January 2018, Perdue presented the task force's findings, including 31 recommendations to align the federal government with state, local, and tribal governments to take advantage of opportunities that exist in rural America. Increasing investments in rural infrastructure, including rural broadband infrastructure, is a cornerstone recommendation of the task force.

To view the report in its entirety, go to www.usda.gov/ sites/default/files/documents/rural-prosperity-report.pdf.

To view the categories of the recommendations, go to www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/rural-taskforce-infographic.pdf. ¶



ATTENTION ALL EMPLOYEES \$500 REWARD This is a program we have implemented to try and add new employees to our team. If you as an employee recommend someone to RBC and they are hired and stay a minimum of 6 months You will receive \$500.00!!



\*We'd like to thank all employees that have made referrals to RBC. \*









Kootenai Tall Pines, Coeur d'Alene, ID Operator: Shawn McMillen Ground: William Osborne





Kootenai Tall Pines, Coeur d'Alene, ID Operator: Tony Jensen Ground: Florentino Martinez



Kootenai Tall Pines, Coeur d'Alene, ID Operator: Kendal McMillen





Awesome job detailing truck: Kendal & Shawn McMillen



Lauren and Paige Rakoz Battling Sisters











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Northern Idaho & Eastern Washington Region Office 14199 Thayer Street Rathdrum, ID 83858	
Ellensburg WA Remote Office/Yard 2410 N. Dolarway Rd Ellensburg, WA 98926	
Hermiston Yard 81628 Hwy 395 N Hermiston, OR 97838	



Toys for Tots Vancouver WA





Kootenai Tall Pines, Coeur d'Alene, ID Operator: Tony Jensen Ground: William Osborne