

Big Skylights



An internal newsletter of the STATEWIDE ASSOCIATION OF MONTANA RURAL ELECTRIC COOPERATIVES

A report from your Chief Executive Officer Dave Wheelihan

June 22, 2017

Vigilante Electric youth elected to national council

Harleigh Johnson, representing Vigilante Electric Cooperative, was elected last week by the Montana delegation participating in the NRECA Youth to Washington, D.C., to represent our state in the NRECA Youth Leadership Council. Ms. Johnson, a junior at Dillon High School, will return next month to our nation's capital for the YLC meeting and will also represent Montana at the NRECA Annual Meeting next year in Nashville, Tennessee.

Twenty eight high school juniors and seniors from Montana attended last week's Youth Tour events, returning to the Treasure State on June 17. A total of 1,800 youth from across the nation attended this year's Youth Tour. In addition to MECA, Montana electric co-ops sponsoring Youth Tour participants this year were Beartooth Electric Cooperative, Big Flat Electric Cooperative, Fergus Electric Cooperative, Flathead Electric Cooperative, Glacier Electric Cooperative, Hill County Electric Cooperative, Lincoln Electric Cooperative, Lower Yellowstone REC, Marias River Electric Cooperative, Mid-Yellowstone Electric Cooperative, Missoula Electric Cooperative, NorVal Electric Cooperative, Park Electric Cooperative, Ravalli County Electric Cooperative, Sheridan Electric Cooperative, Sun River Electric Cooperative, Tongue River Electric Cooperative, Vigilante Electric Cooperative, and Yellowstone Valley Electric Cooperative.

Western G & T elects officers at annual meeting

Under automatic rotation of officers, **Norm Tebay**, a trustee at Vigilante Electric Cooperative, was elected to replace **Rex Griffin** as president of Western Montana Electric Generation and Transmission Cooperative at the G & T's annual meeting June 7 in Missoula.

Other officers elected were **Jean Matt**, Mission Valley Power trustee, as vice president, and **Doug Grob**, trustee at Flathead Electric Cooperative, as secretary-treasurer.

Fergus Electric members OK new garage facility

Fergus Electric Cooperative members approved building a new garage to protect the cooperative's equipment and improve safety during the co-op's 79th Annual Meeting June 8 at the Fergus County Fairgrounds in Lewistown.

President **Bob Evans** in his report commended the support of the membership and the dedication and hard work of management and staff. He noted that Fergus Electric is supportive of the Black Butte Copper Project near White Sulphur Springs, which the co-op would supply power to. Mr. Evans also voiced his support for the proposed truck garage, which will protect more than \$2 million worth of equipment. He concluded his report by thanking retiring trustee, **Mike Vlastelic**, for nine years of service on the board and thanked **Mr. Vlastelic's** wife, **Deb**, for her support.

Vice President **David Dover** gave a final report on the history and status of the Southern Montana Electric Generation and Transmission Cooperative. He told members that the Southern bankruptcy is closed, and the G&T will be dissolved by the end of June.

Manager **Scott Sweeney** delivered the manager's report, highlighting the new Cooperative Solar Project, which is Fergus Electric's community solar array. Members can prepurchase solar panels for \$600 each. He also reported that the co-op's existing metering system is becoming obsolete and will need to be upgraded in the next one to three years.

Mr. Sweeney also spent time explaining the need for a truck garage, noting that in addition to the need to protect the equipment, getting the trucks out of the snow would make getting in and out of the vehicles safer for the linemen. He also concluded by thanking Mr. Vlastelic for his service to the cooperative.

In elections, the membership overwhelming approved to build a 100-foot-by-100-foot heated truck garage for a cost not to exceed \$850,000, though Mr. Sweeney said he expects the actual expenditure to be much less. In trustee elections, incumbent **David Dover** was re-elected by affirmation and **Cathy Kombol** was elected by affirmation to replace Mr. Vlastelic.

Montana GMs seek seats on national co-op boards

Two Montanans, **Brandon Wittman**, general manager at Yellowstone Valley Electric Cooperative, and **Mark Grotbo**, general manager at Ravalli County Electric Cooperative, are seeking election to two national boards affiliated with electric cooperatives.

Mr. Grotbo is seeking election to a Region IX seat on the National Information Solutions Cooperative (NISC) board of directors. Mr. Wittman is seeking election to a Northwest Region seat on the CoBank board of directors.

MECA sponsors winter survival training course

MECA will hold a one-day Winter Survival Training course at the Yogo Inn in Lewistown, Mont., on Tuesday, Aug. 8. The course instructor will be **Art Seely**, a renowned authority in safety and survival training and the sole founder of Safety One Training International. He is one of the first certified rescue paramedics in the United States.

Training will focus on Case Histories – simple lessons to avoid disaster, Survival Attitude – how to get it, how to keep it; Winter Survival – secrets that make a difference; Hypothermia – why it kills so many, recognition and what you need to do; Frostbite – simple secrets to keep your fingers; and Survival Priorities – surviving the unexpected.

Registration deadline for this training is July 28.

For additional information, please contact **Lea Potoczny** of our office. She can be reached at (406) 761-8333 or via email, meca@mtco-ops.com.

OCR training schools set for Kalispell and Huntley

MECA will sponsor two Oil Circuit Recloser schools. The first course will be held Aug. 22-23 at Flathead Electric Cooperative in Kalispell. The second course will be held Aug. 29-30 at Yellowstone Valley Electric Cooperative in Huntley. The course instructor will again be **Mike Dean**.

The course is limited to the first 30 registered participants so those interested in attending are urged to register as soon as possible but no later than July 31.

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CALENDAR

June

22-23	MECA Managers' Group Summer Meeting	Helena, MT
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July

6-7	MECA Summer Board and Committees Meetings	Kalispell, MT
13	Goldenwest Electric Cooperative Annual Meeting	Wibaux, MT
22	Tongue River Electric Cooperative Annual Meeting	Broadus, MT

August

5-8	Statewide Editors Association Institute	Whitefish, MT
8	Winter Survival Training	Lewistown, MT
9	Co-op 101 Class	Havre, MT
11	Co-op 101 Class	Dillon, MT
17-18	MECA Office Managers & Accountants Summer Meeting	Fairmont Hot Springs, MT
22-23	OCR School	Kalispell, MT
29-30	OCR School	Huntley, MT