

Big Skylights



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

A report from your Chief Executive Officer Dave Wheelihan

May 25, 2017

Hill County Electric adds demand billing line item

Hill County Electric Cooperative members during their annual meeting May 13 in Havre were reminded of the tremendous amount of experience on their co-op board, and informed about a new item that will be showing up on their bill for educational purposes.

Each Hill County Electric Board member gave their own report, highlighting various items, from the importance of generators and surge protectors, to net-metering legislation concerns, to the importance of the Youth Tour and the scholarships available to students to the quality of board members and employees at the co-op. It was also mentioned that the co-op's trustees have more than 100 years combined experience on the board.

General Manager **Craig Gates** said the cooperative will include a new item on members' bills to show what their bill would be if the cooperative switched to demand billing, which is a trend in the industry. He also updated members on ongoing maintenance and power supply concerns.

Central Montana Electric Power Cooperative Manager **Doug Hardy** gave an update during the meeting, and MECA was pleased to provide a legislative update.

In elections, incumbents **Merle Belcourt** and **Stuart Smith** were re-elected without opposition.

Non-accountants training well received in Montana

MECA was pleased to have a good attendance at this week's "Accounting for Non-Accountants" Workshop at the statewide association building in Great Falls. A total of 20 people participated from co-ops across the state. The instructor, **Kim Mikkelsen** of KW Consulting, is a popular instructor on the nationwide NRECA seminars and workshop circuit. Ms. Mikkelsen, who lives in Yakima, Wash., got her start with electric co-ops at Fergus Electric Cooperative, based in Lewistown. She is a graduate of Montana State University.

More sign-ups needed for avian seminars

Sign-ups are urged for Avian Protection Seminars MECA is organizing in Missoula and Billings. Although sign-ups for the Billings seminar are fairly strong, more sign-ups are needed for the Missoula event.

These seminars are being held to meet training requirements of the statewide Avian Protection Plan (APP) adopted by most of Montana's electric cooperatives. The APP requires periodic training on avian protection. MECA will likely not hold these seminars again for about two years or so.

The trainings will be held in Missoula on Wednesday, May 31, at the Hilton Garden Inn, located at 3720 North Reserve Street and in Billings on Thursday, June 1 at the Hampton Inn and Suites, located at 3550 Ember Lane.

Both training seminars will begin at 10 a.m., and end at 2 p.m. Lunch will be served as part of the seminar. The seminar will be conducted by **Jim Burruss**, MECA's avian protection consultant. Mr. Burruss, who developed our statewide avian protection plan, is a wildlife biologist with extensive experience working in the electric utility industry. He is well respected in Montana and in other states. In addition, officials from the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service will provide presentations. There will also be a presentation on bird biology, including birds to help attendees gain additional understanding of avian issues.

Among the topics to be covered are avian reporting requirements, a review of the APP and a discussion of viable retrofit options to address avian problem. Co-ops are urged to contact MECA if they have any

suggestions on information you would like to have presented. Mr. Burruss will cover any topics you may request.

It is strongly advised each co-op send at least two people to one of these seminars. The cost to attend is \$150/person, which includes the working lunch.

Registration forms have been sent out. Additional forms are available by contacting **Lea Potoczny** of our staff. We are asking that the completed forms be returned to Ms. Potoczny by no later than May 26. She can be reached by calling (406) 761-8333 or via email at meca@mtco-ops.com. Room blocks have not been established at either hotel, but currently both facilities have rooms available if overnight accommodations are needed. The Hilton Garden Inn in Missoula can be reached by calling (406) 532-5300. The Hampton Inn & Suites in Billings can be reached by calling (406) 656-7511.

Job Market

Work Order Clerk

Sun River Electric Cooperative in Fairfield, MT, is accepting applications for the position of Work Order Clerk. Primary responsibilities include accounting for labor, materials, and other costs associated with construction projects; maintaining inventory records and plant accounts; maintaining subsidiary records on substation and transportation equipment; verifying invoices for payment; and coordinating material purchases. A Bachelor's degree in accounting/finance or comparable experience is required. Excellent benefit package offered and wage will be based on experience. Applications are available online at www.sunriverelectric.coop or call 406-467-2527. Submit application and three letters of reference to Leona Huidekoper, office manager, Sun River Electric Cooperative, PO Box 309, Fairfield MT 59436. Deadline for submitting applications is June 2, 2017.

Journeyman Lineman

Marias River Electric Cooperative (MREC) is seeking a qualified candidate to fill the position of journeyman lineman.

MREC is a rural electric distribution cooperative headquartered in Shelby, Mont. MREC is located 90 miles north of Great Falls, and serves approximately 4,000 member-owners in Toole, Liberty, and Pondera counties.

The ideal candidate must have a thorough knowledge of the construction, operation, and maintenance of distribution and transmission lines and substations. A thorough knowledge of the National Electrical Safety Code, OSHA rules and regulations, the ability to read and understand, staking sheets, federal Rural Utilities Service specifications, and assembly and material specifications. A working knowledge of leadership is required.

A high school diploma or equivalent is required, along with a Journeyman Lineman Certificate of Completion. Five-plus years of progressive experience in all aspects of electric utility construction, maintenance, and operations experience is preferred. The selected candidate will report directly to the operations superintendent.

MREC offers a competitive salary and a benefit package, including NRECA retirement and a Lineco insurance program. The selected candidate will be required to become a member of IBEW Local 44. Pre-

employment drug and physical test is required, and candidate must be able to obtain and maintain a valid Montana (CDL) driver's license

To apply; please submit a cover letter and resume, along with three professional references, no later than May 26, 2017 to: Mr. **Randy Ruff**, Operations Superintendent, Marias River Electric Cooperative, P.O. Box 729, Shelby, MT 59474. Phone: (406) 434-5575. Marias River Electric website: www.mariasriverec.com.

CALENDAR

May

31	Avian Protection Training Seminar	Missoula, MT
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June

1	Avian Protection Training Seminar	Billings, MT
1	Lower Yellowstone REC Annual Meeting	Sidney, MT
2	McCone Electric Cooperative Annual Meeting	Circle, MT
2	Southeast Electric Cooperative Annual Meeting	Ekalaka, MT
6	FEMA Training	Sidney, MT
8	FEMA Training	Great Falls, MT
8	Fergus Electric Cooperative Annual Meeting	Lewistown, MT
10	Fall River Electric Cooperative Annual Meeting	Ashton, ID
10-16	Youth Tour to Washington, D.C.	Washington, D.C.
22-23	MECA Managers' Group Summer Meeting	Helena, MT

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