

# Big Skylights



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

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A report from your Chief Executive Officer Dave Wheelihan

October 26, 2017

## Region IX elects Montana co-op manager to seat on national committee

Congratulations to **Mark Hayden**, general manager and CEO of Missoula Electric Cooperative, who was elected last week as Region 9's representative on NRECA's standing Legislative Committee. The vote at the Region 9 meeting in Denver was unanimous. Mr. Hayden will serve an initial two-year term and will be eligible to be re-elected for two additional two-year terms. In other Region 9 elections, **Doug Hardy**, manager of Central Montana Electric Power Cooperative, was re-elected chairman of the Region 9 Nominating Committee. He has been re-elected chairman multiple times.

## New slate of officers elected to METSPool

New officers have been elected to the METSPool Executive Committee. The elections were held Oct. 3 in conjunction with MECA's annual meeting.

Elected president was **Mark Hayden**, general manager of Missoula Electric Cooperative. Mr. Hayden succeeded **Melanie Roe**, a director at Park Electric Cooperative, who decided not to seek re-election to the committee. Elected first vice president was **John Burgmaier**, a director at Sun River Electric Cooperative. **Michael Candelaria**, general manager/CEO at Mid-Rivers Telephone Cooperative, was elected second vice president. **Craig Gates**, general manager of Triangle Telephone and Hill County Electric Cooperative, was elected treasurer. Elected secretary was **DeeDee Isaacs**, a director at Tongue River Electric Cooperative.

## Rate change boosts co-op financial picture

NorVal Electric Cooperative members heard the history of the cooperative, and how last year's rate modification put the co-op in a better financial position during their annual meeting Oct. 18 in Opheim.

Manager **Craig Herbert** told members that when the co-op was founded, the average home cost \$4,600, and a gallon of gas was 15 cents. He praised the original members of Northern and Valley electric cooperatives for organizing and starting the cooperatives, with the first lines energized 70 years ago.

Mr. Herbert also addressed the rate modification that was introduced last year, noting that it allowed NorVal Electric to improve its Time-Interest Earned Ratio from "well-below" 2.0 last year to 2.7 this year. That will allow NorVal to have access to funding when it is needed, he said. He added that there are no plans for a rate increase in the coming year.

Other speakers included Youth Tour participant **Casity Boucher**; board member **Chris Christensen**, the secretary/treasurer of the NRECA board, giving an update on that board; and MECA, which was pleased to provide an update on aquatic invasive species and Call Before You Dig legislation.

In elections, incumbents **Lee Risa**, **Sam Gundermann**, Mr. Christensen and **Rocky Kittleson** were all re-elected without opposition.

## Fire and winter storm key topics at Big Flat Electric's annual meeting

A summer fire and early winter storm were among the topics discussed at Big Flat Electric Cooperative's 71<sup>st</sup> Annual Meeting on Oct. 14 in Malta.

Manager **Gretchen Boardman** told members that only one pole had to be replaced as a result of the Landusky fire this summer. However, the October winter storm left 75 percent of the members without power — and 130 three-phase and single-phase poles had to be replaced, as well as numerous crossarms.

Ms. Boardman then went over all of the services the cooperative offers, and the ways in which it contributes to the local community.

Guest speaker **Doug Hardy**, manager of Central Montana Electric Power Cooperative, updated members on the aquatic invasive species and Call Before You Dig laws passed during the 2017 legislative session. Other speakers included Youth Tour winner **Chris Depuydt** and **Shannon Van Voast** of Big Flat Grocery in Turner.

In trustee elections, **Alan Wasson**, **Roger Solberg** and **Clyde Robinson** were re-elected without opposition.

### **Members hear rationale for rate structure changes**

Sheridan Electric Cooperative Manager **Rick Knick** explained to the membership at its 70<sup>th</sup> annual meeting Oct. 14 the need for changes in the co-op's rate structure, saying it "needs to be fair — even when it comes to distributed generation."

As a result, said Mr. Knick, the co-op earlier this year increased the co-op's base charge but had also decreased the co-op's kWh charge, resulting in a 7-percent net decrease in rates for the average user of 1,200 kWh. An additional increase in the base charge combined with a decrease in the kWh charge are being contemplated, he said. Regarding rates, Mr. Knick pointed out that although the co-op raised rates to 10.5 cents residential on Jan. 1, the co-op was able to reduce rates by one cent on July 1. The cold months early in the year and the increase in irrigation sales starting in early spring were not anticipated, and improved the co-op's bottom line, allowing the decrease in rates, he said.

Mr. Knick also talked about capital credits. He said the co-op had been on a 15-year cycle for retirement of capital credits but, due to high debt payments, had fallen slightly behind. With these debt-service issues now resolved, he told members the co-op will return to the 15-year cycle, adding, "The board is committed to retiring capital credits."

Also during the meeting, the members heard **Claire Vigesaa**, general manager of Upper Missouri Power Cooperative, explain the purpose and functions of his wholesale power co-op. He noted that due to power loads serving oil and gas wells in the Bakken, the co-op sells large amounts of power. Currently, its sales comprise .21 percent of all U.S. electricity sales, or one kWh out of every 483 kWh sold in the U.S., said Mr. Vigesaa.

In trustee elections, **Rod Smith**, **Harlan Skillingberg** and **Rick Hansen** were all re-elected without opposition. Trustee **Warren Overgaard**, who passed away earlier this year, was honored for his long-time service on the co-op board. His wife, **Eileen**, was presented with an electric-meter lamp. Said Board President **Wayne Deubner**, "He was one of the good ones."

### **Job Market**

#### **Journeyman Lineman**

Vigilante Electric Cooperative (VEC), headquartered in Dillon, Mont., has an immediate opening for a journeyman lineman. Excellent pay and benefits are provided in this position. VEC may accept applications from a fourth step and above, "hot", apprentice lineman. This position requires residing within a 20-minute response time of the co-op's Dillon headquarters office. Please contact **Justin Bair**, line superintendent, at (406) 683-2327 or [Justin@vec.coop](mailto:Justin@vec.coop), for further details/requirements related to the position and an application package. This position will remain open until filled. VEC is an Equal Opportunity Employer.

#### **Operations Superintendent**

Park Electric Cooperative located in Livingston, Montana, is currently accepting applications for an operations superintendent. Duties include crew oversight, engineering and planning, compliance, record keeping as well as material control. The operations superintendent supervises a union line crew and inside staff members and is responsible for scheduling and assigning all daily work for members of the department.

Applicants should have a minimum of 5 years in electrical operations, including considerable experience in a supervisory role and meet the following requirements: possess a thorough knowledge of both distribution and

transmission line construction, maintenance, and operation; be able to interact with both consumers and employees in a professional and courteous manner; possess excellent organizational skills; be proficient in the operation of a personal computer; possess a Commercial Driver's license or be able to obtain one within 90 days of employment; and be able to work all hours of the day as needed.

Applications due by December 1, 2017. For more information about Park Electric Cooperative or to obtain a job description or application, please visit our website at [www.parkelectric.coop](http://www.parkelectric.coop) or call our office at 406-222-3100. Qualified interested individuals should submit a resume, cover letter and application to [info@parkelectric.coop](mailto:info@parkelectric.coop) or mailed to Park Electric Cooperative, PO Box 1119, Livingston, MT 59047.

## CALENDAR

### October

27	Park Electric Cooperative Annual Meeting	Livingston, MT
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### November

8	Basin Electric Power Cooperative Annual Meeting	Bismarck, ND
28-29	MECA Winter Meetings	

### December

12-14	Midwest Electric Consumers Association Annual Meeting	Denver, CO
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