

# 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

May 26, 2016

## Hill County Electric manager thanks members for help in spring storm

In his first annual meeting report as general manager of Hill County Electric Cooperative, **Craig Gates** thanked members for their volunteer assistance to line crews in helping restore power during a major April spring snowstorm.

Mr. Gates reported that several farmers used their tractors to help line trucks get unstuck in the aftermath of the storm, which broke 62 poles and dumped up to four feet of snow in some areas. "It really means a lot when we get help from our members."

Trustee **Gerald Rutledge** expressed similar gratitude, telling members, "That's the true meaning of a co-op."

Also during the annual meeting, the co-op received a positive financial report from controller **Mark Majeres**. Reviewing the 2015 financial audit, Mr. Majeres noted the co-op's equity ratio had improved to 45.3 percent. He also pointed out the co-op was able to hold down its operating expenses in 2015. Excluding the increased cost of power, the co-op's operating expenses grew by only 1.7 percent. Mr. Gates said the co-op will continue to try to hold expenses to a similar level in 2016.

In trustee elections, **Lon Waid** was re-elected without opposition. MECA appreciated the opportunity to give a legislative report during the meeting.

## Northwestern Energy plans pilot solar project

Work is expected to begin next month on construction by NorthWestern Energy of a 385-kW pilot solar array in Bozeman. Members of the Montana Legislature's Energy and Telecommunications Committee (ETIC) heard a presentation on the project at its May 12 meeting in Kalispell.

The project is estimated to cost \$702,000. Sept. 9 is the targeted completion date.

An NWE official told ETIC the purpose of its project is to measure, analyze and quantify benefits of renewable energy on the distribution system, and ascertain distribution improvements or added controls needed to maintain safe and reliable circuits.

The array, estimated by NWE to provide enough electricity to "power 59 homes" based on 750 kWh per month usage, is being built in partnership with the city of Bozeman. It will be constructed at the city's water reclamation facility site.

## MECA sets voltage regulator school for July

MECA will hold a voltage regulator school July 19-20 in Corvallis. The school will be hosted by Ravalli County Electric Cooperative at the co-op's headquarters building. The instructor will be **Mike Dean**.

The school will begin at 8:30 a.m. on Tuesday, July 19. It will conclude by 4 p.m. on Wednesday, July 20. Lunch will be provided both days.

Attendance will be limited to the first 28 registered participants. It is strongly recommended that registrations be made by no later than July 1.

For more information, please contact **Lea Potoczny** of the MECA staff. Her email is [meca@mtco-ops.com](mailto:meca@mtco-ops.com). The phone number is (406) 761-8333.

## CALENDAR

### June

1	Lower Yellowstone REC Annual Meeting	Sidney, MT
3	McCone Electric Cooperative Annual Meeting	Circle, MT
3	Southeast Electric Cooperative Annual Meeting	Ekalaka, MT
11-17	Youth Tour to Washington, D.C.	Washington, D.C.
11	Fergus Electric Cooperative Annual Meeting	Lewistown, MT
11	Fall River Electric Cooperative Annual Meeting	Ashton, Idaho
14-15	MECA Managers' Group Summer Meeting	Great Falls, MT

### July

6-7	MECA Summer Meetings	Glasgow, MT
9	Tongue River Electric Cooperative Annual Meeting	Ashland, MT
14	Goldenwest Electric Cooperative Annual Meeting	Golva, ND
19-20	Regulator School	Corvallis, MT