

Big Skylights



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

A report from your Chief Executive Officer Dave Wheelihan

April 14, 2016

Marias River Electric hears positive report despite downturn in sales

Despite a downturn in electricity sales in 2015 due to mild temperatures, Marias River Electric Cooperative members on Friday heard a positive report at their annual meeting in Shelby about the co-op's financial condition.

General Manager **Kris Ingenthron** told members the co-op had achieved healthy year-end margins, in part by reducing its operating expenses.

Also during his report, Mr. Ingenthron cautioned members about inaccurate information they may have received in the mail regarding smart meters. The information, he said, falsely alleges capabilities of smart meters, such as the ability to detect what television shows people are watching. He urged members to call the co-op for more information about smart meters.

In addition during the annual meeting, Mr. Ingenthron recognized centenarian **Ray Zell**, a member of the co-op's original board of trustees. With perhaps one exception, Mr. Zell has attended every annual meeting of the co-op since 1949.

And in trustee elections, incumbents **Joe Sisk**, **Adrian Hawks** and **Shannon Dunk** were all re-elected without opposition.

MECA appreciated the opportunity to provide a legislative report at the annual meeting.

New trustee, two bylaw changes approved at FEC

Mail-in ballots have confirmed that **Stacey Schnebel** has been elected to the Flathead Electric Cooperative board of trustees. Ms. Schnebel replaces **Chris Byrd**, who did not seek re-election.

In other trustee elections at Flathead Electric, **Bruce Measure** and **Doug Grob** were re-elected without opposition.

Bylaw changes were also approved. One requires nominating petitions for candidates to be submitted 12 business days prior to the annual meeting instead of just five days as it stands now. The other concerns capital credits and a clarification as to how they are retired for a business as opposed to a "natural person," should that business cease to exist.

Upper Missouri power sales increase in 2015

Upper Missouri Power Cooperative members received an update from their power suppliers, heard how the Clean Power Plan may impact their rates and listened to insight offered by a G&T manager from Kansas during Upper Missouri's annual meeting April 7 in Sidney.

Board President **Travis Thompson** told members that a year ago there were 94 active drilling rigs in North Dakota, with oil at more than \$50 a barrel. Today, there are 29 active drilling rigs in North Dakota, and oil is at \$36 barrel, up from a low of about \$20 in January.

"All prices cycle. They'll come back, but it might be some time before you see it again," Mr. Thompson said.

General Manager **Claire Vigesaa** told those in attendance that 2015 sales increased significantly over 2014 sales, and that last year Upper Missouri accounted for 30.1 percent of sales for Basin Electric Power Cooperative. He also announced Mid-Yellowstone Electric Cooperative as a new member and welcomed them.

Chief Operating Officer **Jeremy Mahowald** then updated members on the installation of new load-monitoring equipment. He noted that last month the load-monitoring system was 99.86 percent accurate.

Basin Electric CEO **Paul Sukut** updated members on Basin's growth and generation portfolio, as well as the Clean Power Plan. He said the 75 percent compliant by 2022 goal in the plan is unattainable. "We can't make that," he said. "We need time and we need flexibility."

Other speakers included **Taylor Gunn**, senior economist, Knowledge Exchange-CoBank; **Stuart Lowry**, president and CEO of Sunflower Electric Power Cooperative in Kansas; and **Jody Sundsted** of WAPA's regional office in Billings.

Job Market

Journeyman Lineman

Lincoln Electric Cooperative, based in Eureka, Mont., has an immediate opening for the full-time position of journeyman lineman.

The person in this position will be responsible for construction, conversion, relocation and maintenance of the electrical lines and stations throughout the area served by the cooperative. High school graduation or equivalency and completion of a certified Journeyman Lineman Apprentice Training Program; or the equivalent combination of education and experience, is required. The person in this position must maintain a minimum Class A, Type II Montana driver's license, and first aid and CPR certifications.

For a complete description of the position and for the Lincoln Electric employment application, please visit the co-op's website at www.lincolnelectric.coop. To be considered, please submit a Lincoln Electric employment application, along with a professional resume, to: Lincoln Electric Cooperative, PO Box 628, Eureka, MT 59917 or email to klarson@lincolnelectric.coop. The position will remain open until May 4, 2016.

CALENDAR

April

19-20	MECA-Sponsored Retirement Seminar	Great Falls, MT
28-29	Nuts & Bolts of Work Orders Training Course	Dillon, MT
30	Glacier Electric Cooperative Annual Meeting	Browning, MT

May

1-3	NRECA Legislative Conference	Washington, D.C.
7	Northern Lights, Inc., Annual Meeting	Sandpoint, Idaho

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 Meeting	Ashton, Idaho
14-16	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	OCR School	Corvallis, MT