

Big Skylights



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

A report from your Chief Executive Officer Dave Wheelihan

July 21, 2016

Double-digit growth continues at Goldenwest

Members of Goldenwest Electric Cooperative received an update on construction projects and the co-op's growth over the last year during its 68th annual meeting on July 14 at St. Mary's Catholic Church in Golva, N.D.

Board President **Dale Schweigert** said more than six miles of copper wire was buried during the construction of the new Beaver Hill Substation, and Manager **John Sokoloski** added that 241 piers also were constructed as part of that ongoing project. He said the substation should be substantial enough to provide power for the next three or four generations, barring "really crazy" growth in the area.

Mr. Sokoloski also told members the cooperative experienced 22.2 percent growth in 2016 vs. 2015, and said he felt confident projecting healthy growth going forward.

Upper Missouri Power Cooperative (UMPC) General Manager **Claire Vigesaa** also spoke to the members, praising Mr. Sokoloski for his work with the G&T, and Goldenwest Electric Trustee **Ray Clouse**, who also serves on the UMPC board.

MECA was pleased to provide the membership with a legislative update.

In elections, incumbent trustees **David Franz** and **Charles Miske** were re-elected without opposition.

TRECO members hear good news on power bills

Tongue River Electric Cooperative members approved two bylaw amendments, heard good news on retail rates and received an update on wholesale power plans at their annual meeting Saturday, July 9, in Ashland.

As part of their bylaw voting, members approved a slight increase in per diem for trustees and lowered the annual meeting quorum requirements from 75 members to 50 members. General Manager **Tary Hanson** said the lower quorum threshold will facilitate the co-op being able to hold some annual meetings in Broadus. The co-op has many members in the Broadus area, but has historically held its annual meetings only in its headquarters town of Ashland.

Mr. Hanson announced to members that no retail rate increase is expected this year. The co-op has not had a retail rate increase since 2011. Member equity at the co-op continues to climb. It currently stands at 15 percent and is projected to reach 20 percent by year's end. In addition, the co-op had a \$750,000 increase in electricity sales last year, spurred in large part by the addition of a new oil pipeline pumping station.

Regarding wholesale power supply, Mr. Hanson announced to members that the Southern Montana G & T debt was paid off in June. The announcement was met with applause from the membership. Mr. Hanson also reported Tongue River Electric is now moving forward with Fergus Electric and Powder River Energy to jointly purchase power when the existing power supply contract expires in October 2017. The co-ops plan to form a new wholesale power cooperative that would buy power from Basin Electric Power Cooperative, he told members.

In other news, both Mr. Hanson and **DeeDee Isaacs**, board president, told members of the implementation of new technologies at the co-op, including Smart Hub and Map Wise. Smart Hub allows members to manage their utility accounts online by using their mobile devices. Map Wise is an electronic line-mapping system that will greatly improve line operations, said Mr. Hanson.

In trustee elections, members elected **Gary Helm** to the seat held by **Gerhard Helm**, who had retired from the board earlier this year. Incumbents Ms. Isaacs and **Jim Collins** were also re-elected unopposed.

Flathead Electric board appoints new trustee

Flathead Electric Cooperative's board recently appointed **Gary Boe** to replace trustee **Bruce Measure** who recently passed away. Mr. Boe is a native of the Big Timber area. His father, **Rasmusson Boe**, served 25 years as a trustee of Park Electric Cooperative. His brother, **Ron Boe**, succeeded Rasmusson, serving as a trustee at Park Electric for 10 years. Gary Boe served as a trustee at Missoula Federal Credit Union for 24 years, from 1980 through 2004.

Mr. Boe will serve on the Flathead Electric board until March, 2017. He will then be able to run for election to complete the remainder of Mr. Measure's term, which expires in 2019.

METSPool meetings to be held with MTA

METSPool board members will want to mark Tuesday, Aug. 30, on their calendars. Aug. 30 is the date of the annual METSPool board meeting, which this year will not be held in conjunction with MECA's annual meeting.

This year's annual METSPool board meeting will instead be held in conjunction with the Montana Telecommunications Association (MTA) annual meeting. MTA's annual meeting will be held Aug. 29-31 at the Hilton-Garden Inn in Missoula. Starting time for the METSPool board meeting is 7:30 a.m. The board meeting will be preceded by a brief meeting of the METSPool executive committee, beginning at 7 a.m. This meeting is also open to the METSPool board to attend.

For those attending the METSPool meetings, a block of sleeping rooms is available for Monday, Aug. 29, at the rate of \$149/plus taxes. Participants just need to call the hotel direct at (406) 532-5300, and request a sleeping room under the METSPool room block (under confirmation #3258023996).

To join the meeting via teleconference, dial 1-866-939-8416. The passcode to enter is 5408606 followed by the # sign.

Job Market

Lower Yellowstone Rural Electric Cooperative is seeking a highly motivated journeyman electrician that could test for a Master Electrician License or is currently holding a Master Electrician License for North Dakota and Montana. This is a position for a qualified professional.

Applicants should have an electrical utility background and a working knowledge of the National Electrical Code (NEC) and National Electric Safety Code (NESC). The successful candidate must have a working knowledge of computers, be able to maintain and test substation equipment; must have the ability to handle a variety of diverse tasks and organize work to meet deadlines; must have proficient communications skills

both written and oral; must be organized, a problem solver and future-oriented; and must be able to climb, lift and operate a variety of equipment.

Educational/experience qualifications: A Bachelor of Arts degree in an electrical field from a four-year college or university, or five years related experience with a journeyman electrician license or equivalent combination of education and experience. LYREC is an Equal Opportunity Employer.

Applications are available on LYREC's website: www.lyrec.com Email applications to coreyc@lyrec.com or mail to LYREC, PO Box 1047, Sidney, MT 59270. Applications will be accepted until Aug. 1, 2016.

CALENDAR

August

8-9	Service Excellence, Parts 3 & 4	Sidney, MT
11-12	Service Excellence, Parts 3 & 4	Kalispell, MT
18-19	MECA Office Managers & Accountants Group Summer Meeting	Helena, MT
23-24	Writing & Photography Workshop	Great Falls, MT
30	METSPool Executive Committee & Board Meetings	Missoula, MT

September

19-22	Operations Conference	Helena, MT
26	958.1 Succession Planning: Developing the Purpose-Driven Organization	Great Falls, MT
26-29	MECA Annual Meeting	Great Falls, MT