

Big Skylights



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

A report from your Chief Executive Officer Dave Wheelihan

March 17, 2016

New manager introduced at co-op annual meeting

Reed Metzger, new general manager at Big Horn County Electric Cooperative, was introduced to the membership at its annual meeting in Hardin on March 8.

Mr. Metzger, who assumed his duties on Jan. 1, replaces **Casey Munter**, who retired. Mr. Metzger most recently served as general manager of an electric and telephone cooperative in South Dakota and prior to that was manager of an electric cooperative in Colorado.

During his manager's report to the membership, Mr. Metzger announced the co-op had recently signed a new power contract with Twin Eagle Energy, based in Houston, Texas. The five-year contract will replace its current contract with Bonneville Power Administration that expires next year, he said. He also talked about the co-op's work plan, and said the co-op is considering purchase of a new metering system that, among various capabilities, will make it possible for the co-op to pinpoint location of outages, remotely disconnect services and provide pre-pay energy service.

Also during the meeting, the membership re-elected trustees **John Mehling**, **Lamont Herman** and **Edward Watt**. MECA appreciated the opportunity to provide a legislative update.

Co-op manager honored by board & membership

Mid-Yellowstone Electric Cooperative members honored retiring General Manager **Ted Church** at their annual meeting March 15 in Hysham.

Mr. Church will retire at the end of April, after serving the cooperative for 41 years, starting his employment at the co-op as its office manager. The board presented Mr. Church, who received a standing ovation, with a meter lamp as an expression of gratitude for his service to the co-op.

The membership was introduced to **Jason Brothen**, general manager at Lower Yellowstone Rural Electric Cooperative, based in Sidney. Mr. Brothen will take over as the interim manager.

Also during the annual meeting, Board President **Joe Schiffer** informed the membership that the co-op has joined Upper Missouri Power Cooperative, based in Sidney. He said it now appears Southern Montana Generation and Transmission Cooperative will be dissolving sometime this summer as soon as its debt is paid off, adding that the debt is expected to be completely paid in July. The co-op hopes to then regain its Western Area Power Administration power allocation. This allocation is expected to provide most of Mid-Yellowstone's power needs. The balance of its power needs would be provided by Upper Missouri. During the meeting, **Jeremy Mahowald**, chief operating officer at Upper Missouri, educated members about his wholesale power cooperative and the services it provides.

In trustee elections, the membership re-elected Mr. Schiffer and **Kevan Kimball**. MECA appreciated the opportunity to provide a legislative update.

Co-ops urged to designate voting delegate to meeting of USB Pool membership

Electric cooperatives are urged to send to MECA the name of your designated representative for the upcoming special meeting of the membership of MECA's Universal Systems Benefit (USB) Pool, which will be held Tuesday, April 5, at 4 p.m.

To date, only a handful of co-ops have submitted the name of their designated voting representative. Please designate via email to **Beckie Frediani** of our staff (beckie@mtco-ops.com) the name of the person who will

be your co-op's voting delegate at this special meeting. **We would like to receive these names by no later than April 1.** Your designated delegate should be a co-op director, manager or other co-op employee.

In order to conduct business at this meeting, a quorum of our USB Pool members must be present. A quorum is a majority of our membership, which is 12 members. (Please note: This is not a meeting of our self-insured workers' compensation insurance pool, known as METSPool. It is a meeting of the membership of the USB Pool, which allows electric cooperatives to collectively comply with a state law on minimum electric utility spending on energy conservation, low-income energy bill assistance and renewable resource projects.)

The MECA USB Pool Board of Directors requested this meeting of the pool membership.

The purpose of the meeting is to vote on proposed amendments to the MECA USB Pooling Agreement. The Pool Board is recommending these amendments. The amendments address two issues: 1) The first amendment authorizes co-ops headquartered outside an adjacent state but serving in Montana to be members of the pool. These co-ops are subject to USB spending requirements but would appear, under the language of our existing Pooling Agreement, to be ineligible for membership in the pool; 2) The second amendment clarifies that co-ops must collect USB dollars from large customers and, less any credits claimed by the large customers, properly expend them as per USB laws and regulations. This amendment was made as a result of provisions passed by the 2015 Montana Legislature. These provisions strengthened USB reporting requirements for large customers. Large customers are defined in statute as those with "a monthly average of 1,000 kW demand in the previous calendar year for that individual load."

Job Market

Journeyman Lineman

Big Horn County Electric Cooperative (BHCEC), based in Hardin, Mont., has an opening for a journeyman lineman.

Applicants must have completed a recognized apprenticeship program, be a team player, be on an "on-call" rotation and have or be able to obtain and maintain a Montana CDL. Other requirements are: Having a positive, safety-minded attitude, ability to operate equipment associated with the trade, physically able to perform all the duties involved with being a journeyman lineman and pass a pre-employment drug screen.

BHCEC is located in southeast Montana in the heart of an outdoor enthusiast's dream. If you enjoy hunting, fishing, water sports, winter activities and much more, this is a great place to be. The co-op offers a competitive salary and benefit package. For more information, applicants can call the office at (406) 665-2830 to obtain an application. Email resumes to mrussell@bhcec.com.

CALENDAR

March

19	Ravalli County Electric Cooperative Annual Meeting	Corvallis, MT
19	Missoula Electric Cooperative Annual Meeting	Missoula, MT
19	Lincoln Electric Cooperative Annual Meeting	Eureka, MT
19	Flathead Electric Cooperative Annual Meeting	Kalispell, MT
22-25	Foreman Leadership Skills Training, Sessions 3 & 4	Missoula, MT
24	Yellowstone Valley Electric Cooperative Annual Meeting	Huntley, MT
25	Sun River Electric Cooperative Annual Meeting	Fairfield, MT
30-31	Managing Emotions Under Pressure Workshop	Great Falls, MT

April

4	957.1 Director's Course	Great Falls, MT
5-6	MECA Spring Board and Committees Meetings	Great Falls, MT
7	Upper Missouri Power Cooperative Annual Meeting	Sidney, MT
8	Marias River Electric Cooperative Annual Meeting	Shelby, MT
19-20	MECA-Sponsored Retirement Seminar	Great Falls, MT
26-27	Disaster Response Plans & Working with FEMA Training	Great Falls, MT
30	Glacier Electric Cooperative Annual Meeting	Cut Bank, MT

May

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