

Big Skylights



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

A report from your Chief Executive Officer Dave Wheelihan

October 13, 2016

Ravalli & Southeast Electric Co-ops top field in communications

Ravalli County Electric Cooperative and Southeast Electric Cooperative won top overall communications awards at MECA's annual Awards Breakfast held Sept. 29 in Great Falls.

Ravalli Electric won the Excellence in Communications award for large co-ops and Southeast Electric garnered the same honor in the small-cooperatives category. Flathead Electric Cooperative won the Significant Achievement in Communications Award for large co-ops. Big Flat Electric Cooperative was the winner of that same award for small co-ops.

Keith Phillips, editor of South Carolina Living, the South Carolina statewide electric co-ops' magazine, judged this year's MECA Communications Awards contest.

Other MECA communications awards are as follows:

Best Newsletter – 1st Place, Missoula Electric Cooperative; 2nd Place, Fergus Electric Cooperative; Honorable Mention, Southeast Electric Cooperative. **Best Social Media Post** – First Place, **Levi Dunn**, Ravalli County Electric Cooperative; 2nd Place, **Vicki Fix**, Southeast Electric Cooperative; Honorable Mention, Ravalli County Electric Cooperative. **Best Feature Story** – 1st Place – **Jami Propp**, Lower Yellowstone Rural Electric Cooperative; 2nd Place, Lincoln Electric Cooperative; Honorable Mention, **Jim Maunder**, Ravalli County Electric Cooperative. **Best News Story** – 1st Place, **Jeanne Barnard**, Big Flat Electric Cooperative; 2nd Place, Lincoln Electric Cooperative; Honorable Mention, **Jonnalea Tatsey**, Glacier Electric Cooperative. **Best Print Ad** – 1st Place, Ravalli County Electric Cooperative; 2nd Place, Ravalli County Electric Cooperative; Honorable Mention, Flathead Electric Cooperative. **Best Special Publication** – 1st Place, **Dan Rogers**, Missoula Electric Cooperative (Solar Brochure); 2nd Place, Ravalli County Electric Cooperative (Bill Stuffer); Honorable Mention, Flathead Electric Cooperative (2016 Calendar). **Best News Photo** – 1st Place, **Wendy Ostrom-Price**, Flathead Electric Cooperative; 2nd Place, **Todd Irwin**, Ravalli County Electric Cooperative; Honorable Mention, **Jeanne Barnard**, Big Flat Electric Cooperative. **Best Feature Photo** – 1st Place, **Mike Radel**, Flathead Electric Cooperative; 2nd Place, **Levi Dunn**, Ravalli County Electric Cooperative; Honorable Mention, **Scot Brown**, McCone Electric Cooperative. **Best Annual Report** – 1st Place, Ravalli County Electric Cooperative; 2nd Place, **Vangie McConnell**, Fergus Electric Cooperative; Honorable Mention, **Dan Rogers**, Missoula Electric Cooperative. **Best Manager's Report** – 1st Place, **Jack Hamblin**, Southeast Electric Cooperative; 2nd Place, **Rick Knick**, Sheridan Electric Cooperative; Honorable Mention, **Mark Hayden**, Missoula Electric Cooperative. **Best Wildcard Entry** – 1st Place, Flathead Electric Cooperative (annual meeting video presentation); 2nd Place, Flathead Electric Cooperative (co-op website); Honorable Mention, **Jonnalea Tatsey**, Glacier Electric Cooperative (PowerPoint used in community forum).

Members hear of need for increase in rates

Big Flat Electric Cooperative members learned at their annual meeting Saturday, Oct. 8, about a confluence of factors impacting the co-op's need for a rate increase next year.

Board President **Alan Wasson** told members rates would increase by 6 percent on Jan. 1, 2017. The co-op's last rate increase was in January 2012. As part of an incremental process, the co-op will also raise its base rate by another \$2 next year.

Mr. Wasson said the combination of two major storms and reduced electricity sales as a result of two straight years of warmer-than-normal winters and wetter-than-normal summers, as well as a variety of other factors, had necessitated the rate increase. Higher costs for new equipment and government regulations are among other factors he listed.

Co-op Manager **Gretchen Boardman**, holding her first annual meeting since being hired, reported on various improvements to the co-op system last year, including the installation of new advanced meters. She also explained to members a new line item on their power bills showing their kW peak demand. Auditor **Rick Matusiak** presented the financial report, noting the co-op is in strong financial condition with its equity having improved to 57.2 percent.

Also during the meeting, MECA and Central Montana Electric Power Cooperative provided updates on legislative and regulatory issues, and other challenges facing their member electric cooperatives.

In trustee elections, **Alan Van Voast** was elected to replace **Gerald Keller**, who decided not to seek re-election. Re-elected unopposed were **Betty Campbell** and **Patty Quisno**.

Miss Montana, school performances highlight Sheridan Electric meeting

Sheridan Electric Cooperative members were treated to a performance by area school children and Miss Montana during their 69th Annual Meeting on Oct. 8 at Medicine Lake High School.

The Medicine Lake school choir welcomed guests with songs, and Miss Montana **Lauren Scofield** kicked off the meeting with the national anthem, and later performed the “Game of Thrones” theme on the piano.

During the meeting, Manager **Rick Knick** went over the current staffing levels at the co-op, and praised employees for their involvement in the community. He also told members about the community projects the cooperative has assisted with in the past year, including having its electrician help install lights at the high school football field in Scobey.

MECA was pleased to provide an update on our communications efforts and the new grassroots website at action.montanaco-ops.com.

In trustee elections, incumbents **Robert Rust**, **Rick Hansen** and **Warren Overgaard** were re-elected without opposition.

Co-op trustees, employees receive service awards

Montana electric cooperatives’ directors and staff were honored for years of service at MECA’s awards breakfast held Sept. 29 in Great Falls. The following service awards were presented:

25-Year Awards

Fall River Rural Electric Cooperative – **Wendi Celino**, engineering services representative. Flathead Electric Cooperative – **Diane Holladay**, administrative assistant; **Kim Smith**, journeyman meterman; **Eileen Steele**, engineering operations clerk. Glacier Electric Cooperative – **Mike Pyette**, line foreman. Hill County Electric Cooperative – **Merle Belcourt**, trustee; **Stuart Smith**, trustee. Northern Lights, Inc. – **Donald Roos**, lineman. Park Electric Cooperative – **Tim Stephens**, general manager. Ravalli County Electric Cooperative – **Cindy Harper**, consumer service coordinator; **Dan Kratofil**, journeyman lineman. Sun River Electric Cooperative – **Robert Anderson**, operations manager; **Ross Oveson**, marketing/member services representative. Tongue River Electric Cooperative – **Miles Dennis**, engineering superintendent. Yellowstone Valley Electric Cooperative – **Roger Kelsey**, line locator; **Mike Stookey**, sub-foreman.

30-Year Awards

Fall River Rural Electric Cooperative – **Rondo Winters**, purchasing agent. Flathead Electric Cooperative – **Pam Wambach**, credit and collections supervisor. Marias River Electric Cooperative – **Vicki Meek**, lead billing specialist. McCone Electric Cooperative – **Theresa Haynie**, manager of finance and administration. Mid-Yellowstone Electric Cooperative – **Marj Cunningham**, office manager. Ravalli County Electric Cooperative – **Jeff Huls**, journeyman serviceman; Tongue River Electric Cooperative – **Cindy Goodwin**, billing clerk. Yellowstone Valley Electric Cooperative – **Steve Erb**, meter technician.

35-Year Awards

Fall River Rural Electric Cooperative – **James Nash**, lineman. Glacier Electric Cooperative – **Doug Ray**, safety coordinator. Mid-Yellowstone Electric Cooperative – **Ken Rolandson**, line foreman. Southeast Electric Cooperative – **Leroy Jardee**, trustee; **Robin Kuntz**, office manager. Vigilante Electric Cooperative – **Allen Martinell**, trustee.

40-Year Awards

Marias River Electric Cooperative – **Keith Frydenlund**, line foreman. Southeast Electric Cooperative – **Francis Hayes**, trustee.

Job Market**Journeyman Lineman**

Vigilante Electric Cooperative, headquartered in Dillon, Mont., has an immediate opening for an IBEW journeyman lineman located at the co-op's Townsend outpost office. This is a three-person outpost primarily serving the Townsend area, but also areas north and south of Helena. Excellent pay and benefits are provided in this position. The co-op may accept applications from a fourth step and above, "hot", apprentice lineman. The position requires residing within a 20-minute response time of the Townsend office. Please contact **Justin Bair**, line superintendent, at (406) 683-2327 or, via email, Justin@vec.coop, for an application package and details/requirements related to the position. This position will remain open until filled.

Journeyman Lineman

Big Horn County Electric Cooperative of Hardin has an opening for a journeyman lineman. Applicants must have or be able to obtain a Montana CDL, have completed a recognized four-year apprenticeship program; be proficient in operating digger derricks, bucket trucks, trenchers, underground locating and fault-finding equipment, be in physical condition to carry out the work associated with overhead and underground power lines, be willing to work in extreme conditions such as heat, cold, wind, rain, snow, at all hours and be on a rotating "On-Call" list, and have experience in rubber gloving, the operation of OCRs and regulators, and underground and overhead distribution lines. Having a positive safety-minded attitude and being a "team player" is a must.

The successful applicant will be required to live within 15 minutes driving time of work, take a pre-employment physical and drug test, and be on a six-month probationary period.

Big Horn Electric is located in a farming/ranching community serving rural residents, including three-phase irrigation and pumping loads, an oilfield, and some small and large commercial loads in Big Horn County, Montana, and a small part of north central Wyoming.

The co-op offers a competitive salary and an excellent benefits program. Send resumes to: Monte Russell, District Supervisor, Big Horn County Electric Cooperative, Inc., PO Box 410, Hardin, MT 59034 or mrussell@bhcec.com. Ph: (406)665-2830. A company employment application with references will be required, along with work history dating back five years. This position will be open until filled.

Maintenance Engineer and Planning Engineer

East River Electric Power Cooperative, based in Madison, S.D., has two position openings. These positions will remain open until filled. They are as follows:

- **Maintenance Engineer**

Primary responsibilities include development and implementation of maintenance programs. Also to perform electric system design for new and modifications to current transmission lines, distribution and transmission substations.

Minimum qualifications: Bachelor's degree in engineering, registration as a professional engineer or the ability to obtain such license within four years of hire. Experience with personal computers, AutoCAD, PLS-CADD, ESRI software and Microsoft Office products is required.

- **Planning Engineer**

Primary responsibilities include transmission analysis, planning and related activities to support transmission development, improve reliability, accommodate load growth and provide interconnections.

Minimum qualifications: Bachelor's degree in electrical engineering. Five years of experience in electric system planning is preferred. Registration as a professional engineer or the ability to obtain such license within four years of hire is also required. Experience with personal computers and Microsoft Office products is required. Experience with Siemens PSS@E software is preferred.

East River is a power supply cooperative that delivers wholesale power through a 2,800-mile transmission system to 25 member electric distribution systems throughout eastern South Dakota and

western Minnesota. The co-op offers an excellent compensation package, which includes health insurance, a pension plan and 401K contribution, and a 9/80 work schedule.

To apply for this position, visit www.eastriver.coop/careers and complete your electronic profile. You will be able to upload additional applicant documents (i.e. resume, cover letter) and submit your electronic application. Questions can be directed to hr@eastriver.coop or (605) 256-4536.

CALENDAR

October

26	NorVal Electric Cooperative Annual Meeting	Glasgow, MT
28	Park Electric Cooperative Annual Meeting	Livingston, MT

November

3	NRECA G & T Legal Seminar	Clearwater Beach, FL
8	Election Day	
16	2016 NRECA Safety Leadership Summit	Fort Worth, TX

December

6-8	Midwest Electric Consumers Association	Denver, CO
13-14	MECA Winter Meetings & Holiday Banquet	Great Falls, MT

January

2	Start of 2017 Session of Montana Legislature	Helena, MT
9	Electric Co-op Day at Montana State Capitol Building	Helena, MT