

One manager's conversations with members of his board

by Ric Brown
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Climate Change Reflections

Stacy Bartlett, President

Q: What is your biggest concern for the future?

One concern is finding another source of power to serve our load growth. We know the political push with regard to global warming will limit any fossil fuels, and I am leery about the true costs and reliability of some alternative renewable resources. Wind, for example, needs to be backed up with other sources of power for those times the wind is not blowing.

Also, when we do find another power source, how do we get access to it? The transmission lines within the Northwest are already congested with no definitive plans to build more.

Wayne Olson, Vice-President

Q: How do you view renewables in the power supply portfolio?

I support renewables but I have concerns that, even with them in the mix, we will need new base-load generation like coal, gas, hydro or nuclear. A major concern is that the timeline to build baseload generation is so long we may not be able to meet the demand in time.

Larry Trexler, Secretary/Treasurer

Q: Does coverage of energy needs and requirements get an unbiased review?

It is a very complex and intricate system to get the

power to the end-user. Emotions seem to play more of a role than common sense, which makes it easier for some parties to distort issues.

Everyone needs to remember that power needs to be reliable and reasonable. Let's hope that mandates from Congress won't be a big burden on the consumer.

Kevin Frost, Director

Q: As a brand new board member, what is the most significant issue in energy supply and delivery?

Climate change. Although our co-op has four years left on its current power supply contract, my concern is that, with new contracts, the fast-approaching global climate legislation will significantly increase the price of electricity for our members. It could also have a major effect on reliability.

Mike Deveraux, Director

Q: What is the first thing that stands out in your mind when it comes to power supply and the end user?

Prior to being a board member, I was like most consumers, assuming power was something that was expected to be there without question when I flipped the switch on. As I learn about power issues, I realize it is a very complex business, which takes many forward-thinking people to make sure our consumers have reliable and affordable power.

I am very impressed with

the intricate details to the broad spectrum the co-op undertakes to work for our consumers and communities.

Charles Swanson, Director

Q: After 26 years on the board, what is your biggest concern for the future?

Some of our current issues remind me of the WPPSS (Washington state's nuclear power program) response to the projected power shortage of the early 1980s. Certain groups use scare tactics on a specific issue instead of identifying the potential problem and possible solutions.

As a board, we must remain good listeners and not jump to conclusions. It is very important to be informed and have an opinion, which needs to be sound, time-tested, reliable, affordable and uses common sense.

Any strategy that contains these virtues will work for our consumers at REC, the region and the nation.

Bob Bailey, Director

Q: After 29 years, what is your advice on approaching the new energy future?

We are one of the few developed nations that have had a moratorium on nuclear energy and, if coal (which makes up over half of our nation's base-load generation) is deleted as a power source, we will not meet our demands for additional energy. Transmission is another big issue in developing new sources of energy, as most of

the renewable sites lack any transmission capabilities. Our present transmission system is maxed out.

A reasonable request would be to demand that Congress and state governments answer some questions on the 100-year projections coming from the United Nation's Intergovernmental Committee on Climate Change. What and where is the minority report from this committee?

We didn't get to the moon on federal mandates but on American ingenuity to a challenge. We need to allow our scientists, engineers, technicians and trade people the opportunity to work on solutions to these challenges.



Ric Brown is the manager of Ravalli Electric, based in Corvallis. He recorded this dialogue with trustees in his manager's message this month. The story has been edited to fit the space here.