

RM

Rural Montana

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VIEWPOINT

Dave Wheelihan



Dave Wheelihan

Your handbook in understanding climate change

This month's Rural Montana sets the stage for one of the most important political discussions we will have in some time. The issue is climate change and what should or shouldn't be done to address it.

As you will see from this issue, rural electric cooperative leaders from Montana and around the country will be headed to Washington, D. C., in early May to talk about climate change and other important electric cooperative issues.

The purpose of many of the articles in this issue is to educate and inform.

Obviously we need to separate hype from reality and make sure policies implemented are thoroughly examined for net effects on rates, the

national economy and the actual benefit of any "solution."

In essence, we need to make sure that policy matches technology and that unintended consequences are examined.

Keep in mind that electric cooperatives are not just saying no to any proposals to address climate change. We have long been leaders in promoting clean forms of energy.

Rather, we are asking that proposals be looked at for long-term benefits while recognizing the growing demand for electricity that requires new generation right now.

What's the balance for meeting new demand with carbon friendly generation while still keeping the lights on?

And, as noted emphatically in this issue, at what cost to individuals and to the economy as a whole?

Additionally, will any solution truly be global? With China building hundreds of new unscrubbed coal plants every year, can our efforts in the United States truly make a difference?

It is clear there are more questions than answers at this point and we hope you find this month's issue of Rural Montana a good starting point for understanding just how complicated the climate change issue really is to you, our industry and our country.

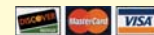
Dave Wheelihan is CEO of the Montana Electric Cooperatives' Association

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