

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, 2005

MECA board, committee meetings set

MECA's board of directors will hold its spring meeting at the statewide association building in Great Falls on April 12, beginning at 1:30 p.m. The meeting will be preceded by a dinner meeting of the MECA Managers' Group on Monday, April 11. The time and place of this meeting have not yet been set. Two MECA committees will meet Tuesday morning.

The Communications Committee will meet at 9 a.m., followed by the Legislative Committee meeting at 10:30 a.m. Lunch will be served at noon. Also, MECA will host a dinner at 6 p.m. at the statewide building.

Lincoln Electric reelects full slate

Lincoln Electric Cooperative's membership reelected five trustees without opposition at the co-op's annual meeting. Reelected were **Marianne Roose, John Hossack, Mike Workman, Gilbert Burk** and **William Griffin**. Lincoln Electric Manager **Mike Henry** informed the membership of the possibility of a rate increase, in part due to the announced closure of a local lumber mill. Also during the annual meeting, MECA's **Gary Wiens** updated the membership on legislation affecting Montana's electric cooperatives. He talked about bills increasing the Universal Systems Benefit Program charge and about legislation mandating renewable energy programs or purchases in the state.

Bighorn co-op members OK bylaw changes

Bighorn Electric Cooperative members elected one new trustee and reelected two others during the co-op's annual meeting in Hardin March 12. Reelected were **Hale Jeffers** and **John Young**. **Brett Nedens** of Hardin was elected to the board defeating incumbent **Erle Gross**. The members also passed three bylaw amendments including an amendment that will allow the discounting of capital credits. Bighorn Electric Manager **Howard Robinson** also announced that the co-op had ceased its solar pump service because it was causing financial losses. He said that generally, expenses for the co-op had risen over the past year while revenues declined. That precipitated a 10 percent across the board rate hike. He said, however, that the co-op is still in an excellent equity position.

Mid-Yellowstone trustees reelected

Mid-Yellowstone Electric Cooperative members reelected three trustees at their March 15 annual meeting in Hysham. Reelected were **Larry Williams, Joe Lind** and **Bill FitzGerald**.

Seminar planned on energy audits

The MECA Education and Training Committee will sponsor a two and a half day seminar May 10-12 in Fort Benton entitled “Small Commercial Energy Audits.” The course is provided through NRECA and prepares staff to conduct a complete, professional energy audit for small-to-medium size commercial members. Contact MECA’s **Sharon McDonald** for more information or to register.

Retirement planning event set to be held

Nearly 20 people have signed up for the MECA-sponsored NRECA retirement planning seminar March 22-23 in Great Falls. However, walk-ins and late registrations are welcome. The seminar will be held at the statewide association building. If you have any questions, contact MECA’s Sharon McDonald at (406) 761-8333.

Job Market

Communications Director

MECA is seeking a talented, energetic, team-oriented individual to serve as its director of communications. Editing, writing, taking photographs and overseeing all processes in the production of the association’s statewide magazine and other publications are among the primary duties.

Other communications duties include writing press releases, working with the media and preparing and staffing exhibits at trade shows and other events. The person may be called upon to represent the association to the public and to other associations and agencies. The person also works with the association’s communications committee and board of trustees. A degree in journalism or English or equivalent experience is preferred. Knowledge of the cooperative way of doing business is helpful. MECA offers a salary commensurate with qualifications and experience plus an excellent benefits package. Deadline for resume acceptance is March 21, 2005. Please direct questions and resume with salary history to Gary Wiens, MECA Assistant General Manager, Box 3469, Great Falls, MT 59403, (406) 761-8333, gwiens@sofast.net.

2005 CALENDAR

March

19	Missoula Electric Cooperative Annual Meeting	Missoula, MT
22	Yellowstone Valley Electric Cooperative Annual Meeting	Huntley, MT
22-23	Early Career Employment Retirement Seminar	Great Falls, MT
26	Flathead Electric Cooperative Annual Meeting	Kalispell, MT
28	Sun River Electric Cooperative Annual Meeting	Fairfield, MT
29-30	Apprenticeship School	Great Falls, MT

April

12-13	Rubber Gloving School	Sidney, MT
12	Montana Electric Cooperatives’ Association Spring Board Meeting	Great Falls, MT
13	NRECA Director’s Course 967.1 Fundamentals of Energy Risk Management for Directors	Great Falls, MT
16	Glacier Electric Cooperative Annual Meeting	Cut Bank, MT
22	Marias River Electric Cooperative Annual Meeting	Shelby, MT

May

1-4	NRECA Legislative Conference	Washington, D.C.
7	Northern Lights, Inc. Annual Meeting	Sagle, ID
10-12	NRECA’s Small Commercial Energy Audit Workshop	Fort Benton, MT
11	Western Montana G & T Annual Meeting	Missoula, MT
14	Hill County Electric Cooperative Annual Meeting	Havre, MT