

# Big Skylights



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

A report from your Chief Executive Officer Dave Wheelihan

March 31, 2005

## Missoula co-op adopts voting by district

By a ten-vote margin, the members of Missoula Electric Cooperative have voted to elect trustees by district rather than by the entire membership. The bylaw amendment was adopted on a 672 to 662 mail-in ballot vote. The vote was announced at the co-op's annual meeting held Saturday, March 19, in Missoula.

Also at the Missoula Electric co-op annual meeting, Manager **Jack Hunt** announced a 10 percent rate increase, citing inflationary increases in the costs of operation. In trustee elections, **Ray Cebulski** and **Joe Kilminster** were both reelected. Guest speaker at the annual meeting was **Bill Drummond**, manager of Western Montana G & T Cooperative. He talked about the co-op's power supply and the prudent decisions the co-op has made in the past to avoid rate increases as a result of power supply purchases.

## YVEC reelects two trustees

**Marlene Amen** and **Dan Swartz** were reelected unopposed to the Yellowstone Valley Electric Cooperative (YVEC) Board of Trustees during that co-op's annual meeting in Billings, March 22. The members also approved a couple of housekeeping bylaw amendments and heard **Tim Gregori**, manager of Southern Montana Electric Generation and Transmission Cooperative, give a power point presentation on Southern Montana G&T's power plant project. YVEC Manager **Terry Holzer** said the co-op had grown to 11,331 members. He said the growth has averaged 428 new members per year for the past decade. He also noted YVEC's outstanding record on energy conservation. He said YVEC's membership has more ground source heat pumps than all other Montana utilities combined.

## Seven candidates vie for seats on Flathead board

The Flathead High School Auditorium was packed, including the balconies, for the Flathead Electric Cooperative's annual meeting March 26. Seven candidates vying for four seats on the co-op's board of trustees addressed the members. Incumbents **Paul Holland** and **Karl Schrade** are running unopposed. Incumbent **George Taylor**, who was recently appointed to the board to replace **Bruce Measure**, is being challenged by **Phillip Crissman**. Incumbent **Earl Messick** is being challenged by **William Dancer** and **Mike Noble**. The election will be by mail-in ballot in April.

Flathead Electric President **Jay Downen** and the co-op's manager, **Ken Sugden**, reported on the cooperative's recent accomplishments. They noted that the Flathead Electric has been able to raise member equity from four percent to 17 percent in three years while decreasing rates twice. This year, the co-op's board voted to return \$725,000 in capital credits. Mr. Sugden said the co-op is still growing rapidly, with over 2,000 new services install in the past year.

**MECA conducts training course for apprentices**

A total of 25 apprentice line personnel from electric cooperatives across Montana completed a two-day apprenticeship training course this week sponsored by MECA and conducted by **Johnnie Stanton**, a MECA safety-loss control instructor and journeyman lineman. Topics included basic understanding of electrical systems operations, nominal voltage determination, field care of protective insulating materials, safety attitudes, setting and pulling meters, electrical burns, transformer function and operations, rubber glove theory and practices, body belts and climbers, stray voltage, safety committees, splices and conductor connections, fall protection and hands-on transformer connections.

**MECA board, committees set dates for meetings**

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 dinner meeting will take place at Jaker's restaurant in Great Falls at 7:00 p.m. 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 12:30 p.m. Also, MECA will host a dinner at 6 p.m. at the statewide building.

**Training and Education Opportunities**

MECA will hold a course on "Fundamentals of Energy Risk Management for Directors" at the statewide association office in Great Falls April 13. The course will be held in conjunction with the MECA spring board meeting on April 12. The course, which outlines changes in the deregulated wholesale energy business, is open to both co-op trustees and co-op staff. It provides an introductory overview on rules of power supply, risk management, energy trading and the reliability of power supply contracts.

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.

## 2005 CALENDAR

### 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

### June

1	Lower Yellowstone REA Annual Meeting	Sidney, MT
3	McCone Electric Cooperative Annual Meeting	Circle, MT
9	Fergus Electric Cooperative Annual Meeting	Livingston, MT
11	Ravalli County Electric Cooperative Annual Meeting	Corvallis, MT
18 - 23	NRECA Youth Tour	Washington, D.C.
20-22	MECA Manager's Group Conference	East Glacier, MT
22	Northern Electric Cooperative Annual Meeting	Opheim, MT