

Big Skylights



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

A report from your Chief Executive Officer Dave Wheelihan

November 11, 2005

Rail regulator hears concerns on coal shippers

A recent visit to Montana by the vice chairman of the U.S. Surface Transportation Board gave MECA a chance to raise the issue of unfair captive coal shipper rates and their potential to harm Montana electric cooperative ratepayers. MECA spoke to **Douglas Buttrey** on Oct. 28 during his visit here at the invitation of Montana Gov. **Brian Schweitzer**. Mr. Buttrey, who was in Montana primarily to address farmers' concerns about rail shipment rates, is one of three members of the STB and he is in line to soon become the next chairman of the board. The current chairman, **Roger Nober**, has announced plans to retire.

Room sign-up deadline Dec. 9 for NRECA

Feb. 19-22 may seem like a long ways off but for those planning or even considering attending NRECA's 64th Annual Meeting in Orlando, Florida, the time to act to reserve a room is now. Prospective attendees have until Friday, Dec. 9, to reserve rooms for the event. Names shown on the room reservations can be changed and rooms can be cancelled until Jan. 10, 2006. After the January cut-off date, there will be no refunds or cancellations. Montana cooperatives were assigned a hotel room block of 60 rooms at the Renaissance Orlando at Sea World hotel beginning Saturday, Feb. 18, 2006. Rates for the Renaissance Orlando will be \$199 plus 19 percent sales tax for either a single or double room. Contact MECA's **Sharon McDonald** at sharonm@sofast.net or 406-761-8333 with any questions.

Goldenwest holds annual meeting

I appreciated being able to attend Goldenwest Electric Cooperative's annual meeting held Thursday, Oct. 27 in Golva, North Dakota. Trustee **Dale Schweigert** was re-elected.

Park says farewell to long-time board member

Park Electric Cooperative honored trustee **David Rigler** for 29 years of service at its 66th Annual Meeting Friday, Oct. 28. Mr. Rigler did not seek re-election for the first time since 1976. In his time at Park Electric he served as president, vice president and as a member of the Central Montana Electric Cooperative board for eight years. Manager **Doug Hardy** cited Mr. Rigler as "a mentor and a positive influence on the cooperative" in his tribute.

The cooperative reported to members a five percent increase in assets and a decrease in debt. A forecast for flat rates was expected to hold until 2008, except for adjustments because of inflation, Mr. Hardy said. The last rate increase for Park Electric's members was 1995. He also lauded the cooperative's purchase of a bulk fueling station with storage facilities that allowed Park Electric to operate its fleet of equipment at up to 70 cents per gallon below the street price during the spikes in fuel costs following the onset of the hurricane season.

In trustee elections, **Ronald Arthun** and **Melanie Roe** were re-elected, and **Bert Otis** was elected to fill the District 5 seat vacated by Mr. Rigler for the Pray, Emigrant and Chico areas of the cooperative.

MECA board, committees set meetings

MECA will hold its winter committee and board meetings Dec. 13-14 at the Statewide Association Building in Great Falls. The annual MECA Holiday Banquet will be held the evening of Dec. 14. The following MECA committees and subcommittees are tentatively scheduled to meet: Managers Group, Audit Committee, Territorial Integrity Act Legislative Subcommittee, USBP Legislative Subcommittee, Communications Committee and the Legislative Committee. More information on the time and agenda for these meetings will be mailed in the near future.

MECA sets regulator school

MECA will sponsor a regulator school at Fergus Electric Cooperative in Lewistown, Jan. 24-25, 2006. The course will be taught by Western States instructor **Mike Dean**, one of the nation's leading experts in regulator instruction. The course will begin at 8:00 a.m. the morning of Tuesday, Jan. 24 and conclude at 5:00 p.m. on Wednesday, Jan. 25. Lunch will be provided. The course is limited to the first 25 registered participants. It is strongly recommended that registrations be made as soon as possible but no later than January 4, 2006. A registration form with hotel information and a tentative course agenda has been mailed. A block of rooms has been reserved at the Yogo Inn. If you have any questions or need additional information, please feel free to contact MECA's Niki Schultz at meca@sofast.net or 406-761-8333.

Job Market

Journeyman lineman

Vigilante Electric Cooperative, based in Dillon, has an opening for a journeyman lineman. Minimum qualifications include a high school diploma and completion of an approved apprentice program. Applicants must have a journeyman lineman certificate and have or be able to obtain a Montana Class A driver's license. Trade-related schooling and knowledge of RUS construction standards is a plus. To apply for this position, mail a resume' and cover letter to **Dave Alberi**, General Manager, Vigilante Electric Cooperative, PO Box 1049, Dillon, MT 59725 or call 1-800-221-8271 and speak with Mr. Alberi or **Dan Snellman**, Line Superintendent.

Journeyman line technician

High Plains Power has an immediate opening for a qualified journeyman line technician. Requirements include a high school diploma or GED and successful completion of an apprenticeship program or equivalent job experience involving a minimum of four years line experience in OH/UG electric distribution including all phases of line construction, maintenance, and troubleshooting. A valid Class A commercial driver's license with excellent driving record is required. The position will be located at the co-op's main office in Riverton, Wyo., located in the Wind River Valley of West Central Wyoming. Riverton is a community of 10,000 and is located approximately 160 miles southeast of Yellowstone National Park. Compensation is \$24.63 per hour with an excellent benefit package. Technical skills testing and a drug screen are required. Call, fax or e-mail High Plains to request a job application. Applications will be accepted until Nov. 30, 2005. The phone number at High Plains is 307-856-9426. The fax number is 307-856-4207. Request the Human Resources Department. The contact person is **Marlene Morss**. The e-mail address is: mamhpp@wyoming.com. The co-op's website is <http://highplainspower.org>.

Journeyman lineman

Fergus Electric Cooperative has an opening for a journeyman lineman based out of operations in the co-op's service territory near Roundup. Salary is \$26.42 per hour. The position will be open until filled. To be considered for the position, applicants must have a high school diploma or equivalent, have journeyman lineman certification and four years of journeyman work experience, be able to perform responsibilities and duties of the position which includes construction, maintenance and repair of overhead and underground distribution and transmission systems with knowledge of RUS construction standards and must possess a valid Montana Class A drivers license or obtain one within six months of employment. For additional information and an application contact Line Superintendent **Dale Rikala** at 406-538-3465.

CALENDAR**November**

15 Sales is Not a Dirty Word Training Great Falls, MT

December

13 MECA Committee meetings Great Falls, MT

14 MECA Winter Board Meeting Great Falls, MT

14 MECA Annual Holiday Banquet Great Falls, MT

January 2006

24-25 Regulator School Lewistown, MT