

# Big Skylights



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

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A report from your Chief Executive Officer Dave Wheelihan

October 27, 2005

## Co-op voice heard at energy symposium

“Big ideas in Big Sky Country” was the theme pushed by Gov. **Brian Schweitzer** for his energy conference Oct. 18-19 in Bozeman. Officially titled “The Montana Symposium: Energy Future of the West,” the conference drew more than 600 people, including a strong contingent of directors, managers and staff representing Montana’s electric cooperatives.

Speakers and moderators for various panel discussions included several co-op leaders. **Jasen Bronec**, manager of Glacier Electric Cooperative and chairman of MECA’s net metering/transmission interconnection legislative subcommittee, served on a panel discussing distributed generation. **Doug Hardy**, manager of Park Electric and a member of MECA’s Universal Systems Benefit Program (USBP) legislative subcommittee, served on a panel discussing USBP issues. **Bill Drummond**, manager of Western Montana Electric G & T Co-op, served as panel moderator for a discussion of the two competing proposals for regional transmission organizations in the Pacific Northwest, known as Grid West and the Transmission Interest Group. **Tim Gregori**, general manager of Southern Montana Electric G & T Co-op, was a member of a panel discussing the future of energy distribution companies.

## MECA board sets winter meeting events

The MECA Board of Directors will hold its winter meeting Dec. 14 at the statewide building in Great Falls. Committee meetings will be held the afternoon of Dec. 13 and the morning of Dec 14. Notices of these meetings will be sent in the near future. The annual Holiday banquet will be held the evening of Dec. 14 at the Meadowlark Country Club. The reception will begin at 6:00 p.m. with dinner at approximately 7:00 p.m. RSVP cards for the banquet have been mailed.

## Valley Electric elects new trustee

Valley Electric Cooperative celebrated its 60<sup>th</sup> annual meeting Wednesday, October 19. The cooperative reported to members that despite a decline in kilowatt hour sales, the co-op ended 2004 with a slightly greater margin.

In trustee elections, Hinsdale area rancher **Chris Christensen**, a Today’s Member participant at this year’s MECA annual meeting, was newly elected to the board Trustees. **Ron Wallem** and **Rocky Kittleson** were re-elected. Also during the annual meeting, MECA’s **Gary Wiens** updated the membership on legislative issues facing the statewide association.

**Capital credits  
discretion OK'd  
at Big Flat Co-op**

Big Flat Electric Cooperative's board of trustees will have greater discretion in issuing capital credits under a bylaw amendment approved by the members at their annual meeting Saturday, October 15. The amendment eliminates a bylaw provision requiring that capital credits be retired in the order of when the capital is first received, known as "first-in-first-out" retirement of capital credits. In its place, the new bylaw states that the board "shall determine the manner, method and timing of retiring and refunding capital credited to members' accounts."

Also at the co-op's 59<sup>th</sup> annual meeting, the membership re-elected without opposition **Alan Wasson, Roger Solberg** and **Clyde Robinson**. **Tom Huntley**, general manager of Central Montana Electric Power Cooperative, updated the membership on wholesale power issues and MECA's Gary Wiens updated the membership on legislative issues affecting the cooperatives. In board reorganization after the meeting, trustees elected **Gerald Keller** as president, Mr. Wasson as vice president and **Betty Campbell** retained her seat as secretary/treasurer of the board.

**Sheridan Electric  
sells oil seed  
processing plant**

Sheridan Electric Cooperative members were told at their annual meeting Saturday, October 15, that the co-op's oil seed processing plant in Culbertson has been sold. Also at the annual meeting, the membership re-elected three trustees. Re-elected were **Richard Sampsen, Harlan Skillingberg** and **Robert Friedrich**.

**Sign-ups needed  
for Great Falls  
training course**

"Sales is NOT a Dirty Word," a MECA-sponsored course designed to help cooperative employees understand sales fundamentals and provide top-notch customer service, is in urgent need of sign-ups for the Great Falls location. Nov. 1 is the pre-registration deadline for the Nov. 15 course in Great Falls. The Sidney and Missoula courses will be held on Nov. 3 and Nov. 9, respectively. The cost of the course is \$60 per person. To register or to obtain more information, contact MECA's **Sharon McDonald** at 406-761-8333.

**MECA to hold  
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 Jan. 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](mailto:meca@sofast.net) or 406-761-8333.

## Job Market

### Journeyman lineman

Hill County Electric Cooperative has an open position for a journeyman electric lineman. Responsibilities include construction and maintenance of all aspects of electrical power facilities to deliver reliable energy to customers. The reporting location for this position is Havre. The pay is \$25.40 as per the union contract. Applications will be accepted through Nov. 11, 2005. Applications and a job description are available at the address listed below or by calling (406) 394-7804. Applications are also available on Hill County electric's website at [www.mtintouch.net](http://www.mtintouch.net) and may be sent to [ttcjo@mtintouch.net](mailto:ttcjo@mtintouch.net) or mailed to Job Search; Hill County Electric Co-op, Inc.; PO Box 2330; Havre, MT 59501.

### 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](mailto: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

### **October**

27	Goldenwest Electric Cooperative Annual Meeting	Golva, ND
28	Park Electric Cooperative Annual Meeting	Livingston, MT

### **November**

2-3	Basin Electric Power Cooperative Annual Meeting	Bismarck, ND
3	Sales is Not a Dirty Word Training	Sidney, MT
9	Sales is Not a Dirty Word Training	Missoula, MT
9-11	NRECA Region IX Meeting	Kauai, HI
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
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