

Big Skylights



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

A report from your Chief Executive Officer Dave Wheelihan

August 17, 2006

NRECA course tackles political action plans

More registrations are needed for the NRECA Director's Course, No. 917.05, "Creating a Political Action Plan: The Board's Role," to be held Oct. 2 in conjunction with MECA's annual meeting. The course will be presented at the Heritage Inn, Great Falls. Course fee is \$200. Sept. 11 is the deadline for early registrations. A total of 20 participants must be registered by then, or the course may be cancelled. The course will include a special presentation regarding political grassroots action by MECA at the Montana Legislature in Helena. Contact MECA's **Sharon McDonald** at (406) 761-8333 to sign up.

Director rate-making actions covered in class

Flathead Electric Cooperative is offering to MECA member cooperatives a class on "Advanced Rate Decisions for Experienced Directors." The class will be held Sept. 26, beginning at 9 a.m. at Flathead Electric, 2510 Highway 2 East, Kalispell. A continental breakfast and lunch will be served. Cost is \$200. Flathead Electric's **Bev McGuire** will make hotel room reservations for anyone who needs them. For further information or to register for the class, call Bev at (406) 751-4444. You can also reach her via the following electronic mail address: bev.mcguire@flatheadelectric.com

Flathead Electric fills key positions

Stephanie Wallace will serve as Flathead Electric's new manager of human resources and community relations. Ms. Wallace has been with the co-op since April of 2005, serving as their community affairs manager. Prior to coming to Flathead Electric, she worked at Jobs Now, also known as Montana West Economic Development and the Flathead Workforce Center. She worked in Minneapolis in a human resources and internal training consultant role for Carlson Companies prior to relocating to the Flathead.

Dan Anderson is Flathead Electric's new manager of engineering. Mr. Anderson has worked at FEC for 12 years in the engineering department. Mr. Anderson is a graduate of Montana State University, Bozeman, with a bachelor's degree in electrical engineering. His degree and engineering career at FEC contribute a wide range of educational and practical engineering experience. Prior to working at FEC, Mr. Anderson worked in Missoula at SSR Engineering. Mr. Anderson's most recent position at the co-op was as senior engineer, new services.

Sign-ups needed for performance management class

Sixteen people from six co-ops have signed up for a Performance Management Workshop to be held on Sept. 6 at the statewide association office in Great Falls. More registrations are needed. Course instructor will be **Jack Yeager**. The course, which begins at 8 a.m. and ends at 5 p.m., consists of a morning presentation and discussion on development of a performance management system and an afternoon training session on specific applications and techniques customized for supervisory personnel. Anyone who supervises staff is encouraged to attend. The fee for this course is \$125 per person. A minimum of 20 participants must be registered by the early registration date of Aug. 25, or the course may be cancelled. To ask questions about the workshop or to register, contact MECA's **Sharon McDonald** at 406-761-8333.

Your chance to honor deserving co-op people

Nominations are needed for MECA awards to be presented at the association's annual meeting Oct. 3-5 at the Heritage Inn in Great Falls. Aug. 31 is the deadline for submitting nominations. Among the awards to be presented are the Hog-Tied Award, the Hard Ridin' Award, the Cooperative Employee and Cooperative Director Spirit Awards, the Life Saver Award and service awards. The Hog-Tied Award is presented to a cooperative director or employee who has exemplified exceptional courage, skill or determination in dealing with individuals on public policy issues of importance to electric cooperatives. The Hard Ridin' Award is presented to a cooperative director or employee who has demonstrated character and perseverance amidst extraordinary difficulties. The Cooperative Spirit Award is presented to either a co-op employee, director or both whose actions in their community continually promote the cooperative spirit. The Life Saver Award is presented to any employee or board member of a co-op who used any lifesaving procedure resulting in someone's life being saved, regardless of whether the lifesaving action occurred on the job or not. Service awards are presented to co-op directors and employees for 25, 30, 35 or 40 years of service.

To submit nominations or for further information, contact MECA's **Sharon McDonald** at (406) 761-8333.

**Retirement
seminar
planned**

MECA will host an NRECA Retirement Seminar Oct. 31-Nov. 1 at the statewide association building in Great Falls. This two-day course helps co-op employees evaluate distribution options from their retirement plans, estimate retirement income and expenses and understand the need for continued investment during retirement years. It is suggested that employees and their spouses who are within 10 years of retirement attend this informative seminar. The seminar is presented by NRECA's experienced investment advisers, field services representatives and local Social Security and estate planning professionals. Attendees are encouraged to participate with questions, comments and class exercises. More details on this seminar, including registration information, will be sent out in the next few weeks.

Job Market

General manager

The Board of Directors of Northern Electric Cooperative headquartered in Opheim is seeking qualified candidates to replace the general manager who will be retiring in December 2006. The board prefers candidates to have at least five years' experience in electric utility management, preferably within the rural electric program. A bachelor's degree in an appropriate field is highly desirable. The board seeks a candidate with broad utility experience including such areas as strategic planning, finance, operations, member communications and board relations. The successful candidate will be a proven community leader with excellent communications skills. The cooperative has 10 fulltime employees serving 1,200 customers over 1,200 miles of distribution and transmission lines. Annual revenue is over \$2 million with total assets of \$16 million. The cooperative is a member of the Montana Electric Cooperatives' Association. Northern Electric's wholesale power supplier is Central Montana Electric Power Cooperative, which holds contracts with the Western Area Power Administration, the Bonneville Power Administration and Basin Electric Power

Cooperative. The cooperative headquarters town of Opheim, Mont., has a population of about 300 and is located on Montana Highway 24, 50 miles north of Glasgow, Mont., and 50 miles west of Scobey, Mont. and 12 miles south of the Canadian border. The area offers the benefits of rural living, solitude, excellent hunting and fishing and low cost of living. It is located near the Missouri River and a recreational lake that provides excellent opportunities.

The cooperative offers an excellent NRECA retirement and benefits package and competitive salary commensurate with qualifications. Please send a resume, three professional references and salary history by Sept 1, 2006 to: Board of Directors, **Robert J. Fouhy**, President, Northern Electric Cooperative, Inc., Box 287, Opheim, MT 59250.

**Schedule set
for MECA
meetings**

Following is the schedule of meetings for MECA committees and subcommittees in conjunction with the MECA Annual Meeting, Oct. 2-5 at the Heritage Inn in Great Falls:

Monday, October 2, 2006		Tuesday, October 3, 2006	
8:00 am	S/LC Committee Breakfast Meeting	7:00 am	Tribal & Cooperative Issues Committee Breakfast Meeting
9:05 am	Managers Group Meeting	8:05 am	Audit Committee
10:00 am	Communications Committee	9:10 am	Enabling/Restructuring Legislative Subcommittee
11:10 am	Power Supply Committee	10:15 am	Resolutions Committee
		11:20 am	Legislative Committee
12 noon	Lunch	12:15 pm	Lunch
1:00 pm	Nuts & Bolts of MECA's Grassroots' Efforts in Helena - 2007	1:30 pm	MECA Board meeting
2:05 pm	Tax Legislative Subcommittee		
2:05 pm	Education & Training Committee		
2:25 pm	Territorial Integrity Act Legislative Subcommittee		
3:10 pm	Member Services Committee		
3:35 pm	USBP Legislative Subcommittee		
4:25 pm	Renewable Energy & PURPA Standards Legislative Subcommittee		

CALENDAR

August 2006

31 BPA Public Meeting: Post 2006 Power Allocation Pablo, MT

September 2006

6 Performance Management Workshop Great Falls, MT
 16 Beartooth Electric Cooperative Annual Meeting Roberts, MT
 18-19 NWPPA Conference on BPA Power Allocation Portland, OR
 20-22 NRECA Region IX Meeting Fairbanks, Alaska

October 2006

2-5 MECA Annual Meeting Great Falls, MT
 14 Big Flat Electric Cooperative Annual Meeting Malta, MT
 14 Sheridan Electric Cooperative Annual Meeting Medicine Lake, MT
 25 Valley Electric Cooperative Annual Meeting Glasgow, MT
 26 Goldenwest Electric Cooperative Annual Meeting St. Philips, MT
 27 Park Electric Cooperative Annual Meeting Livingston, MT
 31-Nov 1 NRECA Retirement Planning Seminar Great Falls, MT