

Big Skylights

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



A report from your Chief Executive Officer Dave Wheelihan

July 20, 2006

Flathead Electric hosts annual MECA conference

MECA's annual Office Managers and Accountants Conference will be held Aug. 7-9 in the training room of Flathead Electric Cooperative in Kalispell. The conference begins at 8:30 a.m. with registration and a continental breakfast on Monday, Aug. 7. To ask questions about the conference or to register, contact MECA's **Sharon McDonald** at 406-761-8333.

Workshop for supervisors set for Sept. 6

MECA will hold a Performance Management Workshop on Sept. 6 at the statewide association office in Great Falls. 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.

Plans taking shape for MECA annual meeting

Under the theme, "*Together We Have the Power to Make a Difference*," MECA will hold its 45th annual meeting Oct. 2-5, 2006, at the Heritage Inn in Great Falls. Preliminary information about the annual meeting, including a tentative agenda, was mailed this week to MECA member managers and directors. This year, annual meeting participants may register online at www.mtco-ops.com.

Committee meetings in conjunction with the annual meeting have not yet been set but most committees will meet either on Monday, Oct. 2, or the morning of Oct. 3. The MECA board meeting will be Tuesday, Oct. 3, at 1:30 p.m. That will be followed by the Montana ACRE annual meeting at 4:30 p.m. The ACRE reception and auction will begin at 6 p.m. and 7 p.m., respectively. The annual meeting general session will convene at 9 a.m. on Oct. 4. The Annual Meeting Reception and Banquet will be at 6 p.m. The annual meeting will wrap up on Thursday, Oct. 5, with the MECA Awards Breakfast, beginning at 8 a.m.

Upcoming retirement seminar

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MECA will host an NRECA Retirement Seminar Oct. 31-Nov. 1 at the statewide association building in Great Falls. More details on this seminar, including registration information, will be sent out in the next few weeks.

Tongue River hears update on power plant

Incumbents **Jim Mullin**, **Jack Knoblock** and **Keith Bales** were all re-elected at the annual meeting Saturday of Tongue River Electric Cooperative in Ashland. The membership heard an update on the proposed clean-coal-technology power plant of Southern Montana Electric Generation and Transmission Cooperative. The presentation was given by **Tim Gregori**, manager of Southern G & T. Mr. Gregori pointed out that a hearing on the draft Environmental Impact Statement on the 250-megawatt plant will be held July 27 in Great Falls. Also at the annual meeting, MECA's **Gary Wiens** gave an update on state legislative issues and advised the members of their need for greater grassroots involvement during the 2007 legislative session as the association deals with major legislative issues.

NorthWestern lineman electrocuted

We were saddened to hear of the electrocution last week of a NorthWestern Energy journeyman lineman. **Curtis Williams**, 33, of Dillon died while on the job Thursday near Sheridan in Madison County. Details of the accident were not released by NorthWestern.

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.

Journeyman and/or apprentice lineman

Lower Yellowstone REA, Inc., located in Sidney, has one position open for a journeyman and/or apprentice lineman. Applicants must possess the ability to perform skilled work in construction, operation and maintenance of an REA electrical system including transmission, substation and distribution for both overhead and underground line. Candidates must have a high school diploma or GED equivalent, possess a current driver's license, plus possession of or ability to immediately obtain a Montana commercial driver's license. A drug test will also be required. To apply for this position, mail a resume and cover letter to **Donald Prevost**, General Manager, Lower Yellowstone REA Inc., PO Box 1047, Sidney, MT 59270, or you may call 406-488-1602 to speak to Mr. Prevost or **Chris Hillesland**, Manager of Operations. A complete job description and job application is available at Lower Yellowstone's office. The position will be open until filled.

CALENDAR

August 2006

7-9	MECA Office Managers/Accountants Conference	Kalispell, MT
8-9	Superintendents Meeting	Lewistown, MT
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
26	Goldenwest Electric Cooperative Annual Meeting	St. Philips, MT
27	Park Electric Cooperative Annual Meeting	Livingston, MT
31-Nov 1	NRECA Retirement Seminar	Great Falls, MT