

Big Skylights



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

A report from your Chief Executive Officer Dave Wheelihan

November 9, 2006

Montana loses stalwart pioneer for cooperatives

Ralph McKelvie, one of Montana's electric co-op pioneers, died this week. He was 95. Mr. McKelvie was a long-time director at Yellowstone Valley Electric Cooperative, serving as the board's secretary/treasurer for 35 years. He was Yellowstone Valley Electric's representative on the MECA board for 30 years and he is credited with being an organizer of Montana's Action Committee for Rural Electrification, the political action committee for electric cooperatives. In addition, Mr. McKelvie was active in a number of other co-ops, including the Electric Rural Manufacturing Co-op, Farmers Union Oil and Plant Food Co-op. He also helped form the Valley Federal Credit Union in Billings.

Mr. McKelvie is survived by his wife, Louise. A funeral service will be held Saturday, Nov. 11, at 10 a.m. at the First Congregational United Church of Christ in Billings.

Co-op members hear good news on power bills

Park Electric Cooperative members were told at their annual meeting Oct. 27 in Livingston to expect continued stability in rates, at least for the foreseeable future. The co-op has not had a general rate increase since 1995, and Park Electric Manager Doug Hardy told members that there will be no general rate increase in 2007 and probably no general rate increases in 2008 or 2009, though the co-op's margins are expected to shrink. The probable outlook for 2010 is also for a no general rate increase, said Mr. Hardy, but he cautioned that the variables are too numerous to make any solid forecasts that far out. Mr. Hardy also recapped events at the co-op over the past year, noting that the ongoing drought has been costly for the co-op both in terms of costs of protecting co-op power lines and equipment from forest fires this past summer and as a result of reduced availability of low-cost hydropower. He also informed members that the co-op is implementing renewable power in cost-effective ways without mandates and he asked members to help in the fight against mandates, saying it is the co-op members who will pay for them if they become a reality.

Also at the co-op annual meeting, incumbents **Dan Dinsdale** and **Jim Kurk** were re-elected and the membership adopted a bylaw change moving the boundaries of several districts that had changed in membership size due to growth. The changes allow for more even distribution of membership.

Legislative dinner held in Sidney

MECA was pleased to be able to participate in another legislative issues briefing session for local legislators. This latest one was held Oct. 24 in Sidney and was hosted by Lower Yellowstone REA with Goldenwest Electric Cooperative also participating. In addition to legislators, also invited to the dinner were members of LYREA's grassroots action team. Both legislators and grassroots action team members engaged in a thoughtful discussion about legislative issues. Not surprisingly, renewable energy dominated the discussion.

MECA member cooperatives are strongly encouraged to schedule these legislative issues briefing sessions, which historically have proven to be the backbone of MECA's legislative success in past legislatures. Contact MECA's Gary Wiens to schedule one in your area.

Job Market

Journeyman Lineman

McCone Electric Co-op., Inc., is currently seeking a qualified applicant for a journeyman lineman position. The reporting position is in Jordan, Mont. Jordan is an area rich in hunting and fishing opportunities with access to public lands. Jordan is within easy driving distance to Fort Peck Lake, Hell Creek Marina and the famous Missouri Breaks. Mountains and great skiing are only a three-hour drive from this location. The successful applicant must possess a valid Montana commercial driver's Class A license (or be able to obtain one within 90 days of the hiring date) and join the local IBEW union. Successful candidates must pass a pre-employment drug test and physical. The successful applicants must also be able to deal with co-workers and consumers in a courteous and professional manner. McCone Electric has an excellent benefits program. A McCone Electric Co-op., Inc., job application is required and may be obtained from McCone Electric at PO Box 368, Circle, MT 59215. This position will remain open until filled. Call for applications at (406) 485-3430 or e-mail Larry Schmidt (lschmidt@mcconeelectric.coop).

CALENDAR

December 2006

4	NRECA's Director Course 968.1 Advanced Rate Decisions for Experienced Directors	Great Falls, MT
5	CFC Cash Flow Seminar	Great Falls, MT
5-6	MECA Committee Meetings	Great Falls, MT
6	MECA Winter Board Meeting	Great Falls, MT
6	MECA's Annual Holiday Banquet	Great Falls, MT