

WATT'S UP

AT LA PLATA ELECTRIC ASSOCIATION

LPEA

La Plata Electric Association, Inc.

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

Shaping the future by building trustworthy community partnerships as an innovative, forward-thinking industry leader, delivering excellence in our member-owned cooperative.

APRIL 2018



Dispatcher Rachel Killinen stands beneath the "live" wall that allows Operations to monitor all parts of the system in real time.

LPEA: Top of the pole

LPEA is anecdotally in the top percentage of rural electric cooperatives in the country – ahead of the curve – employing the latest in technology for the benefit of the membership.

"When we attend industry conferences, it often amazes us, when we start talking to our counterparts, how forward-thinking and pro-active we are here at LPEA," says Dan Harms, manager of rates, technology and energy policy. "Our members' desires have LPEA constantly exploring the edge of technology, which has vendors and manufacturers often requesting LPEA to sit on advisory boards to assist with product development. This produces the products that LPEA needs....that our members need."

Harms notes that the evolution in energy source development and electricity generation is dramatic.

"Electricity, if we can be anthropomorphic, has a mind of its own. Our task is to manage the electrons and maintain reliability and efficiency. Technology is helping us all along the way," he says.

As LPEA explores the energy future with electric vehicles and increased distributed generation through, for example, individual solar systems, the co-op has worked steadily to incorporate both onto the grid. An electric vehicle plugged in at home can increase that home's energy usage by 30 percent. At the same time, distributed generation systems are challenging our ability to maintain great power quality.

"That's where Time-of-Use and controls come into play," says Harms, also noting that LPEA is exploring use of battery storage. "If the need for power coincides with distributed generation production, that's ideal, but it rarely happens that way. We're working with newly-

developed equipment to help with this and to keep the voltage optimal."

Within the last 10 years, outage management has also taken a great step forward, and the outage management system continues to be enhanced.

"We used to have a lot of pieces of paper," says Justin Talbot, manager of operations. "And it took a great deal of time for our Dispatchers to prepare daily logs and properly track outages. Now we're computerized. Our system probably knows you're out of power even before you do."

With the installation of the "live" wall in the Dispatch Center several years back, employees on duty 24-7 can monitor LPEA's entire system in real time.

Additionally, for efficient maintenance, members of LPEA's tech team, Brad Fuqua and Don Short, have developed a number of applications for the line crews to use in the field through their phones or tablets. From LPEA headquarters, crews receive information on location for maintenance of, for example, street lights or pole inspections, and repairs are tracked. When changing out equipment in the field, new and correct information is sent with a push of a button and the data immediately filed. An additional application is being used by crews in Archuleta County conducting an inventory of the attachments to LPEA's poles (phone, cable companies, etc.).

"All the information goes into the database and we can automatically query it. That's a big thing," says Talbot.

"What these technology advancements translate to is that we're able to provide our membership with more services while maintaining rates," says Harms. "It's challenging, but we enjoy digging our teeth into these kinds of challenges for our members."

Ballots to be mailed April 17

Election materials/ ballots for the upcoming Board of Director elections are scheduled to be mailed to all members on April 17, 2018. In addition to voting for directors, members will be asked to approve revisions to the cooperative's bylaws.

With the director elections, in District 1, Archuleta County, Kirsten Skeeahan is challenging incumbent Bob Formwalt. District 2, south and west La Plata County, incumbent Kohler McInnis is challenged by Jeffery Mannix. In the City of Durango, District 3, Gene Fisher is challenging incumbent Britt Bassett. In District 4, north and east La Plata County, incumbent Karen Barger is challenged by Tim Wheeler.

"In addition to asking our members to learn about the candidates and vote in their districts, we want to strongly encourage the vote on the bylaw revisions," says Mike Dreyspring, CEO. "There will be a special insert in your ballot materials that lines out the changes your co-op is advising. Also, a review of the bylaw revisions is available on our website."

As a rural electric cooperative, all members in good standing, who pay their electric bill to LPEA, are qualified to vote for the directors who represent them, as well as the bylaws, which are the governing directives of the cooperative.

"If any members have any questions, I welcome their call or email," says Dreyspring. Contact Dreyspring at 970.382.3509 or mdreyspring@lpea.coop.

Students to visit Washington D.C.

Area high school students Paul Farrah of Pagosa Springs, Anthony "AJ" Swenk of Bayfield, Kiana Valdez of Ignacio, and Risa Whitehead and Alma Wolf of Durango have been selected to represent La Plata Electric Association (LPEA) as part of the National Rural Electric Youth Tour to Washington D.C., scheduled for June 6-14, 2018.

"This trip is a tremendous opportunity for our area juniors," says Mike Dreyspring, CEO. "Our communities, as well as the country and the world are facing many challenges in the energy arena, and the industry is changing, so it's important that our next generation gain an understanding about energy policy development at the federal level. We are pleased to be able to further that education."

LPEA's student representatives will join juniors from the cooperative's sister electric co-ops across Colorado. The schedule includes an intimate look at the nation's Capitol and the government from the inside, including discussion of current concerns with Congressional representatives. Tours of Washington D.C.'s monuments and museums, plus social activities, are also part of the agenda.

The opportunity to participate in the D.C. Youth Tour was open to all current high school juniors, including home-schooled students, who receive their electric power from LPEA. Students completed an application and penned a 500-1,000 word essay covering "My Favorite Cooperative Principle." Students were asked to select one or more of the seven cooperative principles and explain how LPEA employs them to make a positive impact in the community.

Applications for the 2019 Washington D.C. Youth Tour will be available in November 2018 at LPEA's offices in Durango and Pagosa Springs, through area high school counselors, or on the web, www.lpea.coop.



Paul Farrah



Anthony "AJ" Swenk



Kiana Valdez



Risa Whitehead



Alma Wolf

Field named Engineering Technician

In its focused effort to keep current with cutting edge technologies in the electricity distribution industry and better serve its members, La Plata Electric Association (LPEA) has hired Clifford Field as Engineering Technician. In the newly-created position, Field is providing system administration for the AMI (Automated Metering Infrastructure), as well as addressing special projects and technology research.

"I'm very pleased to add Cliff to my department," says Dan Harms, manager of rates, technology and energy policy. "Since he's been interning for LPEA since 2015 while attending college, he is already very familiar with our system."

Among the first Fort Lewis College students to benefit from the new Geosciences, Physics, and Engineering (GPE) building at the Fort, allowing for 4-year degrees in the sciences, he completed his BS in Engineering in Dec. 2017.

Field served as a Senator with the Associated Students of Fort Lewis College, and also was student president of the Village Aid Project, a Fort Lewis organization derived from the national Engineers Without Borders.

Originally from Steamboat Springs, Colo., Field is an avid outdoor enthusiast who grew up as a Nordic ski jumper and counts among his accomplishments completion of the Colorado Trail (Denver to Durango) as well as The Appalachian Trail.



A new face at the front desk in Durango



Last month, LPEA employees bid farewell to Member Services Representative Donna Arriza, who after nearly five years helping LPEA members with billing issues, new accounts and the cooperative's various products and services, has retired to the Phoenix area. In her stead at the front desk at the Durango office, members are now greeted by Denver Hutchins.

Hutchins comes to LPEA from the La Plata County Clerk's office where he'd served the community as Senior Title Clerk and Recorder since 2013.

Coincidentally, Hutchins and Arriza (serving under County Clerk Tiffany Parker before joining LPEA) were colleagues at the County Clerk's office back in the day. At LPEA they enjoyed several weeks overlap on the job as Arriza shared her LPEA expertise with Hutchins.

Welcome Denver and LPEA will miss you Donna.

LPEA to launch new website

To enhance communication to members, LPEA has scheduled launch of a "new and improved" website. The new site is slated to go "live" on April 16.

"We've been tracking how members access our website," says Lonnie Tucker, communications coordinator. "More than 60 percent of visitors now appear to use mobile and tablet devices to connect with lpea.coop, as opposed to using laptops or personal computers. Our current website platform isn't ideally compatible with these new devices. But it will be after April 16 for a better user experience."

As many companies have learned, older websites may be difficult to view and use with a smartphone or tablet due to a static design. For example, with LPEA's current site, words, links and pictures may appear as too small and difficult to zoom. The new site will allow for enhanced scrolling and navigation.

LPEA's new website features:

- Compatibility with a wide variety of devices and screen sizes.
- Improved navigation for improved access to content.
- Simplified homepage links to popular resources.
- Reader-friendly pages for smartphones and tablets.

To comment or for further information, contact Tucker at ltucker@lpea.coop or 970.382.3511.

CO-OP MEMBERS

Ask...

Q: LPEA Board meetings are held in the middle of the work week, in the morning during business hours. We can't be there to share our thoughts. Will the Board listen to other input from people who care, but just can't be there in person?

A: Yes. All LPEA members have a voice, and you don't have to attend a Board meeting to have your voice heard. Written communication is warmly invited.

To pose questions or provide input to the LPEA Board of Directors, email CEO Mike Dreyspring, mdreyspring@lpea.coop, or mail hard copy letters to PO Box 2750, Durango, CO 81302, or drop your letter by either of the LPEA offices, 45 Stewart St. [Durango] or 603 S. 8th St. [Pagosa Springs].

LIVE WIRES

Board meeting April 18, 8 a.m.

The next meeting of the LPEA Board of Directors is set for Wednesday, Apr. 18. The agenda will be posted 10 days in advance of the meeting at www.lpea.coop. All members are reminded that public comment is heard at the beginning of the meeting shortly after 8 a.m.

Call before you dig!

Spring is here. Before initiating any outdoor digging projects, call 8-1-1 and within two days, LPEA will send a professional line locator to mark underground electrical lines. The service is free to LPEA members. The simple step of calling 8-1-1 could prevent serious injury, or even save a life. A line locate request can also be made on line at www.colorado811.org or through the link on LPEA's home page, www.lpea.coop.

Round Up Grants

The LPEA Round Up Foundation Board awarded Round Up and Educational grants in February to The Herb Hut Free Clinic, Durango Elks Lodge, DUST2 [supporting trail maintenance in Archuleta County, Southwest Rural Philanthropy Days, Fort Lewis Mesa PTO, Pagosa Springs Girls' Choir and Seeds of Learning.



From the CEO

LPEA Elections are here... Please VOTE!

BY MIKE DREYSPRING | CEO | MDREYSPRING@LPEA.COOP



Ballots for LPEA's Board of Directors elections will be mailed April 17. The Board of Directors oversees the vision and policies that govern how LPEA is managed as a business.

You will have the opportunity to vote for a representative in the District in which you live, and businesses who purchase electricity from LPEA also have a vote in their districts.

Information will arrive in your mailbox with the ballot, but candidates' profiles are on all the candidates is available on our website, lpea.coop. The four incumbents are each facing challengers in each of LPEA's four districts.

In addition, your LPEA Board and staff request your "yes" votes on 10 Bylaw revisions. Remember, the Bylaws are the governing directives of the cooperative. When your Board members have any questions, we turn to the Bylaws for clarification of issues and policy. In your Election packet there will be a separate insert outlining of all the suggested changes. Voting in your LPEA Director election is always vital, but in addition to electing the Board members, we truly want to hear from you regarding the changes to the Bylaws.

So, does your vote matter? Yes it does.

Ask business owners why they voted. They may say that reliable and affordable electric power is essential to their business. Likely, the electric bill is a large portion of their monthly expenses. Perhaps not the largest, but probably more significant than any other check a business might write, other than payroll. Beyond cost, however, for most businesses, reliable electric service is vital, as all commerce stops without electricity.

Ask our irrigators why they voted. Our farmers and ranchers vote in LPEA elections because electricity is also vital to their operations – a great deal of electricity is consumed to

power irrigation water pumps.

How about the residential member who votes? Why do they vote? Let's detour here and see why a residential member *doesn't* vote. They perhaps don't realize they are a member-owner of an electric cooperative and that their vote matters. Or they may not know the candidates and are relying on their neighbors who do to make the decisions.

I surmise that most residential members who do vote, do so because energy means something. It's not just about reliable, affordable power here in Southwest Colorado. It's also about our energy sources and the impact on our environment, right along with the water we drink and the air we breathe. Electric energy is more than just turning on our lights or the technology it powers.

So, if you vote regularly in your co-op's annual election, thank you. I truly appreciate that my bosses are paying attention to the business they own. YOU, as member-owners, all are my bosses.

If, on the other hand, you haven't voted in an LPEA election, I encourage you to learn about the candidates, read the bylaw insert and vote. LPEA's elections are completely private, overseen by an independent Election Committee to ensure (to use the popular current buzz term) no collusion.

As we move into the new energy future, we need our members to understand and be more engaged than ever before. As the song goes, the times they are a-changin' and we want you to have a voice as we move forward.



Mission Statement:
La Plata Electric Association provides its members safe, reliable electricity at the lowest reasonable cost while being environmentally responsible.

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Board of Directors:

Davin Montoya, President [District 2]
Bob Lynch, Vice President [District 1]
Karen Barger, Secretary [District 4]
Doug Lyon, Treasurer [District 3]
Mike Alley [District 1]
Britt Bassett [District 3]
Bob Formwalt [District 1]
Dan Huntington [District 2]
Rachel Landis [District 3]
Kohler McInnis [District 2]
Jack Turner [District 4]
Guinn Unger [District 4]

Chief Executive Officer:
Michael A. Dreyspring