

F E R G U S

FEATURES

Member Newsletter ♦ Fergus Electric Cooperative, Inc., Lewistown, MT

WTI works to improve winter highway safety

Multi-million dollar research organization involved with projects in 30 states

Story by Judy Byrne

Central Montana usually receives a good pile of snow each winter. Some would say even more than its share. Some love it; some curse it. Some make a living getting rid of it. Now a group of scientists are purposely creating snow and dumping it near the Lewistown airport.

“The Department of Transportation has to keep the highways clear. We are conducting studies to help them improve their task,” says Eli Cuelho, a civil engineer at the Western Transportation Institute (WTI).

WTI is a multi-million dollar research organization located at MSU-Bozeman, and they are involved in research projects in more than 30 states. According to their website, WTI conducts research in a variety of disciplines revolving around transportation issues. Within that context, they study safety issues, winter maintenance, road ecology, infrastructure, mobility, freight management, animal detection systems, and transportation economics. WTI is nationally recognized for developing effective solutions to the transportation challenges of rural America.

At the Transcend Test Site a few miles west of Lewistown, Cuelho and four other staff members are currently

conducting experiments intended to improve winter highway safety.

Keeping roads and highways clear during winter months is expensive – over \$2 billion each year in the U.S. alone. “The Department of Transportation basically can either remove snow from the highways mechanically – by plowing it – or chemically,” says Cuelho. “We are using the decommissioned taxiways and runways to test a variety of products simultaneously, both de-icers and anti-icers. De-icers melt the snow; anti-icers keep it from bonding to the surface so it’s easier to plow. In order to do that, we have to have snow.”

To that end, WTI has constructed a



Western Transportation Institute scientists conduct research revolving around transportation issues. Here, they are programming a giant sprinkler used to make snow to test de-icers and anti-icers. Photo courtesy WTI.

2,000 square foot shop and a 1.3 million gallon reservoir at the test site. Additionally, they have added two smaller buildings for snow-making equipment and storage.

“The snow makers are basically the same type of equipment used on ski hills,” Cuelho says. “They work like a giant sprinkler system that oscillates automatically.”

Water is sprayed up to 200 feet over a controlled area, and the air temperature causes the mist to freeze as it falls on the runways. The snow makers allow for a fairly controlled placement of the snow, however, air temperatures have been less than

cooperative since WTI began operating the system. According to Cuelho, the optimum air temperature must fall between 15 and 25 degrees above zero. “If it’s too cold, the water freezes at the nozzle; if it’s too warm, it melts on the ground.”

Besides testing the effectiveness of various products on the road’s surface, this study is examining corrosion inhibitors. So far, they have not reached any conclusive results, but the project is slated to run for two years. Additionally, WTI has other studies coming that will also incorporate the snow making equipment. Cuelho foresees tremendous opportunities for the Transcend Test

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MANAGER'S MESSAGE

From Scott Sweeney



Long-term power supply

Southern Montana Electric G & T, our power supplier, was successful in negotiating a "firm price" for power through June 2019. This is very good news for the membership as this power supply will provide affordable, predictable and secure prices. I, along with Southern Montana, am pleased with the negotiating process and am delighted to report this to Fergus Electric's members.

Southern Montana can now move ahead, cautiously, with the Highwood Generating Station. The project will be studied carefully and Fergus Electric and Southern Montana will have the opportunity to evaluate a long-term power supply solution.

Rates to increase

On January 1 of this year, Southern Montana initiated an 8 percent rate increase to the cost of power, which led

Fergus Electric's board and management to carefully study and assess what impact this increase would have on the various rate classes.

The board and management considered all the costs required to maintain a reliable power system, while still keeping rate increases to a minimum. After extensive deliberation, effective April 1, Fergus Electric implemented the following rate adjustments, which are reflected on your current statement.

The residential/single-phase rate will go up 9.9 percent on average; the irrigation rate will increase 9.8 percent on average and the multi-phase/three-phase rate will go up 9.7 percent on average. For additional information call the office at 406-538-3465 or log on to the cooperative's web site www.ferguselectric.coop.

Please join me for our 2009 Annual Meeting, June 4 at the Fergus County Trade Center in Lewistown.

Bylaw amendments to be presented at annual meeting

Note: Language for two bylaw changes was ratified for presentation to the membership by the board of trustees at their March 26, 2009 meeting. General Manager Scott Sweeney recommends that the following amendments be approved.

By direction of the board of trustees, the membership will be given an opportunity to either ratify or reject TWO bylaw amendments at the June 4, 2009 annual meeting.

FIRST:

Section 3.3 Notice of Members' Meeting would be changed to read as follows:

A. The first sentence would be changed as follows:

(Language stricken would be removed, and that in italics would be added.)

"Written or printed notice stating the place, day and hour of the meeting and, in case of a special meeting or an annual meeting at which business requiring special notice is to be transacted, the purpose or purposes for which the meeting is called, shall be delivered not less than ten (10) days nor more than ~~twenty five (25)~~ *forty-five (45)* days before the date of the meeting, either personally or by mail, by or at the direction of the Secretary, or upon a default in duty by the

Secretary, by the persons calling the meeting, to each member."

Explanation for change: The above changes makes it possible to give the notice to the members since the *Rural Montana*, published by the Montana Electrical Cooperatives' Association and delivered to all of our members, could be used and there would be enough time to accomplish this within the requirements of the bylaws. If this is not done, we may at some time in the future be required to mail first class letters to each member.

No other change is made in this section.

SECOND:

Section 7.2 Patronage Capital in Connection with Furnishing Electric Energy would be changed to read as follows:

(Language stricken would be removed. No other changes would be made.)

"In those years when the Board of Trustees decides to retire capital credits to the membership, the Cooperative shall offer the individual members an opportunity to receive a capital credit payment within a reasonable time after the close of the fiscal year. ~~The Cooperative shall make this offer by sending to the last known address of each member a notice of the~~

~~Cooperative's offer to make a capital credit payment. The notice shall instruct the member that the offer will be considered accepted upon the Cooperative's receipt of a postcard from the member accepting the offer, and the notice shall include a self-addressed postcard to be used for that purpose. The notice shall inform the member that within a reasonable amount of time after receipt of the postcard, the Cooperative shall distribute the member's capital credit payment. In addition to the above, this offer may be made to members by any other reasonable method calculated to accomplish the same ends. This may include, but not be limited to, the sending of a check which, when cashed by the member, shall be sufficient proof of notice and acceptance. The Cooperative may charge against the capital credits of the member involved a fee for searching for them to make such offer.~~

Explanation for change: The state statutes now provide that checks not deliverable may be used for a co-op education undertaking, such as scholarships for college students. We no longer have to use the complex former process to avoid such funds being escheated to the state.

highway safety

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Site. He even envisions an advanced driver training course for enhancing winter driving skills. "Here is a place drivers could experience the forces in effect on black ice," he says. "They can go into a skid without crashing into anything."

WTI chose the Lewistown site for several reasons. The terrain is flat and even, and it offers a good variety of weather conditions for a variety of experiments. Its location is fairly close to Bozeman, and they have developed a good relationship with the airport facility. In just the few years since it was established, Transcend has become WTI's primary test site in the Northwest. Cuelho says the site can accommodate several different types of experimentation simultaneously and has tremendous potential in the future. Not only does it allow researchers to conduct a variety of tests, it also prof-



Water is sprayed over a controlled area and the air temperature, between 15 and 25 degrees above zero, causes the mist to freeze as it falls to the ground. Photo courtesy WTI.

its local businesses. In the last year, it has generated over half a million dollars for the Lewistown economy.

Making snow is energy intensive, so Fergus Electric Cooperative is one business directly involved with WTI. As WTI staffers visit the site several

times each month, local hotels and restaurants also reap benefits. Most importantly, however, are the benefits everyone reaps as WTI helps determine better and more efficient ways to keep our highways safe.

Notice of annual meeting

Pursuant to Article III, Section 3 of the bylaws of Fergus Electric Cooperative, Inc., notice of the 72nd annual meeting is hereby given.

The member meeting will take place at the Fergus County Trade Center, Lewistown, Montana, Thursday, June 4, 2009. Registration begins at 11 a.m. with lunch at noon.

The business meeting will convene at 1 p.m. with the order of business as follows: report of members present, reading of notice and proof of publication, election of three directors, and transaction of other business.

A \$900 drawing will be part of the June 4 meeting

The names of all Fergus Electric's members will be entered in a drawing for \$900. In order to win, the member must be present.

Identify account number— Win a \$30 credit

If one of the following account numbers is yours, call Fergus Electric (406-538-3465) and identify yourself and your account number.

**Account 368194 • Account 378334
Account 319068**

You will receive a \$30 credit on next month's statement.

Scholarship drawing at annual meeting

Fergus Electric will offer six \$600 scholarships in a drawing at this year's annual meeting June 4, 2009.

Funding for the scholarships comes from unclaimed capital credits. If members or their heirs cannot be found, Montana law allows electric cooperatives to use these monies for education purposes.

Rules for the scholarship drawing are: 1) The applicant or applicant's parents must be a member of Fergus Electric Cooperative; 2) The applicant must be present at the annual meeting; 3) The applicant must be accompanied by a parent/guardian; 4) The applicant must have at least a "C" grade average; 5) The scholarship may be used for undergraduate college or vo-tech studies or for graduate studies.

No support documentation is required. Winners are determined by "the luck of the draw." Checks will be written to the college or school of the winner's choice.

Please complete the following application and return it to: Fergus Electric Scholarship Drawing, 84423 US Highway 87, Lewistown, MT 59457 by May 22, 2009. For questions, call Vangie at 406-538-3465.

Fergus Electric Scholarship Application*

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____

College/Vo-Tech attending/will attend _____

I maintain at least a "C" average _____

Student Signature _____

Parent/Guardian Signature _____

*Application due May 22, 2009

Meet your board candidates

In accordance with Fergus Electric Bylaws, Article IV, Section 4.3, the nominations committee met and selected candidates for the Board of Trustees.

In addition to the procedure set forth above, any 15 or more members acting together from the district in which a trustee is to be elected may make other nominations by petition not less than 30 days prior to the meeting and the secretary shall post such nominations at the same place where the list of nominations made by the aforesaid committee are posted. No other method of nominating candidates for the trustee shall be permitted.

The following members from Districts 3, 5 and 7 are seeking board positions.

Joe Dirkson – District 3

Joe Dirkson, long time central Montana rancher and member of the Fergus Electric Cooperative, is seeking re-election to the Fergus Electric Board. Joe also holds a seat as director and secretary/treasurer of Southern Montana Electric G & T comprised of five cooperatives and also Fergus Electric's wholesale power supplier.



Joe Dirkson

In order to keep an affordable power supply, Dirkson is working towards the cooperative owning its own power supply. He says he would like to continue to provide the service that Fergus Electric's members have come to expect.

Joe and his wife, Pat, reside in Winifred and are involved in a number of community activities.

Alan Evans – District 5

Alan and his wife, Rene, ranch south of Roundup. Alan, a graduate of MSU – Bozeman, has served on the Fergus Board for several terms – seven years as FEC president.



Alan Evans

Evans has diverse experience in energy policy, management and budget. Concurrent with his Fergus responsibilities, Alan served in a number of Montana gubernatorial (democrat and republican) assignments: Montana

Coal Board – 16 years, Montana Corridor Oversight Review Committee – 12 years, Supercollider Task Force – 3 years, Montana Coal Council – 3 years and United States Department of the Interior lead for the Colstrip power line.

He was president of Montana's International Right-of-Way organization and a director of the International Right-of-Way Association. For three years, he served as Fergus Electric's representative on the Montana Electric Cooperatives' Association Board. He was also instrumental in helping to create Southern Montana Electric G & T which will yield long-term savings and stability for Fergus Electric's members.

Alan was born and raised on the Lavina side of the Snowies. He says the Fergus lights were turned on at his folks' place in the mid 1950's.

Terry Frost – District 5

Terry Frost ranches near Roundup where he raises registered Black Angus cattle. Prior to ranching, he worked for Ravalli Electric Cooperative (Corvallis) for 27 years. Positions included ground man equipment operator, apprentice lineman, journeyman lineman, crew foreman, line foreman and journey service lineman.



Terry Frost

Frost says that his years involved in electrical work were an education in regard to power supply, safety, power related services and customer expectations. He has established knowledge and understanding of the many facets involved with rural electric cooperatives and would like to share his hands-on service by becoming a board member.

Some of Terry's volunteer activities in Corvallis included, volunteer fireman, president of the Jaycees, vice president of Western Montana Angus Association, vice president and president of the Bitterroot Stockgrowers and president and vice president of Midland Empire Angus Association. He is currently involved with several Angus associations, Musselshell Valley Stockgrowers director and a delegate to Cooperative Resources International.

Terry and his wife, LaVonne, have been married for 36 years and have two grown sons.

Bob Evans – District 7

Bob Evans is seeking an eighth term on Fergus Electric's board where he currently serves as president. Bob represents


Fergus on the board of Montana Electric Cooperatives' Association, headquartered in Great Falls, and is in his 6th year as president of the statewide organization.




Bob Evans

Maintaining Fergus Electric's system in order to provide the reliable, quality electrical service needed for present-day uses is a continuing challenge and Bob looks forward to seeking solutions and solving future challenges.

Bob earned a BS degree in Industrial Arts from the University of Montana – Western at Dillon in 1974 and returned to Geysers where he assumed operation of the family ranch. He is involved in a variety of community activities.



LEWISTOWN, MT

Your Touchstone Energy® Partner 

FOR OUTAGES

First: Check the fuses or breakers in the building in which the electricity is off.

Second: Check the breaker below the meter.

Third: If electricity is still out, call a neighbor to see if they have electricity.

Fourth: Call **406-538-3465** day or **night** or:

Dale Rikala	406-538-5192
Guy Johnson.....	406-535-5132
Scott Sweeney	406-538-7218
Don Criswell (Roundup)	406-323-3426
Monte Obert	406-538-9705

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