



Niobrara Electric Association

24th year 8th Issue

July 2012

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NEA will be closed on Wednesday, July 4th for the Holiday.

We wish all the membership a happy and safe Independence Day celebration.

In May, the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) held a Grassroots Summit where nearly 2,000 leaders in the Cooperative movement came together to discuss how to strengthen the cooperative movement through political advocacy. Many issues were discussed and questions asked. At the heart of the Summit was this question: "How can the electrical cooperative movement leverage the strength of its 42 million members to make sure our nation enacts common-sense energy policies that are environmentally responsible, while keeping electricity affordable and reliable?"

The hard part is how we go about defining terms such as "environmentally responsible." I think we all have a pretty good grasp of what "affordable" and "reliable" mean, but even here, there is interpretation. You might find it interesting to know that across the 900 different electric cooperatives, covering 75 percent of the nation's land mass; cooperatives find friends on both sides of the aisle. Affordability, reliability, and environmental responsibility are not partisan issues.

In Wyoming we are blessed with incredible access to all of our Federal legislators. This access has allowed us to develop and maintain close relationships with our elected officials. Senator Enzi, Senator Barasso, and Representative Lummis work very hard for Wyoming and are friends of the cooperatives and of Niobrara Electric. We also work very closely with our State officials and enjoy a good working relationship with them as well.

This is good news for Niobrara Electric and for our members; however, we do have an area of risk. It is human nature to become comfortable when things are going our way. This is a problem that many of our sister cooperatives in other states are experiencing, especially in places where their complacency has grown to the point where people have forgotten how to make their voices heard.

Being heard, or being politically active, has never been easier than it is today, especially if you are tech savvy. There is strength in this new developing arena of high tech communications, but there is also an inherent weakness. I believe that it takes both a personal touch and using the newer communication mediums to be really effective.

One of the things that truly resonated from this Grassroots Summit was a quote from Thomas Jefferson who said, "We in America do not have government by the majority. We have government by the majority who participate."

Over the next several months, we will be spending some time discussing how to leverage both technology and face-to-face communications to help us dust off our right of free speech and our tool kit for participating.

Shawn Taylor, Wyoming Rural Electric Association Executive Director and Ken Ceagske, NEA General Manager



Basin Electric, Tri-State G&T and Niobrara Electric Association Scholarship recipients in attendance at Annual Meeting.

Max Zimmerman, Thompson Bruegger, Joe Kinchen, Harley Cushman, Michelle Keener, Ashley Waldock, and Taylor Kinchen.

Group picture from the NEA 67th Annual Meeting, including NEA General Manager Ken Ceagske; NEA Attorney John Skavdahl; Wyoming Rural Electric Association Executive Director Shawn Taylor and members of the Niobrara Electric Association Board; including retiring members, John Bruch and Robert Shockley, along with newly elected directors, Andy Barnette and Jim Dunn.



For those who were unable to attend Annual Meeting this year, your Capital Credit statements & checks (if applicable) have been mailed. We ask that you cash your Capital Credit check as soon as possible; checks void on December 31, 2012.

This year's cash prize winner drawn from the membership was not in attendance so, the cash prize advances to \$500.00 for next year's Annual Meeting.



Damage from high winds on June 5th, caused a power outage at the NEA headquarters building.

Three poles on the premises sustained damage, requiring their replacement.

One pole was also brought down by wind in the Van Tassell area the same day. Linemen replaced that pole and restored power the same day.



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NEA NEWS is a publication of Niobrara Electric Association, Inc

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Touchstone EnergySM

Office Hours

Monday—Thursday

7:30 am—5:00 pm

Fridays 7:30 am—
4:00 pm

Electricians Department

7:00 am—5:30 pm (M-Th)

Outages1-800-322-0544
or 307-334-3221

Phones are answered 24 hours a day. Phones will be answered by Niobrara Electric Association during office hours and the Niobrara County Sheriff's office will take all other calls and dispatch NEA personnel.

It even happens to the electric co-op...

Tuesday, June 5, started out like many others, just a little windier than most. Around 11 AM I was working with Chris in her office when I looked out her window and saw the first pole come down in the front yard. Rick heard the fuses blow that feed the office and we both headed out the door to see what happened. It appeared that the wind broke the transformer pole that feeds the line shop, and the strain from that pole broke two more, including a pole that carries two circuits out of the sub. One feeds a small amount of load to the east and another that feeds all the way to Shawnee and most of our western border.

Back at the office, our power was out. One of the poles that broke was used to feed the office from our backup generator, so that option is out. In the process of switching the line out for repairs, we had to de-energize the service to the Internet provider, so our billing system that we connect to via Internet was down. For a while we lost telephone service. We had wires down across the driveway, so we even had to close that down for a while. It's a tough spot when you're the electric co-op and you're in the dark.

After some switching in the substation and yard the members that were out had their power restored. Then a few radio calls and we were able to reroute the crews from their day to day work back into the office to gear up for outage repairs. The damage was assessed and plans were made, then all the guys scattered different directions to gather up what was needed; poles, cross arms, insulators, etc. to replace the most critical pole that carried the two circuits out to our members. The crew was able to isolate the line and only leave a couple members out while the pole was changed out. By 6:30 PM, the pole was changed out and all the members were back on. Our main office was back on, but the east line shop was out and the west shop was running on the backup generator. Those services had to wait for a few days to get fully restored.

This reminds me how thankful I am for the magic that happens when I flip the switch and the lights come on and how much hard work goes on behind that magic to make it happen.

Ken Ceaglske, NEA General Manager

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

District

John Hester	1	Keeline, WY	President
Andy Barnette	2	Lusk, WY	
David Keener	3	Marsland, NE	Sec./Treas
Bill Wilson	3	Harrison, NE	
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Jim Dunn	3	Harrison, NE	
Kenny DeGering	2	Lusk, WY	
Andy Greer	1	Lance Creek, WY	
JD Wasserburger	2	Lusk, WY	Vice President

Boardroom News

April Board Meeting

- NEA Attorney John Skavdahl discussed collections and the Nebraska Coops lawsuit with Tri-State.
- Manager Ceaglske reported on his training in Washington, DC. Additional discussion was held on the ONEOK project, computer system upgrades, irrigation accounts, SEL relay purchase for Podolak Sub and the house project.
- Director Hammond discussed Tri-State events. Director Greer discussed WREA news. Director Keener reported on NREA issues.