

[Rural Life]

OWNERSHIP MATTERS TO US AND OUR COMMUNITIES

BY JACK JOHNSTON || CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER || JACKJ@SECPA.COM

It is proven that communities where owners occupy the majority of homes are more successful academically, are more physically fit and have a stronger sense of community. While owning a home is only one example and may not be possible or desirable for everyone, ownership does matter. It just seems to make sense that we treat things we own with greater care, and such pride is evident throughout the Arkansas River Valley and all of our service territory.

Chances are you probably don't think too often about your ownership role with your electric cooperative. Every member of Southeast Colorado Power Association can take pride in the fact that they are owners of their own electric co-op. While at times it may seem easy to take the provision of electricity for granted, we are working 24 hours a day, 365 days a year to make sure you, the member-owners of the co-op, are well-taken care of when it comes to your electricity needs.

Locally based cooperatives believe in this special bond and obligation to be an integral part of the community. Electricity is a critical need, but it takes more than poles, wires and kilowatt-hours to make a community. We are either directly or indirectly involved in economic development organizations and/or specific initiatives within Otero, Prowers, Baca, Kiowa, Bent, Las Animas and Crowley counties. This

comprises various memberships in chambers of commerce and economic development organizations. It includes donations to nonprofit organizations. Coordination with local and state governments is also a key part of our efforts. And of course, we work to attract and serve new businesses and residents with safe, reliable and affordable power.

We are owners of our co-op, and in a real sense, we are owners of our community. The communities we serve are strong. It is unimaginable how much greater it can be when we work cooperatively to tackle our future challenges. If we act like owners on a consistent basis, we will put even more care and attention into our

community and we will look locally for solutions. Finding local solutions can help keep money — and people — right here in our community.

We all have a role to play. As your local electric cooperative, we promise to do our part for the community.



Jack Johnston

BACKUP GENERATOR SAFETY



If you have a backup generator, make sure you know how to operate it safely. Unsafe operation can threaten you, your family, neighbors and the linemen working to restore power. Unsafe installation or operation may also result in a lawsuit, and your insurance may not cover your liability.

NUCLEAR POWER: *The Overlooked Energy Source*

WILL THE CONTROVERSIAL SOURCE OF ELECTRICITY GROW, SHRINK OR STAY ABOUT THE SAME?

BY PAUL WESSLUND

As energy headlines scream about a war on coal, fracking that's pumping up a lot of low-priced natural gas and the rise of wind and solar power, one form of electric generation quietly continues to keep the lights on throughout much of the country.

While electric co-op members in Colorado do not have access to nuclear power, about one in every five electrons running through the wires of homes and businesses elsewhere comes from a nuclear power plant. That makes it an important resource when the overall energy picture is discussed on a national basis. The fact that nuclear power is reliable and affordable makes it an important resource.

Nuclear became one of our main fuels for electricity by overcoming huge obstacles to a pretty simple idea: heating water into steam that turns a turbine that generates electricity, similar to the way a coal-burning power plant works. The difference is that in a nuclear power plant, the fuel is uranium and it doesn't burn. Instead, the heat is generated by splitting the uranium atoms, releasing large amounts of energy from extremely small amounts of fuel.

ELECTRIC CO-OPS SUPPORT NUCLEAR POWER

The details are hugely complicated. Highly advanced physics and engineering were needed to build the first nuclear plants in the 1950s. And the dangers of radioactivity called for extreme safety measures. Regulating the technically complex industry falls to the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, an independent agency of the federal government, and its nearly 4,000 employees and \$1 billion budget.

In the United States, 60 nuclear power plants operate 100 nuclear reactors (some plant sites have more than one reactor) in 30 states. In addition to regulation by the NRC, those plants operate under a variety of agreements with groups as varied as the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, state and local governments, emergency responders and academic researchers.

The regulation and cooperative agreements are called for because of the high-stakes concerns with nuclear power. In addition to the health and safety concerns, cyber security and safeguards against possible terrorism are regularly reviewed.

Do all these protective efforts work? The fact that nuclear power provides one-fifth of the electricity in the United States offers evidence of its acceptance.

Electric co-ops see nuclear power as a valuable part of the mix of fuels that make our electricity. An official membership resolution of the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association calls for "legislative and regulatory initiatives to support the continuation and expansion of nuclear power."

Dale Bradshaw, CEO of Electrivation LLC, a firm that consults on power generation and delivery with groups that include NRECA, describes why electric co-ops see nuclear power as a good way to generate electricity.

"Nuclear power is safe and emits no carbon dioxide," he says, noting the industry's safety and security systems and the lack of greenhouse gas.

Bradshaw also sees advantages of nuclear power over the increasingly popular renewable energies of wind and solar, since solar doesn't produce energy at night and wind doesn't work in calm weather.

"We need nuclear for reliability; it runs around the clock," he says, adding, "existing nuclear reactors are basically cost competitive — it's a low-cost resource."

A BRIGHT FUTURE FOR NUCLEAR POWER

So if nuclear power is so great, why isn't it used for more than 20 percent of our electricity?

The need for fuel diversity is one reason, but Bradshaw says growth in nuclear power use is being restricted by a unique combination of forces. The drilling boom of the past several years dramatically lowered natural gas prices, and various government subsidies reduced the costs of wind and solar. Electricity markets base energy prices on the lowest cost producers and, because of the recent low cost of natural gas and continued subsidies for renewables, prices are too low to support the building of new nuclear units. When utilities make their buying decisions, nuclear power often is not the preferred choice these days.

But Bradshaw sees a potentially bright future for nuclear power, referring to today's market forces as "a short-term problem." He notes that natural gas prices started rising, and the tax breaks keeping wind and solar costs low will expire in a few years. He adds that researchers are developing nuclear plant designs that will be even safer and lower in cost and will extend the life of existing nuclear fuel.

"There are advanced reactor technologies in the early stages of development that might allow us, in the next 20 years, to build these technologies for 25 percent of the cost of existing nuclear plants," Bradshaw says. "Advanced nuclear will more efficiently use the fuel and become essentially sustainable with thousands of years of fuel supply, and be more price competitive in the market."

Paul Wesslund writes on cooperative issues for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.

WALSH HOSPITAL RECEIVES \$300,000 CHECK FROM SECPA REDLG LOAN

SE Southeast Colorado Power Association presented a \$300,000 check to the Walsh Hospital District to assist with the installation of a new heating, ventilating and air-conditioning system and a nurse call and patient wandering surveillance system.

The new HVAC system replaces an outdated steam-based heating system, where much of the heat was lost to the outdoors. Besides greatly enhancing energy efficiency in the medical facility, the new HVAC system will also provide the ability for the environment in each room to be controlled individually. It was noted that a patient in one room could have the temperature set at 80 degrees, while the resident in the adjoining room could set the temperature to 60 degrees, thereby keeping all residents much more comfortable.

The nurse call system simply brings

the medical center into the 21st century with regard to nurse and resident communication. In addition, more active patient monitoring and surveillance will simply provide a safer and more secure environment for all residents.

While the loan covers only a fraction of the cost of the two projects, it provides a valuable source of funds toward completion of the projects. The true value behind the loan is that it is provided at no interest, which reduces the cost of the overall project.

The interest-free loan was made possible through the Rural Economic Development Loan and Grant program. The REDLG program provides funding to rural projects through local utility organizations. Under the REDLG program, the U.S. Department of Agriculture provides



Scott Larsen, SECPA chief finance officer presents a check to Rita Hetrick, Walsh Hospital administrator.

interest-free loans to local utilities, which they, in turn, pass through to local businesses (ultimate recipients) for projects that will create and retain employment in rural areas. The ultimate recipients repay the lending utility directly. The utility is responsible for repayment to the USDA.

ACCEPTING PETITIONS FOR SECPA BOARD DIRECTOR POSITIONS

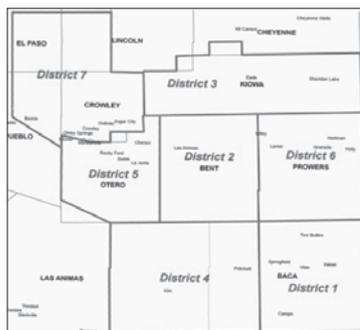
SECPA board positions up for election in 2017 are District 4 – western Baca County and eastern Las Animas (incumbent director is Randy Phillips); District 5 – Otero County (incumbent director is Kevin Karney); and District 7 – Crowley County (incumbent director is Shad Sullivan.)

Director elections are for three-year terms, beginning April 2017 and ending March 2020, for Districts 4, 5, and 7.

To be eligible to be a director, a person 1) must be a SECPA member and bona fide resident of the district he or she is to represent, 2) cannot be an employee of SECPA, and 3) cannot be employed by or financially interested in a competing enterprise or business selling electric energy or supplies to SECPA.

Petitions must be signed by 15 bona fide members in the nominee's district and must be returned no later than 5 p.m., DECEMBER 31, 2016. Petitions are available in all SECPA offices or on the website at secpa.com/news-and-membership-info/annual-meeting-and-elections.

Petitions can be returned to Telly Stanger at any SECPA office, or mailed to SECPA, Attn.: Telly Stanger, PO Box 521, La Junta, CO 81050. (WIN* Garth Thimgan #2003920000)



SAVE the Date!

You're Invited to SECPA's Annual Meeting

Southeast Colorado Power Association will hold its annual meeting on

Thursday, April 6, 2017.

****Cash prize drawings held throughout the day.****

Please join us at the
Kiowa County Community Building
15103 Highway 287
Eads, CO 81036

BOARD ELECTIONS

Registration — 5 p.m.

Dinner — 6 p.m.

Meeting — 6:45 p.m.

APPLY NOW FOR SECPA SCHOLARSHIPS

SECPA is once again making a series of scholarships available to area high school seniors.

SECPA is offering five \$500 scholarships. Eligible applicants must be high school seniors graduating in 2017 who plan to attend a two- or four-year college. Students' parents must be members of Southeast Colorado Power Association.

Students interested in applying for the scholarships are asked to submit the completed SECPA application form

(available on the SECPA website at secpa.com/our-community/scholarships) along with a school transcript, letters of recommendation and a short letter addressing why they deserve the scholarship and what their major will be in school. Applicants are also asked to submit a current digital photo to Debbie Howard at debbieh@secpa.com with their application.

Additionally, the SECPA website has information regarding other scholarships through Tri-State Generation and

Transmission, as well as Basin Electric. Local students are also eligible to apply for both of those scholarships. Tri-State offers two \$500 scholarships and Basin Electric provides one \$1,000 scholarship.

Applications for the SECPA scholarships are due no later than February 6, 2017.

For additional information, please visit the SECPA website or contact Telly Stanger at 719-383-1341.

ATTENTION HIGH SCHOOL JUNIORS

WIN A TRIP TO WASHINGTON, D.C., OR A WEEK AT LEADERSHIP CAMP AT GLEN EDEN RESORT

The National Rural Electric Cooperative Association Washington, D.C., Youth Tour is June 8-15, 2017. High school students who are 16 by June 1 and whose families are Southeast Colorado Power Association members are eligible to apply to go on the trip. The tour provides students with an eight-day adventure that offers in-depth exposure to the electric cooperative network while exploring our nation's capital. The selected youth's expenses, including airfare, lodging, meals and all tour admission fees, are paid by your local cooperative, Southeast Colorado Power. Activities during the trip include tours of the U.S. Capitol, Washington Monument, Lincoln Memorial, war memorials (Vietnam, Iwo Jima), Arlington National Cemetery, National Archives, White House and Smithsonian museums; a Potomac River dinner and dance cruise; visits with Colorado's U.S. senators and representatives; an NRECA town hall meeting; and the chance to connect with students nationwide.

If you're not chosen to attend the Washington, D.C., trip, you may be the recipient of a trip to Leadership Camp held at Glen Eden Resort, located just outside Steamboat Springs. At this camp, held July 15-20, 2017, students from Colorado, Kansas, Oklahoma and Wyoming will gather at a beautiful resort on the Elk River and spend the week at an outstanding leadership camp. You'll participate in activities to improve leadership skills and get an inside view of the state and national legislatures. There is plenty of time for swim parties, barbecues, dances and banquets during the week. Many of the attendees call this camp a "life-changing experience."

For more information and applications, go to our website at <http://secpa.com/related-links/youth-camps/> or contact Debbie Howard at 719-383-1314 or Telly Stanger at 719-383-1341. **Applications must be received or postmarked by January 9, 2017.** Send them to SECPA, Attn.: Telly Stanger, PO Box 521, La Junta, CO 81050.



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