

## MONTANA RENEWABLE ENERGY ASSOCIATION

Meeting 2/03

9 April 2003

Not for general publication

**Meeting called to order** at 1 p.m. in Room 111 at the Department of Environmental Quality (Metcalf Building Office) in Helena.

**Present:** Dave Ryan (in the chair) Roy Nollkamper, Rip Hamilton, Lee Tavenner, Jeff Blend, Kim Moran, Wendy Kleinsasser, Mark Hines, Kathi Montgomery, R. Paul Williamson, Georgia Brensdal, Dan Healy, Jim Tracy, Chris Borton, Patrick Judge, LuMarie Strickland, Mikey Strickland, Jenni Bryce, Van Jamison, Gail Snow, Gayle Shirley.

**Minutes:** Minutes of the January 2003 meeting were read and approved.

**Treasurer's Report:** Chris Daum submitted a written report showing that the MREA had \$5,189.39 in its account as of April 8, 2003. She also reported the following paid members as of April 8:

Bonneville Power Administration  
Dear Solar Electric  
Independent Power Systems  
Jerry Spencer  
Jim Tracy  
Lincoln Electric Cooperative  
Montana Department of Environmental Quality  
Montana Environmental Information Center  
National Center for Appropriate Technology  
NorthWestern Energy  
Oasis Montana Inc.  
Rural Sustainability Organization  
Solar Plexus  
Sunelco  
Windpark Solutions

**Old Business**

- A. Kathi Montgomery of DEQ reported that the Alternative Energy Loan Program, established by the 57th Montana Legislature in Senate Bill 506, expected to issue its first loans by the end of April. Montgomery passed out copies of a brochure that explains the program. DEQ has about \$500,000 available for loans with the recent infusion of cash from fines levied against Conoco and Plum Creek, she said. The loan program provides a financing option to Montana homeowners and small businesses to install alternative energy systems that generate energy for their own use. Montgomery noted that information on the loan program is available on the DEQ's Energize Montana website: [www.energizemontana.com](http://www.energizemontana.com). Montgomery said Montanans may add their names to the loan availability notification list by calling her at 444-6778 or by e-mail: [kmontgomery@state.mt.us](mailto:kmontgomery@state.mt.us). Loans can be made up to a maximum of \$10,000 (subject to available funds), and must be repaid within five years, she said.
- B. After a brief discussion, MREA members voted to accept nominations for the MREA Annual Renewable Energy Award. The award recognizes a business, organization or individual for "demonstrating an outstanding commitment to the promotion of renewable energy technologies."

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Nominations were to be submitted by e-mail or letter to secretary Jim Tracy by May 15.

Receipt of the award is to be based on original and innovative contributions to the advancement of renewable energy technologies. The recipient must show exceptional contributions during the past year in the field of renewable energy through the promotion of renewable technologies, through acting as an advocate for public policy development, or through active participation in renewable energy education forums.

Any dues-paying member of MREA may make a nomination for this award. Nominations may be made any time during the calendar year but will be solicited during the October through November timeframe. A brief written narrative documenting the basis for nomination must accompany each nomination.

The group agreed that the award should include a plaque and be accompanied by a release issued to Montana news media. It was also suggested that the award be given out as early as the Sustainability Fair.

- C. The board voted to spend as much as \$1,000 to buy LED Christmas lights and re-sell them at the Sustainability Fair as a fund-raiser. Jim Tracy agreed to buy the lights through Ellen Lamiman of Energy Solutions in Winthrop, Wash., who has done business with NorthWestern Energy, BPA, NCAT and Glacier Electric Cooperative.
- D. Georgia Brensdaal showed off the new MREA brochure and drew compliments from members. Brensdaal said the brochure, which includes a form for joining MREA, was to be sent to more than 500 people on a mailing list she had compiled. She also distributed bundles of brochures for members to hand out or mail out on their own. Brensdaal reported that 800 copies of the brochure were published at an estimated cost of \$0.513 per copy for a total of \$410, including \$225 for printing and \$185 for distribution.
- E. Pat Judge reported on three bills passed by the 2003 Legislature that he believed “would further weaken” the Montana Major Facilities Siting Act.
- F. R. Paul Williamson, dean of the College of Technology at the University of Montana described the Montana Hydrogen Futures Project. Using a PowerPoint slide show, Williamson said it is clear that Montana is at least five years behind where it needs to be in relation to the competitive world of state economies and innovative hydrogen technologies. This is extremely disappointing, he said, considering the fact that Montana is the only state in the nation that holds all the natural resources to be a hydrogen state. By fall it is apparent that three major steps must be in order to catch up and not be in a position of picking up crumbs as an “also ran” follower. Williamson said three things must happen:
  1. Montana needs to adopt a Hydrogen Energy Plan.
  2. Montana needs to create a “Best Business Environment” Plan that will facilitate the hundreds of businesses and products that will be part of the hydrogen future.

### 3. Montana needs to break ground on the Hydrogen Futures Park.

Williamson said he has traveled around the state speaking to groups about a hydrogen economy for Montana and that his talks have generated great interest and excitement. His talk highlighted the great potential that Montana has “when it moves to a hydrogen economy.” Williamson provided an overview of what the state has to do to make this happen, why it is so imperative that “we do it immediately and how we can turn economic lemons into lemonade as state and a nation to become a pollution-free, hydrogen-based economy.”

Williamson also described a wind turbine partnership he’s working on. As part of the University of Montana’s EPSCOR project, the University of Montana College of Technology and Montana Tech are working together to move two wind turbines to the Missoula area that will serve as training and research equipment, Williamson said.

He said the UM-COT will install and maintain the turbines as part of a new alternative energy training program that is being developed with the anticipation that photovoltaics, microturbines, hydrogen electrolysis, and metal hydride batteries will become part of the “training centers.” Data will be communicated to Montana Tech via telemetry from the wind turbines to continue to support its research. “This is a first step toward the goals of creating the best-trained hydrogen workforce in the country and for the University of Montana College of Technology to develop training that can be replicated throughout the State,” he said.

The Futures Project, (<http://www.cte.umt.edu/MTFutures/>) hopes to establish an H2 Futures Park at the University of Montana; establish statewide hydrogen production and distribution capabilities; leverage hydrogen investments that create new hydrogen products, businesses and jobs; and use hydrogen-generated resources that enhance Montana's infrastructure growth.

- G. Energy consultant Van Jamison described efforts by Secretary of State Bob Brown to create a “functional” and “dynamic” wind working group. The group would be an offshoot of a wind/biomass group that has been meeting periodically over the past two years. Jamison said the group’s purpose would be to develop a strategy for promoting wind energy in Montana. Dave Ryan suggested that the wind working group could be part of the Montana Renewable Energy Association.
- H. Gayle Shirley, spokesperson for the secretary of state, described the Energy from the Farm Bus Tour scheduled for May 1-3. The bus tour is aimed at exploring the potential economic, national security, and environmental opportunities that the wind and biofuel industries have to offer Montana farmers and ranchers, Shirley said. The three-day tour, hosted by Secretary of State Bob Brown, was to begin and end at the State Capitol.
 

Shirley said the tour included a stop in Bozeman for a presentation on oilseeds by Dr. Charles Flynn, a research chemist with Montana State University’s agricultural research station in Sidney, and Yellowstone National Park for a tour of the vehicle maintenance garage by park employee Jim Evanoff.
- I. Dave Ryan described the Renewable Energy Demonstration Trailer MREA is building with a grant from NorthWestern Energy’s Universal System Benefits

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program. Ryan said the trailer will include photovoltaic, small wind, solar hot water, and efficiency displays. The trailer will also house a battery bank, allowing it to be used as a power source at a variety of sites. Ryan said MREA hoped to display the trailer at regional renewable energy fairs, home shows, appropriate conferences, and trade shows. The trailer will also be used for hands-on demonstration at a series of seminars MREA will conduct in 2003-2004 for electricians and electrical inspectors. Ryan said the seminars will be taught by John Walden of NCAT and licensed journeyman electrician Jim Sullivan of Local #44 of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers in Missoula. Ryan said more than 100 electricians had attended similar seminars conducted by Chris Borton of Sage Mountain Center.

- J. The Montana Renewable Energy Association approved spending \$1,000 to help fund the Sustainability Fair July 12 in Livingston.
- K. Roy Nollkamper, member services manager for Glacier Electric Cooperative, reported on the installation of a wind turbine at Blackfeet Community College. With the installation of the 10-kilowatt Bergey wind turbine complete, students at the Blackfeet Community College have begun to compile and study the data produced by the project, Nollkamper said. The turbine, acquired by a grant written by Ron Ladue through the college, also provides power for approximately 50 percent of the load at the vocational center where the generator is located. Any excess production will be passed onto Glacier Electric's system.
- L. Jim Tracy reported on his attendance at a meeting of Montanans for Responsible Energy Development. Tracy said his view was that MREA and MREA likely would have few common areas of interest or aims. Pat Judge, energy policy director for the Montana Environmental Information Center, criticized MRED for failing to back legislation favorable to renewable energy. "Not once did they come in as a proponent of renewable energy," he said, adding that MRED did favor policies Judge believes would weaken environmental protections.

The meeting adjourned at 4 p.m.