

MONTANA RENEWABLE ENERGY ASSOCIATION

Meeting 2/02

10 April 2002

Not for general publication

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

**Present:** Marla McCombie (in the chair), Jerry Spencer, Lee Tavenner, Georgia Brensdal, Kathi Montgomery, Chris Borton, Tony Boniface, Tim Ranf, Mikey Strickland, LuMarie Strickland, Logan Bryce, Jenni Bryce, and Jim Tracy. Guests: Suzanne Wilcox and Galen McKibben of Community Works in Helena.

**Apologies:** Roy Nollkamper, Dave Ryan, Chris Daum, Dan Healy

**Minutes:** Minutes of the January 9, 2002, meeting were read and approved.

**Treasurer's Report:**

Treasurer Chris Daum reported by e-mail that the association had \$2,984.34 in its account as of April 9, 2002. Chris submitted the following written report for 2001:

Our bank balance at the end of the year (12/31/2001) was \$2469.34

Here are the checks that were written:

(3/29/2001) Check #1001 for \$125 to New Earth Magazine for a booth at the Montana Festival

(4/17/2001) #1002 for \$128.66, reimbursement to Chris Borton for printing costs (MREA brochures/fliers)

(4/17/2001) #1003 for \$50 to the Corporation for Northern Rockies for a booth in the Sustainability Fair

(7/17/2001) #1004 for \$50 to Jim Tracy for reimbursement for banner

(8/21/2001) #1005 for \$150 to Greenfield Printing for MREA stationary

(10/17/2001) #1006 for \$150 to IRS for (application fee)

The only other debit was \$37 for a check printing fee, and is listed on the 01/31/01 bank statement.

All monies received into the checking account were from membership dues, except for \$500 from the Fanwood Foundation (Bob & Hope Stevens) which was a contribution/donation (received 7/26).

MEMBERSHIP DUES: \$2,660

CONTRIBUTIONS: \$500

EXPENSES: \$690.66

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**Old business**

- A. Jim Tracy reported that the Internal Revenue Service had granted the Montana Renewable Energy Association tax-exempt status as a 501 (c) 3 public benefits corporation. The effective date of the exemption is March 27, 2002, meaning contributions made before that date are not tax exempt. And because the exemption is not retroactive to MREA's founding date in 2000, the association must pay taxes at the rate of 15 percent on revenues from 2001 and the first three months (up to March 27) of 2002. Tracy and Dave Ryan will report on the tax liability at the next meeting.
- B. After a brief discussion, the MREA voted unanimously (motion by Jim Tracy, second by Chris Borton) to co-sponsor the 2002 Sustainability July 13 in Livingston at a cost of \$1,000. The theme for the Sustainability Fair 2002 is Shining a Light on Sustainable Choices. The fair includes activities Friday evening, July 12, and all day Saturday, July 13, at Rotary Park next to the Historic Depot Center in Livingston. Here's a promotion of the energy portion of the fair from the CNR website: "Worried about rising gas and energy prices? Want to learn how to get off the grid? Whether you're ready to go solar or are just looking for ways to reduce your 'ecological footprint,' you'll find choices for more sustainable living at CNR's Sustainability Fair 2002." MREA members Logan and Jenni Bryce of PineRidge Products in Great Falls pledged to set up a 42-foot wind tower and turbine to go along with a workshop on small-scale wind electric systems. Mikey and LuMarie Strickland of Dearborn Solar Electric will lead a workshop on residential-scale, stand-alone solar electric systems. For more information about Sustainability Fair 2002: 406.222.0730 [info@northrock.org](mailto:info@northrock.org). Other MREA members who will staff booths at the fair include: Montana DEQ, Sage Mountain Center, NorthWestern Energy and NCAT.
- C. Georgia Brensdal and Kathi Montgomery of the Montana Department of Environmental Quality reported on the Alternative Energy Loan Program established by the 57th Montana Legislature in Senate Bill 506. The loan program aims to provide a financing option to Montana homeowners and small businesses to install alternative energy systems that generate energy for their own use. Net metering is allowed.

Montgomery said DEQ is still soliciting comments and writing administrative rules that for the program. "The good news is we don't have to have the rules in place and adopted before we start accepting applications," Montgomery said. She said the first loans should be available by July 2002. Information will be available on the DEQ's Energize Montana website: [www.energizemontana.com](http://www.energizemontana.com). Montanans can add their names to the loan availability notification list by calling Montgomery 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. It is anticipated the interest rate will be 4 percent to 5 percent, Montgomery said. DEQ will accept and process loan applications throughout the year. Approved projects will be ranked according to criteria being developed. Criteria will be published upon completion and will consider items such as system reliability, return on investment and avoided fossil fuel consumption.

Once a loan is approved, the applicant will be informed whether funds are available, and, if not, when new funds are anticipated.

- D. The program is funded by air quality penalties collected by the Department of Environmental Quality. Montgomery said DEQ anticipates it will have as much as \$400,000 in the loan fund in 2002, including fines to be paid by Conoco in Billings and Montana Resources Inc. in Butte. Funds are derived from air quality penalties. DEQ will contract with a financial institution to administer the loans.

“We want people to use the loan program,” Montgomery said. “We don’t want to go back the Legislature and say, ‘Oh, it sounded great, but no one wanted to play.’”

The loan program is described in a DEQ brochure that also describes Montana’s Income Tax Credit on Alternative Energy. The credit is available to resident individual taxpayers who install an energy system using a recognized non-fossil form of energy generation, as defined in Montana code in the taxpayer’s principal dwelling after December 31, 2001.

The taxpayer is entitled to claim a tax credit in an amount equal to the cost of the system, including installation costs, less grants received, not to exceed \$500, against the income tax liability imposed against the taxpayer pursuant Montana law. Montgomery said DEQ has passed out brochures at home shows and other venues announcing the loan program and tax credit and will publicize the program more widely this summer.

- E. After a brief discussion, Chris Borton and Marla McCombie agreed to work together to develop criteria for an annual MREA Renewable Energy Award that will recognize an individual or group for contributions to renewable energy in Montana.

### **New Business**

- A. The MREA wrote the following letter to Sen. Max Baucus in support of portions of Energy Bill:

Max Baucus  
United States Senate  
Washington DC 20510-2602

Date: March 12, 2002

Re: Montana Renewable Energy Association Support for Renewable Portfolio Standard

Dear Max:

Please regard this a letter of support for a national Renewable Portfolio Standard (RPS). As you know, Montana has the potential to become one of the nation’s leaders in renewable

energy. Montana currently develops less than 1 percent of its power from renewable energy, but has the technical potential to generate much more. The current provision of Senators Daschle and Bingaman's bill requires utilities to ensure that 10 percent of their electric power sales are generated by renewable sources. While 10 percent is a good start, the Energy Information Administration has shown that a 20 percent standard is feasible and more beneficial. We ask that you support expected amendments in the debate to raise the RPS goal and most importantly oppose any efforts to weaken or eliminate the current proposal of 10 percent.

The Montana Renewable Energy Association was formed to educate and inform Montanans about the benefits of renewable energy. These benefits are both environmental and economic. A national RPS could benefit Montana economically, especially if appropriate electric transmission system upgrades were undertaken. Specific economic benefits include but are certainly not limited to increased land owner revenue from royalties from wind leases, construction and maintenance jobs in wind and biomass fueled power plants, and increased property tax revenue for the state. A national RPS would also help to conserve fossil fuels and avoid air and water pollution.

Again, we urge you to support a higher percentage of renewable energy as a standard for electric generation, for the benefit of Montanans and for all Americans.

Sincerely Yours,

David Ryan

President, Montana Renewable Energy Association

- B. Public Service Commissioner Bob Anderson left copies of a press release from the American Wind Energy Association ([www.awea.org](http://www.awea.org)) titled: "FERC Endorses Fair Treatment of Wind in Wholesale Electricity Markets – Commission Order Backs California ISO in Providing Access to Transmission Systems at Reasonable Cost."
- C. Brandon Wittman, Marketing and Member Services Director for Yellowstone Valley Electric Cooperative in Huntley, submitted the following written report on the Coop's Solar Stock Watering Program:

I just wanted to report that Yellowstone Valley Electric Cooperative is now offering solar stock watering units. Using one of our suppliers, YVEC constructed a demonstration solar unit. The unit was mounted on a trailer, and featured the Aerovironment pump controller/inverter. The unit performed very well throughout the testing period. We are so impressed that we have chosen to enter the business of solar stock watering. I have pictures and other information if you would like to see what we are offering. Additionally, YVEC will offer financing for these units. Please feel free to write or call, I would love to discuss this with you.

Brandon J Wittman

Marketing and Member Services

Yellowstone Valley Electric Cooperative

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Tony Boniface of Independent Power Systems in Bozeman said he had advised YVEC about solar stock watering.

- D. Dan Healy of Sunelco submitted the following report on Sunelco's Solar Pumping Workshop:

Our first water pumping seminar was held at the Hamilton Holiday Inn Express on Thursday 2/28 & Friday 3/1. Excluding ourselves (Dan, Tom & Nick), we had 19 other people attend our pumping workshop from MT, WA, ID, WY, NM and AZ (see attached attendee list). The first day was pretty much classroom work discussing the history of solar pumping, different types of pumps for different applications, the 4 main system components (solar modules, mount structure, controller & pump) and system sizing. The 2<sup>nd</sup> day started with a brief review & question/answer session followed by the assembly and wiring of 3 different pumping systems (Kyocera SD 12-30 w/two 75W modules on a Zomeworks tracker, Dankoff's new ETA pump with four KC120's on a fixed roof/ground mount and an M-3 floating pump with a US-64 solar module). We totally lucked out weather wise since it was very cloudy and snowing in the morning, but just as we started setting all of the systems up outside on the south side of the building, the sun broke through and allowed us about an hour of play time with the 3 different pumping systems before the clouds rolled in and it started snowing again. When we came back inside, we took apart a Kyocera SD 6-35 diaphragm pump and Windy Dankoff's new ETA pump to see how they work. We concluded the 2nd day with a discussion of stock tank freeze protection.

- E. Roy Nollkamper, Manager of Member Services at Glacier Electric Cooperative in Cut Bank and Browning, submitted the following report on Coop Day at the State Fair in Great Falls:

Here is a paragraph or two explaining the purpose and philosophy of our gathering in Great Falls at the State Fair. I believe it will take place August 6, 2002 at the State Fair grounds. We have been located at the same place since the inception of the program three years ago, and the fair visitors are now familiar with the location and automatically walk to the site to "see what's going on."

Our intent is to promote cooperative concepts and provide a great method of exposing fair-goers to the different cooperatives around the state. We encourage not only electric, but all cooperatives to participate, and typically have 15 to 20 booths set up and staffed by cooperative employees. These include telephone, electric, propane, loan agencies, and other cooperative entities. We have always had a display by Basin Electric Cooperative out of North Dakota which includes innovative electric items such as the Honda gas over electric vehicle and the electric bicycle and scooter.

One of the ways we promote participation by the public is to provide free rides in any of four bucket trucks supplied by the cooperatives, plus we emphasize safety aspects by having periodic safety demonstrations during the day. The rides often continue well past darkness, and free t-shirts are given to those who "dare" to ride in the trucks.

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One reason I think that NCAT, and some of the NREA members would find this a useful program, is due to the large number of questions we field every year concerning solar power, wind power, and other forms of alternative energy. I think it would be an excellent opportunity to set up demo units and promote all methods of distributed generation plus stand-alone systems for various applications.

The only thing that can't be done at this location is actual retail sales. However, my personal thought is that promotion of information and then providing a source for the visitor to call later for "more details," would not be a problem. We need to be very careful, since we are deemed a non-retail entity at the fair, and get a substantially lower rental fee for the space we use. We would certainly not want to jeopardize that standing with the Fair Board.

Feel free to toss this around the group and let me know what you think. As I mentioned on the phone, I may or may not be back from vacation by April 10th, so I'm not certain about my attendance at the meeting in Helena. Once the group decides if they want to participate, I'll carry that information to the chair of the group that organizes the event.

Thanks for your help.

Roy

- F. Suzanne Wilcox and Galen McKibben of Community Works, a Helena non-profit organization, discussed the possibility of working with MREA on several fronts. Community works is developing an "exploration and discovery" museum in Helena to house hands-on science and culture activities for children and their families, teachers, caregivers and others. As part of the development, the group is offering "museum without walls" activities. This summer, Community Works will sponsor Summer Exploration 2002, including Explore Renewable Energy July 15-19, a hands-on outdoor workshop for children 5-12. Community Works' goal is "to educate about the science of alternative energy," including photovoltaics, wind turbines and fuel cells. Community Works is looking for experts in alternative energy who will help set up "educational and experiential exhibits" showcasing and explaining wind, solar and fuel cell technology in a way that is meaningful to its targeted group. MREA agreed to provide technical assistance and written material for the effort. Wilcox and McKibben also explained Community Works' plans to build a 14,000-square-foot "Exploration and Discovery Center" in Helena. Jerry Spencer and Tim Ranf agreed to work with Community Works on that effort.
- G. The group briefly discussed a net metering policy recommended by the of Montana Electric Cooperatives' Association Subcommittee on Transmission, Interconnection and Net Metering. A copy of the policy (PDF), along with the policy adopted by Park Electric in Livingston are available on the Montana Green Power website: [www.montanagreenpower.com](http://www.montanagreenpower.com). Tony Boniface pointed out that the MECA and Park Electric policies do offer "true net-metering," although both limit banking of generated electricity credits. Such banking can only only from month to month.

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- H. The group agreed to change the next regular quarterly meeting date to accommodate planning for the July 13 Sustainability Fair. MREA will meet Wednesday, June 26, 2002, at DEQ in Helena.

The meeting adjourned at 3:30 p.m.

NEXT MREA MEETING: Wednesday, June 26, 2002, 1 to 4 p.m. at the Montana Department of Environmental Quality in Helena.

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