

Meet Your Co-op

Loren Howard retires

“Did I do the right thing?” Going home at the end of the day, I ask myself that question. ‘Did I do the right thing for our cooperative, the employees and 90 percent of our members?’ If I can answer yes to that question, then I sleep well at night,” Loren Howard stated when commenting on his 11 years as CEO of San Luis Valley Rural Electric Cooperative (REC). Loren retires in March, and new CEO Eric Ericksen will take over all duties as Chief Executive Officer on March 13. Loren will stay on board to the end of March to help foster a smooth transition for Eric and REC employees.

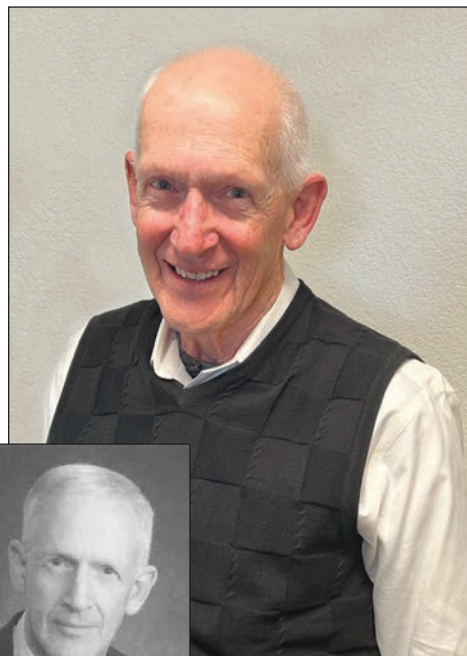
Coming to REC from Holland Board of Public Works (Holland, Mich.) in November 2011, Loren was looking forward to having “many new professional challenges and opportunities.” He had previously served 22 years in the United States Coast Guard and worked at Packaging Corporation of America, Century Boat Company and Colorado Department of Transportation. Loren earned a Bachelor of Science in Mechanical Engineering and a Master in Business Administration in his many academic pursuits. He is also a registered professional engineer in Colorado.

Loren has seen many industry changes since starting in the business more than 40 years ago. The technical (back-end) of the electric system is completely different, due to wholesale deregulation and the creation of regional transmission organizations (RTO) and independent system operators (ISO). In addition, “renewable energy is transforming the industry; wind and solar are changing where power comes from,” he stated.

On a more local level, Loren doesn’t see huge changes coming for the electric cooperative. “We’re the wires to your house; we’re the end-user provider. I don’t see the fundamentals of our business changing even with solar on your house and someday the implementation of microgrids. No technology will change the wires and poles to your house. I do think demand will change, but the basics will not.”

Throughout Loren’s history of being at REC, one of the accomplishments he is most proud of is summed up in one word: Ciello. His pride for REC’s broadband

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Loren Howard
at left (Loren in 2011)

Major Accomplishments:

- PENITENTE SOLAR, BUILT AND OPERATIONAL
- ADVANCE METERING INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECT
- NEW SCADA SYSTEM
- SUCCESSFUL LAUNCH OF CIELLO
- NET METERING PROGRAM STREAMLINED
- IMPLEMENTED TEAM-BUILDING AND COHESIVENESS
- RATE CLASSES COVER THEIR OWN COSTS
- EMPLOYEE BENEFITS BETTER MANAGED TO DECREASE COSTS

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Concern for Community



REC employees give back



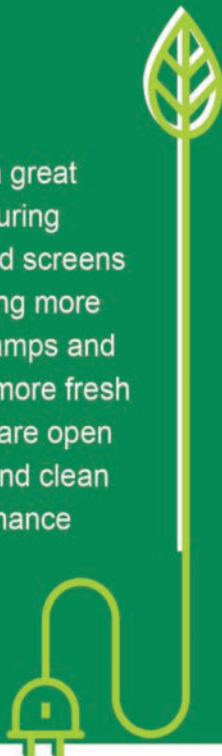
REC staff members Michelle Trujillo, Monroe Johnson, Shawn McKibbin, Carol Silva, Stacy Valdez, Terry Daley and Jennifer Alonzo served breakfast at the 41st Annual Southern Rocky Mountain Agriculture Conference at the Ski Hi Complex on Feb. 8.



Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

Washing windows and screens is a great way to practice energy efficiency during spring cleaning. Clean windows and screens make your home brighter by allowing more sunlight in, reducing the need for lamps and fixtures. Clean screens also allow more fresh air in the home when the windows are open to recycle indoor air. Natural light and clean air are energy savers, and they enhance overall health and productivity.

Source: energy.gov



ciello *This is our why...*

"I would like to give kudos to Kelby with Cielo. He installed Internet service in our home today (Jan. 23, 2023). He is very professional, knowledgeable, and courteous.

And that friendly smile of his made my 91-year-young Mom's day. Thank you for your awesome customer service!"

-Susan Valdez, Monte Vista

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Loren Howard

The last word

So, it comes to this – my last Newsboy column. It has been my pleasure to work for San Luis Valley Rural Electric Cooperative for more than 11 years, and I want to thank the Board of Directors for the opportunity to serve. In those 11 years, there have been only two days in which I was not anxious to come to work, and those days had nothing to do with some of the well-known difficult events of the past. I will walk away hoping I have made some lasting changes in this organization, none of which were detrimental to the success of San Luis Valley Rural Electric Cooperative and Cielo. I believe REC and Cielo will continue to be successful through the hard work and commitment of employees and the Board of Directors.

On March 1, Eric Eriksen will come on board REC and Cielo, and after a few days of transition, Eric will take over as the Chief Executive Officer on March 13 assuming all control of leadership. Having been an ex-officio participant in the selection process of the new CEO, the Board of Directors selected an outstanding leader for the future of REC and Cielo. I would encourage all members of REC to attend this upcoming annual meeting

on the second Tuesday of June to meet Eric and hear his plans for the future.

The past is gone, only the now can change and improve the future. My assessment of the electric industry future is one of both confidence and concern. Electricity will continue to be, as I like to call it, the “Prime Utility” because virtually every other utility relies upon electricity to function – water, sewer, telecommunications, natural gas, et.al. Reliability is a real concern and will be for some years, transitioning from a world of virtually 100 percent controllable generation to a world of a mix of controllable and uncontrollable generation. Will we, the United States, make the transition? I have no doubt the answer is yes. Bumps along the way will be challenging, but will be solved.

Finally, I want to say thanks for the opportunity to live where I love, to work at a place I love and in an industry that I love. I shall forever remain committed to REC and Cielo and shall, from the sidelines, watch and revel in its successes.

Final and best regards to all members, Board of Directors and employees of REC and Cielo.

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Your email will be forwarded based on the direction you provide in your subject line.

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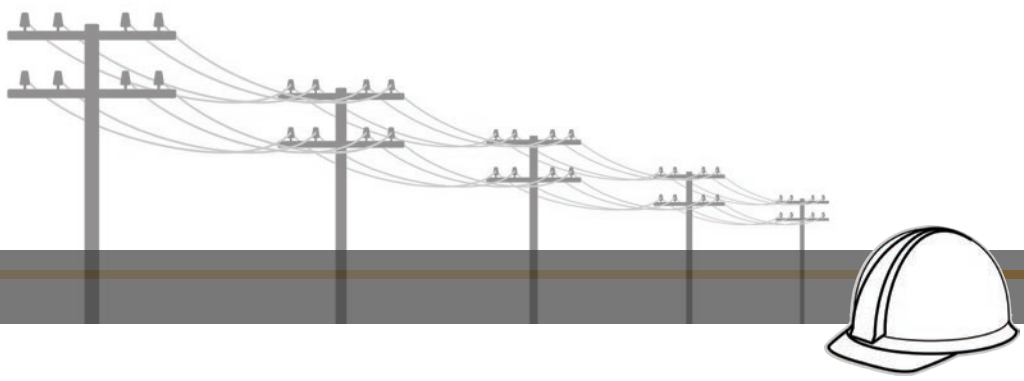


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LOREN

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division is very evident in the way he talks of it. “I’ve been around broadband since 1993. When REC’s Board of Directors wanted to bring it to the Valley, I said, ‘ok, let’s go.’ We brought someone in to do a feasibility study—marketing, engineering and financials, and everything looked okay. Then we did a second round of market and financial studies, and we went for it,” Loren said.

“I would like to think we’ve changed people’s lives here [by bringing fiber broadband Internet to unserved and underserved areas].” He wouldn’t have changed a thing along the way. “We didn’t wait for grant money. If we did, we’d never be where we are today. We just went and did it.”

“In the future, maybe grants will help build out fiber in other areas that are difficult to justify financially, but we did what we needed to do to get the job done at the time, and I’m proud of that,” Loren said, “I hope 20 years from now, maybe someone will think, ‘I remember Loren Howard; he brought fiber to the Valley.’”

“My best memory of working at REC ... every day. There have only been two days since I’ve been here that I didn’t want to come to work. I’ve loved every other day of the last 11 years,” he commented.

So what’s next for Loren... “I’m retiring,” he laughed. “I’ve never been good at having fun when I know there’s work to do. Can I just play all the time? I struggle with that concept.” As a new Monte Vista City Councilor, Loren will be able to keep himself somewhat busy. “I’ve thought about being on City Council before, but never could commit the time. With my impending demise here at REC, the time is right,” Loren commented.

Loren also plans to travel with his wife Karen; they’re looking forward to a future trip to Scotland. “As of right now, Karen is excited for me to be home more, but we’ll see

how that goes. Sometimes you realize you might not want what you asked for,” he chuckled.

In addition, his two children have been asking him for years: “when are you going to retire and come visit us more?” That’s definitely in his plans as well—visiting his daughter Rebecca and her husband James in Denver and his son Micah and his wife Kendra in Washington D.C., as well as his eight grandchildren.

Additionally, Loren will find more time for his

hobbies: rebuilding jeeps, amateur radio, hiking and rock climbing, and he might even try to finish getting his private pilot license. The San Luis Valley has been the perfect home for Loren and his wife. “Anywhere above tree line is literally my

heaven on earth. When we moved here in 2011, we were 228 miles away from my son and

his family and 228 miles from my daughter and her family. It’s the perfect place to be,” Loren said. “I am enormously grateful for being a part of REC. I love working for the members and customers of REC and Cielo. The employees here are the best I have ever had a chance to work with. It’s a great organization with few struggles; this makes it hard to walk away. My heart will always be with REC and Cielo, and I’ve told the board and the employees several times, ‘if you ever need me for any reason, I’ll be there,’” Loren concluded.

There may have been a few stumbles along the way, but Loren spent the past 11 years working alongside the employees to make REC and Cielo what it is today. When Loren finishes up at the end of March, he can be assured that the difficult decisions he has made put REC and Cielo in the right place for the future.

“Loren has been an energizer for the entire SLVREC Board. He encourages each and every board member to think out of the box in a very productive manner. It has been exciting to see SLVREC’s progression under his leadership.”

**~Carol Lee Dugan,
REC Board Director**

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Recipe of the Month

INGREDIENTS

- 1 medium onion, cut into wedges
- 4 large red potatoes, quartered
- 1 lb. baby carrots
- 3 c. water
- 3 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 bay leaf
- 2 T. sugar
- 2 T. cider vinegar
- 1/2 t. pepper
- 1 corned beef brisket with spice packet (2-1/2 to 3 lbs.), cut in half
- 1 small head cabbage, cut into wedges

SLOW-COOKER CORNED BEEF & CABBAGE

1. Place the onion, potatoes and carrots in a 6- to 7-qt. slow cooker. Combine the water, garlic, bay leaf, sugar, vinegar, pepper and contents of spice packet; pour over vegetables. Top with brisket and cabbage.

2. Cover and cook on low for 8-9 hours or until meat and vegetables are tender. Discard bay leaf before serving.

TasteofHome.com

Historical Happenings will return next month

Member Information

Petitions for Nomination of Director Candidate now available

Petitions for the nomination of director candidates for San Luis Valley Rural Electric Cooperative (SLVREC) are now available. Members can call Michelle at 719-852-3538 to have a petition packet mailed or pick up at SLVREC's office at 3625 US Hwy 160 W., Monte Vista.

At the June 13, 2023 annual meeting, two directors will be elected: one from Rio Grande County, District 1 and one Member at Large, District 7.

Completed petitions must include 15 valid SLVREC member signatures and be returned to SLVREC no later than Monday, April 17, 2023 (or Friday, April 7 to have a brief bio included in the Annual Report). It is recommended to obtain 20 signatures in the event that any of the 15 signatures is invalid.

To view or download the current Bylaws, Board Policy 1-002-Board Job Description and Candidate Statement of Qualifications, go online to slvrec.com, About Us, Annual Meeting. This does NOT include the actual petition for nomination.

If you're interested in having a brief bio included in the Annual Report, it is due to Jennifer Alonzo no later than Friday, April 7, 2023; email to jalonzo@slvrec.com.



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Photo by Tyler Cerny

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SCHEDULED MEETINGS

Board Meeting: Tuesday, March 28, 9:30 a.m.
The REC Board of Directors meets the last Tuesday of each month unless otherwise stated. Members are welcome; advance notice required.

This institution is an equal opportunity employer.

