

THE NEWSBOY

News for Members of San Luis Valley Rural Electric Cooperative

Moving forward

2020 year in review

This past year, 2020, was a trying year for many including San Luis Valley REC and Ciello, but like most REC and Ciello forged onward and finished the year with numerous successes.

On the electric side of the business, REC upgraded the Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition (SCADA) equipment at three substations which allows real time monitoring, alarming and control. This SCADA equipment improves reliability and reduces outage times by providing information about outage events and remote control to assist crews with restoration and switching.

Transformers at substations are crucial pieces of equipment on REC's electric system and to ensure continued reliability, transformers at two substations were tested in accordance with REC's regular substation inspection and maintenance program.

REC maintains a mobile substation in case a substation would have a major outage. This mobile substation can be set up at any substation location very quickly. The mobile substation was also tested as part of the substation maintenance program.

In the past year, REC electric line crews spent



Photo by Kevin McCarroll

considerable time updating about seven miles of REC power lines in areas with active bird populations in an effort to make power lines more "avian friendly."

September brought some headaches to both the electric system and the fiber system of Ciello with a fall storm (*see photo above*) with more than 12 inches of snow and wind gusts up to 80 MPH. This storm event caused outages across the Valley. Crews and employees worked together to restore electric and Internet services as

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Meet your co-op

Sanford native joins Ciello team

Sanford native Devin Ruiz recently joined the Ciello team as a telecommunications coordinator. Devin comes to Ciello with six years of experience working at Spectrum.

He was drawn to REC/Ciello because he's heard good things about being a part of a cooperative and wanted to grow his knowledge of fiber and the technology that goes along with it.

As a telecommunications coordinator, Devin is tasked with coordinating installations and surveying customers' homes to see what type of drop they need. He works to make sure everything is ready for the technicians when they go to do the actual installations.



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Capital credits/Conservation corner

Loren Howard

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Recipe/Historical happenings

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Getting your piece of the pie



Capital credits issued

As a cooperative, SLVREC does not operate for a profit. Rates are determined by periodic cost-of-service studies designed to evaluate the cost of doing business for each rate class served. Money collected in excess of actual expenses is retained by the cooperative as a type of operating loan. This loan from members to the cooperative provides a ready cash flow and keeps the cooperative financially stable.

Each year, the cooperative's board of directors reviews the company's financial status and determines if there is enough working capital on hand to return a portion of this "borrowed" money back to members. These capital credits are paid out to members in direct proportion to a member's use for the years in which the credits are being returned.

Members who no longer have active accounts with the cooperative, but who are entitled to receive capital credits for these years will receive a check in the mail.

SLVREC currently returns most capital credits in the form of a bill credit for members with active accounts. Bill credits were issued on the January 2021 statements.

2021 CAPITAL CREDIT RETIREMENT

100% of 1991 SLVREC capital credits
A portion of 1992'S SLVREC capital credits
and a percentage of all other SLVREC capital credits
If you have questions,
please call Carol at 719.852.6638.



"We would like to personally thank the installers of our internet and commend them on a job well done. Jeff and Andy installed Cielo at our house in South Fork the week of Thanksgiving. We were so very impressed by their professionalism and their dedication to a clean and perfect install on our internet where the lines would not show through the logs on the home.

Prior to the install, the assistance of Dustin and Davine was over the top as well. Faced with a huge install cost, Dustin found another route to run the fiber and saved us a tremendous amount of money. Their service was top notch and the willingness to find a way to save us money was truly appreciated. Additionally, the time that James Romero took to explain the rate structure for the electric billing was very much appreciated. He spent quite a bit of time explaining the components that add up to the electric bill.

It is the work of the employees of the company which make it so great. It is clear that SLVREC/Cielo hire great people. While we have been a customer for less than two months, we look forward to continued service with a company that clearly values dedicated employees!"

-Kim and Stewart Domke, South Fork

POWERED BY REC

Cielo, Powered by REC, is proud to feature testimonials from our satisfied customers in upcoming issues of the Newsboy. Send your testimonials to jalonzo@slvrec.com to be featured.

Conservation corner

Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

Use wool or rubber dryer balls in the clothes dryer to reduce drying time and static.

Wool dryer balls can also absorb extra moisture. These are an efficient alternative to dryer sheets, which can create buildup on the dryer's filter and reduce air circulation. If you prefer dryer sheets, scrub the filter once a month to remove buildup.

Source: www.energy.gov





Loren Howard

Electric rates— an ongoing topic

Electric rates have always been a source of discussion, sometimes causing unhappiness and often difficult to understand. In 2019, when REC implemented what is known as three-part rates for all electric rate classes, this was very disconcerting to residential members who were very accustomed to rates with just a customer charge and an energy charge. Commercial customers including farming and ranching have been accustomed to rates which have three parts (customer charge, demand charge and energy charge) for many years. In the last months of 2019, after many meetings and complaints about the new residential rate, REC revised the charges of the three-part residential rate making the demand charge significantly smaller resulting in a rate which is effectively just a two-part rate. The residential rate agreed upon will continue through 2021.

In 2021, as is usual every three years, REC will conduct another cost-of-service study utilizing an outside consultant to evaluate all current electric rates including the Interim Residential Rates (Rate A, Rate A-TOD and Rate A2-TOD). This cost-of-service study will once again work to fairly allocate costs between rate classes and within rate classes. Two main goals of the study will be to 1) develop a single residential rate and 2) separate residential members and commercial members into separate rate classes.

As a part of the recent focus group

meetings, REC has prepared a video presentation of the 2018 cost-of-service study presented by the consultant. This video presentation is available for all REC members to view at www.slvrec.com (About Us Tab). When the 2021 cost-of-service study is complete, another video presentation will be prepared and available on the REC website.

Before any rates are changed, REC is committed to providing information on any new rates and any changes to existing rates for at least six months, i.e. well into 2022, prior to implementation to ensure all members, residential, commercial and agriculture have sufficient time to understand the proposed changes and work with REC customer service to evaluate the proposed changes on their individual account.

Ensuring electric rates are fair to all members has always been a goal of REC and while the 2019 rate implementation caught many residential members off guard, the rates of that study were evaluated using industry standard methodologies and designed to be fair to all members, not just a select few. Having understood that changing rates too quickly is very disrupting to members, any changes in future rates will be implemented in a slow, methodical manner over years allowing members to understand the rates and have sufficient time adapt to the impact of the new rate whether the rate increases or decreases monthly bills.

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

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PUBLISHER'S STATEMENT

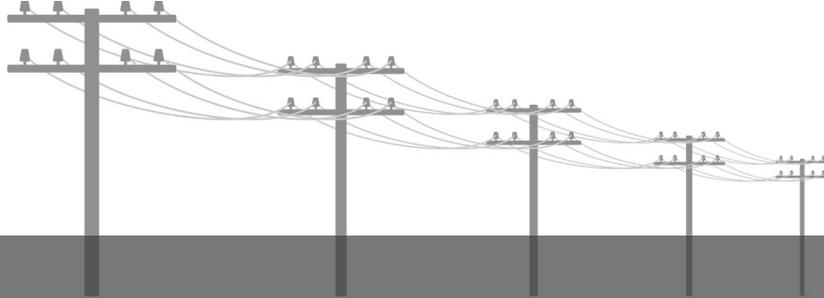
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REVIEW

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quickly as possible but given the widespread nature of the storm, it took three days to get everyone's services restored.

Ciello continued to grow throughout 2020 with more than 650 miles of fiber built out and 88 wireless antennas deployed. Ciello now passes more than 13,000 homes and businesses and has more than 5,600 subscribers to Ciello Internet and phone services.

Fiber was built throughout the town of Saguache and in various parts of Alamosa (see photo at right).

Reliability of Internet and phone services has become as crucial as the electric system. Working to improve the Ciello core network, authentication protocols were converted to a more reliable system known as Dynamic Host Configuration Protocol (DHCP) replacing an older system.

The spread of COVID-19 took its toll on everyone's daily routines in 2020 and REC was no exception. REC offices were shut down in late March until early June during which time employees worked remotely or with minimal contact. Ciello went above and beyond to get Valley residents and students connected providing students with the ability to attend classes online (see photo above) and many residents to work remotely.

REC Board of Directors approved additional measures



Courtesy Photo



Photo by Jennifer Alonzo

to aid REC members struggling to pay their electric bills due to the pandemic.

As part of an ongoing rate education and stakeholder engagement process, SLV REC conducted a customer satisfaction survey among members this past summer and a series of residential focus group meetings this fall. Reports from both can be found online at www.slvrec.com/about-us. Ongoing member education has become a regular effort continuing into 2021 with

an agriculture/commercial member focus group.

While many 2020 activities were put on hold, REC employees took part in school career fairs early in the year and helped

sponsor several local events. In 2021 the co-op will continue to support Valley communities with economic development and community involvement.

With the challenges of 2020 in the rear view mirror, REC and Ciello are looking ahead to 2021 and will continue to improve the reliability of both the electric system and the broadband system.

We hope you have a healthy, positive and prosperous 2021!

DEVIN

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Devin has found it a little challenging getting familiar with all the different programs used to install service to customers, as well as troubleshooting. But he commented, "The whole work environment is great here. I am enjoying being part of helping customers get the services they need

to do their everyday things over the Internet whether it be work, schooling, or just for overall entertainment."

Devin graduated from Sanford High School and grew up in Sanford. He is married with two sons and enjoys fishing and riding ATVs in his free time.



Recipe of the month

INGREDIENTS

For the seasoning mix:

- 2 t. garlic powder
- 1 1/2 t. onion powder
- 1 1/2 t. paprika
- 1 t. freshly ground pepper
- 1/4 t. cayenne

For the fries and steak:

- 1 (1-lb.) package frozen fries
- 12 oz. flank steak, sliced into 5" sections
- 1 T. vegetable oil
- Kosher salt

For the cheese sauce:

- 3 T. butter
- 3 T. all-purpose flour
- 1 c. whole milk
- 2 c. shredded cheddar
- Kosher salt

For serving:

- 2 avocados
- 1 1/2 T. lime juice
- Kosher salt
- 1 medium tomato, diced
- 1 small yellow onion, finely diced
- 1/4 c. sour cream

CARNE ASADA FRIES

1. Make the seasoning mix: Mix all ingredients in a small bowl.

2. Make fries and steak: Preheat oven to 425°. On a large baking sheet, bake French fries in a single layer according to package instructions. Season with salt to taste immediately after they're baked.

3. Meanwhile, rub steak with vegetable oil and season with 1-1/2 teaspoons salt and 1 tablespoon seasoning mix. Heat a medium cast iron skillet over medium-high heat. Add steak and cook, flipping once, until a deep golden crust forms on both sides of the steak, about 5 minutes total. Let meat rest 10 minutes before slicing into 1" cubes.

4. Make cheese sauce: In a medium saucepan over medium heat, melt butter. Add flour and cook until just golden, 1 to 2 minutes more. Add milk and bring to a simmer, then whisk in cheese and let thicken, 3 to 5 minutes more.

5. Assemble: In a small bowl, mash avocados with lime juice and 1 teaspoon seasoning mix, and season with salt. Top fries with cheese sauce, sliced steak, mashed avocado, tomato, onion and a dollop of sour cream. Sprinkle on remaining seasoning mix and serve immediately.

Recipe by www.Delish.com

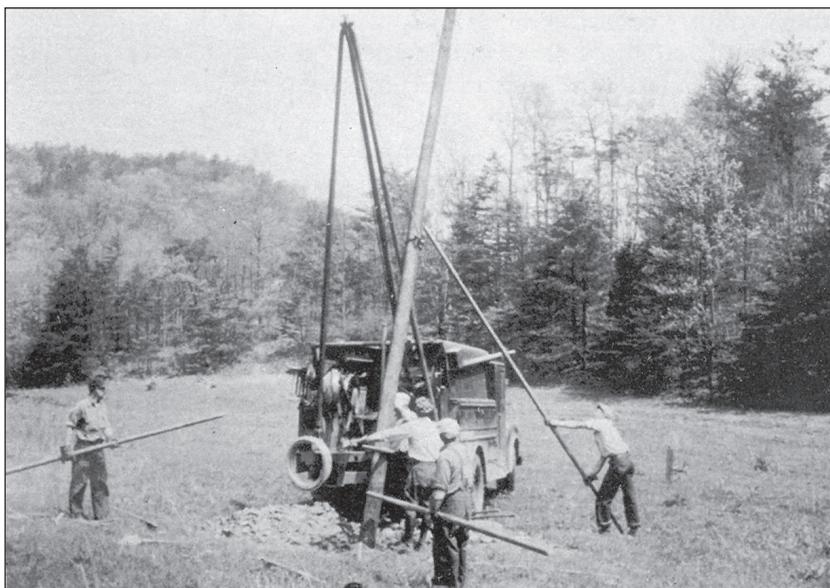
Historical happenings

Late 1937: Construction bid awarded

Pueblo's Driscoll Construction Company was awarded the project of 136 miles of electrical line in the San Luis Valley. Their bid of \$98,074.34 for the "A" section included western red cedar poles, aluminum cable steel reinforced conductors, installation of transformers, steel structures for the substation and three 150 KVA transformers to be located at Zinzer Switch east of Monte Vista.

(San Luis Valley Historian, Volume XXVI #3, 1994)

Courtesy Photo





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POWERING A VITAL VALLEY

P.O. Box 3625
Monte Vista, CO 81144

February 2021

CONGRATS ON YOUR MILESTONE ANNIVERSARIES!

2020



ciello



POWERING OUR COMMUNITY

SLVREC's office is open from 7 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Thursday and will be closed on Feb. 15, 2021 for Presidents' Day.

ENERGY ASSISTANCE
866-HEAT HELP (866-432-8435)
www.energyoutreach.org

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Cooperative

SCHEDULED MEETINGS
Board Meeting: Tuesday, Feb. 23, 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.



Photo by Blain Decker