

## Cooperation goes a long way

### Fire mitigation focus of maintenance project

Disaster has struck many parts of Colorado in recent years by way of wildfire, and the San Luis Valley hasn't been immune to the widespread epidemic. The Million Fire, Spring Creek Fire and West Fork Fire Complex burned thousands of acres of land, and while these Valley fires weren't caused by an electric utility, they do show the importance of having a fire mitigation plan in place.

SLV REC holds wildfire prevention as a high priority and strives to be proactive in keeping mitigation plans accurate and up to date. This is evidenced by the current maintenance project occurring on Highway 160 from mile marker 183.5 to mile marker 178. The three-phase line and 34 poles from Lonesome Dove to the Lucky 7 Subdivision will be replaced with Hendrix Aerial Cable.

"Hendrix Aerial Cable Systems are anchored by a high strength messenger wire that supports the spacers and phase conductors from above. It has the mechanical and electrical strength to weather severe storms," according to a Hendrix product website.

The covered cable can withstand impact from contact, such as a tree falling, without triggering an outage. The resiliency of the line drastically reduces the potential for a



A generator was brought in and is housed in Wolf Creek Ski Area's parking lot.

fire caused by the electric utility.

"One of the big drivers of this project is wildfire mitigation. We're spending a great amount of effort looking at ways that we can mitigate the risk of wildfires caused by electric lines owned by San Luis Valley Rural Electric," stated REC CEO Loren Howard.

Not only will the new line help with fire mitigation, but it will also increase reliability. With the difficult terrain in the area, wire and pole repair is more challenging. The Hendrix cable will help prevent outages

See **COOPERATION** continued on Page 4

## Tri-State rate reduction update

### Members will receive credit in August

In April, Tri-State Generation & Transmission announced a 2% reduction in their wholesale electric prices effective March 1, 2021 for all members of Tri-State, which includes REC. At the June Board of Directors meeting, the Board approved passing this cost reduction on to REC members in the form of a bill credit. Since REC's electric rates have been set for 2021, a bill credit is the quickest way to return this cost reduction to members. The credit will show up in the August bills and will include the cost reduction retroactive to March 1,

so the first credit you see on your bill will be larger than subsequent credits. It will be passed on as an average credit of \$0.0016 per kilowatt-hour.

REC has engaged Power Systems Engineering of Madison, Wisc. to perform the triennial cost of service study. The reduction in electric costs from Tri-State is being included in this study and will be included in future rates.

Tri-State has announced it will implement another 2% reduction next year, which will also be included in REC's future rates.

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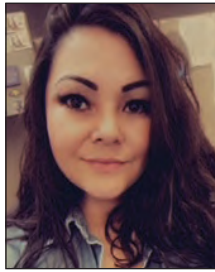
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# Meet your co-op



## New customer service reps welcomed

Del Norte native Victoria Robles came to the SLVREC/Ciello team in November with nine years' experience working in customer service. She was drawn to the co-op because it's a hometown-based company. "I know exactly who my leaders are, and my coworkers know my family. The involvement with the local community is important as well," said Victoria.



Victoria Robles

As a customer service representative, Victoria "loves being a piece of the pie. Lots of movement within the company stems from our department. I enjoy being a part of that team and contributing my part to help things run smoothly," she stated. "We always stay busy, which isn't really a challenge; there's just a lot of volume."

Although Victoria was born and raised in Del Norte, she graduated from high school in Denver. She moved back to the Valley in 2011 and now lives in Monte Vista with her boyfriend and children. Victoria enjoys barbecuing, fishing and walking her dogs.



Darren Romero

Alamosa High School graduate Darren Romero recently joined SLV REC/Ciello as a customer service representative as well.

Darren has held various jobs that taught him lessons relevant to his current position. "As a math teacher, I learned how to manage a large workload; as a loan officer I developed stronger organization skills, and working in restaurants taught me patience and great customer service skills," he stated. Darren attended Adams State University as a Business Administration student and has since desired a career which aligns well with his education. He has worked with the public throughout his employment history and really enjoys it, which makes him a good fit at REC/Ciello.

In his position as a CSR, Darren helps customers directly and indirectly whether it be collecting and processing payments, taking and submitting orders for fiber service, answering billing questions, troubleshooting with customers and much more.

"I am really enjoying the environment REC/Ciello provides. Everyone here is kind, patient **See CSRs continued on Page 4**

## Employees clean up highway



On June 17, REC/Ciello employees grabbed trash bags and hit the highway as part of CDOT's Adopt-a-Highway program. "Goods" collected included masks, cigarette butts, artificial flowers, a pool noodle, a gas can, tire pieces and much more. A total of 20 bags were filled and hauled off by CDOT.

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*Proudly serving our neighbors...*

January 2021— "Recently moved to Villa Grove, because of Ciello's wireless Internet service. This service is better than Spectrum (100MB) ISP and allows me to work from home and stay in contact with my employer located in NY. Love the area and all the sunshine!"

June 2021— "The service is still fantastic! We have four adults and two teenage kids and no one complains about the Internet being slow. We are on our phones using WiFi, watching videos and streaming Netflix, Amazon Prime, Disney+ and Fubo services on our TVs. No complaints!"

*—Alan Fielder, Villa Grove*

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Loren Howard

### Electric Rates Part 3: Energy Charge

At last, the part of the monthly electric bill that is the most understood – energy or what everyone knows— kilowatt-hours. When you turn that 100-watt light bulb on and leave it on for an hour that is 100 watts (or 0.1 kilowatt-hour). For decades, residential consumers of electricity were billed on kilowatt-hours only, so that concept of electricity has been understood for a long time. When residential and commercial consumers had no alternative as to who or how their electricity was supplied, billing on kilowatt-hours (kWh) was the easiest and least expensive way to charge for electricity consumed. Times change and so has the electric industry. Virtually all consumers of electricity have options on how the electrons used in their home or business are delivered.

Let's back up a month to the topic of the "demand charge." Generation, transmission and distribution infrastructure are all sized to be able to deliver electricity to all consumers at all times. All the costs to install and maintain the electric infrastructure are fixed— money spent. Even if no electrons actually flow, those costs still need to be covered. Generation actually makes the electricity— makes the electrons flow. Generation comes in many forms including central station plants, wind farms, solar farms, hydro-



electric stations and various other sources. These are the major sources of electric generation in today's world. When you turn on that light bulb at home or start up the water pump, a generator somewhere is responding.

The "prime mover" in central station plants is coal, natural gas or fuel oil. Hydroelectric plants use water as the prime mover, wind turbines use wind and solar farms use the energy of the sun (restating the obvious). Operating each of these types of generation has a cost. For wind and solar, operating costs are mainly personnel and maintenance costs, hydroelectric adds the cost of managing the water resource and central station plants add the cost of the fuel. All generation has some cost to actually making the electrons flow in the wires.

So, back to the energy charge on your monthly electric bill, it covers the costs of generating the electricity, moving the electrons which includes prime mover costs, maintenance costs, operating personnel costs and other lesser costs.

I hope the last three columns in the Newsboy have helped in the continuing effort to understand what it takes to provide electricity to members and why the various charges are separated on your monthly San Luis Valley REC electric bill.

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### Member questions answered, part 1

Several questions were received with the annual meeting ballots returned to REC. In the coming months, we will continue to address some of the questions. Many questions regarded current and future rates, another group regarded renewable energy, and there were several individual topics.

One of the individual questions received asked why biographies of the directors up for election were not included in the annual meeting information mailed to all members. Due to print deadlines and our priority of printing the annual report locally, the candidate petition for nomination deadline does not allow time to include the bios in the annual report. Strict deadlines must be adhered to when holding elections; to meet those deadlines, the printer needs ample time to print and assemble the annual meeting information for distribution. As soon as the candidates' petitions were verified, the bios were added to the REC website and announced via several social media outlets. In addition, there

### CSRs

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and willing to lend a helping hand. Previous employers of mine have promised this type of environment, but have not delivered, but REC/Ciello definitely has gone above my hopes and expectations," Darren explained.

"The hardest part of this position is calling customers to tell them that we may have to disconnect their services. I have learned that although this may be the case at times, we do offer assistance to customers who qualify. We are willing to help and work with customers to provide them with quality services even when times get hard," he stated.

Darren was born and raised in Alamosa where he attended

### COOPERATION

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and blinks on the system.

The project, which has been in the works for two years, couldn't have happened without cooperation and significant coordination between many different entities: USFS-Rio Grande National Forest, Colorado Department of Transportation, Wolf Creek Ski Area, United Power, contractor Ward Electric and more.

Under the CDOT permit and traffic control plan, Critters Barricade will be controlling traffic as needed for traveler/worker safety, particularly when the helicopter is used. This will involve possible traffic delays along Highway 160, which will be kept as short as safely possible. "A generator has been brought in for four to six weeks, while we switch the wires out. It is located in the ski area's parking lot. Davey Pitcher [Wolf Creek Ski Area owner] has been

was a link to the bios included in the annual report, and copies of the biography were available at the open house on June 8. We strive to communicate with members as efficiently and cost-effectively as possible.

One large group of questions revolved around renewable energy. REC has an established and active net metering program which allows members to install renewable energy on their business or residence. New applications are received almost daily. In addition to members installing their own solar projects, REC has a power purchase agreement with both a small hydro project and a medium size solar project which currently provide about 4% of REC's energy requirements. Tri-State Generation and Transmission has hundreds of megawatts of solar and wind energy which is supplied to REC in order to meet the current state of Colorado renewable energy requirement of 20%.

Alamosa High School. Darren is currently working on getting his MBA through Adams State.

In his spare time, Darren really enjoys travel. "I have had yet to leave the country, but it is on my bucket list. So far traveling has consisted of many road trips with friends and flights to beautiful places such as New York, Miami, Los Angeles, Atlanta, Phoenix and soon San Antonio! My dream vacation would be to visit Barcelona, Spain. Like many people of the SLV, my heritage traces back to Spain, which has really sparked an interest in visiting this country."

very accommodating with this project. We would have had a very difficult time finding somewhere secure to place that generator and couldn't have done this without Davey's help," stated REC Engineering Manager Terry Daley.

"United Power [covering the northern Front Range] let us review their projects to learn about Hendrix...co-ops are always great about helping other co-ops. This whole project has been a huge collaboration; there are many partners coordinating to keep everything running smoothly," said Daley.

Approximately 50 REC members will be affected with intermittent electrical outages in late July and August, and all will be notified prior. The project will continue through approximately Sept. 1. Please call REC with any questions or concerns, 719-852-3538.



## Recipe of the month

### INGREDIENTS

- 2 large eggs, room temperature
- 1 c. 2% milk
- 1 c. water
- 1/2 t. vanilla extract
- 3 c. all-purpose flour
- 1/4 c. sugar
- 3 t. baking powder
- 1/4 t. salt
- Oil for deep-fat frying
- Confectioners' sugar

### FUNNEL CAKES

1. In a large bowl, beat eggs. Add milk, water and vanilla until well blended. In another bowl, whisk flour, sugar, baking powder and salt; beat into egg mixture until smooth. In a deep cast-iron or electric skillet, heat oil to 375°.
2. Cover the bottom of a funnel spout with your finger; ladle 1/2 cup batter into the funnel. Holding the funnel several inches above the oil, release your finger and move the funnel in a spiral motion until all the batter is released, scraping with a rubber spatula if needed.
3. Fry until golden brown, 2 minutes on each side. Drain on paper towels. Dust with confectioners' sugar; serve warm.

Recipe by [www.tasteofhome.com](http://www.tasteofhome.com)

## Historical happenings

### Electric system continues to grow

According to SLV REC's first manager, Willard Johnson, the first lineman was Claus Rose, and he was paid \$125/month. Willard was paid \$150/month, and Mrs. Sara Loring, the office girl, was paid \$50/month. Art Wolfe was hired as a second lineman in summer of 1938. They would ride to work on the back of a flatbed truck at 7 a.m. with the temperatures at 20 degrees below zero. (*Newsboy, September 2005, Volume 30, Issue 9; San Luis Valley Historian, Volume XXVI #3, 1994*)



In the early days of electric co-ops, utility poles were put in place by hand – and a lot of hard work!

Photo courtesy of NRECA

### Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

During summer months, run large appliances that emit heat (like clothes dryers and dishwashers) during the evening when it's cooler. This will minimize indoor heat during the day when outdoor temperatures are highest.





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**SCHEDULED MEETINGS**  
Board Meeting: Tuesday, August 31, 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.

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*Photo by Caden Alonzo*