



Kilowatt Korner

APRIL 2023

Spring has sprung which means it is annual meeting season for most electric cooperatives. The WREA Board of Director election officially opened on April 13th. Director candidates wishing to run for one of two seats in the Town of Meeker District can pick up an election petition at any time. Election details can be found in the legal section of this week's Herald Times or on our website at www.wrea.org.

Earlier this month, several WREA board members attended our wholesale power supplier, Tri-State Generation & Transmission's, annual meeting. The theme of the Tri-State meeting was "Resilience", to which so many can relate, both personally and professionally. During the meeting, Tri-State highlighted its continued efforts to meet the needs of its forty-two (42), uniquely different, member cooperatives all while conforming to strict government regulations with regards to greenhouse gases and CO2 emissions. Like most things, the solution is not one-size-fits-all and the wave of ever-changing government policies and regulations makes every decision feel like a risky one. Making decisions and balancing the needs of distribution cooperatives requires a great deal of input from, and negotiation amongst, Tri-State members who all want the same thing; reliability and reasonable rates for each of their members.

As Tri-State works to develop a future rate plan, WREA CEO, Alan Michalewicz extended the invitation for Tri-State CEO, Duane Highley, to visit our service territory and learn about WREA's unique distribution and transmission system. Last week, Highley traveled to Meeker with members of his senior staff to sit down with the WREA board and management team where he learned about the demographics of WREA's membership, our county's financial landscape and listened to what WREA needs to help us meet its goals. Currently, WREA is one of Tri-State's smallest distribution coops in terms of electric meters, but the total kWh sales ranks in the top ten for Tri-State. WREA is also one of the only Tri-State distribution cooperatives to own most of its own transmission line. Highley summed it up when he said, "You are certainly a unicorn".

Michalewicz couldn't agree more. "WREA is definitely unique in terms of membership numbers versus load. While the outcome of any wholesale rate structure change is unknown, WREA remains active and engaged throughout the rate making process." says Michalewicz. "We're glad to have a voice and a seat at the table when it comes to wholesale rate discussions because our wholesale rate accounts for about 78% of our total costs."

Being resilient has become necessary for most of us over the past several years. Beginning with the pandemic, small business was forced to dig deep, get creative and weather a storm that lasted much longer than any of us thought possible. Couple that with the fact that the oil and gas industry in our county came to a screeching halt around the same time and Meeker business found itself a good reason to stay focused and determined. Between 2020-2022, WREA kilowatt sales and revenue dropped approximately 30% which forced staff to begin doing more with less. Through attrition and retirements, WREA management downsized its staff 10% and our team continues to work diligently, but conservatively, towards the future. Most importantly, we also remain resilient!