



October 1, 2024

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT

Amanda Anderson, Strategic Communications Officer

T: (970) 946-4022 E: aanderson@lpea.coop

LPEA Celebrates 85 Years of Service

Honoring LPEA's Longest-Standing Members

Durango, CO — La Plata Electric Association (LPEA) proudly marks its 85th anniversary this year, celebrating more than eight decades of service to rural Southwest Colorado. Founded in August 1939, LPEA emerged in the wake of the Rural Electrification Act (REA), a transformative part of President Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal that empowered rural communities to access the electricity that had long been available only in urban areas.

“The decision to establish LPEA wasn't just about turning the lights on in rural homes,” said Graham Smith, Interim CEO of LPEA. “It was a bold statement of self-reliance and community effort. For 85 years, we've kept those values at the core of our mission—ensuring the needs of our members are always front and center.”

At the time of LPEA's founding, much of rural Southwest Colorado remained in the dark while cities like Durango had been powered since 1892 by companies such as Durango Light and Power. The cost of extending power lines to rural farms and ranches was considered prohibitive by for-profit utilities. However, with the REA offering low-interest loans, rural communities were able to band together and form nonprofit cooperatives like LPEA. In August 1939, La Plata Electric Association, Inc. was officially incorporated, and just a year later, the first electric lines were energized, transforming life in the region.

In celebration of its 85th anniversary, LPEA is proud to honor its longest-standing members, each of whom has played a pivotal role in supporting the cooperative since its earliest days:

- **Florida Grange #306 (LPEA member since 1939):** Established in 1916 as a community center on Florida Mesa, the Florida Grange played a key role in advocating for rural electrification in the area. As LPEA's longest-standing member, the Grange has been a vital part of the cooperative's history from the beginning.
- **Immaculate Heart of Mary (LPEA member since 1948):** Serving the community since 1948, this church is a long-standing member of LPEA's District 1 (Archuleta County).
- **Mt. Allison Grange #308 (LPEA member since 1941):** Founded in 1916, Mt. Allison Grange is one of the oldest granges in the region and LPEA's longest-standing member in LPEA's District 2 (South and West La Plata County).

- **Durango Elks Lodge (LPEA member since 1951):** Built in 1925, this lodge has been a significant part of local history and is being celebrated for its ongoing commitment to the community in LPEA's District 3 (City of Durango).
- **Florida Mesa Presbyterian Church (LPEA member since 1939):** Established in 1881, this church has been a cornerstone of the community for over a century and remains a key institution in LPEA's District 4 (North and East La Plata County).

In conjunction with National Cooperative Month in October, LPEA will host a series of events under the theme "More Than Just Poles and Power Lines," highlighting its holistic approach to community service. For a full list of anniversary events and National Cooperative Month activities, visit lpea.coop.

###

Florida Grange Photo: [Longest Standing Member.JPG](#)
LPEA 85th Anniversary: [85th Anniversary Page](#)

About LPEA

La Plata Electric Association (LPEA) is a member-owned, not-for-profit electric distribution cooperative serving La Plata and Archuleta counties, along with segments of Hinsdale, Mineral, and San Juan counties. Celebrating 85 years of dedicated service, LPEA stands as the fifth-largest cooperative among 22 in Colorado, committed to delivering safe and reliable electricity at the lowest reasonable cost to approximately 36,500 members. In this exciting era of energy transition, LPEA focuses on integrating renewable solutions and enhancing energy efficiency, empowering communities to embrace a sustainable future while honoring its rich history. The cooperative is leading the way toward an innovative energy landscape. For additional information, contact LPEA at (970) 247-5786 or visit lpea.coop.