

Shaping the future by building trustworthy community partnerships as an innovative, forward-thinking industry leader, delivering excellence in our member-owned cooperative.

MARCH 2019

STRATEGIC GOAL REDUCING THE CARBON FOOTPRINT

LPEA has adopted the long-term strategic goal to reduce its carbon footprint by 50 percent, from 2018 levels, by year 2030, while keeping its cost of electricity lower than 70 percent of its Colorado rural electric cooperative peers.

“The focus of this work has emerged from our strategic planning retreats,” says Ron Meier, manager of engineering and member relations. “If you look at the statement, it contains two elements that are very important for our membership – environmental stewardship and costs.”

As Meier notes, it's important for LPEA to provide a template for both the Board of Directors and staff to guide the cooperative's direction going forward. The next step is to establish the metrics, create the benchmarks.

“Now the real work has begun,” he says. “How do we establish our benchmarks, and how to we determine the best course for us to pursue?”

In example, he cites installing charging stations for electric vehicles, which can encourage growth of the electric vehicle industry. As he notes, by doing this, LPEA will potentially be distributing more electricity, possibly not generated by a non-fossil fuel source, but at the same time, how does that measure with decreasing the fossil fuel emissions coming from a traditional vehicle's gasoline tailpipe?

“Next to electricity generation, transportation has the greatest impact when it comes to carbon footprint,” he says. “These are the things we're going to need to study and evaluate.”

“There's a process we're going to need to go through to put some substance into what 50 percent reduction means,” says CEO Mike Dreyspring. “The over-arching objective is

de-carbonization in time. That's what we're shooting for. This is the beginning of a challenging and exciting journey for us.”

Dreyspring and Meier point out that reducing carbon footprint is different from increasing local renewable generation, but it doesn't preclude it.

New technologies that have not been put into place or even invented yet, may not be “renewable” by current definition, but they will reduce LPEA's carbon footprint.

“Not everyone can agree one way or another about climate change or renewables, which are things we cannot necessarily control,” says Dreyspring. “But what we can agree on is that de-carbonization is something we can actually DO. Though as a cooperative that supports its consumer-members, whatever we pursue, we want to make sure that our rates remain competitive, thus the strategic goal to keep costs in line with our peers.”

The stated 70 percent of LPEA's Colorado's cooperative peers is essentially where the co-op's rates are today.

While the launch of this effort is now underway, Dreyspring and Meier caution, because of the complexity of analysis, it could take months to benchmark the numbers. LPEA staff plans to work with energy efficiency professionals, sustainability proponents and the utility industry as a whole to build accurate metrics.

“We feel the goal of 2030 is realistic,” says Meier, noting that as accomplishments can be made sooner, they will be. “We want to do all we can for the benefit of our consumer-members, so we want to make sure we're prudent and study everything as we proceed. We will keep our members informed of what we learn and how we plan to evolve as we move along this road to the future.”

VOLUNTARY GREEN FUNDS ALLOCATED

As is determined twice annually, the LPEA Board of Directors, per its Policy 303 Local Renewable Generation Fund Grant Requests, which supports and encourages the advancement, development, and installation of renewable generation projects in the service territory and region utilizing voluntary renewable generation funds from participating members, has awarded new grants.

Four entities have recently been recognized by the LPEA Board and received grants: Cross Bar X (\$20,520), Habitat for Humanity (\$32,000), KSUT Public Radio (\$20,520), and TARA Community Center (\$4,461).

Funds that are generated come from LPEA's voluntary Local Renewable Generation Fund (aka the "Local Green Power" projects program). As it is a voluntary fund, consumer-members can opt to make monthly donations on their electric bills to further these types of renewable projects in the region. Visit www.lpea.coop for more information, or call 970.247.5786.



New Pagosa Springs EV charging station in the works

LPEA has in place charging stations for electric vehicles (EV) at its offices in Durango, and has been working with the Town of Pagosa and Archuleta County for the past several months to make it "happen" there as well. Good news. Installation is right around the proverbial street corner.

"As a cooperative, LPEA always endeavors to support our members with current concerns, but we're also looking ahead and preparing for the future," says Dan Harms, manager of rates, technology and energy policy. "Electric vehicles are shifting the transportation fuel market away from gasoline and toward electricity for their power, and we're finding that our members are embracing these new, high tech vehicles. Thus, local charging stations are growing in demand, so we want to help. We're pleased to be working with the Town of Pagosa in furthering this effort."

In January, the Pagosa Springs Town Council approved installation of a Level II ChargePoint EV charging station in Pagosa's Centennial Park parking lot, which is an optimal location for those utilizing the service to shop, walk and dine in the area. Two outlets will be available for charging, and the station is also ADA accessible.

To finance the charging station in Pagosa, LPEA applied for a Charge Ahead Colorado grant, which provided \$9,000 to assist with installation. LPEA will add an estimated \$5,700 to complete the project.

Level II EV stations advertise to provide a full charge for new generation electric and plug-in hybrid vehicles such as the Nissan Leaf, Chevy Volt, and Ford Focus in about four hours. Currently, "plugging in" to LPEA's charging stations in Durango is free, and the Pagosa station will also offer the service free through 2019. LPEA is studying the need, use and costs for EV charging stations, and it is anticipated that fees for the electricity used at the stations will begin in 2020.

The selected location, from LPEA's perspective, is optimal, as adequate electrical infrastructure is already in place in Centennial Park. However, "snow melt" will be required before the full installation of the charging station can be completed.



LPEA "lights up" the Snowdown Light Parade

LPEA participated in the annual Snowdown Light Parade, with employees going all out to decorate a bucket truck with thousands of energy efficient LED lights. For their efforts, the team earned a 2nd Place Award for Best Use of Lights. Pictured in the bucket truck are Lex McCarthy, son of Energy Management Advisor Dennis McCarthy, and Ashton Lee (with the light saber), son of Lineman Tim Lee.



Photo: Aspen McCarthy

McCarthy takes on new role; O’Rand moves to new position

As longtime, great LPEA employees retire, it opens up opportunities for others in the organization.

Such is currently the case with Suzy Bynum’s retirement after 18 years with LPEA as an Energy Management Advisor. She’s been LPEA’s consumer-members’ go-to person in La Plata County for purchase, maintenance, advice (and more) regarding Electric Thermal Storage (ETS) units and Marathon water heaters, as well as the Time-of-Use program.

In her stead, Dennis McCarthy has been appointed to the position. McCarthy joined LPEA in 2012 as an equipment operator, working in the field with the line crews, maintaining the distribution system. Prior to joining LPEA, McCarthy garnered more than 12 years in the electrical and construction fields working for Horizon Environmental and CT Electric.



Dennis McCarthy

With McCarthy’s move out of Operations and the equipment operator position, it opened up the opportunity for relatively new employee Decker O’Rand’s promotion to the position. O’Rand, who joined LPEA in January 2018 as a meter reader collector, had previously worked in construction, and welcomes furthering his career at LPEA to sustain the electric distribution system in partnership with the LPEA line crews.



Decker O’Rand

LPEA offers a variety of apprenticeships and employment opportunities. To explore employment, or for additional information, visit www.lpea.coop.

Campaign Finance Reporting

The LPEA board has put in place Policy 107, to establish guidelines under which candidates for LPEA’s Board of Directors must disclose monetary and in-kind contributions to a candidate’s campaign. This is in accordance with Article III, Section 2 of the Cooperative’s Bylaws.

All candidates running for a position on LPEA’s board shall disclose all monetary and in-kind contributions greater than \$20 from any individual or organization. All candidates must complete periodic Campaign Donation Reports. Any candidate who fails to submit timely and accurate reports, may be subject to disqualification to run for elections for the LPEA board.

Review the full policy at www.lpea.coop.

CO-OP MEMBERS Ask...

Q: Somebody told me LPEA has a tree trimming program to help mitigate damage to lines from downed branches during the heavy, wet snow storms. Can you tell me more?

A: Yes, LPEA has a very proactive tree trimming program. We employ professional arborists essentially throughout the year to patrol our service territory and trim or remove any hazardous trees that have the potential of falling/breaking and impacting the electric distribution system. While the contractors make the round throughout the year, they can’t be everywhere at all times, so it is of great benefit for LPEA consumer-members to keep an eye on the trees on their property or in their neighborhood, and let LPEA know (970.247.5786) if you spot a tree that could potentially damage the distribution system and cause outages. This private “spotting” is especially important on private property, as LPEA contractors do not patrol in your backyards. Trees are trimmed free-of-charge to consumer-members, and if a tree is felled, the wood is left for the homeowner’s use. While we love our trees, it is prudent for maintenance of the electricity distribution system to employ the tree trimming program.

LIVE WIRES

Board meeting March 20, 9 a.m.

The next meeting of the LPEA Board of Directors is set for Wednesday, Mar. 20. The agenda will be posted 10 days in advance of the meeting at www.lpea.coop. All members are reminded that public comment is heard at the beginning of the meeting shortly after 9 a.m. The Board meeting will be streamed live on YouTube.

Board Petition Deadline

Reminder: The deadline to submit petitions for those who wish to run for the LPEA Board of Directors is Mar. 4, 1 p.m. Information at www.lpea.coop.

Save the Date!

LPEA Annual Meeting, celebrating our 80th Anniversary is Thursday evening May 2, 2019 at the Community Concert Hall at Fort Lewis College. Plan to join us!

Round Up Grants

The LPEA Round Up Foundation Board awarded Round Up and Educational grants to:

- The Clothing Closet
- Ignacio Senior Center
- Dancing Spirit Community Art Center
- Stillwater Music
- Fort Lewis Mesa PTO
- FLC Student Wellness Initiative



Meeting the GOAL – Physics.

BY RON MEIER | MANAGER OF ENGINEERING AND MEMBER RELATIONS
RMEIER@LPEA.COOP



Yes, yes we did. LPEA has adopted a goal to bring forward our environmental stewardship of our mission while continuing to consider our electric bills. We are going to decarbonize our operation as aggressively as we can while keeping our bills as relatively if not less expensive than our Colorado peers.

What does this mean from the Engineering side of LPEA? Well a lot. The “lion’s-share” of our carbon impact to the environment comes from the power we purchase from our suppliers, and while many of us know Tri-State Generation and Transmission is increasingly integrating renewables into its supply, it’s likely not at a pace that will help LPEA meet our current goal. We also continue to recognize that we are limited by our purchase agreement with Tri-State in our ability to source other power beyond our own 5 percent allotment.

So, what does this leave us from a power supply point of view? Well a few things, but one of the simplest, and most easily accomplished, is “behind the meter” energy production – net metering.

It doesn’t take much to look up and around to see a lot of solar panels on roof tops and on posts and racks in our communities. These solar panels don’t count against our 5 percent limit from Tri-State – that is, assuming they are

properly sized and are only providing enough energy to offset the usage of the house or businesses they support.

What you don’t see is that there are areas on our grid that are nearing the limits of taking energy when it isn’t being used at their locations – we are reaching saturation. You can find a map on our website that illustrates those areas in our service territory where something will need to change to keep the pace of how we want to integrate more solar and other forms of energy production behind the meter.

So, what are we doing? Well, the next evolution is storage. Battery technology and, more importantly, the costs of utility storage is approaching a point where it is beginning to be viable for us. By deploying storage solutions in the optimal places on our grid, we can start to increase our ability to take more energy coming from our consumer-members (“us”), behind our meters.

Over the next six to nine months we will study where and what it will take to install smaller battery systems that will enable us to allow installation of more energy from behind the meter. Every solar panel reduces our carbon footprint and this is just one of many steps we are doing.

Also, last month, we hosted a free workshop about “Beneficial Electrification.” Don’t worry if you missed it. I know we will be offering additional educational opportunities. Beneficial electrification is a term that speaks to an idea of electrifying areas of our lives, replacing other fuel sources with electricity. Doing this, we provide options to power our lives. What do I mean by that? Well that will be another story for another time. Until then we have a goal to meet, if not exceed, which we will do together.



Mission Statement:

La Plata Electric Association provides its members safe, reliable electricity at the lowest reasonable cost while being environmentally responsible.

Mailing Address:

PO Box 2750
Durango, CO
81302-2750

Street Address:

45 Stewart St.
Durango, CO 81303
603 S. 8th St.
Pagosa Springs, CO 81147

970.247.5786 | www.lpea.coop

Board of Directors:

Bob Lynch, President (District 1)
Britt Bassett, Vice President (District 3)
Dan Huntington, Secretary (District 2)
Tim Wheeler, Treasurer (District 4)
Mike Alley (District 1)
Rachel Landis (District 3)
Doug Lyon (District 3)
Kohler McInnis (District 2)
Davin Montoya (District 2)
Kirsten Skeehan (District 1)
Jack Turner (District 4)
Guinn Unger (District 4)

Chief Executive Officer:

Michael A. Dreyspring

