

# NETWORK

M A G A Z I N E

*STORIES about the people and communities of our co-op network*



TRI-STATE Generation and Transmission Association

Summer 2009



# NETWORK

M A G A Z I N E



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Cover: The Doherty family of southern Colorado includes three generations living, working and enjoying ranch life. John and Carolyn Doherty (pictured left) are recipients of the Leopold Conservation Award.



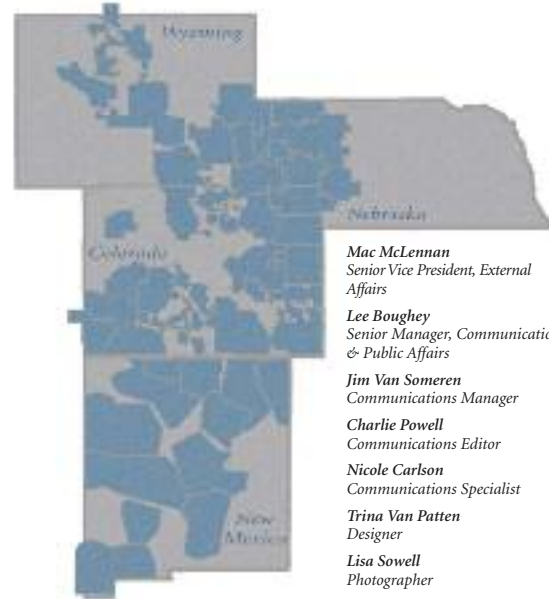
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## Leopold Award

Member co-op rancher honored for a lifetime of land conservation.

*Network Magazine is a quarterly publication that tells the stories of the people and communities of Tri-State Generation and Transmission Association and our 44 member rural utilities. Tri-State is a wholesale power supplier serving electric cooperatives in Colorado, Nebraska, New Mexico and Wyoming.*

*Tri-State and our member cooperatives are powering rural residences, farms, ranches, businesses and industries. While we operate the power plants and maintain the power lines that deliver electricity, it is the member-consumers who provide the energy and spirit that sustain our communities. To learn more about Tri-State, visit [www.tristatetg.org](http://www.tristatetg.org).*



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General Manager's message

## Managing greenhouse gas and electric industry risks

**Ken Anderson**  
Executive Vice President/General Manager

As I've previously addressed in this column, electric utilities today face tremendous uncertainty, including economic, market, environmental and regulatory risks. With that in mind, it is not difficult to grasp why any successful utility's planning requires ongoing evaluations of all of the risk factors that affect its operations. This is certainly the case with Tri-State's approach to resource planning, which we are currently reevaluating using the latest data and tools that are available to us.

While we continue to assess the various risks that have prompted revisions in our future resource assessments, the fundamental goals of our resource strategy remain in place. Our resource planning will ensure stable and affordable wholesale rates, allow us to meet our member load, reliability and compliance obligations, and expand our resource portfolio diversity.

We look to achieve these fundamental goals in the context of many different risk scenarios, including the potential for greenhouse gas regulation. There are debates taking place at the state, regional, national and international levels regarding limits on greenhouse gas emissions. Several of the states in which Tri-State operates are considering greenhouse gas policies. In Congress, recent efforts have been dominated by the Waxman-Markey greenhouse gas "cap and trade" bill, which has proposed economy-wide limits on greenhouse gas emissions. And in December 2009, the U.S. will participate in the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen, Denmark.

We continue to work with our members, Congressional delegations and the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association to ensure that the interests of rural electricity consumers are protected, and to advocate for greater certainty around how greenhouse gas emissions will be treated in federal energy policy. Last month, electric cooperative leaders from around the country visited Capitol Hill in a "legislative rally" to voice their policy concerns.

As policy debate continues, Tri-State is taking active steps to address the risk of potential greenhouse gas regulations. Tri-State's Greenhouse Gas Management Roadmap identifies the specific activi-

ties, programs and initiatives that will develop the data, tools and technologies necessary for the association to manage risk, while continuing to affordably and reliably meet the demand and energy requirements of our member systems.

Roadmap initiatives and programs span many areas of Tri-State's operations. The association will report greenhouse gas emissions as a founding member of The Climate Registry. Energy efficiency, renewable energy and system efficiency programs will be evaluated for their greenhouse gas management potential.

And in an effort to boost our renewable portfolio, Tri-State announced a second utility-scale renewable energy project, a 51-megawatt wind farm, to be constructed in K.C. Electric Association's service territory near Burlington, Colo. The project is scheduled to come online at the end of 2010, the same time Tri-State's 30-megawatt Cimarron I solar project in north-eastern New Mexico should begin full commercial operation.

Several studies have been commissioned to inform Tri-State's planning efforts, including an end-use energy efficiency and demand-side management study; a carbon footprint, sequestration and monetization study; and a generation technologies study. Tri-State is also participating in several research, development and demonstration projects, including carbon capture and sequestration, energy storage and hybrid renewable energy/fossil fuel integration.

Tri-State's success in managing greenhouse gas risks will be heavily dependent upon the development of cost-effective energy and environmental technologies, efficient technologies to manage electricity consumption and the development of greenhouse gas market opportunities.

The outcomes from the Greenhouse Gas Management Roadmap will be incorporated, along with other risk factors, into Tri-State's ongoing resource planning evaluations, modeling and analysis. This is the most prudent path for us to identify resource options, mitigate risks and create certainty to serve us best in providing our members with affordable and reliable power in the decades ahead.

*Tri-State's Greenhouse Gas Management Roadmap identifies the specific activities, programs and initiatives that will develop the data, tools and technologies necessary for the association to manage risk, while continuing to affordably and reliably meet the demand and energy requirements of our member systems.*



# 2009 LEOPOLD Conservation Award Winner

Story by Charlie Powell  
Photos by Bill Gillette, freelance photographer

It's probably a safe bet that, if you remember the day when the local rural electric co-op first brought electricity to your ranch, you are a fairly well-established and successful cattleman. That's certainly the case with John Doherty, this year's Colorado recipient of the 2009 Leopold Conservation Award.

As third-generation, southern Colorado cattle ranchers, John and Carolyn Doherty epitomize the spirit of this recognition given to farmers, ranchers and foresters who do well by and for their land.

This spring, the Sand County Foundation, a private nonprofit conservation group, in partnership with the Colorado Cattlemen's Association,

the Colorado Cattlemen's Agricultural Land Trust and EnCana Oil and Gas, named the Dohertys' Mesa de Maya and Red Rocks ranches the recipient of this year's award. The Leopold award consists of an Aldo Leopold crystal and a check for \$10,000. In 2009, the Sand County Foundation will also present these awards to outstanding land-owners in Nebraska, Wyoming, Texas, Utah and California.

The award is given to individuals and families who demonstrate outstanding commitment, conservation and stewardship of their land. The annual award is named for Aldo Leopold, who was a renowned Wisconsin forester and wildlife ecologist.

The Leopold Conservation Award is a competitive recognition that is overseen by a selection committee appointed in Colorado by the Colorado Cattlemen's Association. "We received quite a few applicants for this award, but the

Dohertys' well-documented lifetime of conservation work was hard to ignore," said Beka Gill, director of industry programs for the Colorado Cattlemen's Association (Arvada, Colo.).

"When I called the Dohertys to tell them that they had won the award and would be receiving a check, they were shocked," said Gill. As it turns out, Steve Woonten, nephew and fellow family cattle rancher, knew that his uncle was far too modest to seek attention for this lifetime of achievement and secretly spent more than a year compiling documents and obtaining testimony before nominating the Las Animas County ranching couple.

The Doherty family's land holdings, first purchased by John's grandfather in the late 1920s, are so vast that they are electrically served by two separate Tri-State member co-ops. The Red Rocks Ranch, where the elder Dohertys spend most of their time along with his sister and nephew's family, is electrically served by Southeast Colorado Power Association (La Junta, Colo.). The Mesa de Maya Ranch, where John was raised and which is now operated by his son, Joe Doherty, is located 18 miles east of Kim, Colo. It is electrically served by San Isabel Electric Association (Pueblo West, Colo.).

John and his sister inherited the Red Rocks property in 1959. "I remember that was the year that my mother first approached Southeast Colorado Power to put in a power line and bring electricity to this ranch," recalled Doherty. "Looking back on it now, it was about \$10,000 for the line and it seemed like a lot of money. Now, it's just a drop in the bucket. Southeast gave us all

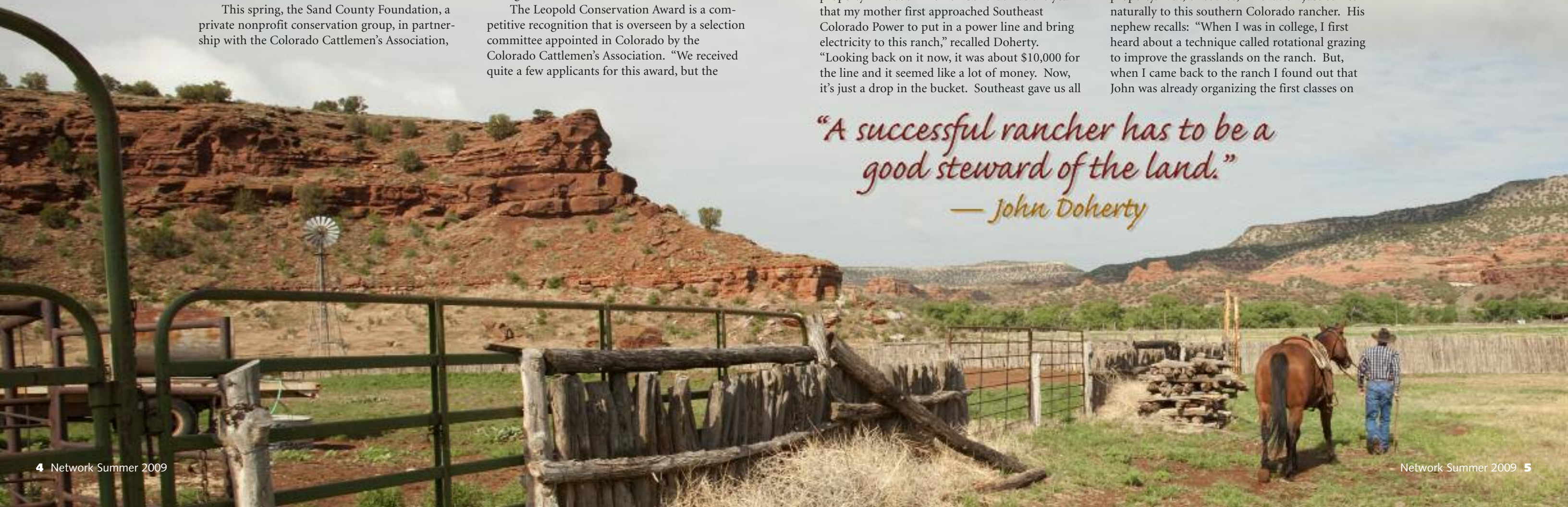


*The ranch where John and Carolyn reside has been in the Doherty family since 1929.*

the electricity we wanted for free until we paid off the line. It's been a real blessing to us," he said.

In the ensuing years, Doherty has embraced new electric technologies by installing several solar-powered well pumps at various sites on the property. But, of course, innovation just comes naturally to this southern Colorado rancher. His nephew recalls: "When I was in college, I first heard about a technique called rotational grazing to improve the grasslands on the ranch. But, when I came back to the ranch I found out that John was already organizing the first classes on

*"A successful rancher has to be a good steward of the land."  
— John Doherty*



this new practice with the local soil conservation district.”

“To me this award is a testimony to John and Carolyn’s lifetime of work,” said Woonten. “And perhaps more importantly, it’s about John’s efforts to constantly seek new conservation, grazing and scientific techniques and sharing that information with friends, family, fellow ranchers, students and his community,” he added.

**H**ow large are the Mesa de Maya and Red Rocks ranches? Once you leave the paved state Highway 109, plan on about 40 minutes of driving on dirt roads through majestic canyons and red rock outcroppings before reaching the Doherty homestead. Of course, that’s not all Doherty land — there are some neighboring ranches between their spread and the highway. The Red Rocks and Mesa de Maya add up to about 75,000 acres. The award recipient says he’s been exploring this ranch for 50 years and he still hasn’t seen all of it.

But a conservationist doesn’t just explore the land, he improves it, and that, after all, is what has engaged the Dohertys for half a century. Doherty and his fellow family ranchers operate a cow-calf raising enterprise as a primary means of income. But the lifelong rancher is quick to point out that the yearlings that he raises and sells each fall are just a product of his land. A diverse native grassland that is properly cared for and not overgrazed is critical to maintaining a healthy herd, with high conception rates and good calf weights, he explained. After lots of experimentation with breeds ranging from Hereford to South Devon cattle, Doherty found that Red Angus

thrived the best on this rugged and rocky terrain. “Out here the mother cows are on their own — they have to lay down and give birth without any help from us.”

Naturally, in southern Colorado, water is always an issue, not only for the grazing land, but it is also essential for the 40 to 50 gallons a day consumed by each animal in his herd, which number about 550 mother cows and 125 yearlings. “My grandfather started drilling the first wells on the property in the 1930s. In the 1950s, we started constructing the earthen dams fed by various tributaries, including Chacuaco Creek and the Purgatoire River.” To date, Doherty and family have installed more than 40 steel water tanks, 60 earthen dams and built more than 25 miles of pipeline to move water across the ranches. If that’s not impressive enough, consider the fact that interior fencing on the Doherty property adds up to more than 100 miles.

A thriving, healthy environment like the one found on the Doherty land is bound to support lots of wildlife and, as the rancher puts it, they are “truly blessed.” The Dohertys enjoy frequent sightings of Rocky Mountain big horn sheep, mule deer, white-tailed deer, turkeys, geese, antelope, bears and mountain lions on the ranch.

Despite his many accomplishments in land stewardship during his lifetime, the rancher downplays his role when he says, “I think anybody who wants to stay in business and be a successful rancher has to be a land conservationist. When we had a severe drought in 2002, we could have left our cattle on the land. But, instead we decided to sell half the herd to give the grasslands a chance to rebound when we finally did get some moisture. Once you kill the root structure of the grass plants the water just runs off and there’s no photosynthesis taking place,” he explained.

Doherty’s commitment to conservation goes beyond the borders of his ranch. He is a leader in his community and is dedicated to continued education and civic engagement. “I’ve been doing this for more than 50 years and I never tire of attending seminars to learn new things,” he quipped. He has been a soil conservation district supervisor and a member of the Branson-Trinchera Conservation District for 40 years, helping to guide conservation efforts in eastern Las Animas County.

But, a lifetime of hard work translates to a labor of love for the Dohertys. “To me there’s nothing prettier than heading out on this ranch and looking out over a field of lush gramma grass waving in the breeze, with fat cattle and maybe a few horses — now that’s pretty,” he said.



*Carolyn Doherty prepares to help husband John with some cattle branding.*



*Nephew Steve Woonten (top) assists John in checking float valves on one of the many water tanks on the ranch.*



*“Our ranch is truly blessed with wildlife”  
— John Doherty*



During a recession, many charities face an alarming drop in income, while at the same time appeals for services dramatically increase. It's a time when most people are closely watching where their money is going. But what if there were a way to assist worthy causes and barely notice the donation?

Many electric co-ops across the nation are offering hope to those in need by subscribing to Operation Round Up®, a simple but ingenious method of turning small change into a conduit for social progress and assistance to neighbors.

The premise of Operation Round Up is that most electric invoice amounts are an uneven combination of dollars and cents, and member-consumers may be willing to simplify their bills by rounding them up to the next even dollar amount. For instance, \$81.55 would be rounded to \$82 even, and the extra few cents are given to charitable causes, thus creating an effortless way to help others.

An individual donation of 45 cents doesn't sound like much, but when you multiply a little loose change by thousands of participating consumers, the total is a significant amount. In fact, co-ops have collected and disbursed more than \$50 million nationwide since the program began, according to a National Rural Electric Cooperative Association survey.

Created and registered in 1989 by Palmetto

Electric Cooperative based in Hardeeville, S.C., the Operation Round Up concept has been adopted by more than 225 cooperatives across the United States, 11 of which are co-ops served by Tri-State. Their success has piqued the interest of other regional co-op staffs who have inquired how they can get involved.

"The first step is a co-op's board of directors approves adoption of the plan," said Martha McMillan, executive assistant at Palmetto. Once that board-level decision is made, the Operation Round Up registered trademark and strategy are available from Palmetto, which requires a signed license agreement stating no funds will be used for political purposes. "We only request a small initiation fee or contribution to Palmetto's Operation Round Up fund from co-ops wishing to join," said McMillan.

Most co-ops initially contacted Palmetto so they could help individual co-op members pay for basic expenses like housing, medical, utility bills, etc. Now, the greater percentage of national funding goes to organizations that serve entire communities.

Participating cooperatives in Tri-State's service territory report a mix of individual and organizational recipients. Heidi Storz, marketing and communications coordinator at United Power, based in Brighton, Colo., said,

"We tend to give to individuals and families more than charitable groups – people who might otherwise fall between the cracks." Aiding its community through Operation Round Up since 1995, United administered \$89,000 in 2008.

La Plata Electric, Durango, Colo., has seen an increase in group applications during the current economic downturn. "There are more organizations experiencing funding cuts and seeking to make up that difference somewhere," said Jeannie Bennett, public relations coordinator. The southwest Colorado co-op has helped support a local soup kitchen, disabled veterans, Head Start, Habitat for Humanity, senior services, and student scholarship and activity groups, among dozens of other causes over the 13 years it's been a Round Up participant.

One Tri-State member system is currently gearing up as a new Operation Round Up contributor. "We recently introduced the program at our annual meeting in April," said Dolores Jones, manager of administrative services at Central New Mexico Electric Cooperative, Mountainair, N.M., "and we plan to use the funds to help members who are unable to pay their electric bills."

Others began Operation Round Up in the mid to late 1990s and have already made impressive contributions to their communities. Rosemary Knerr, director of communications and member services at Mountain Parks Electric, Granby, Colo., said, "Since 1999, we've disbursed nearly half a million dollars. A member contributes an average of \$6.66 per year, but those small numbers really add up." A few of the many worthy causes aided by Mountain Parks are an area hospital, early childhood services, a search and rescue team, and a local fire department.

Linda Nyberg, member services representative at Sangre De Cristo Electric Association, Buena Vista, Colo., tells her community where their dollars are at work with regular press releases. Recently announced was the purchase of a new laptop and software for a local clinic. "The focus of the clinic is to educate patients about life-threatening illnesses and promote educational programs," said Nyberg, "and more than 335 low-income patients visited the clinic over 1,000 times in the past year."

While co-op staff members describe the emotional rewards of reaching out to those less fortunate, they also stress that the fundraising effort calls for exacting administrative practices. Round Up finances are kept strictly separate from the co-ops' business revenue, and an independent board of directors diligently reviews all requests for donations.

"Applicants must provide detailed documen-



*Top: High Plains Power, Riverton, Wyo., presented a check to Help for Health, a service that transports local cancer patients to Casper, Wyo., for treatment. Third from left is former general manager, the late Dave McDonald.*

*Inset above: La Plata Electric, Durango, Colo., contributes to many local organizations, including the Durango Nature Center, which has brought hands-on outdoor education to thousands of children from the Four Corners community since 1994.*

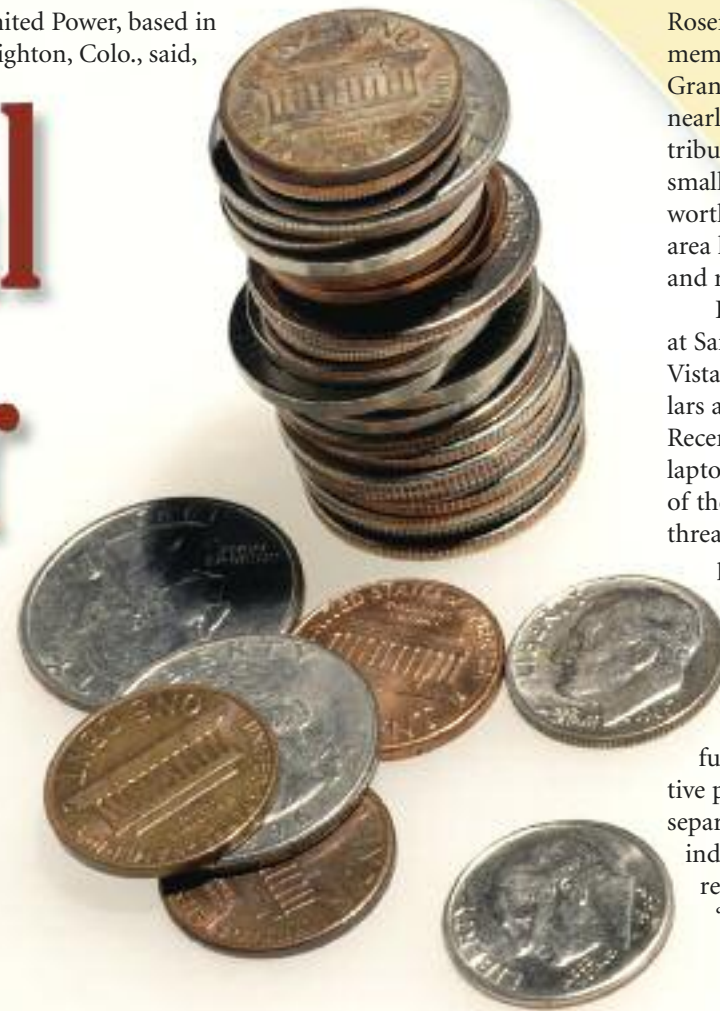


*A wheelchair contributed by Mountain View Electric, Limon, Colo., made a world of difference in Paulina Lopez's life.*



# Co-ops corral change for charity

Story by Andy Ashley



# Cooperation among utilities



*Colorado's two largest electric utilities join forces to bring reliable power to the state*

*Story by Nicole Carlson*

Cooperation among cooperatives, one of the seven cooperative principles Tri-State and its member co-ops adhere to, states, "Cooperatives serve their members most effectively and strengthen the cooperative movement by working together through local, national, regional and international structure."

While the principle is essential for a successful cooperative business model, situations arise when this cooperation extends beyond the cooperative family. One such example is the recent filing of applications by Tri-State with the Colorado Public Utilities Commission (PUC) regarding a transmission project in southern Colorado. The action was a joint filing with the association and investor-owned utility Xcel Energy (Minneapolis, Minn.) and is a step in developing a new transmission project that will serve the long-term electric grid requirements in southern Colorado.

This project is an example of cooperation between Colorado's two largest utilities to meet the greater power needs of the region by strengthening the state's power delivery infrastructure, serving growing electricity needs and providing for the interconnection of new energy resources.

"Tri-State and Xcel Energy have shown their commitment to serving their respective customers reliably and cost effectively by teaming

up on this joint transmission project," said Grant Lehman, Tri-State electrical engineer and project manager. "There has been tremendous coordination and cooperation from both companies."

The proposed joint project builds on Tri-State's previously proposed San Luis Valley Electric System Improvement Project. In 2007, Tri-State was planning lines from the San Luis Valley to Walsenburg to boost its southern Colorado system, increase reliability for its two electric cooperatives in the region – San Luis Valley Rural Electric Cooperative and San Isabel Electric Association – and support renewable energy development. That same year, Xcel Energy began planning for transmission projects to better serve renewable energy zones established by Colorado's Senate Bill 100 requirements. This new joint project addresses both utilities' goals and provides additional transmission system improvements in southern Colorado.

Most importantly, Tri-State is concerned with the reliability of the existing electrical system in the San Luis Valley as it is beginning to reach its limit due primarily to continued residential and irrigation growth. One of the major problems currently experienced is a drop in voltage (known as "voltage collapse") that can occur when electric use is high, especially during summer months.

As with other transmission projects, a team is assembled to conduct the extensive planning efforts required to assess all factors and aspects. The goal is to identify a transmission line route that balances the need for reliable electric service with environmental concerns, public acceptance, engineering needs, economics, and legal and regulatory requirements.

"We look at a number of potential corridors and solicit input from government agencies and stakeholders before determining a preferred corridor," said Karl Myers, Tri-State's transmission environmental manager.

Once a preferred corridor is selected, the



association's land department then works very closely with landowners to refine an actual route.

The utilities filed for a Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity with the Colorado PUC on May 14, 2009, to construct the San Luis Valley-Calumet-Comanche Transmission Project. The application is required to build and own electricity infrastructure in Colorado and the PUC must grant the certificate to the utilities before construction of the project can begin.

Next, the permitting staff will need to secure the required land use approval from local governments in the project area. As part of the environmental and siting process, Tri-State and Xcel Energy will host public workshops where all interested parties are invited to learn more about the need for the line and the process that's followed to select a route. "This provides opportunities for landowners to provide input into the process," added Myers.

The transmission project is one example of how Tri-State continues to invest in transmission infrastructure to ensure dependable power delivery to its 44 member cooperatives throughout its four-state service territory.

*Tri-State's Walsenburg Substation is a key delivery point for much of southern Colorado's transmission infrastructure. Planned improvements will create the loop system needed to address voltage collapse concerns and reliably serve the San Luis Valley. The new Calumet Substation will be constructed six miles north of Walsenburg and will help facilitate the interconnection of new generation resources.*

# Working together to harvest the sun

Story by Nicole Carlson  
Photos by Lisa Sowell



United Power's Laurel Eller and Jerry Marizza played integral parts in the development and launching of the co-op's cooperative solar farm.

What if you are an electric consumer who wants to invest in solar power, but cannot afford the large investment of a home system? For members of Brighton, Colo.-based United Power, the solution could be joining in as one of the first in the nation to own a piece of a cooperative solar farm.

Tri-State member system United Power has developed a project that illustrates the cooperative model in its purest form, while simultaneously "greening" the co-op's energy load. The venture – Sol Partners Cooperative Solar Farm – is a first-of-its-kind cooperative solar farm supported by individual member investments. As part of United Power's New Energy program, the solar farm is another concept of the continuing effort by the co-op to provide unique and innovative solutions for its members, allowing them to personally invest in green resources.

For an initial investment of \$1,050, United Power members may lease a 210-watt solar panel for a 25-year period, during which time the member reaps all the benefits of the panel in the form of solar credits on their electricity bills. The solar farm allows members of all income levels and housing situations to participate in a renewable energy project by eliminating the large, initial cost of installing a traditional rooftop solar unit. Additionally, members who rent their properties or who may not have "ideal" solar orientation at their homes or offices are able to take part in the program.

"The solar farm allows for the participation of every United Power member," said Jerry Marizza, project coordinator for United Power.

Members who participate in the Sol Partners program will have the added benefit of monitoring the production of their panel(s) in real-time through United Power's Web site.

The initial Sol Partners module, which was energized May 15 and launched May 27, consists of 48 photovoltaic panels representing 10 kilowatts of power. Located just northwest of United Power's headquarters building in Brighton, Colo., the module is fully visible to members and others who drive by the property.

Initially, United Power will limit participation to a maximum of two panels per member. Once the original 48 panels are leased, United Power will increase the limits to 10 kilowatts for residential members and 25 kilowatts for commercial class member.

United Power anticipates that one 210-watt panel will produce about a 3 percent return on its investment or approximately \$32 per year in electricity credits. However, for those members wishing to lease additional panels, another benefit of the solar farm is it acts as a pay-as-you-go type of program. While members may not have \$15,000 - \$20,000 to purchase a total system for their homes, the Sol Partners program allows them to lease panels as they have the money to invest. On average, it requires 20 panels to offset 100 percent of

Cooperative solar farm offers 'green' option for just \$1,050

the electric usage for an average home.

A \$50,000 investment from the Governor's Energy Office of Colorado assisted in offsetting much of the initial cost of the design, engineering and development of the solar farm. Additionally, United Power provided in-kind labor for construction of the modules.

Tri-State also supports this and other member-sponsored, local renewable projects through board policies 115 and 117.

In addition to acting as a valuable monetary and environmental benefit to United Power members, the solar farm can also be utilized as an educational tool.

"The solar farm gives people the opportunity to do the math, show the reality of solar and alleviates many of the misconceptions," said Marizza.

Sol Partners is not United Power's only solar option for members who wish to offset their electricity bills with sun power. The co-op also continues to offer rebates to those members who choose to install solar systems at their homes or businesses. Marizza said the solar rebate program has been



United Power members who lease the initial modules of 48 panels will be part of the co-op's exclusive Founder's Club.

successful in the past and they do not want to discount the success they have seen with it; however, the program's limited funding and expensive initial outlay confines the program to a short list of participants. The solar farm allows for anyone who wishes to lease a minimum of one solar panel the ability to harvest the energy of the sun. Although solar farm participants cannot take advantage of any current federal tax credits, Marizza said this might change in the future.

"The solar farm provides more options than the standard solar rebate program," said Marizza. For members who may move out of the cooperative's territory during the 25-year lease period, United allows the transfer or sale of credits to another United Power member.

Another advantage of the program is that it affects only those members who choose to participate. United has not added a surcharge to fund the project.

"The solar farm is self-sustaining, funded entirely by participants," said Laurel Eller, United Power communications specialist. "It's truly a cooperative."



Brighton Mayor Janice Pawlowski and United Power CEO Bob Broderick took part in the May launch of Sol Partners Cooperative Solar Farm.



# Columbus Electric helps local schools save ENERGY and DOLLARS



Two Deming, N.M., schools received nearly \$79,000 in EEC credits from Tri-State.

Story by Charlie Powell  
Photos by Jonathan Thornton

Like Tri-State, Columbus Electric Cooperative (Deming, N.M.) has been in the energy efficiency business for a long time. But, as an electric co-op serving largely agricultural loads, a lot of the customer energy savings has been derived from high efficiency motors for irrigation pumping and other farm and ranch applications, according to Mike Fletcher, general manager of Columbus Electric.

"Opportunities to see some big savings at two new schools in our service territory don't come along every day, so we were very pleased to

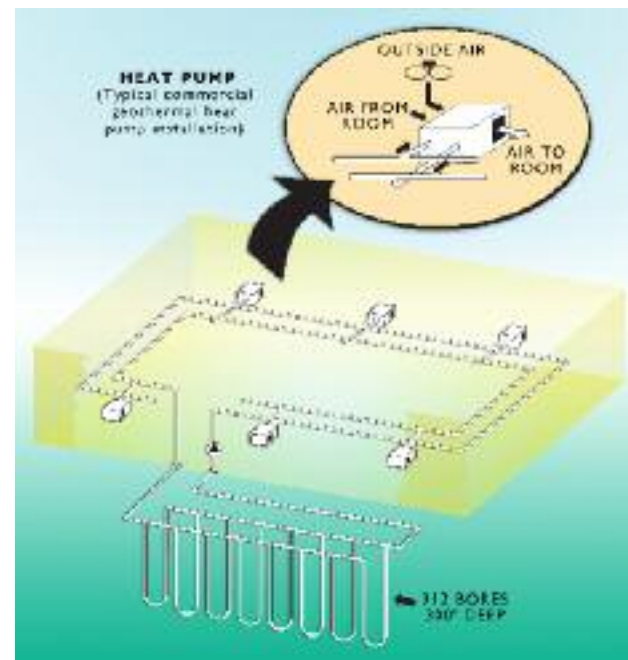
be able to work with Tri-State and provide some rebate incentives on top of the savings that the two schools in Deming would realize with the installation of ground-source heat pump systems," said Fletcher.

The state-of-the-art geothermal heating and cooling systems were installed in the Ruben S. Torres and Columbus Elementary schools. "The architectural firm designing the schools was already knowledgeable about the advantages of ground-source heat pumps, but they didn't know about the incentives available through Columbus and Tri-State," said the general manager. Those incentives added up to a tidy sum of \$78,731 in energy credits for the two systems.

On May 28, Hal Keeler, Columbus Electric board president and Tri-State director, presented a check to Deming Public School officials. Joining him at the ceremony were students, government and community officials, including N.M. Sen. John Arthur Smith and Rep. Dona Irwin.

In addition to the rebate, Deming's two newest schools are expected to yield significant savings on energy use compared to conventional HVAC systems that typically go into commercial buildings.

"School officials at Ruben S. Torres Elementary said that the new geothermal system will serve as a teaching tool for their students, helping them learn about energy efficiency," said



Geothermal heat pumps utilize ground loops to extract year-round heating and cooling.

Keith Emerson, Tri-State's coordinator for energy marketing and energy services programs. "Over the last 20 years, geothermal heat pump systems have become popular for schools from Canada to the American south. We're seeing a growing number of them installed for school districts in Tri-State's member service territory as the technology becomes better known among the districts and design teams," Emerson said.

To date, a total of 1,200 geothermal heat pump systems utilizing the G&T's incentive programs have been installed throughout the Tri-State membership.

"Our schools are getting smart about energy use," said Sen. Smith. "These highly efficient heating and cooling systems will surely save the school district money and resources."

"It's exciting to see New Mexico's electric cooperatives are giving back to our communities by incentivizing energy efficiency," said Rep. Irwin.

The ground-source heat pump incentives are just one part of a recently expanded Tri-State Energy Efficiency Credits program that offers its members a wide range of options that help consumers capture savings for installing Energy Star-rated appliances, efficient electric water heaters, high performance electric motors, LED and CFL lighting, as well as other heating and cooling products. In 2008, participation in Tri-State's EEC program paid out more than \$1.8 million on top of individual co-op incentives that are offered to end-use consumers.

## Focus on community



### Tri-State employee revives New Mexico fire station

In the five years Tri-State employee Robert "Blue" Siebert has been fire chief of the Lobo Canyon Fire Station in Grants, N.M., the department has seen significant improvements in equipment, training and an increase in members.

The Escalante Station mechanic welder has applied for and received numerous loans and grants, which allowed the fire department to purchase new gear and equipment, including a tanker in 2008. Recently, Siebert received word that he was successful in obtaining additional grants, which will go toward the purchase of an 80,000 gallon water tank and fire hydrant for the fire station. Since taking over the reins as chief five years ago, Siebert has been responsible for additional funding of \$525,700 for the department. He has also established training sessions for members and membership of the department has increased from six to 31 members during his tenure.

FALL

### In our next issue ...

Cooperatives are democratic organizations controlled by their members, who actively participate in setting their policies and making decisions. Last year, Tri-State member co-ops in Wyoming ran a campaign that resulted in the co-ops' opting out of Public Service Commission rate regulation. In our next issue, read about the successful campaign and learn how the results illustrate democratic member control at its best, emphasizing why self-governance remains an important cooperative principle.

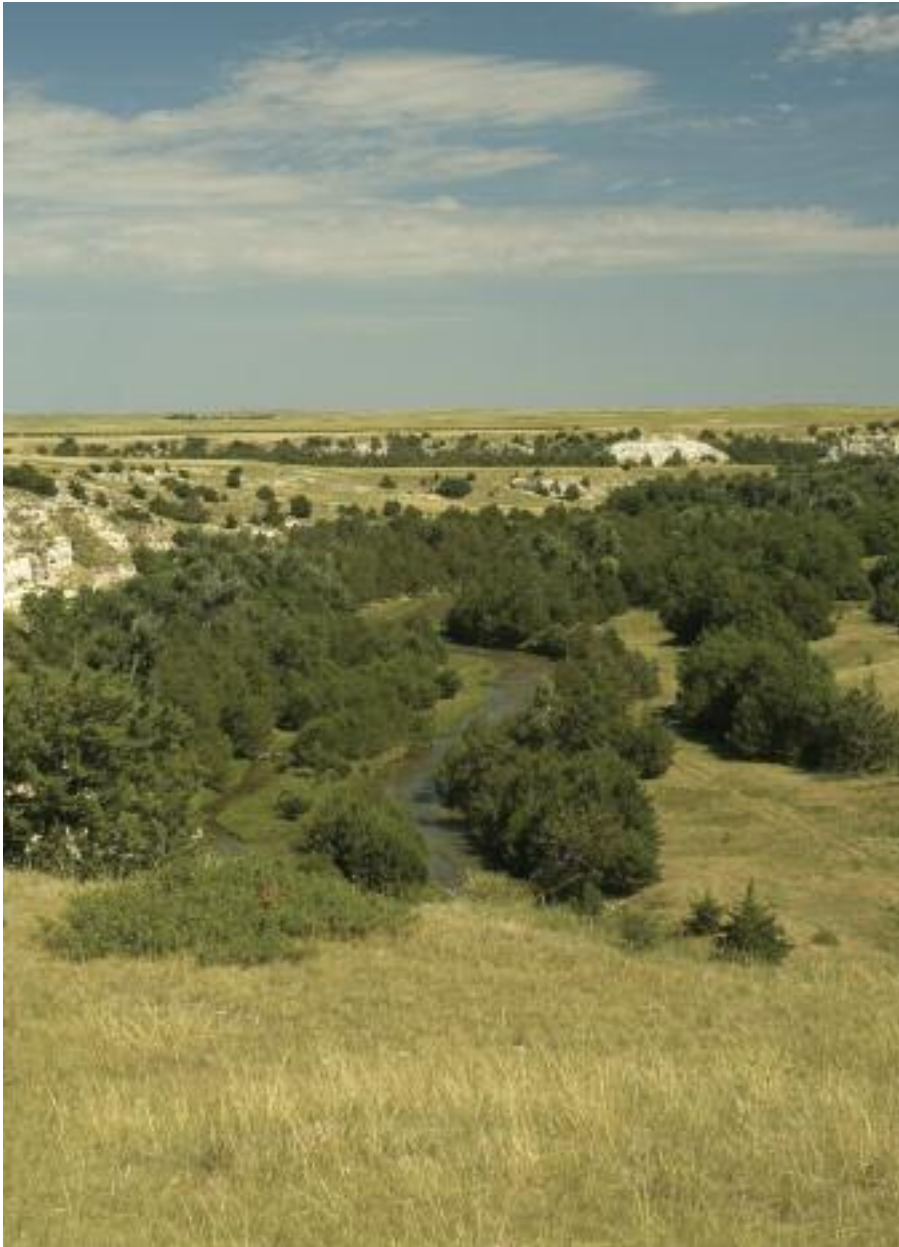


# NETWORK MAGAZINE

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## Service area scenic

### *The Niobrara River*

The scenic Niobrara River is a 430-mile-long tributary of the mighty Missouri River extending within the Tri-State member service territory through the states of Wyoming and Nebraska. In this view, it is winding its way through the upper panhandle of Nebraska inside the service area of Northwest Rural Public Power District (Hay Springs, Neb.).

The Niobrara River drains over 12,000 square miles of the Sandhills, one of the largest stabilized dune fields in the world. During the late spring and summer, canoe enthusiasts and rafters often enjoy leisurely float trips on this outstanding Great Plains river in north-central Nebraska. Along the way, visitors may be surprised to see pine-clad hills and prairie, numerous waterfalls, tall sandstone cliffs and wildlife including deer, bison, elk, beaver, mink, heron and kingfisher.