

WATT'S UP

AT LA PLATA ELECTRIC ASSOCIATION

LPEA

La Plata Electric Association, Inc.
A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

SEPTEMBER 2017

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

Protecting our regal feathered friends

Raptors, those birds of prey such as eagles and hawks, hunt from above. They often can be spied at the tops of Ponderosa pines, surveying in search of supper.

In the absence of such natural perches, however, these raptors find manmade structures – such as LPEA's utility poles – highly attractive. The cross arms also appear as secure nest locations. Unfortunately, what they may perceive to be a great perch to help sustain or birth new life, can also mean immediate death by electrocution.

In late summer 2011 LPEA erected a non-functioning utility pole by Echo Lake off of Highway 84 in Archuleta County to relocate an osprey family. This summer, LPEA crews erected a second “bird condo” [a sturdy platform that mimics a utility pole] just south of Pagosa Springs High School adjacent to CR 119, to “convince” the raptors to avoid LPEA's distribution lines in the area.

“The osprey started building their nest soon after construction,” says Jerry Wills, Pagosa line superintendent. “It may take them some time to move in formally, but our effort at Echo Lake has been effective, so we're hopeful that this second structure will protect more of our raptors.”

Federal laws protect the birds, nests, eggs and parts [such as a raptor's talon]. LPEA has in place a formal Avian Protection Plan that addresses issues and strategies, the laws, suggested regulatory compliance procedures and training programs.

“An avian protection plan has several primary components,” says Jake Wills, systems engineer. “We are sometimes necessarily reactive, responding to incidents and problem nests on existing poles, because we cannot move the nests until the chicks hatch. But with any new construction, we put avian protection automatically in place, and we are steadily retrofitting our system with the latest in avian protection.”

On a three-phase pole, raptors [that can have a wing span of more than 54 inches] risk hitting two different phases of electric current. They become a conductor between the phases, and the electric current zips through the bird. Death comes quickly. In addition, all LPEA customers on that three-phase line will be out of power. LPEA thus follows the plan and uses 60-inch spacing between phases and phase-to-ground lines to accommodate large female eagles.

“Many of our protection measures aren't necessarily visible from the ground, but you might see what look like triangles on top of cross arms,” says Jake Wills. “Those are an example of how we keep the birds away from the electrified lines.”

Because nests can be quickly built, and LPEA crews can't keep an eye on all the poles every day, LPEA members can assist in avian protection to minimize mortality and injury.

“If a raptor is showing interest in a utility pole in your neighborhood or on your route to work, please give us a call,” says Curt Marlatt, line superintendent, lines and services. “We'll get right on it to help protect our regal raptors.”



Raptors were building a nest on the energized pole in the background, but have now been relocated to their own “bird condo.”

Fuqua named to Milsoft OMS Advisory Board



Engineering
IT Specialist Brad Fuqua has been elected to the Milsoft Utility Solutions Advisory Board. He will serve a two-year term helping to improve Outage Management

System (OMS) software utilized by rural electric cooperatives across the country, including LPEA.

Milsoft is an Abilene, Texas-based developer of engineering, operations and communications software. LPEA's OMS program developed by Milsoft, has continued to improve the cooperative's ability to enhance outage communications both internally and externally.

"Milsoft relies on its advisory boards to help guide the direction of its products from an end-user's perspective," says Fuqua. "While my focus and support to Milsoft will be in the OMS arena, the company also supports LPEA with Geographic Information System (GIS), Interactive Voice Response (IVR), and Engineering Analysis software. I consider this a tremendous honor and look forward to contributing all that I can."

Members of the Milsoft advisory boards are elected by their peers at the annual corporate conference. Fuqua is well known to his contemporaries as a leading presenter at the annual conference. He served with Milsoft for 11 years before joining LPEA in 2014. He first became involved with LPEA in 2009 when the cooperative installed Milsoft's OMS system, and he assisted with the installation/transition to the new technology.

"I'm always looking toward what's next, being a voice for the future direction," says Fuqua. "Technology doesn't slow down. The OMS is one of the core tools for our Operations group that they depend on day in and day out. I'm excited to see what we and Milsoft can accomplish for LPEA and electric cooperatives everywhere."

LPEA grant supports DADT

BY ABBY SCOTT | DURANGO AEROSPACE DESIGN TEAM

Les Brown, a leading American motivational speaker claims that one should, "Shoot for the moon. Even if you miss, you'll land among the stars." The Durango Aerospace Design Team, however, shot farther than the moon in their Aug. 28-31 trip to the World Finals of the International Space Settlement Design Competition at Kennedy Space Center in Florida.

The Durango High School students were an integral part of Grumbo Aerospace's championship effort and swept all individual awards during the three-day competition. Grumbo Aerospace, a theoretical aerospace and engineering corporation, included 60 students (in addition to Durango) from schools in Romania, India, Seattle, Beijing, China and Iowa/Texas.

Annually, three individual honors are awarded, and this year, all went to Durango students:

- Joe Lawton – Dick Edwards Award (given to the best student leader from each company).
- Daniel Sander – Best Male Presenter Award.
- Abby Scott – Jingle Lutz Award – Best Female Presenter.

The 13 sleepy Durango youths returned Tuesday morning from the 42-hour space settlement design competition that simulates project proposals given within the aerospace industry. The 2017 project proposal detailed the need for a functioning space settlement upon the surface of Venus. The planet's inhospitable environment was only one of many challenges they had to overcome to succeed in the competition. Other challenges included, sleep deprivation, language and cultural differences, and time limitations to complete the proposal.

The students first received technical briefings from industry experts with experience in automation engineering, human factors, structural engineering, operations and infrastructure and management. Then they got the Request for Proposal setting their mission: to design a settlement on Venus that specializes in exploration, prospecting and surveying of Venusian materials, plus operations and maintenance of a city that provides for 10,000 residents, and beginning the process of terraforming Venus.

Rising DHS senior Paxton Scott was elected president of the combined team, with rising senior Abby Scott as co-systems engineer with Lakshyajit Dwivedee from the Shri Ram School, India. Other managerial positions held by Durango students: rising junior Katelyn Weese, head of human factors and safety, and graduating senior Harry Steinberg, head of structure and engineering.

The Durango team has won the International Aerospace Design Settlement Competition seven times in the past 23 years and qualified for the competition 22 times.

In support, the Durango Education Foundation financially contributed and gathered sponsorships and grants to help this happen from LPEA, StoneAge, Pediatric Partners, Alpine Bank, Susan and Richard Lawton, and Karla and Ed Dudley.



Back row, from left: Daniel Sandner, Torin Hopkins-Arnold, Sarah Vierling, Georgia Witchel, Abby Scott, Madeleine Burns, Katelyn Weese, Clay Mickelson. Front row, from left: Harry Steinberg, Alison Hall, Paxton Scott, Joe Lawton.

“Economics” of renewables workshop set for Sept. 19

To further the discussion about the opportunities and challenges of integrating renewable/distributed electricity generation into the cooperative’s resource mix, LPEA will host a third, free, informational session, Tuesday, Sept. 19, 2017, 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. at LPEA’s Durango headquarters, 45 Stewart St. (Bodo Park). Reservations required.

“For this third session, we will specifically focus on the ‘economics’ of installing renewable systems and the impacts it has financially to LPEA and our membership as a whole,” says Dan Harms, manager of rates, technology and energy policy, who will once again lead the workshop. “Renewables are not always the most economical solution for providing electricity, and we want to go through all the numbers.”

To reserve a seat at the workshop, RSVP to Sue Maxwell, 970.382.7170 or smaxwell@lpea.coop.

Join us for Member Appreciation Luncheons

LPEA will host two complimentary luncheons for cooperative members, Thursday, Sept. 14 in Durango, 45 Stewart St. (Bodo Industrial Park), and Thursday, Sept. 21 in Pagosa Springs, 603 S. 8th St.

“We’re your friends and neighbors who serve you as part of your rural electric cooperative,” says Mike Dreyspring, LPEA CEO. “The luncheons are an opportunity for us to get together, get to know each other, talk about your concerns, and remind us all of the spirit of being part of a cooperative. We truly enjoy meeting and talking with our members in person.”

All LPEA members – those who pay their electric bills to LPEA – are invited to drop by either LPEA office between 11:30 a.m. and 1 p.m. on the scheduled luncheon dates. No reservations are required.

The casual buffet meals will be catered in Durango by Back Porch BBQ and in Pagosa Springs by Smoken MOES Un-Real BBQ. The Bar D Wranglers will perform in Durango with Tim Sullivan serenading in Pagosa Springs.

Members are asked to park out front at both offices, though handicapped parking will be available, and parking attendants will direct those requiring assistance. Golf cart “shuttles” will also be available for those who don’t wish to walk across the LPEA facility yards to the lunch locations.



CO-OP MEMBERS

Ask...

Q: Why is LPEA giving away free electricity to those who have electric vehicles? As a cooperative member, I don’t feel this is a good use of everyone’s money.

A: LPEA believes the charging of electric vehicles will have a significant impact on our industry in the coming years. These newly installed charging stations are a way for LPEA to gain insight and understanding into a customer’s charging requirements.

For the nearly two months (at this writing) that the charging station has been operational, it has been used a total of 26 times by seven unique vehicles, and the impact to LPEA’s budget to provide the free electricity has been \$11.76. This is an extremely inexpensive way to avoid making an expensive mistake in the future. We are learning a great deal about EV charging, and what it will take to assess a fee for charging in the future.

LIVE WIRES

Board meeting Sept. 20, 9 a.m.

The next meeting of the LPEA Board of Directors is set for Wednesday, Sept. 20, 9 a.m. at the Ross Aragon Center in Pagosa Springs. 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.

Thanks for your input

LPEA, through NRECA, will conduct a new Member Survey this fall. A random sampling of members will receive phone or email requests to share their thoughts about LPEA. Please participate. Help us learn how to better serve YOU.

Round Up Grants

The LPEA Round Up Foundation Board awarded Round Up and Educational grants to Silver Spruce Academy, the Durango Food Bank, Pagosa Pregnancy Crisis Center and SUCAP Youth Services in August.

Closed for Labor Day

LPEA’s offices in Durango and Pagosa Springs will be closed on Monday, Sept. 4 in honor of Labor Day.





Round UP? Why should you?

BY TERESA CAMPBELL
LPEA ROUND UP FOUNDATION BOARD PRESIDENT

Let's start with the basic information: What is the La Plata Electric Association Round Up Foundation? It is a nonprofit organization supported by funds generated by LPEA members when they "round up" their electric bills to the next higher dollar amount [which amounts to an average of 50 cents per month, or \$6.00 per year]. A member can also select "Round Up-Plus," which "rounds up" the dollar amount and then monthly adds an additional donation of choice for the good cause. Each month the Round Up Board reviews applications from local nonprofits and allocates these donated funds to support our communities' needs.

OK, BUT WHY ROUND UP??

Let's take a look at that... We know you care about your community. You care about kids... kids having books to read... meals to

eat... attending camp... participating in science fairs... having safe places to "be"... kids growing into healthy adults. I'm sure you embrace art, theater, community gardens, community centers, science, playgrounds and more community efforts. Round Up supports all of these.

Round Up is a very easy way to give back to your community and show that you care about others. You can rest assured that all of the pennies donated from Round Up are collectively putting substantial dollars back into La Plata and Archuleta counties. All members of the Round Up Board are volunteers, and we have no overhead, so donations all go to our local nonprofits.

IT'S EASY TO SUPPORT YOUR COMMUNITY

All you have to do is sign up to Round Up (www.lpea.coop) and the rest is done by the Round Up Board. The Board meets monthly to allocate funds to worthy nonprofits such as: Celebrating Healthy Communities, Manna Soup Kitchen, Trails 2000, Project Merry Christmas, Gold Star Parents Weekend, Federal Order of Police,

THRIVE, Seeds of Learning, SASO, Lions Club, After Prom, Women's Resource Center, Merely Players, Friends of the Library, and many, many more.

BUT WHAT'S IN IT FOR YOU?

What's in it for you is knowing that you are thinking from your heart about sharing with others... knowing you are joining with people to collectively make a huge difference to those around us who are in need... knowing you can be counted in the mix of donors who help to keep much-needed programs running (which may otherwise have to cut services). You are contributing to our communities. And for all of you already donating to Round Up, thank you. I know you're not doing it for accolades, but I want to tell you, you should be proud.

If you're not a Round Up participant, and I've still intrigued you and you are still reading this article, I want to thank you because I feel certain you will sign up to participate in the LPEA Round Up or Round Up-Plus programs.

MAKE YOUR HEART SMILE!!

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Michael A. Dreyspring

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

