

# Rural Power

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### Co-ops disappointed with Fish & Wildlife Service's lesser prairie chicken decision

Electric cooperatives across several states expressed disappointment in the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) decision to list the lesser prairie chicken (LPC) as "threatened" under the Endangered Species Act.



The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service declares the lesser prairie chicken as threatened under the Endangered Species Act.

"This is a very discouraging decision. KEC has been working hard on an outcome that balances the interests of the rural Kansas economy with goals to encourage the lesser prairie chicken population," said KEC's CEO Bruce Graham. "This decision preempts voluntary conservation efforts in favor of a plan that will extract millions of dollars from a struggling rural economy, result in higher electric rates and restrict private property rights."

Utilities, industry and other developers can join a conservation plan that requires potentially significant mitigation fees but provides protection against fines and penalties for an accidental take of the LPC.

In response to the decision, Gov. Sam Brownback announced that Kansas will join a lawsuit against the federal agency that's listing

the LPC as a threatened species, saying the designation isn't necessary to rebuild the bird's population. Oklahoma filed the federal lawsuit last week against the FWS, challenging the agency's process in considering the listing.

"This is an overreach by the federal government,"

Brownback stated in a press conference. "We have put forward a plan that would work; they have ignored it. Instead they have taken this unnecessary, aggressive, intrusive and harmful route."

Since its enactment, the Endangered Species Act has been among the most contentious environmental laws because its substantive provisions can affect the use of both federal and nonfederal lands and resources. Once a species is listed, it is a difficult decision to reverse even if protection is no longer needed.

The rule takes effect 30 days after publication in the Federal Register. KEC is working with its members to determine next steps during this fairly short time frame.

### Paityn Manning Meets Peyton Manning at CoBank's customer meeting in Wichita

It's not often you get to meet your hero. Much less one who shares your name. But Paityn Manning, the daughter of Kaw Valley's General Manager Jerry Manning and his wife Pam, got to do just that last month when she met Denver Broncos quarterback Peyton Manning in Wichita.

"We thought he would be a good role model for her," said Pam Manning, on the decision to name their daughter after the signal caller.

"When we watched the Super Bowl this year, my Paityn would ask me why the announcers kept saying her name," Jerry Manning said. "Once we explained who was playing, she

commented, 'oh that's cool, guess it's all right for them to say it'."

Peyton Manning was speaking at CoBank's Western Plains customer meeting when bank CEO Bob Engel spotted the 6-year-old Paityn in the front row, proudly wearing her #18 jersey. Engel invited her to the stage for a photo with the quarterback, who was the opening night speaker at the co-op bank's annual meeting.

Jerry Manning notes that young Paityn hasn't stopped smiling – or talking – about the meeting. He said, "We were very pleased that Bob (Engel) provided Paityn the opportunity to get a photo with Peyton."



Paityn Manning, daughter of Kaw Valley's Jerry Manning, meets Denver Broncos quarterback Peyton Manning at a CoBank meeting.



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## inbrief

### Roberts bill to help co-ops heads to President's desk

Bipartisan legislation coauthored by Sen. Pat Roberts and Sen. Tom Harkin that will make it easier for cooperatives to continue to offer pensions to their employees has cleared both houses of Congress and will soon be signed into law by the President. The Cooperative and Small Employer Charity Pension Flexibility Act of 2013 will ensure that cooperative associations are not swept into a loophole, which would require them to divert funds from critical services and jeopardize their ability to provide pension benefits to their workers.

ROBERT'S REPORT - 4/1/14

### Sen. Pat Apple appointed to KCC post

Gov. Sam Brownback announced that Sen. Pat Apple, R-Louisburg, has been appointed to the Kansas Corporation Commission. If confirmed, Apple would replace KCC commissioner Thomas Wright and become the second senator in three months to be named to the utilities regulator's three-member panel.

CJ ONLINE - 3/24/14

## co-opcalendar

### APRIL

- 14 **KEC's Continuing Legal Education (CLE) Program**, KEC Headquarters, Topeka
- 16-17 **KEPCo Board of Trustees Meeting**, KEPCo Headquarters, Topeka
- 18 **Sunflower Board of Directors Meeting**, Sunflower Headquarters, Hays
- 18 **PCB/SPCC Seminar**, Courtyard Marriott, Salina
- 24 **MDM Meeting**, KEC Headquarters, Topeka
- 28 **KEC HR Summit**, Wichita Marriott

### MAY

- 4-7 **NRECA Legislative Conference**, Washington, D.C.
- 8-9 **KEC Board of Trustees Meeting**, Marriott Hotel, Wichita
- 14-15 **KEPCo Board of Trustees Meeting**, Courtyard by Marriott, Junction City
- 16 **Sunflower Board of Directors Meeting and Annual Meeting**, Victory Headquarters, Dodge City

## annualmeetings

### APRIL

- 4 **Alfalfa - dinner at 5 p.m.**, meeting at 7 p.m., Cherokee High School, 412 E. 5th, Cherokee, OK
- 5 **Sumner-Cowley - lunch at 11:30 a.m.**, meeting at 1:15 p.m., Wellington High School, East Highway 160, Wellington
- 8 **DS&O - Registration at 6 p.m.**, dinner at 6:30 p.m., meeting at 7 p.m., Sterl Hall, 619 N. Rogers, Abilene
- 8 **Sedgwick County - dinner at 6:30 p.m.**, meeting at 7 p.m., The Cotillion, 11120 W. Kellogg, Wichita
- 10 **CMS - dinner at 5:30 p.m.**, meeting at 7 p.m., High School, 409 School Addition, Meade
- 15 **Victory - dinner at 6 p.m.**, meeting at 7 p.m., Western State Bank Expo Center, 11333 Highway 283, Dodge City
- 22 **LJEC - meeting at 7 p.m.**, High School Auditorium, 217 Summit Street, McLouth
- 24 **Twin Valley - dinner at 6 p.m.**, meeting at 7 p.m., Labette County High School, 401 S. High School, Altamont
- 25 **Rolling Hills - dinner at 5:30 p.m.**, meeting at 6:30 p.m., NCK Technical College, East U.S. Highway 24, Beloit

### MAY

- 6 **Caney Valley - dinner at 5:30 p.m.**, meeting at 7 p.m., Cedar Vale School Gymnasium, 508 Dora, Cedar Vale

## Two Kansas electric cooperative employees attend NRECA's New Co-op Communicator Orientation

Two members of the Kansas cooperative family participated in NRECA's annual New Communicators Orientation last week.

Sadee Rohleder, Pioneer Electric, and Shawn Powelson, Wheatland Electric, spent two and a half days at NRECA's headquarters focusing on key issues and how to communicate effectively to members.

They, along with 30 other co-op communicators, learned about important issues facing cooperatives from



Pioneer's Sadee Rohleder (front row, third from right) and Wheatland's Shawn Powelson (standing in back row, far right) visited CFC as part of the New Co-op Communicator Orientation last week.

Capitol Hill to their own communities. Participants also had orientation sessions and briefings on a wide range of materials including: understanding the electric co-op business model and values, services available at a national level, and electric industry issues and challenges. Rohleder and Powelson

both found value in the orientation.

"The best part was the networking," Rohleder said. "I met so many communicators who specialized in different areas that adds benefit to the co-op. The training was valuable to me because it was basically like a welcome to the club, and introduced us to all the portals of information available."

She stated that knowing about the available resources and having networked with other cooperative communicators will be helpful in the future.

"I also enjoyed meeting the other communicators from across co-op land," agreed Powelson. "It's always good to have a network of peers in your profession that you can utilize for collaboration and support."

## Nemaha-Marshall

The members of Nemaha-Marshall celebrated the co-ops 75th anniversary at the annual meeting on March 4. The meeting was held at the American Legion Building in Axtell.

Ricky's Cafe catered a lunch prior to the meeting. The two youth tour participants from last year spoke on their experiences. Bob Hall, KEC, also spoke to the membership.

Re-elected to the board were Galen Bauman, Robert Rottinghaus, and Robert Voet.

## Bluestem

Even with 70 degree weather, 111 members and their families turned out for Bluestem's 75th annual meeting in Clay Center. The meeting was held on March 10 at the Clay Center United Methodist Church.

Members enjoyed a small expo and signed up for door prizes prior to the meeting. During the meeting, the 10 scholarship winners were introduced. Guest speakers included Chuck Terrill, KEPCo, and Shana Read, KEC.

Members re-elected Bill Pannbacker, Don Sutter, Dan Pollock, and Alice Kimble to the board by mail ballot in Dec. 2013. The meeting adjourned with door prizes and cookies.

## Butler

Nearly 300 members attended Butler's annual meeting on March 13 at Circle High School in Towanda. A meal catered by Syl's Catering of Colwich, and entertainment from Butler Community College Headliners, was offered prior to the meeting. A "kids korner" was also provided for the younger children during the meeting.

Sheri Claassen was newly elected to the board, and Richard Jimenez was reelected by a unanimous ballot.

The speakers of the night included Jay Prater, KAKEland TV meteorologist, and Chuck Terrill, KEPCo.

## Heartland

Ice cream was enjoyed by the members following Heartland's annual meeting on March 13 at Fort Scott Community College.

Guest speakers included board president, Sam Marsh; CEO, Dale Coomes; Finance Director, Angie Erickson; and KEC's CEO Bruce Graham.

Re-elected to the board were Dennis Peckman, Patrick Johnson, Don Davied, and Sam Marsh.

## Pioneer

Pioneer's 70th annual meeting was held on March 15 at the Grant County Civic Center in Ulysses. The meeting was attended by 129 members.

Newly-elected to the board was Michael Brewer, and incumbents Melvin Winger and Martie Floyd were re-elected.

Prior to the meeting, more than 1,000 people attended the annual health fair that was co-hosted by Pioneer Electric and Pioneer Communications.

## Ninnescah

Approximately 245 members and guests attended Ninnescah's annual meeting on March 25.

Dinner was provided by Fencepost Catering of Harper. Members re-elected Curtis Durall, Edwin Lenkner, and Kenneth Unruh to three-year terms on the board of trustees.

Speakers at the meeting included Coleen Wells, KEPCo, and Larry Freeze, KEC.

## Prairie Land

More than 300 members and guests enjoyed lunch catered by Ruth Ann Bigge and served by FCCCLA students at Prairie Land's Annual Meeting held March 25 at the cooperative headquarters. Prior to the meeting, members enjoyed a mini home show.

During the meeting, the members

learned about self-regulation and acknowledged the youth tour winners.

Members re-elected Mike Rogers, Keith Ross, Ronald G. Griffith, and Jerry Gallagher to the board by mail ballot in February.

## Doniphan

Doniphan held its annual meeting on March 27 at Midway School. The evening started with a dinner catered by Doniphan West PTO and served by the school's sixth graders.

The meeting drew more than 100 members, and included speakers Bruce Graham, KEC's CEO, and Ted Meyers who shared how to improve energy efficiency in the home.

Two new members were elected to the Board: Mike Collins and Norman Sigrist. Steve Whittaker was reelected.

## Flint Hills

Dinner and a show was enjoyed by more than 350 guests at Flint Hills' 76th Annual Meeting on March 27 at the Centre High School. Prior to the meeting, members were entertained by the Cottonwood River Band. During the meeting, the members heard reports and were introduced to the student winners selected to attend the Cooperative Youth Leadership Camp this summer.

Members re-elected Roger Zimmerman and Tim Miser to the board.

## Lyon-Coffey

Lyon-Coffey's annual meeting on March 31 drew more than 600 in attendance at the Emporia Civic Center. Dinner was catered by Olpe Chicken House prior to the meeting.

Highlights of the meeting included the American Legion Post #5 color guard, guest speaker Chuck Terrill from KEPCo, and the introduction of youth tour winners.

Gene Huston and Warren Schmidt were reelected to the board without opposition.

# Midwest Energy to plant first community-owned solar farm

Midwest Energy and community solar developer Clean Energy Collective (CEC) have signed an agreement to build a one-megawatt community solar photovoltaic array, the largest in Kansas, with panels owned by Midwest Energy members throughout central and western Kansas.

The 4,000-panel solar garden will be located within the Midwest Energy service territory, making renewable energy ownership available to all of Midwest Energy's 50,000 electric members. The purchase price for panels in the array will include all available rebates and tax incentives, as if the system were located on the customer's roof. Members will receive credit for the power their panels produce directly on their Midwest Energy electric bills.

"We're excited to be the first utility in Kansas to offer community-owned solar to our members," said John Blackwell, Chair of Midwest Energy's Board of Directors. "Our customers have signaled they're supportive of renewable energy, and we're pleased to

bring this solar ownership opportunity to them."

CEC's community solar model employs economies of scale to build optimally-sited, fully-maintained solar projects. The PV arrays are designed for maximum power production and maximum lifespan, delivering the lowest possible price for renewable energy. Midwest Energy members purchase the panels directly from CEC; Midwest Energy then purchases the power from CEC, while Midwest Energy provides a credit directly to the member's bill. Members get the benefits of solar ownership, yet bypass the research, construction, and ongoing maintenance and repair required of a rooftop system. It also provides the flexibility of having the energy credits move with each owner, as long as they stay within the utility territory, and have the ability to resell

their panels at any time.

Renewable energy is playing an increasing role in economic development for Kansas, credited with helping generate jobs, reducing electricity bills, and pumping millions of dollars into local economies. Innovations like community-owned solar are showing that this burgeoning industry is poised for growth in the state.

"This is a win-win solution that provides tangible benefits for everyone—ease of implementation for the cooperative, cost-effective solar ownership options for our members, and impressive environmental contributions," said Earnie Lehman, Midwest Energy's General Manager.

Lehman will share more about this community solar project as part of KEC's Summer Board Meeting agenda.

For more information, visit [www.MWEcommunitysolar.com](http://www.MWEcommunitysolar.com).

**We're excited to be the first utility in Kansas to offer community-owned solar to our members.**

JOHN BLACKWELL



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