

Rural Power

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Brinker highlights RUS loans, energy efficiency needs at Farm Bill hearing

Nemaha-Marshall's general manager, Kathleen Brinker, highlighted core Rural Utilities Service programs for the Senate Agriculture Committee during a Farm Bill field hearing on August 25 in Wichita.

Responding to questions from Sen. Pat Roberts, Brinker explained that it would be difficult, if not impossible, for electric co-ops to finance major utility infrastructure without the RUS loan program, which helps secure long-term financing at no cost to the federal government.

"Co-op service areas are often large and their populations small, so the not-for-profit electric co-op model is very important in providing affordable, reliable electricity to our members,"



Nemaha-Marshall's Kathleen Brinker testified on behalf of the electric cooperatives during a Farm Bill field hearing in Wichita on August 25.

Brinker stated. During questions from chairwoman Debbie Stabenow about Kansas electric co-op efficiency efforts, Brinker discussed Midwest Energy's "How\$mart" program, which was a model for the proposed Rural Energy Savings Program Act.

"Rural electric cooperatives have a straightforward mission: to provide reliable electric service at the lowest cost possible," she added. "That is one reason electric co-ops have been leaders in energy efficiency."

Funding will be a key issue in the 2012 Farm Bill reauthorization debate, and this hearing was an opportunity to get electric co-op views heard early in committee deliberations.

DS&O and Rolling Hills electric cooperatives to consider consolidation

Eyeing potential savings and more efficient customer service, DS&O and Rolling Hills electric cooperatives are considering consolidation.

DS&O's Board of Directors recently met with Rolling Hill's Board of Trustees to explore the possibility of consolidating the two utilities. Out of this meeting, the two cooperatives formed a consolidation committee which consists of three members from each board. The committee members from DS&O are Ron Seyfert, Bruce Spare and James Christopher. The three members from Rolling Hills are Gary Frieling, Leon Eck and Bernard "Sonny" Bohnen. The joint committee begins talks this month.

The joint committee will develop a timeline if both boards agree to move forward and take the consolidation issue to their respective memberships.

Many issues will need to be studied –

including the composition of board, management and staffing issues, financing, equipment, and software compatibility – and any differences that must be resolved in order to develop a consolidation plan that is beneficial to both cooperatives' members. For the consolidation to be approved, each cooperative must gain approval from two-thirds of their members who vote.

Both cooperatives have already been informing their memberships about the plan to study a possible merger. Articles were run in the *Salina Journal* on Sept. 1, and Rolling Hills' manager, Doug Jackson, was interviewed on air by KNCK 1390 AM.

Both DS&O and Rolling Hills plan to keep their memberships informed as to the committee's progress through updates in the center-spreads of *Kansas Country Living* and through other cooperative mailings.



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Abengoa announces DOE offer for \$133.9 million loan to build biomass plant

Abengoa Bioenergy has been selected by the DOE's Loan Programs Office to receive an offer of a \$133.9 million federal loan guarantee for the construction of its "first of a kind" commercial scale bio-refinery facility in Hugoton to produce renewable liquid fuel from earth's most abundant organic feedstock source – plant fiber, or cellulosic biomass.

ABENGOA – 8/22/11

Score your Smart Grid IQ

The Smart Grid Research Consortium released a scorecard for utilities to evaluate their smart grid investment and planning process. The ideal investment/planning framework is capable of identifying specific technologies and programs that best meet utility financial requirements while considering unique infrastructure and customer characteristics.

SGRC – 9/1/11

DOE announces \$12 million to support development of drop-in biofuels

U.S. Energy Secretary Steven Chu announced up to \$12 million to fund three small-scale projects in IL, WI, and NC that aim to commercialize novel conversion technologies to accelerate the development of drop-in biofuels and other bio-based chemicals. Drop-in biofuels are fuels that can serve as direct replacements or supplements to existing gasoline, diesel and jet fuels, without any changes to existing fuel distribution networks or engines. The projects seek to accelerate research and development that will lead the way toward affordable, clean alternatives to fossil fuels and diversify our nation's energy portfolio.

DEPT. OF ENERGY – 8/31/11

SEPTEMBER

- 12-16 **High-voltage Safety Demo**, Kansas State Fair, Hutchinson.
- 13-15 **Hot Line School**, Pratt Vo-Tech, Pratt.
- 14-15 **KEPCo Board of Trustees Meeting**, KEPCo Headquarters, Topeka.
- 16 **Sunflower Board of Directors Meeting**, Sunflower Headquarters, Hays.
- 20-22 **Hot Line School**, Manhattan Vo-Tech, Manhattan.
- 22-23 **Line Superintendents Meeting**, Holiday Inn, 549 S. Rock Road, Wichita.
- 28-29 **KEC Board of Trustees Committee Meetings**, Marriott Hotel, Wichita.

OCTOBER

- 11-13 **NRECA Region 7 & 9 Meeting**, Denver, CO.
- 19-20 **KEPCo Board of Trustees Meeting**, KEPCo Headquarters, Topeka.
- 21 **Sunflower Board of Directors Meeting**, Sunflower Headquarters, Hays.
- 26 **Touchstone Energy Brand Camp**, Homewood Suites, Wichita.

upcoming training

Touchstone Energy Brand Camp to be held Oct. 26

Electric cooperative employees are invited to attend this free, hands-on workshop that's geared to equip you with the statistics, game plans and team spirit to energize co-op teams.

The training will be held on Wed., Oct. 26, from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. at the Homewood Suites in Wichita.

This camp will help employees better understand Touchstone Energy's varied resources, how to use them, and how they can help cooperative members. Guest speakers will include DS&O's Don Hellwig and the Wichita Wingnuts' Jeremy Mock.

There is no cost to attend, and lunch will be provided. Registration deadline is Oct. 5.

Participants are asked to bring (if possible) a wireless-enabled laptop, their co-op logo, a .jpg image of their CEO, their communications or strategic plan, samples of how they've used Touchstone Energy materials, and their member satisfaction or ASCI score.

Make room reservations by calling the Homewood Suites at 316-260-8844. If you have any questions, please contact Shana Read, 785-478-4554 or email sread@kec.org.

Renewable energy in schools free webinar on Sept. 20

A free, hour-long webinar will share current success stories of consumer-owned utilities that encourage renewable energy in the schools and school-based solar projects nationwide.

Speakers include Larry Flowers, who helped initiate the Wind in the Schools program for US DOE, and Jill Cliburn, who regularly brings her field experience to Clean Energy Ambassadors.

CEA webinars are held on the third Tuesday of each month.

Visit the Clean Energy Ambassadors ning site, www.cleanenergyambassadors.ning.com to register for this free webinar and to see the full line-up of CEA services and events.

KEC to offer Supervisory courses

KEC is offering the first five of the NRECA Supervisory Training courses on Dec. 14-16 at the Hotel Old Town in Wichita.

This workshop offers the first five courses, and the remaining courses will be offered in the first quarter of 2012. Bryan Singletary, NRECA, will facilitate.

Registration is \$975 per attendee, and includes workshop materials and lunch on both Dec. 14 and 15. Registration deadline is Sept. 30.

Make room reservations by calling Hotel Old Town 877-265-3869. Ask for the KEC block to get the rate of \$119 plus tax. Breakfast is included in the rate. If you have any questions, please contact Shana Read, 785-478-4554 or email sread@kec.org.

Rolling Hills' Doug Jackson speaks with White House Business Council

Rolling Hill's general manager, Doug Jackson, was invited to participate in a Winning the Future Roundtable with American Business on Aug. 12 in Wamego.

Coordinated by the White House Business Council, the roundtable is an information gathering event for senior Obama administration



Doug Jackson

officials to learn from business leaders across the country. The roundtables allow officials to listen to local businesses and to receive feedback on how the administration can best support their growth. The event is also designed to ensure that local business leaders are taking advantage of the resources and programs designed to help them to create jobs and to compete.

The Wamego roundtable was facilitated by Dr. Catherine Woteki, the under secretary for the USDA Research, Education, and Economics mission area, as well as the Department's chief scientist.

Jackson commented on wholesale power costs, as well as the direct linkage between and EPA regulation of power plants and the agricultural economy in Kansas.

"I believe that all federal agencies need to understand the cumulative impact of the regulations they impose," Jackson stated. "The process for evaluating this impact must be open and transparent with opportunity for input by all stakeholders. This review should be undertaken before regulations are adopted."

Following Jackson, representatives from the rural telephone industry shared their concerns on potential reduced funding that would cripple the expansion of fiber in the rural areas.

White House Business Council members will host these roundtables in at least 100 communities across the country by year-end.

Co-ops golf, raise funds in KCRE tournament

Cooperative golfers raised more than \$6,000 during the 15th annual Kansas Committee for Rural Electrification (KCRE) golf tournament. The event was held August 26 at the Salina Municipal Golf Course.

The KCRE golf tournament raises an amount of money approximately equal to 240 memberships and provides KCRE necessary funds to support those who support electric cooperative issues.

A total of 120 golfers on 30 teams participated in the tournament. Flight winners included the teams from CMS, Nemaha-Marshall, Sedgwick County, Rolling Hills, KEPCo and Lane-Scott. The winning team included Jim Abel, Scott Abel, Roger Davis and Kirk



The KCRE Golf Tournament organizers included (from left): Roger Davis, CMS; Bob Reece, Flint Hills; Kirk Thompson, CMS; Dale Short, Butler; Ken Maginley, Bluestem; and Scott Whittington, Lyon-Coffey.

Thompson all from CMS.

Rod Gerdes, Brown-Atchison, won the early bird drawing. Tony Hitsman, Bluestem, and Les Evans, KEPCo, won the top prize drawings. In addition, 18 hole prizes were also awarded following the tournament.

The 16th Annual KCRE Golf Open is scheduled for August 24, 2012, at the Salina Municipal Golf Course.

DirecTV breaks with NRTC, electric cooperatives

Since 1993, electric cooperatives have contracted through the National Rural Telecommunications Cooperative (NRTC) with DirecTV to sell and support their satellite services. However, last month, DirecTV elected to let the existing contracts expire between the satellite provider and 90 electric cooperatives across the country, including Flint Hills and Rolling Hills.

On Aug. 15, NRTC's contractual agreement to sell and support DirecTV services has expired after 18 years.

Existing customers will be now be serviced by DirecTV technicians and staff, not employees at the local cooperative."

"Rolling Hills has installed around 400 systems that we cannot touch now," said Linnea Beebe, Rolling Hills. "Customers cannot pay at our office or get service through us as they have in the past. It's a real pain for our members."

Although electric cooperatives will no longer provide satellite television installations, they will continue to offer WildBlue satellite Internet services.

Victory Electric employees and families at Dodge City Days



More than 75 Victory employees and family members were in the Dodge City Days parade on July 30. The theme this year was "Harvest the Excitement". Victory employees also grilled

1,500 hamburgers for media night, rode tricycles in the Wacky Trike Races, grilled and barbecued the Dodge City Days BBQ, and entertained children at the Touch A Truck event.

Co-ops to deliver safety message at Kansas State Fair

Kansas electric cooperatives and Touchstone Energy Cooperatives of Kansas are once again co-sponsoring a high-voltage line safety demonstration in conjunction with the Kansas State Fair, Sept. 12-16.

Teaching the public to stay safe around power lines is the focus of the electric cooperatives' message at this year's fair.

Cooperative linemen from Midwest, Sedgwick County, Lane-Scott, Butler and Wheatland have volunteered to help spread the message

The demonstration, which is part of "Kansas' Largest Classroom," is a half-hour in length and will incorporate a full-size electric safety demonstration. The demonstration is on loan from Midwest Energy.

Linemen will demonstrate proper safety precautions and teach viewers what protective gear linemen use and why, and what happens to a person when they come into contact with an energized line.

The public demonstration will operate from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m., and will be located in the Beef Judging building.

Touchstone Energy and Discovery Channel School "Get Charged" kits will be distributed to teachers who pre-register their fifth through ninth grade classes for the demonstration.

Efficiency Kansas challenge: KU vs. K-State

Lawrence and Manhattan have been competing all year in the "Take Charge Challenge" to see which community can conserve the most energy in the statewide energy efficiency challenge. The competition, which ends on Sept. 30, offers bragging rights and a \$100,000 community prize.

Both communities have encouraged their residents to take energy-savings measures such as: switching all light bulbs to compact fluorescents, to have a home energy audit, to install programmable thermostats, and to attend community events. The activities are then logged at the Take Charge website.

To be fair, the competition is scored on a per capita basis across all three categories. The three categories consist of "whole house" energy efficiency retrofits including energy audits, energy efficiency measures including programmable thermostat installations, and community participation including participation at challenge events.

To help spread the word to the Manhattan students and residents, K-State created "EcoKat," a new "cru-



K-State created EcoKat, the "crusader of conservation" to promote the "Take Charge Challenge" – a friendly competition to see which community reduces its energy usage the most.

sader of conservation". EcoKat, a K-State student, wears a superhero-inspired costume that is made of 90-percent repurposed materials.

While both Lawrence and Manhattan are playing on school rivalries to promote competition, the true spirit of the "Take Charge Challenge" is to educate Kansas' students and residents about how energy conservation saves money and helps the environment. Since January, the combined total savings between the two communities is more than \$155,000.

For more information, visit www.takechargekansas.org, www.sustainability.ku.edu/takecharge, or <http://sustainability.ksu.edu/takecharge>.

KEC is on Facebook

If you are a member of the fastest growing social networking site – Facebook, join us in becoming a fan of Kansas Electric Cooperatives. The fan page will keep you up-to-date on happenings at the Kansas statewide. Find our fan pages at www.facebook.com by searching for Kansas Electric Cooperatives.



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