

NETWORK

Spring 2011



Outgoing NRECA president's parting words



TRI-STATE GENERATION AND TRANSMISSION ASSOCIATION, INC.

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative





NETWORK

Spring 2011

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.tristategt.org.



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General Manager's message

Delivering on our mission in 2010 and beyond

Ken Anderson
Executive Vice President/General Manager

Every April, more than 400 directors, members, guests and affiliated friends of our Tri-State co-op family converge on the Westminster headquarters to attend our annual meeting. I and my colleagues on the management staff look forward to this once-a-year opportunity to visit with directors and staff from all 44 of our member systems at one time. As always, our goal is to make the most of this gathering by informing our constituents about our many projects, programs and management strategies that we have implemented to do our part to ensure the lights stay on and the power we deliver remains affordable for the member-owners at the end of the line.

It is most gratifying to report on a successful 2010, in which we accomplished a significant number of important goals and closed out the year with positive margins, excellent availability and performance from our generation fleet and improved reliability on our transmission system.

Safety is always the top priority at our plants and field locations and our improved record during the past year at nearly all of our facilities indicates that our employees are taking that message to heart. In 2010, corporate flight joined Escalante Station in the prestigious OSHA Voluntary Protection Program, and going forward, we will continue to mature our safety programs and practices aimed toward our goal of no on-the-job accidents or injuries.

Also of great importance, we bolstered our liquidity, received an upgraded financial rating and received a clean financial audit for 2010 — owing in large part to the stewardship and prudence of our board of directors and the competence of our financial staff.

At the beginning of 2010, we produced our first business plan that set forth our enterprise vision with key disciplines around measurement, analytics, change management, risk mitigation and the visibility of our work. This plan — updated for 2011 — exercises and matures these disciplines

and builds on the board of directors' four strategic goals, which were formalized during their 2010 strategic planning process.

Recently, we presented a 2010 load analysis to the Tri-State board and the results, given the sluggish economy of the past several years, may surprise you. In 2010, member peak demand grew 5 percent, and members' 15-year average demand growth is 3.4 percent. Last year, member peak energy grew 5.6 percent with a 15-year average energy growth of 3.5 percent. This is particularly noteworthy when you consider that our member system growth is approximately three times the national average for other U.S. utilities.

This growth trend reinforces the need for us to continue to explore available fuel and resource options to meet the memberships' future requirements, in addition to pursuing our comprehensive maintenance program at our existing generation fleet.

As you will read in Tri-State's 2010 Annual Report, the past year marked many milestones. These included the completion and commercial start-up of two renewable projects in Colorado and New Mexico and approval of a 2011 operating budget that holds the average wholesale rate at 2009-2010 levels and allows for the continued construction of projects to strengthen the association's transmission system in areas where power supply is at or near capacity.

We also have made important strides to enhance and mature forecasting, analytic and risk assessment capabilities. These tools will provide a better near-term financial forecasting, boost market activities and support our energy and financial position and assess future rates and risk profiles under an increasingly uncertain future.

While we are pleased with the accomplishments of 2010, we look forward to continuing to implement a number of ongoing initiatives and strategies to serve the will of the board and best provide value to the membership in the years ahead.

We must ensure that the lights stay on at the co-ops and the power we deliver remains affordable for the member-owners at the end of the line.

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Wolski reflects on role as industry leader

Tri-State director and recent NRECA board president discusses the key issues facing the rural electric industry.



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Co-ops protecting right-of-ways

Member co-ops are spending millions to remove stricken beetle-killed trees from their right-of-ways.



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Energizing our communities

The association's generating facilities and affiliated mining operations bring jobs and prosperity to many in the region.



Cover: Former NRECA board president Wally Wolski addresses the 8,000 attendees at the electric co-op organization's annual meeting held in March in Orlando, Fla.



In one of his last official acts as president of NRECA's board of directors, Wally Wolski delivered a passionate keynote speech to the 8,000 attendees at the association's 2011 annual meeting.

Wolski passes the gavel at NRECA annual meeting

Photos and interview by Jim Van Someren

This native of Wyoming is a husband, a father of two grown daughters, a farmer, an insurance agent and both an avid golfer and goose hunter. Along with all that, for nearly the past 25 years, F.E. "Wally" Wolski also has proudly worn the title of electric cooperative director.

Wolski's electric co-op director credentials are strong — and won't be matched anytime soon. He has served on his local, Lingle, Wyo.-based co-op board — Wyrulec Co. — since 1987 (having held all of the officer positions over the years); he has served as a Tri-State director for the past decade; and, for the past 12 years he has served on the board of the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association — the national organization representing the interests of more than 900 rural electric co-ops across the U.S.

In fact, Wolski recently concluded a two-year term as president of NRECA's 47-member board at the association's 69th annual meeting held March 3-9 in Orlando, Fla. He is only the second Tri-State director to hold that prestigious position, following in the footsteps of the late Bob McClurg, a fellow Wyoming co-op director who fulfilled the role in the late 1990s.

Network was on hand at the NRECA annual meeting to document portions of Wolski's busy week and to get his thoughts on a number of topics.

Incoming NRECA president Mike Guidry (left) pins the "past president pin" on his predecessor to conclude the March board meeting. "We've been more than president and vice president; we've become sincere friends," said Guidry.



Network: You have served as an electric co-op director in several different capacities for nearly 25 years. What was it that first attracted you to cooperative service at the local level and what is it that has kept you so involved all these years?

WW: The incumbent director moved out of my district and the nominating committee asked my Dad to run. He said he was too old to do it, so they approached me and asked for my permission to place my name on the ballot. I got elected in February and went to the NRECA legislative rally in May. It was there that I first saw the big picture and wanted to be an active participant in the cooperative network.

Network: You just finished a two-year stint as NRECA board president. How was the experience and what is the strongest lasting impression?

WW: It was the defining moment of my tenure as a grassroots-elected director and the two most personally rewarding years — and most intense years — of my life. The greatest impact was getting to work with the talented staff and getting to know different co-op leaders all around the country — G&T managers, statewide association folks and co-op managers and directors. I have a deeper appreciation for the internal challenges of trying to keep everyone everywhere happy — not everyone is always on the same page and it's a 24/7, 365-day challenge for NRECA.

Network: Any future plans you care to share? Are you going to continue "wearing as many hats" as you have been over the past few years?

WW: I plan to stay involved at different levels, but I'm also looking forward to systematically tapering off a bit, too. I have just stepped off the National Rural Utilities Cooperative Finance Corporation board after serving four years; next year, at NRECA's annual meeting in San Diego, I will be retiring after serving 13 years on that board. I was just recently re-elected to my local co-op for a ninth term and will continue to serve as a Tri-State director at the pleasure of my board at Wyrulec Company.

Network: The theme of NRECA's 2011 annual meeting was "Our Members - Our Power." What does that mean to you?

WW: "Our Members" are why cooperatives exist — we exist solely to serve them. As our grassroots, they also are "Our Power." I like to think of our membership as spinning reserves — they are our ace in the hole. Our members represent who we are and what we stand for. Working together, we operate as an effective network. Simply stated, our members are our power!

Network: Based on your personal experience, what do you think the future of the electric utility industry holds — and specifically for the cooperative sector?

WW: While we will continue to face uncertainty from both regulatory and legislative agendas, I believe our cooperative business model will serve us well into the future. As cooperatives, we always seem to pull together for the greater good and rise up when we're faced with difficult situations. The key to our future success is education and communication. We need to educate our member-owners, educate our elected officials and the general public about the realities of having a reliable, affordable and abundant source of electric power available for our daily consumption. Our nation's entire economy revolves around electricity and the co-ops will be a force to be reckoned with down the road. The future will no doubt be filled with surprises, but by working together we can position ourselves to be successful in our mission.

Network: Do you have any advice for electric co-op directors or employees who may be in the early stages of their careers?

WW: Get involved from the get-go. I would strongly recommend attending the NRECA regional meeting your first year and the new director classes — even sit in on the resolutions committee. Take on-line, fast-track new director orientation courses. Try to obtain your CCD (Certified Cooperative Director) status during your first term. Attend statewide and G&T annual meetings, maybe take in a director's conference or the legislative rally every year or so. The learning curve is steep and by attending outside meetings, you will get a better feel for our electric cooperative program and get a head-start on coming up-to-speed with fellow directors at your co-op.

Network: Any final thoughts or parting words you would care to share?

WW: The electric cooperative program allows ordinary people to accomplish extraordinary things on behalf of others. I am living proof — a grassroots co-op member from Yoder, Wyo., from a small rural co-op, Wyrulec Company, having an opportunity to represent Wyoming on our national association. And, then having the distinct honor of being elected by my peers to serve as the 34th president of NRECA is a humbling experience and one that I will always remember. I owe a great deal of thanks to all the members of the Tri-State family for all the support that has been extended to me over the years. It truly has been a once-in-a-lifetime experience — made extra special for me by following in the footsteps of my good friend, fellow Tri-State director and NRECA past president — the late Bob McClurg — to ride for the co-op brand!



Wolski was backstage to greet entertainer Lee Greenwood (left), who performed a couple of his signature patriotic songs at the NRECA annual meeting.



Wolski displays the statue of an electric co-op lineman, a gift he received in recognition for his service to the NRECA board. Serving as the association's president has "been an honor and a privilege," Wolski said.

It isn't a pretty sight. Since the late 1990s, throughout the Rocky Mountain West, majestic high country vistas that were recently carpeted with green forests have been rapidly transformed into millions of acres of red rust and yellow-tinged

dead and dying pine trees over a massive region that extends from New Mexico to British Columbia.

The culprit is a tenacious little native pest known as the mountain pine beetle that measures no larger than a pencil eraser. But, despite its diminutive size, this insect has proven to be nearly unstoppable in its ability to chew through vast tracts of mature lodgepole, ponderosa, Scotch and limber pine trees. Beyond the visual devastation of barren landscape that is undoubtedly impacting wildlife, mountain tourism and real estate values, these tinder-dry dead forests pose a major threat of fueling a massive forest fire that could threaten lives, water quality and property in many mountain communities in Colorado and southern Wyoming.

Two of Tri-State's member co-ops, Mountain Parks Electric (Granby, Colo.) and Carbon Power & Light (Saratoga, Wyo.), have been seriously impacted by this forest devastation, prompting costly

emergency right-of-way tree cutting to keep falling dead trees from damaging lines and causing fires. United Power (Brighton, Colo.) has also worked closely with the U.S. Forest Service in stepping up its right-of-way management efforts in its Coal Creek Mountain District, where the pine beetle has begun to kill trees near its distribution lines.

To a lesser extent, Tri-State also has been impacted. Although the G&T has ownership in several lines traversing beetle-impacted federal forest lands, it only has maintenance responsibility for one line in the tree-kill zone. That's the 22-mile, 115-kilovolt, Fraser-Mill transmission line in Grand County, Colo., which has already survived one fire that caused minor damage to the power path last fall.

A growing problem

In order to get a feel for the size of the footprint that these insects are carving out of the western forests, one only needs to take a drive through Grand County, where a majority of the mature pine forests are now dead. But, a recently compiled Forest Service assessment paints an even bleaker picture. An aerial survey conducted last fall shows that since 2009, beetles ravaged 550,000 more acres in Colorado and southern Wyoming, moving from

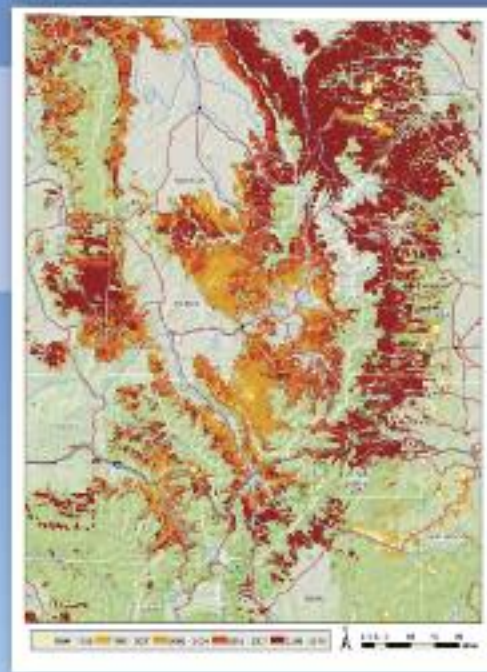


Many of Mountain Parks Electric's distribution lines are threatened by dead and dying lodgepole pine trees that can fall on conductor, knock out power and possibly cause a major wildfire. Photo by Les Shankland of Mountain Parks Electric.

PINE BEETLE

infestation whittling down western forests

Story by Charlie Powell



Tri-State, several member co-ops impacted



lodgepole pines into ponderosa and other kinds of trees.

These new infestations bring the total number of beetle-infested acres in the two states since 1996 to 4.6 million. Of that amount, 4 million acres have been killed by pine beetles and 650,000 acres have been wiped out by the related spruce beetle.

The hardest hit new areas in Colorado include forests along the northern Front Range west of Boulder and Fort Collins and in southwestern Colorado. And, some forestry experts are now concerned that this epidemic may spread to trees along Colorado's Front Range.

In Wyoming, state foresters say that 85 to 90 percent of the mature lodgepole pine — about 750,000 acres — will be dead in the Medicine Bow Mountains of southern Wyoming in the next three to five years.

As staggering as those numbers may seem, it is really just a small part of much larger problem. In British Columbia, foresters have already seen 40 million acres of their pine wilderness decimated by this insect.

Why is this happening?

Opinions vary on the cause of what some experts are calling a "catastrophic event to our forests." Beetle populations that occur naturally in the Rocky Mountain forests soared during the 1990s, amid drought and warm temperatures. Forests already weakened due to fire suppression practices were further compromised by the insect infestation. Some say that the "perfect storm" recipe for the beetle epidemic is a lack of cold winters (extreme cold — minus 34 degrees — kills the beetles) that has allowed the insects to thrive. Others contend that logging restrictions have left forests too densely packed with century-old lodgepole pines, which happen to be the beetles' favorite food.

Whatever the reason, little can be done to save a tree that becomes infested with pine beetles other than cut it down and haul it away to keep the tiny bark borers from spreading to nearby trees.

The nature of the pest — death of a tree

Mountain pine beetles spend most of their lives inside lodgepole, ponderosa or limber pine trees. The beetle generally attacks large trees (8 to 10 inches in diameter) that are weak from drought,

"A catastrophic event to our forests."



Dead pine beetle infested trees are winter logged on this Carbon Power & Light right-of-way until the late spring when they can be hauled away for disposal. Photo by David Cutbirth of Carbon Power & Light.

damage or disease. In late summer, adult beetles fly away from the tree where they developed in search of a mate and a proper nursery for their young. A beetle pair bores under the bark of its chosen tree and builds a vertical tunnel where it lays about 75 eggs.

“It’s a huge problem in our territory.”

If the beetles’ attack is successful, there will be little sign of infestation except for a bit of wood dust in the bark crevices or at the base of the tree. Meanwhile, the

eggs develop into munching larvae and fungus spreads from the adults’ bodies throughout the wood, staining it blue and clogging the tree’s water and nutrient transport system. The tree slowly dies, its needles turning from green to straw yellow to rust red and, by the end of the following summer, another generation of adult beetles flies away to lay their own eggs and continues the destruction of the forest.

Numerous and costly impacts

The impacts from the loss of the forest canopy are numerous and costly to the region’s infrastructure. Dead trees are going to fall. The region affected by the beetle kill encompasses more than 550 miles of power lines and more than 3,000 miles of roads. A tree falling can close a road and a tree that hits a powerline can interrupt service to thousands of people and possibly cause a fire that could be very difficult to stop considering the available fuel. To compound the crisis, a portion of the affected region serves as a watershed for much of the West. A large fire could seriously damage the water supply for millions of people.

Co-ops step up to manage the problem

Of course, the impacted forests will eventually regenerate and the hope is that a more diverse species of trees will populate the forests and more effective management practices may result in a new generation of vegetation that is more resistant to the beetle infestations. In the meantime, Tri-State’s member co-ops are actively stepping up to the plate to protect their power supply systems.

“For the past four years Mountain Parks has been spending between \$500,000 and \$800,000 on line clearance work to try and prevent trees from getting in our lines,” said Joe Pandy, manager of the Granby-based cooperative. “It’s a huge problem in our territory. Essentially all of our forested lands have been impacted by this infestation.”

Pandy said Mountain Parks recently received approval from the Forest Service under an “Emergency Powerline Clearance Project,” to allow expansion of right-of-way tree cutting from 20 feet (10 feet on either side of the line) to 150 feet (75 feet on either side of the line). However, the detailed plan is still under review by the federal agency. But, in at least one instance because the Forest Service did not move fast enough on their plan the co-op was forced to obtain an emergency permit from the local forest ranger to cut dead trees on a line that serves Winter Park Ski Area.

“We explained that this line was at risk and we wouldn’t be able to ensure power to the ski area if they didn’t let us trim back the right-of-way. Within a week we received a modification of our existing permit that allowed us to get that done,” said Pandy.

In the heart of the beetle-impacted forests of southeastern Wyoming, Carbon Power & Light is the first co-op in the nation to receive permission from the U.S. Forest Service to expand its right-of-way trimming on federal lands to a maximum of 150 feet.

“Over a three-year process of studies and an Environmental Assessment with the Forest Service, we were finally able to begin cutting trees on federal land last summer,” said David Cutbirth, operations director for the co-op. “We are more than half done with about 34 miles of affected right-of-ways and hope to complete the project by this fall.” Cutbirth said the process has gone well, but it hasn’t come cheap. “By the end of the project we will have spent about \$2 million,” he said.

Diana Leiker, environmental planner for Tri-State, said the association has been vigilant in its efforts to remove dangerous trees within the Fraser-Mill transmission right-of-way, as well as those adjacent to the right-of-way that pose a hazard to the line. “The stands of dead and dying beetle kill trees also have created a significant safety hazard to our maintenance personnel,” said Leiker.

“We are planning to approach the Forest Service this spring to gain approval for a project to conduct more substantial vegetation management along this transmission line corridor, which includes addressing fuel loading within the line’s right-of-way. It is important for utilities and the Forest Service to work cooperatively to mitigate wildfire risk that could impact public lands and critical infrastructure,” Leiker added.

Lemonade from lemons

While there’s no shortage of bad news associated with the pine beetle infestation, there have been a few entrepreneurs who have found marketable uses for the diseased trees. Rocky



Mountain Pellet Co. of Walden, Colo., and Confluence Energy in Kremmling, Colo., which are both electrically served by Mountain Parks Electric, crank out a combined 200,000 tons a year of fuel pellets used in home heating from the pine beetle kill trees. Mountain Parks Electric also utilizes a pellet-fueled boiler to heat its 25,000 square-foot warehouse and service center.

The unique denim blue stain created by the fungus that kills the pine trees also has been transformed into many attractive wood products, including interior residential flooring, paneling and table tops. And, it’s probably a safe bet that the raw material for these products will be available for some time to come.

About 30 employees from the U.S. Forest Service visit a recently cut Carbon Power & Light distribution right-of-way near the northern Colorado border. Photo by David Cutbirth.



Contract heli-logging doesn’t come cheap, but is necessary in some of the less accessible right-of-way wilderness areas like this one shown in Mountain Parks Electric’s service territory. Photo by Les Shankland.

Powering more than homes and businesses



Tri-State-operated power plants provide a nearly \$600 million value annually to towns, counties.

Story by Nicole Carlson

It is no secret that electricity enhances our lives. We would find it difficult, if not impossible, to live the way we do without this vital commodity that powers our homes and businesses. However, for those who work and live in communities and counties in which a power plant is located, the ripple effect of electricity is even greater. Jobs, infrastructure, community development services and law enforcement programs — to name a few — are directly and indirectly impacted by the ongoing operations of these facilities.

To this end, in addition to keeping the lights on for its 44 member systems serving 1.5 million member-consumers, Tri-State continues to support economic growth in Colorado's Western Slope and northern New Mexico through the operation of three major coal-fired power plants: Craig Station, Nucla Station and Escalante Generating Station.

The economic and fiscal impacts of its generating stations and affiliated mines were the subject of a recent study, conducted by Development Research Partners on behalf of Tri-State. The study focused on the direct and indirect impacts of the previously mentioned power plants related to the gross output of the regions, which envelop three communities and eight counties.

Direct impact applies to the value of business expenditures on such items as equipment, parts, raw materials, operational materials, maintenance services and spending resulting from scheduled outages. Spin-off effects, or multiplicative impacts, from spending partners associated with the power plants and transitory-worker spending, as well as spending in the region by employees and their families, contribute to the fiscal impacts.

Beyond the power plants' day-to-day operations, scheduled outages and maintenance activities also impact the economies of the surrounding communities and counties. During outages, transitory workers temporarily reside in the communities in which they are working and spend money locally on food, retail items, lodging and entertainment. The value of the additional output in all industries throughout the region supported by the spending

patterns associated with the power plants' local suppliers and employees comprises the indirect impact.

Combined, the facilities provide \$594 million annually in direct and indirect value to the communities and counties in which they are located. Additionally, more than 1,240 individuals are employed (directly and indirectly) by the facilities.

Craig Station, located in northwest Colorado and Tri-State's largest power plant, is a 1,304-megawatt facility that occupies 1,120 acres of land and produces electricity to supply the association's member distribution cooperatives, as well as other partner utilities comprising the Yampa Project. The facility, operated and jointly-owned by Tri-State and other partners, is comprised of three coal-fired generating units.

The ongoing operations of the facility generate direct and indirect output valued at \$428.2 million produced by 752 workers earning a total of \$54.8 million. The power plant generates about \$8.9 million annually in property tax, sales tax and lodging tax for the taxing entities in the region. Based on the 2010 tax rates and tax policies, the ongoing operations of the power plant generate \$8.9 million annually in tax revenue for the local government.

Economic impacts of the operation of Craig Station reach beyond the town of Craig and Moffat County to include support of its key suppliers — such as Trapper Mine, Colowyo Mine, Maybell Enterprises and the Union Pacific Railroad — in the region that also includes Rio Blanco and Routt counties.

"Without Craig Station using northwest Colorado coal from Trapper and Colowyo mines and then producing clean, economical and environmentally-friendly electrical power, Moffat County would lose the strongest cornerstone on which our economy is based," said Rick Johnson, plant manager at Craig Station.

Johnson added that the low property taxes due to the location of the power plants and coal mines in the county could entice new families and businesses to move to the area. "There are many current businesses in the valley that are based there to support the power plant, coal mines and families that work at these facilities," he said.

Farther south along the Western Slope, Tri-State's Nucla Station — located near Nucla, Colo., in Montrose County — also plays a large economic role in the area. The coal-based power plant directly employs 60 workers, making it one of the largest private employers in Montrose County. In addition, the 100-megawatt coal-based power plant, owned and

operated by Tri-State, receives coal exclusively from New Horizon Mine. The power plant also supports the economies of the surrounding region including Montrose, Mesa and San Miguel counties.

Nucla Station manager Howard Kettle stressed the importance of the facility to the local economy. "Nucla Station is a staple in the local economic food chain," he said. "Not only is the plant one of the biggest employers in Montrose County, but it also supports other industries and businesses, such as the coal mine, limestone mine, ash disposal services and trucking companies."

Kettle added that the tax dollars generated by the plant, which utilizes a circulating fluidized bed boiler, are done so by "one of the cleanest technology power plants in the country."

The ongoing operations of Nucla Station generate direct and indirect output valued at \$72.4 million produced by 185 workers earning a total of \$14.6 million. The power plant generates about \$1.1 million annually in property tax, sales tax and lodging tax for the taxing entities in the region.

Just like its Colorado counterparts, Escalante Generating Station — located near Prewitt, N.M. — is one of the largest employers in the county in which it's located. The 250-megawatt baseload power plant is owned and operated by Tri-State. The regional significance of the facility includes supporting McKinley and Cibola counties, Lee Ranch Mine (from which the power plant buys all of its coal) and C&E Concrete.

Total annual direct and indirect value of output resulting from the continued operation of Escalante Generating Station equals \$94.1 million produced by 303 workers earning a total of \$21.2 million. Additionally, the power plant further supports the local community and region with the generation of \$5.2 million annually in tax revenue.

In addition to the direct and indirect value of output related to the power plant itself, the symbiotic relationship between Escalante Generating Station and the adjacent McKinley Paper Company also plays an important role in the region. The business, purchases steam, water and electricity as part of its ongoing operations. Were it not for the existence of the power plant, the paper company's continued operations would be jeopardized.

As evidenced by the study, coal-fired power plants in Colorado and New Mexico provide much more than just a reliable source of baseload power. They add significant value to their communities and counties and support the residents who live there.

Focus on community



Craig Station plant manager Rick Johnson

Craig Station recognized as 2011 large business of the year

As further testament to the importance of coal-based power plants to their communities, Tri-State's Craig Station was recently honored as the large business of the year during the Craig Chamber of Commerce's State of the County 2011 event.

Plant manager Rick Johnson accepted the award of behalf of Tri-State. Craig Station was chosen for "demonstrating exemplary businesses practices and community-oriented service."

In 2010, the 1,304-megawatt facility set an impressive 93.2 percent station availability factor (much higher than the national average) while generating approximately 9.7 million megawatt-hours of electricity. Additionally, the plant set an improved safety record by completing the year with just six OSHA recordable injuries, compared to 15 recordable injuries in 2009.

During the chamber event, Craig County commissioner Audrey Danner spoke to the significance of Craig Station and Trapper Mine to the regional economy. "Natural resources are the base of our economy," she said. "We rely on coal and gas extraction and the generation of electricity. We are a rural community with significant resources to meet the energy needs of our future."

SUMMER

In our next issue . . .

Each spring, nearly 500 electric cooperative communication, marketing and member service professionals converge to strengthen their skills through educational sessions, network and learn about the newest energy innovations and technologies during CONNECT. This year, the national conference — taking place in Denver, Colo. — is being hosted by Tri-State, its Colorado member cooperatives, and the Colorado Rural Electric Association.

Gain a first-hand look at what the conference entails through coverage in the next issue of Network.

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Service area scenic

Desert sunset

Sunsets in New Mexico are notoriously breathtaking and this one captured outside of Carrizozo, N.M., is no exception. The iconic shot of the New Mexico landscape portrays the beauty of the desert that is served by Tri-State member system Otero County Electric Cooperative (Cloudcroft, N.M.).

Otero County Electric Cooperative operates nearly 3,000 miles of distribution line to serve more than 18,000 meters in the counties of Chaves, Lincoln, Otero and Socorro in southern New Mexico.