

March 8, 2019

NRECA International Program

VMD Association Readies for Trip to Electrify Remote Bolivian Villages

NRECA has had a longstanding tradition of coordinating the efforts of cooperatives across the U.S. **to electrify rural areas of third-world nations.** Recently, efforts have been focused on the South American country of **Bolivia**, where about 40% of residents live in poverty.

When the **VMD Association and its member systems** last fall agreed to undertake an electrification project in a third-world country, we were assigned **a remote, mountainous region of Bolivia.** DEORURO utility provides electric power to Oruro city and most of the municipalities and communities in the rural areas surrounding the city. DEORURO's distribution system (including the rural areas it serves) is connected to Bolivia's national grid.

However, even though DEORURO is responsible for providing electricity to the areas it serves, Bolivian law only requires that utilities expand to serve 100 meters beyond their existing lines. So, communities a few kilometers outside of a utility's service area may not have electricity until or unless they receive assistance from the government or other institutions.

Thankfully, for several outlying villages in the **Oruro "Department"** (departments are similar to U.S. states), help is on the way **from cooperatives in our three-state region.**

VMD Association member systems are **making plans to send line workers to Bolivia this coming fall** to provide electricity to several small villages in **the western part of the country.** These projects would bring electricity for the **first time to 41 households.**



John Medved (center left) and Alan Scruggs survey a project in Plano Anchoco with engineers from NRECA and DEORURO.



Alan Scruggs (l) and John Medved visit Salinas to scout potential lodging to house VMD line crews.

Alan Scruggs (VMDAEC vice president of safety and training services), **John Medved** (VMDAEC manager of safety training) and **Ingrid Hunsicker** (NRECA international senior program manager) traveled to this area to survey the future projects during the week of February 25. During their several days in Bolivia, they gained knowledge about the Bolivian people's **needs and way of life.**

According to Alan, "While considered impoverished to Americans, these families are very resourceful and intelligent in their use of land and materials. Due to the high altitude, farming consists mostly of growing quinoa, potatoes and beans," he pointed out.

"While this was my first experience in a third-world country," he continued, "it changed my outlook on life and made me even more grateful for the things I have. But it also gave me a great appreciation of the Bolivian people's happiness despite their unfortunate circumstances."

John added, "I would highly encourage any linemen who are interested in aiding in this project, to volunteer today. This isn't going to be easy work. Working in such high altitudes will be a unique challenge. But it will be very rewarding work."



(Seated, l-r) John Medved, Alan Scruggs and Ingrid Hunsicker meet with villagers of Condoriri to discuss the electrification project.

In the near future, **Alan and John** will be sending out to all 15 VMD member systems information on the scope of work and expectations, and will **begin forming the team**, which is expected to consist of about 15 line workers for a project that may last about 2-1/2 weeks.

In the meantime, if you have specific questions, please contact **Alan at 434-238-7597** or **John at 540-305-9065**.

Co-op Leadership

BARC CEO Mike Keyser Speaks at NRECA Briefing for Members of Congress

BARC CEO **Mike Keyser** represented cooperatives across the country at a **March 6 briefing** for Members of Congress, including both representatives and U.S. senators, plus their staff. The briefing was held in Washington, D.C. as part of the unveiling of **NRECA's economic impact analysis** on the benefits that electric cooperatives provide to their local economies. Mike joined NRECA CEO **Jim Matheson** and **Ron Holcomb**, CEO of Tipmont REMC in Linden, Indiana.



BARC CEO Mike Keyser briefs Members of Congress and their staff on the many benefits that cooperatives bring to their local economies. "Our focus is on keeping our youth in the community with high-paying jobs and improved job opportunities that weren't available five years ago," he said.

In his remarks, Mike noted various ways in which cooperatives bring benefits to their local economy, from **infrastructure investments** like solar and broadband to investing in the next generation of members through **partnerships with local schools**.

Mike said, "Many of the future employees at BARC will be graduates of local high schools, so investing in education is investing in our own future. But more importantly, with improved educational opportunities, along with initiatives like solar and broadband, our focus is on keeping our youth in the community with high-paying jobs and improved job opportunities that weren't available five years ago."

The analysis commissioned by NRECA found that electric cooperatives sustain **over 611,000 jobs nationwide** and contribute **over \$88 billion to America's gross domestic product, representing 0.5% of total GDP**. To put this into perspective, the entire U.S. auto industry represents 3% of GDP.

In addition to solar and broadband, Mike also talked about the **landmark net metering legislation passed by the Virginia legislature**. "By working cooperatively with all industry stakeholders, Virginia's electric cooperatives are leading on renewable energy development and have developed a model that other states can use," said Mike.

"With everything we have going on today impacting the community, BARC is as relevant to our member-consumers' quality of life as it was 80 years ago when we lit the first light bulb," Mike pointed out. "We employ 70 full-time employees between our electric cooperative and broadband subsidiary. And we can say something that seemed unimaginable five years ago: we're growing."

Following the briefing, Mike took part in a **formal TV interview** with the **U.S. Department of Agriculture's RFD TV**. [The interview](#) will air nationwide on **Dish Network, DirecTV, and Sling**. During the Q&A, when asked if BARC is an acronym, Mike smiled, saying it stands for **"Bear and Rattlesnake Country."**

-Report by Andrew M. Vehorn, VMD Association Director of Government Affairs.

PGEC’s Cathy O’Donnell Earns CLM Certification

On February 21st, **Cathy O’Donnell** from **Prince George Electric Cooperative** completed her **VMDAEC Contemporary Leadership & Management (CLM) Program Level I** certification. Cathy began the program in 2016 when the Association first began its annual training, onsite at **Prince George Electric**. Since then, she has attended additional classes held at the Association and completed the **six-workshop requirement** to achieve **Level 1 certification**. She has already signed up for future classes this year and is well on her way to receiving her Level 2 certificate.

The class, along with CLM facilitator **Sam Bruce**, celebrated Cathy’s accomplishment with some sweet treats and **Richard Johnstone**, **president & CEO** at the **Association**, presented Cathy with her **Level I certificate**. Richard expressed thanks to Cathy’s manager, **Robbie Hall**, and **Prince George CEO Mike Malandro** for supporting Cathy’s development and the leadership program offered by the VMDAEC. The Association will present another workshop at **Prince George Electric** later this month.



L-R: Richard Johnstone (VMDAEC), Cathy O’Donnell (Prince George) and Sam Bruce (CLM Facilitator).

Congratulations to **Cathy!**

The 2019 workshops and conferences schedule is posted on the **Association website** but it’s never too late to make a request. If your system’s employees need *continuing education credits* or have an idea or topic for a class, contact **Brandon Burton**, VMDAEC director of continuing education, at bburton@vmdaec.com or (804) 297-3485. The Association happily takes requests and can even bring training onsite to you!

Here’s what is coming up:

- ★ **March 13:** [Contemporary Leadership & Management Workshop](#) – *Leadership as a Practice* – VMDAEC Headquarters
- ★ **April 10-11:** April Director Education Days – *The New VMDAEC Website & Cybersecurity* – VMDAEC Training Center in Palmyra and The Draftsman Hotel in Charlottesville
- ★ **May 1-2:** Engineers & Operations Conference – Hilton VA Beach Oceanfront
- ★ **May 23:** [Contemporary Leadership & Management Workshop](#) – *Leadership through Communication* – VMDAEC Headquarters
- ★ **May 29-30:** HR Roundtable – VMDAEC Training Center in Palmyra
- ★ **June 18-19:** Six Sigma Yellow Belt – VMDAEC Training Center in Palmyra

-Report by Brandon Burton, VMD Association Director of Continuing Education.

Co-op People

REC’s David Koogler Tapped to Lead Energy-Efficiency Council



David Koogler

David Koogler, vice president of member services and external affairs for **Rappahannock Electric Cooperative**, was recently selected as **chairman of the Virginia Energy Efficiency Council**, or VAEEC. His two-year term began last month.

The council includes **Fortune 500 companies, small businesses, universities, nonprofits, local governments, state agencies** and **electric utilities**. The council’s goal is to ensure **energy efficiency** is recognized as an **integral part of Virginia’s economy**.

“The VAEEC provides a forum for stakeholder engagement around energy efficiency and also a platform for supporting programs, innovation, best practices, and policies that advance energy efficiency in Virginia,” David said.

Under the **Virginia Energy Plan**, **energy efficiency** is one of five areas of focus, along with **solar, onshore and offshore wind, energy storage** and **electric vehicles/advanced transportation**.

-Report by Casey Hollins, REC Director of Communications & Public Relations.