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cover photo by Amanda Baillie, Currents Magazine

Tim Cervantes, Administrative Director of The Cochise Water Project, sits among old toilets that have been replaced by low water use toilets. TCWP has replaced more than 1,500 toilets in two years, adding up to significant annual savings.

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Major issues affecting your cooperative this past year

As a new year begins, it's an appropriate time to reflect on the past year. The cooperative's board and management dealt with a number of big issues in 2014. Here are two we completed and one that is ongoing.

SMART GRID GRANT

In October of 2009 SSVEC received notification that the cooperative's smart grid grant application, under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, had been approved. This meant that \$22 million (\$44 million in projects) to improve the cooperative's infrastructure would be matched through the program. In short, the federal government reimbursed SSVEC for half the costs associated with projects to improve power delivery and monitoring.

We submitted projects already on the work schedule that would qualify for the matching funds. These projects made the electric grid (lines and equipment) "smarter" by letting us know what's going on with it. A number of these projects were already in progress. This meant upgrading and optimizing communications through fiber optics, system control and data acquisition (SCADA), and smart meters. It also included improvements in the ability to monitor and remotely control several substation operations. These projects were spread across SSVEC's service area. Required project status

reports and expenditures were regularly reported to the U.S. government.

We reduced the number of projects as some of the proposed projects were determined not to have a good payback or large benefit to the system. We do not spend your money just to spend it. This reduced the total to \$40 million in projects of which \$20 million was paid by the smart grid grant. In short, by taking advantage of the grant money the cooperative compressed the work schedule, which resulted in savings to members of at least \$20 million. These projects have been completed.

MANDATES FROM THE EPA

SSVEC is a member of Arizona Electric Power Cooperative's Apache Generating Station and is contracted to purchase approximately 80 percent or more of its power from AEPCO. That means that any mandates or regulations have an impact on the cost of power for our members. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) presented two major requirements to Apache Generating Station within the past few years: addressing visual haze and reducing the production of carbon dioxide.

Visual haze is NOT a health issue, but EPA required each state to submit a plan to reduce visual haze. The EPA rejected Arizona's plan and implemented its plan. Different technologies to reach the required level resulted in a difference in estimated costs for Apache Station of \$21 million for the proposed APECO plan versus \$180 million for the EPA plan.

The EPA plan did not make a perceptible improvement in visibility.

There is some good news regarding this particular issue. In September, the EPA issued a "proposal to approve" an AEPCO alternative plan that calls for converting one coal unit to natural gas and doing extensive emission control upgrades to both units for a total cost of approximately \$32 million. This plan gets total emissions to a lower level than mandated by the EPA. Final approval is expected soon. Although both units will continue to operate, one on coal and one on natural gas, costs will go up because natural gas is more expensive than coal and the plant is almost 40 years old and not as efficient as a new natural gas plant.

However, the EPA issued a new carbon rule in June of 2014 for existing coal plants. It would require 52 percent reduction of carbon dioxide emissions by 2030 but 70 to 80 percent of that amount by 2020. To meet this interim goal every Arizona coal power plant would have to close by 2020.

The EPA says there are enough gas plants in Arizona to cover the loss of coal power production. The fact is most of these gas plants are "merchant plants" selling contracted power to California or selling power for Arizona's hot summer peaks. There is also a major problem in getting electric power to where it's needed because existing transmission lines don't exist.

As a result the new carbon rule could mean insufficient transmission to get power to members with the threat of not

enough power available resulting in potential rolling brownouts or blackouts. In addition, closing coal plants could mean the loss of good paying jobs in southeast Arizona if Apache Generating Station is closed and increased power costs and significant rate increases for cooperative members.

This is the reason AEPCO, its member distribution cooperatives and cooperatives across the nation mounted a campaign for individuals to notify the EPA of opposition to this plan. To date, more than 1.5 million people have responded via the Internet and a postcard campaign. Thank you to all members who participated in this effort.

The final EPA rule is to be released in June 2015.

FINANCING

One of the ongoing goals for SSVEC is obtaining the optimum interest rates to finance short and long-range projects.

We have been working consistently over the years to improve our short and long-term financing choices by reviewing and analyzing all options. About a decade ago, SSVEC refinanced its Rural Utilities Service borrowing through the Cooperative Finance Corporation (CFC). Several years after that, SSVEC split its loan portfolio between CFC and CoBank in order to ensure that we could get the best interest rates available.

Once we had the ability to sell commercial paper and bonds, CFC and CoBank reduced their interest rates to compete with our new options. (Because we have received more favorable rates than commercial paper or bonds can offer, we have not issued any commercial paper or sold any bonds at this time.) As a result we have refinanced \$65 million in existing debt ranging from 12 years to 27 years at an average interest rate of 3.52 percent.

In November 2012, we filed a Comprehensive Credit Management Program (CCMP) docket with the Arizona Corporation Commission requesting the au-



CREDEN W. HUBER

thority to issue commercial paper and bonds in addition to borrowing from CFC and CoBank. This was approved in 2013, which started the process of converting our existing mortgage into an indenture. The indenture was completed in 2014. In addition, we became publicly rated by Fitch and Standard & Poor's. Our "A-" rating, an investment grade rating, allowed us to enter the commercial paper and bond markets. This gave SSVEC the opportunity to even further reduce long-term borrowing costs by enabling us to issue commercial paper and bonds.

Once we had the ability to sell commercial paper and bonds, CFC and CoBank reduced their interest rates to compete with our new options. (Because we have received more favorable rates than commercial paper or bonds can offer, we have not issued any commercial paper or sold any bonds at this time.) As a result we have refinanced \$65 million in existing debt ranging from 12 years to 27 years at an average interest rate of 3.52 percent.

EPA is getting the message on proposed carbon rule

More than one and a half million rural Americans tell Federal agency to back off

Geoff Oldfather

Communications, Marketing and Public Relations Manager
Arizona's G&T Cooperatives/AEPCO

Thanks to you, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency is listening. Thanks to you and the more than 1.6 million rural Americans across the nation who commented in opposition to the EPA's proposed carbon rule, the EPA is getting the message: Don't move forward with unnecessary "carbon rules" that will drive rural electric rates through the roof and threaten reliability. Don't move forward with an "all but one" policy that eliminates coal generation – the most reliable and economical source of rural electric power – in a few short years.

Of those 1.6 million comments submitted on the clean power plan for existing power plants, 675,402 have come from co-ops and co-op supporters, or approximately 40 percent of the total.

The public comment period on the proposed carbon rule for existing generating ended Dec. 1. The rule would have a huge impact on power plants such as the Apache Generating Station at Cochise, owned and operated by Arizona Electric Power Cooperative (AEPCO), part of the Arizona's G&T Cooperatives (AzGT). You and millions of others

understand what's at stake, and the Action.coop campaign in opposition

to the proposed rule resulted in one of the of the largest grass-roots responses ever from rural Americans who use co-op power.

In Arizona alone, more than 32,000 electric co-op members, employees, directors, and even non-co-op members who are concerned about the EPA's huge power grab commented against the proposed rule.

AzGT employees stepped up to the plate, talking to friends, neighbors, relatives and anyone they could find who uses co-op power, collecting more than 8,800 signatures. That's a huge accomplishment for an organization with 234 employees.

The number of rural Arizonans who signed up puts Arizona fifth in the entire nation compared to states with similar numbers of co-op members.

The reason for all these numbers and statistics is to point out how engaged people become over an issue when they learn the facts. Here are the facts we've been talking about on these pages since June 2, when the proposed rule was announced:

The EPA has singled out Arizona with a mandated 52 percent reduction in carbon emissions from existing coal-fired power plants. That means every coal-fired plant in the state will have to shut down by 2020, the year the EPA's "interim rule" goes into effect (see graphic below).

The EPA assumes we can simply

shift to natural gas and points to unused capacity from so-called "merchant generators" in the state. But these natural gas plants are privately owned and were built by speculators back in the days of the Enron debacle, and even if we wanted and could purchase the unused capacity – which we can't – the infrastructure doesn't exist to get the power to where it's needed.

Forget the hundreds of millions – if not billions – of dollars it would take to build new transmission infrastructure. It's simply impossible to plan for and design and buy pathways and obtain the hundreds of local, state and federal permits needed in only six years. It probably couldn't be done by the year 2030, when the EPA's final rule goes into effect.

If the rule isn't rewritten to provide more time to shift resources, and back away from the EPA's unrealistic and impossible-to-reach reductions, we'll reach a crisis in six short years as we try to shift to other sources of power. That could even include trying to purchase a lot of power from sources outside Arizona, turning the state into a net importer of power. Do we really want to have to rely on suppliers from points unknown for such a critical commodity? Other consequences of the EPA's unrealistic rule-writing are enormous. The North American Electric Reliability Corporation (NERC) is already reassessing grid reliability as it looks

at the loss of coal generation and the addition of solar and wind power, which sounds good but is intermittent and presents huge challenges to grid reliability. Again, if the rule stands as written, the agency predicts we'll lose huge amounts of conventional generation resources in the next decade, some of which won't be replaced. The generation that is replaced with renewables will be unreliable.

And then there is the issue of cost. In our case, we're looking at stranded debt and the possibility of having a reliable and economical plant – a plant you're invested in as a member/owner – sit idle while we purchase power or build natural gas generators at a cost of hundreds of millions of dollars. These costs that, because we are a rural, not-for-profit G&T cooperative, are ultimately passed on to the people at the end of the line – like you.

People are catching on. They realize that the EPA's arbitrary rule-writing, which the industry contends oversteps its authority under the Clean Air Act and is illegal to begin with, has enormous consequences and in the end does little to reduce global carbon emissions.

Because people are catching on, they're taking action, and making their voices heard.

Thanks to you.

The G&Ts and its Member Cooperatives are not-for-profit utilities.

Students headed to Washington, D.C., in June

For the past 34 years, SSVEC has sent high school juniors to the nation's capital each summer.

This next June nine high school juniors will be touring the nation's capital for one week as winners of Sulphur Springs Valley Electric Cooperative's 2015 Washington Youth Tour competition.

The students were recognized on Thursday evening, Nov. 19, following a dinner honoring them and their parents at Benson High School in Benson, Ariz.

The students who earned all-expenses-paid trips to Washington, D.C., are Julia Caputo from Buena High School; Elizabeth Daley and Johnny Schmidt from St. David High School; Sara Fowler, Jon Little and Sean Spinney from Benson High School; Joseph Fickett from San Simon High School; Cera Norris from Tombstone High School; and Charity May from Veritas Christian Community School.

The cooperative's Washington Youth Tour program is open to all high school juniors in SSVEC's service area. SSVEC personnel visited the nine high schools served by the cooperative in September, explained the program and left study materials for a preliminary test. Those who scored highest on this test at each high school moved to the next level of competition -- an essay.

This year's essay topic asked students to develop a marketing campaign on renewable energy and "Going Green." Nineteen students whose essays scored highest were invited to the final stage of competition on the afternoon of Nov. 19. The students took a second test covering more complex materials about SSVEC, cooperatives, energy, and electricity terminology, and a panel of four judges interviewed each student.

The 10 students, who advanced to the final competition but did not win the trip, earned \$200 each for their efforts. These students are Joshua Allred from Willcox High School; Caitlin Dimerling, a homeschool student from Elgin; Dustin Foote from Buena High School; Arlene Fry, Rebekah Larson, and William Morrison from St. David High School; Kathryn

Miller from Patagonia Union High School; Kenneth Morain and Jodie Ryan from Berean Academy; and Tristen Reynolds from Benson High School.

Following the dinner and prior to the announcement of the winners, Washington Youth Tour Coordinator Marcus Harston explained details of the Washington Youth Tour program and the upcoming trip. He also introduced SSVEC Board President Kathy Thatcher and Directors Dan Barrera, Gene Manring and Harold Hinkley.

The SSVEC Foundation funds the Washington Youth Tour program. As a cooperative, SSVEC periodically returns money earned in excess of expenses to its members. When those members move out of the area and leave no forwarding address, SSVEC transfers the money to the SSVEC Foundation. This is money that was previously forfeited to the state of Arizona. With the establishment of the Foundation in 1984, the cooperative sponsors not only the Washington Youth Tour, but also the annual Youth Engineering and Science Fair and the SSVEC Foundation Scholarship program.

Rebekah Knaub, member services assistant, announced the results of the competition, and SSVEC Board President Thatcher presented the students with plaques recognizing their efforts.

Interview judges were Les Boegemann, Benson

attorney (and a former Youth Tour participant); Phyllis Cohorn, former SSVEC employee and chaperone (along with her husband Tony) for SSVEC's 1984 Washington Youth Tour; Geoff Oldfather, communications, marketing and public relations manager for Arizona's G & T Cooperatives; and Barbara Richardson, director of the Benson center of Cochise College.

Essay judges for this year's competition were Michael and Wendy Clark, Emily Marshall, Grady Taylor, and Priscilla Vihauer. Students and chaperones will tour Washington, D.C., from June 11-18, 2015.



Photo top: Washington Youth Tour interview judges for the Nov. 19 final competition were (from left) Barbara Richardson, Geoff Oldfather (seated) Les Boegemann (standing) and Phyllis Cohorn.

Photo opposite page, left: Ten local students who were finalists in the Youth Tour competition. Back row -- Caitlin Dimerling, Arlene Fry, Rebekah Larson, Joshua Allred, and Kathryn Miller. Front row -- William Morrison, Dustin Foote, Jodie Ryan,

Photo opposite page, right: Nine high school juniors earned all-expense-paid trips to the nation's capital next summer. Back row -- Charity May, Elizabeth Daley, Sara Fowler, Julia Caputo, and Cera Norris. Front row -- Johnny Schmidt, Joseph Fickett, Sean Spinney, and Jon Little. Photo by Larry Scott



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Fort Huachuca has led the way in reducing water use

For more than two decades, Fort Huachuca has been a leader in the water conservation arena.

As a federal entity, the military installation is significantly impacted by the Endangered Species Act, which gives authority to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to designate threatened and endangered species and to take steps to protect their critical habitat.

Because the San Pedro River is federally designated as a critical habitat, it is the Fort's responsibility to help maintain and protect it. Subsequently, the Fort has introduced far-reaching water savings measures to significantly reduce its impact on the local aquifer.

As a result, Fort Huachuca has reduced its groundwater pumping by 67 percent since 1993.

Its highest record of water pumping in 1993 was 3,028 acre feet, which fell to just 986 acre feet in 2012 – its lowest record of groundwater pumping to date. An acre-foot of water is approximately 326,700 gallons. Groundwater pumping rose slightly to 1,013 acre feet in 2013, but 304 acre feet were reused for irrigation and 238 acre feet were recharged.

Due to the acquisition of the Preserved Petrified Forest conservation easement, the Fort also gained 2,588 acre feet of water credits. Those credits exceed the amount of water use attributed to the Fort, both on and off the installation.

Most recently, the Fort entered into an agreement with The Cochise Water Project to implement water savings measures in Sierra Vista, resulting in 84 acre feet (more than 27 million gallons of water) of water credits.

Saving water one drop at a time



Photo top: Rainwater that previously flooded the Palominas Elementary School property is now captured in three tanks installed by The Cochise Water Project and used to flush low water use toilets.

Photo middle: The Sonic Drive-Thru in Sierra Vista is one of several businesses to have taken advantage of The Cochise Water Project's rainwater harvesting tank rebate program.

Photo bottom: This 6,800 gallon tank was installed at Boys & Girls of Sierra Vista, thanks to a grant from The Cochise Water Project.

Photo right: The Cochise Water Project provided funds to area Realtors, allowing them to study for and receive their National Association of Realtors Green Designation.

All photos by Amanda Baillie.

Amanda Baillie
for Currents Magazine

While the issue of water conservation may have garnered its fair share of news headlines over the years, for one local non-profit it all comes down to one simple thing.

“Our goal is to get people thinking about saving water the same way they do about recycling or turning off the lights,” said Pat Call, executive director of The Cochise Water Project. “We live in a desert, so it just makes sense not to waste water if we don’t have to.”

Since its founding three years ago, the non-profit organization has achieved much success in not only spreading its water conservation message, but helping local residents, businesses and organizations take positive action.

Its region of focus is the Sierra Vista sub-watershed, which feeds the San Pedro River.

The ecological importance of the river, coupled with the presence of plants and animals protected by the Endangered Species Act, means saving water is critical to the future of the surrounding communities, as well as the river itself.

Call, familiar with local water issues thanks to his long time role as a member of the Cochise County Board of Supervisors, decided to broaden local conservation efforts in January 2012 by forming TCWP.

Primarily financed initially through a private philanthropic organization, TCWP has also received significant federal funding, as well as money from local government and businesses. Its sole purpose is to reduce the amount of water being drawn from the aquifer in and around Sierra Vista.

Overseen by a board made up of prominent community leaders, the non-political organization has introduced a wide range of programs and initiatives since its inception.

In particular, a major push has been made through rebates and grants to encourage more people to install rainwater-harvesting tanks, to capitalize on the annual monsoon.

RAINWATER HARVESTING

TCWP has seen a number of businesses step up to participate, with one highly successful project receiving an American Rainwater Catchment Systems Association Rain Catcher Award in 2013.

Carried out in conjunction with Oasis Rainwater Harvesting, the venture involved installing a 30,000-gallon tank to collect the runoff of water from two tennis courts and the golf cart house at the Pueblo del Sol Country Club in Sierra Vista.

“Not only is this system saving approximately 250,000 gallons yearly in landscape water use around the clubhouse, as part of the grant process the golf course management agreed to reduce turf irrigation to the entire course by approximately five percent, resulting in an annual estimated savings of more than 6.5 million gallons,” Call said.

Additionally, the water conservation message is being brought directly to Cochise County’s youngest residents, thanks to rainwater harvesting installations at local schools, as well as the Boys and Girls Club of Sierra Vista – believed to be the first club in the nation to undertake such a measure.

“Around 3,700 gallons of water would come off the roof at the Boys and Girls Club after just one inch of rain and it would go straight into the playground and flood it,” said TCWP’s Administrative Director Tim Cervantes. “Now that water runs into the 6,800 gallon tank we installed. The rain water collected also flushes new 0.8 gallons per flush toilets.”

TOILET REBATE PROGRAM

A low flush toilet rebate program also has proven to be a runaway success. An initiative previously handled by the City of Sierra Vista, whose limited funding allowed fewer than 100 toilets to be installed annually, the program was handed off to TCWP. Combining the two programs has resulted in more than 1,500 toilets installed over a two-year period, saving at least 15 million gallons of water per year.

The organization’s latest partnership with Sierra Vista has resulted in around 5,000 square feet of turf being removed from the front of City Hall and replaced by an artificial lawn.

Funded through a TCWP grant, this project, which was completed in December, will result in significant savings of approximately 200,000 gallons of water every year.

Earlier in 2014, TCWP also installed a rainwater-harvesting tank next to the Sierra Vista Police Department, where it gathers water from the roof to help maintain the surrounding desert landscape. The Sierra Vista and Fry Fire Departments are next in line to receive five, 10,000-gallon rainwater tanks.

Realizing that education and community involvement are key to maintaining conservation efforts, TCWP also has looked to industry specific groups to jump on board its water wagon.

GREEN PROGRAMS FOR PLUMBERS, REALTORS

First to take up the mantra were local plumbers, thanks to a partnership with the International Association of Plumbing and Mechanical Officials. TCWP funded a 32-hour training program that saw 13 Sierra Vista tradesmen certified as Green Plumbers – there are just 22 Green Plumbers across the state of Arizona.



continued from page 11

Next up were the area's Realtors, who welcomed funds provided by TCWP to allow some of them to be awarded the National Association of Realtors Green Designation.

Both Call and Cervantes acknowledge saving water might not be the most exciting subject to talk about, particularly for young people, and so they organized a fun way of introducing the topic to families by staging Movies in the Park events in Sierra Vista, Benson and Bisbee.

In the build-up to the film, the audience is shown videos produced by TCWP and high school students, which deliver the conservation message in an entertaining way.

Partnerships also have been formed with local DIY stores to stage regular rainwater harvesting classes.

LOOKING TOWARD THE FUTURE

Firmly established in the community, TCWP is now turning its attention to larger, high impact projects.

These will include installing Smart Irrigation control systems – which waters landscapes only when needed, thanks to a weather-based monitoring station - at high profile sites, such as the City of Sierra Vista's well-used ballparks, Mountain View Golf Course at Fort Huachuca, and the Pueblo del Sol Golf Course.

With outdoor recreational facilities often using more water than necessary, due to set watering times even during heavy rain, this enterprise has the potential to make a significant dent in the amount of water being pumped from the aquifer.

"We are excited and optimistic about the possibilities and opportunities for saving water," Call said. "More importantly, the community's willingness to step up and play its part in helping to preserve the local aquifer has been significant. We hope other communities facing the same or similar issues will be able to look to Sierra Vista and Cochise County as model examples of how to successfully conserve for the future."

For more information about The Cochise Water Project and its programs visit www.thecochisewaterproject.com or email information@thecochisewaterproject.com



Photo top: Low-cost, easy to install rain barrels allow residents to try out rainwater harvesting on a smaller scale. Business, organizations and residents can display one of these signs (left), provided by TCWP, to demonstrate their commitment to water conservation.

Photos by Amanda Baillie.

Winter may seem an unlikely time of year to be saving water, but there is actually much that can be done during the colder months, according to Cado Daily.

"Landscaping, in particular, is an area of opportunity where people can be more water efficient," said the coordinator of the University of Arizona Cooperative Extension's Water Wise program, a conservation initiative that reaches throughout Cochise County.

"The cold season is the time to ensure your systems, both indoors and outdoors, are weatherproofed. Take a look at your irrigation system, hose bibs, timers, anything that's exposed to the cold, and make sure they are insulated or disconnected," she said.

Exposure to extreme temperatures can lead to burst pipes, or leaks that go undetected, Daily added. But there are a number of measures any area resident can follow to minimize the amount of water lost and to lower utility bills.

Meet Your Meter

Know where your water meter is located. It's most likely to be near the curb and will have a metal or plastic cover. You also should know where the turn-off valve is, which is usually in the same box as the meter. It should give you easy access to shut off the water if you have any leaks. Before opening it, though, check first to see if there's a bee nest, or even a rattlesnake. Give it a knock first.

Read Your Meter

Most meters have a red or black triangle. If the triangle is moving, when you are not using water, it means water is moving through the line and you may have leak. You should periodically check to see if any water is leaking.

Check Your Irrigation System

Low water plants should be dry in between watering. If we get normal winter rains, most plants don't need to be watered during the winter.

Learn Your Plants' Watering Schedule

People tend generally to overwater plants. Know how much your plants need. Some people even turn off their irrigation systems during the winter. Water Wise offers free, on-site visits to talk to homeowners about their landscaping. It also has a watering schedule on its website at WaterWise.Arizona.edu

Get Help from Mother Nature

Water Wise is a big supporter of RainScape principles, which can be applied to create a beautiful and water-efficient landscape. You can practice passive rainwater harvesting by introducing structures such as berms and swales to encourage the collection and retention of water, or you can be more active and use containers to collect rainwater. If you can provide water from precipitation, it can make a big difference in the amount of groundwater you use.

Prepare For Spring

Turn on your irrigation system as winter ends and check it for leaks. Check the position of each water emitter and move closer to the outer edge of the root ball as the plant grows, rather than keeping it at the stem.

For more information and water saving tips or a free on-site visit, call Water Wise at (520) 458-8278, extension 2141 for Sierra Vista, Hereford, Palominas, Tombstone, Bisbee, Whetstone and Huachuca City, (520) 586-3467 for Benson, Pomerene and St. David, (520) 384-3594 for Willcox, and (520) 364-4146 for Douglas, or visit WaterWise.Arizona.edu.

by Amanda Baillie, for Currents magazine

Linemen's reunion brings colleagues and friends together



Ty Shelton and Connie Dunham are the spouses of two retired Sulphur Springs Valley Electric Cooperative linemen. And one thing they both knew about their husbands, Frank Shelton and Dennis Dunham, was that their pride in the work they had done for the cooperative over the years was exceeded only by the close friendships they'd formed with their fellow line workers.

In September of this year Ty and Connie started organizing a luncheon get-together for as many of the retired cooperative linemen as they could contact. The result was a reunion at the Willcox Elks Lodge in October that brought together a number of those retirees.

In all, 24 individuals (retired linemen, operations workers and other employees), a few current linemen, their spouses, significant others, and family members attended the reunion. It proved to be an afternoon of visiting, storytelling and catching up.

In addition to the nine linemen with the largest number of service years featured in the photo on this page, attendees included Howard Bethel, Dennis Dunham, Bobby Gantenbein, Gary Franklin, Larry Glenn, Richard Hoyler, Bob Jones, Randy Keiller, Harold Lackner, Rich Lane, Butch Logan, Gene Moreman, Eddie Soule, Pete Wilharm and Butch Wilson.



Photo top: Eighteen retired cooperative linemen, their spouses, other retired cooperative employees, current linemen, family members and special guests met for the luncheon reunion at the Willcox Elks Lodge on Saturday, Oct. 11, 2014. Photo by Larry Scott

Photo right: Connie Dunham (left) and Ty Shelton organized the reunion event.

Photo above: There are 355 years of lineman service to the cooperative in this photo of nine gentlemen retired from SSVEC. Standing (from left) -- Pete Swiatek, 41 years; Mike Stringer, 43 years; Wayne "Pete" Peterson 36 years; and Manny Peralta, 39 years. Seated (from left) -- Bill Hill, 43 years; Frank Shelton, 42 years; Jim Hansen, 32 years; Tom Martin, 41 years; and Richard Cox, 38 years. Photo by Danny Dunham





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The Cochise Water Project has built several weather monitoring stations to be installed throughout the Sierra Vista sub-watershed to help control water irrigation. Story on page eight. Photo by Amanda Baillie.



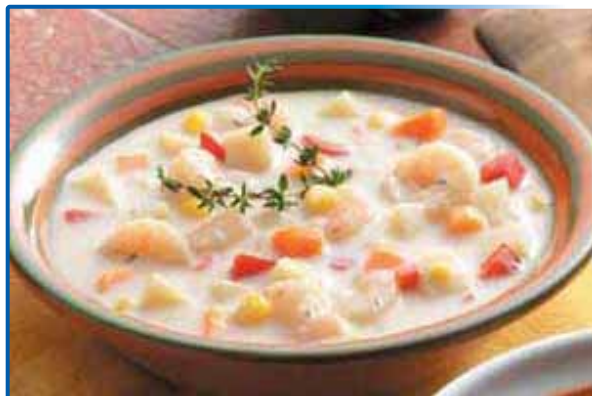
RUTH'S MEAT CHOWDER

Submitted by Ruth Coleman, St. David

We love to have soup for lunch on Sundays in the winter months and I have created this by combining several recipes. I have used hamburger and fried it with the onion, celery and garlic; in place of the chicken. I also have used squash or jicama in place of the potatoes or with them. I use different sausages to create different flavors. I add mushrooms or other vegetables of interest such as chopped spinach. Sometimes I have to add a little water or milk to have enough liquid. It can be put in a crock pot on warm and add cheese and milk right before serving. The favorite flavor my family loves is when I use Polish sausage.

Ingredients:

- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 3 celery stalks, diced
- 1 tablespoon minced garlic
- 1 lb. fully cooked smoked sausage, halved and thinly sliced
- 1 quart of chicken broth
- 1 or 2 cans of chicken or 2 cups cooked and diced
- 1 ½ cups of cooked small shrimp or salmon that's cooked and diced
- 2 or 3 carrots diced
- 3 cups of diced yellow yams or white potatoes



2 teaspoons parsley flakes (or 2 tablespoons fresh)
 1 teaspoon dried basil (or 1 tablespoon fresh)
 1 teaspoon of sea salt
 Dash of pepper (optional spice, 1 teaspoon dill weed)
 1 can of whole kernel corn, drained or 1 ½ cups frozen
 3 cups of whole milk
 2 cups cheddar cheese
 In a soup kettle or Dutch oven over medium heat, brown first three ingredients. Then add sausage, brown slightly with the above ingredients. Slowly add one quart of chicken broth, carrots, potatoes, and spices bring to boil. Reduce heat add the chicken, shrimp and corn. Simmer for 15-20 minutes or until potatoes and carrots are tender. Add the corn and milk; cook 5-10 minutes longer or until heated through. Yield: 12 servings.

GARDEN FRESH TOMATO SOUP

(Quick and easy)

Submitted by Cheryl Sauter, Sierra Vista

This recipe came from a lovely friend who now lives in Tucson (we met as volunteers at Kartchner Caverns in 2001). After making the smaller quantity of soup twice and after our temperatures dropped recently, I decided to double the recipe and make it more of a “stomach-sticker” by adding the cooked barley and mixed vegetables. We are blessed to still have some tomatoes from our garden so will make the soup again soon.

Ingredients:

- 8 cups chopped fresh tomatoes (no need to peel them)
- 2 slice(s) onion
- 8 whole cloves
- 4 cups chicken broth
- ¼ cup butter
- ¼ cup all-purpose flour
- 1 tsp. salt
- 2-4 tsp. sugar

In a stockpot, over medium heat, combine the first four ingredients. Bring to a boil. Then gently boil for about 20 minutes to blend all of the flavors.

Remove from heat and run the mixture through a food mill into a large bowl or pan. Discard anything left over in the food mill.

In the now-empty stockpot, melt the butter over medium heat. Stir in the flour to make a roux, cooking until the roux is medium brown.

Gradually, whisk in a bit of the tomato mixture so that no lumps form. Then, stir in the remaining tomato mixture. Season with salt and sugar, adjusting to preferred taste. For 4-8 servings



BONITA NINE BEAN MIX MINESTRONE SOUP

Submitted by Karin Link, Dos Cabezas

Ingredients:

- 2 cups beans, soaked overnight in 4 cups water
- ¾ lb. boneless, smoked pork chops, cubed
- 1 large onion, chopped
- 2-4 cloves of garlic, crushed
- 6 carrots, pared and grated
- 4 stalks celery, sliced
- 1 tsp. dried marjoram, basil, oregano, salt, pepper
- Plus 1 can (2 lbs., 3 ounces) Italian Plum Tomatoes
- Brown pork, onion, garlic. Add to soup mix plus soaking liquid, then carrots, celery, spices, tomatoes. Stir, boil; lower heat an simmer two hours or until tender.



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**LOOK FOR THE NEXT
ISSUE OF CURRENTS
IN EARLY MARCH!**

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

The deadline for the March issue of Currents featuring events for the months of April and May is February 4. Email information to wcrane@ssvec.com.

JANUARY

JANUARY 14 TO 18

22nd Annual Wings Over Willcox Birding and Nature Festival

Guided tours, free seminars, activities for kids, live animals and a Nature Expo. The National Wild Turkey Federation is hosting the Saturday evening banquet and the ticket price for

it and auction items are tax deductible; plus you will be helping with local habitat restoration. For complete information about the event or to register for tours, go to www.wingsoverwillcox.com or contact the Willcox Chamber of Commerce and Agriculture at (800) 200-2272. Plan to join the fun!



JANUARY 31

Nickel Sale and Raffle

The annual Nickel Sale and Raffle will take place at 5 p.m. Saturday, Jan. 31, at the Sunsites Community Center. The event benefits the Stronghold Area Recreational Park adjacent to the community center. Raffle tickets are 5 cents each and will be sold in packets of 50 for \$2.50 per packet. The park committee will be selling light supper items. The Sunsites Community Center is located on Treasure Road and is west of Highway 191 in Sunsites.

FEBRUARY

FEBRUARY 2

Deadline for Film Festival Submissions

The submissions deadline for the Southern Arizona Independent Film Festival is Feb. 2. Short and micro-short films are sought. The Festival, on March 21, will feature screenings, awards, panel discussions and Q&A with independent film professionals. Visit willcoxfilm-fest.com for more information.

FEBRUARY 7

Shred for a Kid

Take this effort to combat identity theft by destroying your confidential personal and business documents. Benson Walmart parking lot from 9 a.m. to 12 noon. Donations of \$5 per file box or bag will go toward the December 2015 Shop with a Cop program that assists under-privileged and at-risk youth. For more information, contact Denise at (520) 940-0247.

FEBRUARY 6 THROUGH FEBRUARY 8

Willcox Historic Theater Anniversary Celebration

Willcox Historic Theater Recognition Weekend celebrates the theater's 78th anniversary Friday through Sunday, Feb. 6, 7 and 8 with a dip into 1950s music, movies, dance, and more. The Manhattan Dolls a live musical '50s Revue, "Rockin' with the Dolls" will headline Saturday evening's events. Other events will include '50s era movies, TV and newsreels throughout the weekend, and pre-show reception with the Dolls at Keeling-Schafer Tasting Room. Come in your best '50s finery and have a blast! Check willcox-theater.com for more information.

FEBRUARY 14 THROUGH FEBRUARY 16

Tombstone Vigilantes Events

Come see us Saturday, Feb. 14, through Monday, Feb. 16, in Tombstone. There will be plenty of street entertainment from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. daily. Our Most Infamous "Hanging Tree" will be up and running. We also have a Geo Coin, for those of you who are into Geocaching.

We will be raffling off a ROSSI Model 92, .45 caliber long Colt lever action rifle and handmade case. Look for the CASI chili cook to be back this year.

MARCH

MARCH 7 AND MARCH 8

Sierra Vista Community Chorus "Sweet Treats & Swingin' Sounds"

The Sierra Vista Community Chorus proudly presents its 12th annual "Sweet Treats & Swingin' Sounds," under the direction of Sharon Keene. This year's show is "Here's To The Losers...Songs That Didn't Win an Oscar."

Three shows will be presented at the Ethel Berger Center located at 2950 E. Tacoma St. in Sierra Vista. On Saturday there will be two shows: 2 p.m. and 6:30 p.m. On Sunday only one show will be presented at 2 p.m. Soloists, duet-

tists and other performers may vary in each of the three shows. Tickets are only \$8 per person and include entertainment, homemade desserts baked lovingly by chorus members and a beverage. Because there are a limited number of tickets available, they will only be sold at the Ethel Berger Center beginning Monday, Feb. 2. Tickets also will be available from chorus members. NO TICKETS WILL BE SOLD AT THE DOOR.

Come and hear those wonderful nominated songs that will always live in our memories, but went home without an Oscar. Give a listen, have a beverage and a homemade dessert. Be sure to purchase your tickets early. In the past these shows have sold out quickly.



Chorus members left to right: Donna Schuster, Barb Swasey, Barbalee Haggerty and Linda Mullard. Photo by Dick McColley.

MARCH 21

High Desert Crafters Spring Craft Fair

The High Desert Crafters presents its annual fair from 8:30 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the Windemere Hotel and Conference Center (2047 S. Highway 92, Sierra Vista) on March 21.

The fair also will feature a bake sale by the Golden K Kiwanis Club. All proceeds from this sale will go toward the club's children's projects (Magic Hands Knitting and Crochet Club, Comfort Dolls, Swaddling Blankets, Terrific Kids and BUGS).

Many fine crafters will be there with new and interesting items for that special gift. A free drawing will be held each half hour; you must be present to win.

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