



New Housing Opportunities in Telluride



Member Dividends!



SMPA Lends a Hand for Fire Disaster Support

JANUARY 2021

ENERGYWISE

YOUR SAN MIGUEL POWER MEMBER NEWSLETTER



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Both Offices Open:
M - TH, 7:00a.m. - 5:30p.m.

www.smpa.com
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In the event of a power outage, contact your local SMPA office to reach our 24-hour dispatch.

QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS

energywise@smpa.com
(970) 626-5549 x212

SAFETY TIPS

THREE NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTIONS FOR YOUR HOME ELECTRICAL SYSTEM:

- 1 Test and reset your Ground-Fault Circuit Interrupter (GFCI) outlets.
- 2 Replace batteries in your smoke and carbon monoxide detectors.
- 3 Ensure clearance around all heat sources.

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(866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by:

(1) mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410;

(2) fax: (202) 690-7442; or

(3) email: program.intake@usda.gov.

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The Trust for Community Housing: Lifeline to... and for Telluride

“It’s hard living in one place and having your life in another,” says Karen Bellerose. Karen and her husband Moe, both full-time Telluride employees, had been commuting between Telluride and Norwood for nearly 20 years. Like many Telluride employees, the Belleroses were enduring long commutes because they couldn’t find affordable housing near their jobs.

When Moe’s new position at the water treatment facility required him to be within 15 minutes of work, they had to look at the Telluride home market again.

The Belleroses found a house they could afford, but transition costs, like the down payment, and moving and closing costs were a significant barrier.

Fortunately, the couple qualified for a grant from the new Trust for Community Housing (TCH), created to help defray these types of expenses for Telluride employees seeking residence nearby. They were elated. “I didn’t think it was possible for someone at my income level to own in Telluride,” says Moe, who worked as a carpenter for 20 years. “I thought I was priced out.”

A grass-roots organization, the Trust for Community Housing seeks to enhance the cultural, social and economic strengths of Telluride by increasing regional housing opportunities. “What not everyone knows,” says Amy Levek, TCH’s Executive Director, “...is that that definition also includes the rental market.” The new Housing Opportunity Fund can also help renters with first/last month rent or moving expenses.



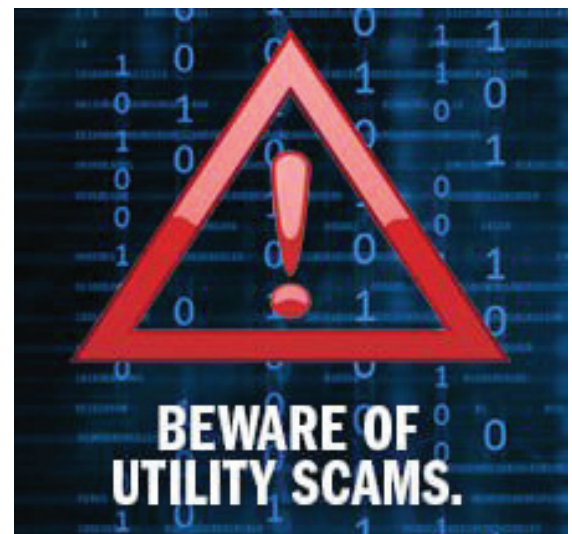
“The Housing Trust is such a great idea, but great ideas don’t get far without community support,” says Karen Bellerose. “More than 100 donors to the Housing Trust made this possible. For that, we are tremendously grateful.”

*Trust for Community Housing
Recipients Moe & Karen Bellerose*

A Warning to Our Members

There have been reports of Scam phone calls going out in our service territory. Most often, these scammers impersonate the power company and threaten to turn off your power unless you make payment through some sort of prepaid card. If you receive a call like this, hang up.

If you have questions about your account, please call us during regular business hours at 1-877-864-7311, or check your account status through your registered SmartHub online or mobile app. smpa.smarthub.coop/



SMPA Rates for Electricity to Remain Unchanged in 2021 Board Sends Out \$500K in Member Dividends

At their October Board Meeting, the Board of Directors of San Miguel Power Association (SMPA) approved a budget for 2021 that avoids a rate increase on the consumer-members. “Our board stated clearly and unanimously that, given the strained economic conditions of our communities, this was not the time for a rate increase,” stated Board President, Rube Felicelli.

This will be welcome news for rate-payers, many of whom are struggling to make ends meet in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic and the resultant revenue and job losses. The good news, however, does come at a cost. “The original 2021 budget proposed a \$500,000 draw on the \$1.2 million of deferred revenue,” said SMPA CEO, Brad Zaporski. This left a projected need of about \$200,000. “Because of previous financial planning, we have been able to pull these necessary funds from deferred revenues instead of from increased rates,” said Zaporski. The Board opted to draw the extra from deferred revenue for a combined draw of about \$700,000.

The Board’s decision was not made lightly, given staff projections of increased costs for planned reliability projects and vegetation management. With projected costs climbing sharply, for the recently-announced Red Mountain Reliability and Broadband Improvement Project, the Board was reminded that, while these improvements may be vital, they don’t directly bring in revenue to cover costs. This upward pressure is still likely to be felt in the so-called “Access Charge,” or the fixed portion of the power bill. Currently, this charge remains the lowest of any neighboring cooperatives in the region. SMPA members are reminded to expect this charge to increase in the future—but not this year.

After opting not to increase the access fee, the SMPA Board of Directors approved the return of approximately \$500,000 in Member Dividends to the consumer-members. This move completes the process by which excess revenues get shared back with consumers over time.

In a typical year, SMPA collects more than enough revenue to cover its expenses. The excess revenue, called “margins” is allocated to each consumer in proportion to their contributions for that year. The cooperative reserves this money for a period of time. When the Board determines the time is right, allocations for a given year or combination of years are cashed out as “Member Dividends” and returned to the members.

This month, many SMPA members received checks in the mail. The dividends represent allocations from the years 1989, 1991, 1992 and 1993. The majority of members received dividend checks between \$20 and \$50. Some large power users, including towns, counties, and schools received checks over \$1000. “Giving member dividends back to you is one of the ways we distinguish ourselves from investor-owned, for-profit utilities,” said Board President, Rube Felicelli. “After a year like 2020, it makes us especially proud to continue this practice.”



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Cooperation Among Cooperatives

The second-largest wildfire in Colorado’s recorded history, the East Troublesome fire near Granby, Colorado destroyed more than 300 homes last month. Mountain Parks Electric, the local electric cooperative that serves this area sustained heavy damage to their system.

From SMPA, volunteer linemen, Chris Falk and Weston Rasmussen, Working Foreman, Brad Boulden and Area Service Technician, KJ Johnson, along with cooperative volunteers from across the state helped to re-build the distribution grid. “It was a very humbling experience to witness all the destruction from the fire,” said SMPA Lineman, Chris Falk. “It was sad to think about all the people that had nothing left except for a chimney and a foundation.”

In addition to damage assessment, communications and safety-related responsibilities, Mountain Parks also had to coordinate the volunteer help. “The process of working with others went very smoothly,” said Weston Rasmussen. “They gave us a guy who served as a “bird dog” to get us what we needed in the field. He was well-prepared and organized so we never had any down time.”

SMPA CEO, Brad Zaporski was also on site to learn about disaster recovery and offer support to Mountain Parks Electric. Much of SMPA’s territory is heavily wooded, and while fire prevention is the main goal, being prepared for a crisis scenario is also warranted. “We may need help someday,” said Foreman, Brad Boulden, who also said that he would volunteer again to help any cooperative in need. “It’s just what co-ops do.”



Everyone was so eager to help and jump in. The mountain parks employees worked around the clock to ensure that they had material and it was ready for all of us the next morning. The feeling you get when you help in times of need will never be forgotten by both the giver and receiver.

—KJ JOHNSON,
AREA SERVICE TECHNICIAN

SMPA OFFICES ARE OPEN BY APPOINTMENT ONLY.

PLEASE CALL: 1-877-864-7311

SMPA POWER PLAY

This Month’s Puzzle: AM RINGS

Hint: Don’t call it ‘profit.’ SMPA allocates these back to members at the end of each fiscal year.

SUBMIT YOUR ANSWER and be entered into a drawing for a fun prize to:

**EnergyWise
PO Box 1150
Ridgway, CO 81432**