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# countryliving

OCTOBER 2015

PUBLISHED FOR MEMBERS OF EAST CENTRAL ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

## Co-op Members Quizzed About Solar

### With enough interest, ECE could sprout a cooperative solar garden

If East Central Electric (ECE) members give it thumbs up, the co-op could sprout a solar garden within a year. ECE is currently polling members on their interest in a cooperative-owned solar project. The survey, enclosed with ECE's monthly electric bill and published on the co-op website and Facebook page, asks members if they are interested in purchasing a portion of their energy from a renewable energy source. In this case, sun power.

With member approval, the member-owned solar project would allow interested members to invest in the installation and operation of solar panels capable of producing up to 250 kilowatts of electricity. The panels would be located near ECE headquarters in Okmulgee. Co-op employees would handle installation and maintenance of the panels.

Benefits of cooperative solar are growing—for co-op members and their electric providers. For ECE members, savings benefits would evolve in a similar fashion to

the co-op's pioneer members who anted up five dollars for the luxury of electric lights.

The solar panels would produce solar energy credits that would appear on participant's bills. These credits would increase as more members participate, and additional solar panels added. Another benefit for ECE and its members is the ability to offset higher wholesale rates during peak periods with clean, renewable solar energy.

### What is Community Solar?

Community solar power allows all users, regardless of income level, geographic location, or home design or home ownership - to access clean, solar energy. Instead of acting alone to purchase and install solar panels, community solar divides costs and benefits among all participants. Solar panels may be located in various locations, or in one central location, to maximize electricity generation.

in solar projects. With enough member interest, ECE could become the third co-op in Oklahoma to offer cooperative solar.

For more on community solar, view this pdf document at [ilsr.org/wp-content/uploads/files/communitysolarpower2.pdf](http://ilsr.org/wp-content/uploads/files/communitysolarpower2.pdf).

"This becomes very important as power plants begin to feel the full effect of EPA regulations and wholesale prices begin to climb," said Tim Smith, ECE general manager.

Member-owned solar power is nothing new for electric co-ops. Currently, 34 U.S. electric co-ops are engaged

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### operation roundup **update**

Operation Roundup funds support local charitable organizations, civic groups, youth programs, community services, and needy families and individuals. For more information on this voluntary bill roundup program, please visit [www.ecoec.com](http://www.ecoec.com).

#### Figures to date:

Applications reviewed.....	720
Applications granted.....	512
Applications denied.....	198
Applications tabled.....	13
Scholarships awarded.....	\$149,000
<b>Total Disbursements.....</b>	<b>\$1,214,219.15</b>
Average member contribution.....	44¢



Country Living is published monthly by East Central Oklahoma Electric Cooperative, Inc., 2001 S. Wood Drive, Okmulgee, Oklahoma 74447. Second class postage paid at Okmulgee, Oklahoma 74447 and at additional mailing office. Subscription price: 60 cents /year. POSTMASTER: Send address corrections to ECE Country Living, PO Box 1178, Okmulgee, OK 74447.



## Get Active In Your Electric Co-op

East Central Electric wants members to be involved in their co-op. You can do this by attending co-op meetings, reading your monthly newsletter and visiting ECE's website and Facebook page. Another way to get active is to volunteer for Friends of Rural Electrification (FORE) group. FORE is comprised of members just like you who take ownership of their co-op seriously. "FORE members are our co-op ambassadors," said Amy Nix, ECE member services representative.

It is their job to stay up on co-op issues that could affect the well being of the co-op and their electric service. For example, FORE members toured the coal-fired plant in Hugo on October 1. The plant is one of many in the U.S. that face possible closure due to stiffer EPA regulations.

By educating themselves about energy issues, FORE members are able to share their insight with other members and even their elected representatives. "They are the front line of our local, grassroots support," Nix said.

FORE responsibilities fluctuate with the challenges of the industry. When ECE asked members to get involved in the nationwide letter-writing campaign opposing EPA regulations, FORE members were some of the first to respond.

For more information on FORE, please call your co-op at **918-756-0833**.



# EPA Regs Fail To Consider Economic Impact On Rural Americans

**N**ational Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) CEO Jo Ann Emerson made the following statement about the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) final rules regulating greenhouse gas emissions from new, existing, modified and reconstructed power plants.

"Any increase in the cost of electricity most dramatically impacts those who can least afford it, and the fallout from the EPA's rule will cascade across the nation for years to come," Emerson said.

The final rule still contains the fundamental flaws of the original proposal, she added. "It exceeds the EPA's legal authority under the Clean Air Act, and it will raise electricity rates for our country's most vulnerable populations while challenging the reliability of the grid.

NRECA recently commissioned a study that underscores the devastating relationship between higher electricity prices and job losses. The study, *Affordable Electricity: Rural America's*

**A 10 percent increase in electricity prices could result in 1.2 million jobs lost in 2021 across the country, with nearly 500,000 of those lost jobs in rural communities.**

Economic Lifeline, measures the impact of a 10 and 25 percent electricity price increase on jobs and gross domestic product (GDP) from 2020 to 2040.

Even a 10 percent increase in electricity prices results in 1.2 million jobs lost in 2021 across the country with nearly 500,000 of those lost jobs in rural communities.

In terms of national GDP from 2020 to 2040, a 10 percent increase results in a cumulative loss of \$2.8 trillion and a 25 percent increase results in a cumulative \$5.4 trillion loss.

Even more concerning is the impact of higher costs on the electric bills of those who can least afford it. On average, 23 percent of co-op households nationwide earn an annual income of less than \$25,000. The average income for households served by electric cooperatives is 11.5 percent less than the national average.

"This study shines a light on the true, real-life cost of higher electricity prices – a cost that policymakers in Washington would do well to remember," Emerson added. "And federal regulations that result in higher electricity prices could wipe out any modest gains rural America has made since the Great Recession."

Co-op members can find more on the EPA ruling and its impact on rural America by visiting [www.action.coop](http://www.action.coop), or visit [www.nreca.coop](http://www.nreca.coop).

## Assessing the Impact



The EPA's proposed greenhouse gas regulations will have significant impacts across the country, particularly for cooperatives and people in some of the poorest areas of the country. Some predictions:

- 171** plants with reduced capacity
- 111** of those plants completely closed
- 2** plants closed in Oklahoma
- 85,928.5** MW lost capacity (US)

SOURCE: NRECA

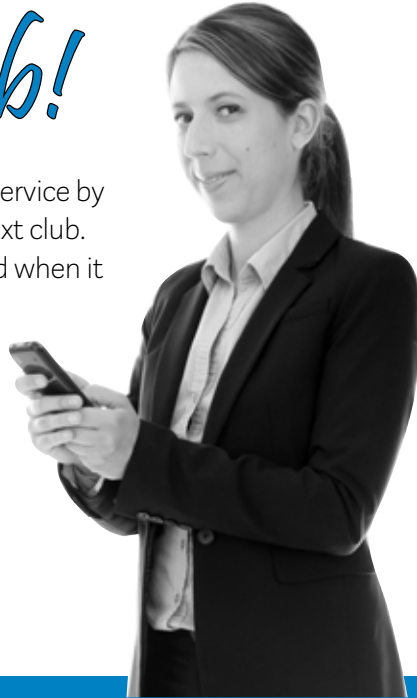


superservices

# Join the Club!

Stay "in the know" about your electric service by joining East Central Electric's mobile text club. You'll know when your power is out and when it is restored. We'll also alert you when maintenance or construction in your area could cause a brief service interruption. We won't bother you with excess messages, either. Ten or fewer per month, our promise.

Sign up today by texting "ECE" to 59457.



Energy Efficiency  
Tip of the Month

Looking for an easy efficiency upgrade? Additional insulation can make a difference! The Department of Energy estimates you can reduce heating and cooling needs up to 30 percent by properly insulating and weatherizing your home.

Source: Energy.gov

East Central Electric offers free home energy audits to help you find ways to lower your utility bills. For details, please call 918-756-0833.



### Statement of Ownership, Management, and Circulation (Requester Publications Only)

1. Publication Title	2. Publication Number	3. Filing Date
Country Living	242-820	9-8-15
4. Issue Frequency	5. Number of Issues Published Annually	6. Annual Subscription Price (if any)
Monthly	12	.60
7. Complete Mailing Address of Known Office of Publication (Not printer) (Street, city, county, state, and ZIP+4®)		Contact Person
East Central Oklahoma Electric Cooperative, Inc., P.O. Box 1178, Okmulgee, OK 74447		Amy Nix
8. Complete Mailing Address of Headquarters or General Business Office of Publisher (Not printer)		Telephone (include area code)
East Central Oklahoma Electric Cooperative, Inc., P.O. Box 1178, Okmulgee, OK 74447		(918) 756-0833
9. Full Names and Complete Mailing Addresses of Publisher, Editor, and Managing Editor (Do not leave blank)		
Publisher (Name and complete mailing address)		
Tim Smith, P.O. Box 1178, Okmulgee, OK 74447		
Editor (Name and complete mailing address)		
Mary Logan-Wolf, P.O. Box 1178, Okmulgee, OK 74447		
Managing Editor (Name and complete mailing address)		
Amy Nix, P.O. Box 1178, Okmulgee, OK 74447		

10. Owner (Do not leave blank. If the publication is owned by a corporation, give the name and address of the corporation immediately followed by the names and addresses of all stockholders owning or holding 1 percent or more of the total amount of stock. If not owned by a corporation, give the names and addresses of the individual owners. If owned by a partnership or other unincorporated firm, give its name and address as well as those of each individual owner. If the publication is published by a nonprofit organization, give its name and address.)

Full Name	Complete Mailing Address
East Central Oklahoma Electric Cooperative, Inc.	P.O. Box 1178, Okmulgee, OK 74447
11. Known Bondholders, Mortgagees, and Other Security Holders Owning or Holding 1 Percent or More of Total Amount of Bonds, Mortgages, or Other Securities. If none, check box. <input type="checkbox"/> None	
Full Name	Complete Mailing Address
Rural Utilities Service	Washington DC
National Rural Cooperative Finance Corp.	Washington DC
CoBank	Denver, CO

12. Tax Status (For completion by nonprofit organizations authorized to mail at nonprofit rates) (Check one)  
The purpose, function, and nonprofit status of this organization and the exempt status for federal income tax purposes:  
 Has Not Changed During Preceding 12 Months  
 Has Changed During Preceding 12 Months (Publisher must submit explanation of change with this statement.)

PS Form 3526-R, July 2014 (Page 1 of 4 (See instructions page 4)) PSN: 7530-09-000-8855 PRIVACY NOTICE: See our privacy policy on www.usps.com

13. Publication Title	14. Issue Date for Circulation Data Below	
Country Living	October 2015	
15. Extent and Nature of Circulation	Average No. Copies Each Issue During Preceding 12 Months	No. Copies of Single Issue Published Nearest to Filing Date
Newsletter of electric cooperative members		
a. Total Number of Copies (Net press run)	26,500	26,500
(1) Outside County Paid/Requested Mail Subscriptions stated on PS Form 3541. (Include direct written request from recipient, telemarketing, and Internet requests from recipient, paid subscriptions including nominal rate subscriptions, employer requests, advertiser's proof copies, and exchange copies.)	0	0
b. Legitimate Paid and/or Requested Distribution (By mail and outside the mail)		
(2) In-County Paid/Requested Mail Subscriptions stated on PS Form 3541. (Include direct written request from recipient, telemarketing, and Internet requests from recipient, paid subscriptions including nominal rate subscriptions, employer requests, advertiser's proof copies, and exchange copies.)	0	0
(3) Sales Through Dealers and Carriers, Street Vendors, Counter Sales, and Other Paid or Requested Distribution Outside USPS®	120	120
(4) Requested Copies Distributed by Other Mail Classes Through the USPS (e.g., First-Class Mail®)	24,110	23,330
c. Total Paid and/or Requested Circulation (Sum of 15b (1), (2), (3), and (4)) ▶	24,230	23,450
(1) Outside County Nonrequested Copies Stated on PS Form 3541 (include sample copies, requests over 3 years old, requests induced by a premium, bulk sales and requests including association requests, names obtained from business directories, lists, and other sources)	0	0
d. Non-requested Distribution (By mail and outside the mail)		
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(3) Nonrequested Copies Distributed Through the USPS by Other Classes of Mail (e.g., First-Class Mail, nonrequestor copies mailed in excess of 10% first mailed at Standard Mail® or Package Services rates)	0	0
(4) Nonrequested Copies Distributed Outside the Mail (include pickup stands, trade shows, showrooms, and other sources)	0	0
e. Total Nonrequested Distribution (Sum of 15d (1), (2), (3) and (4))	0	0
f. Total Distribution (Sum of 15c and e)	24,230	23,450
g. Copies not Distributed (See instructions to Publishers #4, (page #3)) ▶	300	300
h. Total (Sum of 15f and g)	24,530	23,750
i. Percent Paid and/or Requested Circulation (15c divided by 15f times 100) ▶	100%	100%

\* If you are claiming electronic copies, go to line 16 on page 3. If you are not claiming electronic copies, skip to line 17 on page 3.

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## Celebrate Your Cooperative Membership—And Ownership

Every October is Cooperative Month—a time to celebrate the reasons why consumer-owned businesses like East Central Electric are important to your local economy and your family.

### VIVA LA DIFFERENCE!

Member response to ECE's solar survey could signal your co-op's entrance into the clean, renewable energy business. Consumers of other utilities don't get the luxury of participating in such important decisions.

From your electric co-op to your credit union, businesses that were created and are governed by the people who use them help keep your money in your community.

They also give you a say when it comes to policies and decisions. A perfect example is your co-op's satellite Internet service. Before making the decision to offer the service, East Central Electric polled members on their interest. Today your co-op provides Exede Internet service to nearly 800 members.

Another member survey currently underway aims to gauge member interest in a cooperative solar program. Your response to this survey could signal your co-op's entrance into the renewable

energy business. Consumers of other utilities don't get the luxury of participating in such important decisions.

Cooperatives such as yours are run by boards of directors who are also members of the co-op. These member/directors are elected by all of the other members who "belong" to the cooperative.

You can run for a seat on your electric cooperative's board of directors, exercise your right to vote in board elections,

attend your cooperative's annual membership meetings, or simply keep up with co-op activities via your newsletter, website or Facebook page.

Perhaps you "joined" your electric co-op because it is the only power supplier for your area. That still makes you a co-owner of your utility, along with all of the others in your area who get their electricity from the cooperative.

Take advantage of the privilege of cooperative membership, starting with Cooperative Month. Attend co-op meetings, vote and keep abreast of "your" business's activities. You own your cooperative—and that's a real reason to celebrate.



therecipebox

Favorite recipes from members of East Central Electric Cooperative.



### Deer Chili

#### INGREDIENTS

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 1 pound ground venison                     | 2 (14 oz) cans stewed tomatoes, with juice |
| 1 pound cubed beef stew meat               | 1 (15 oz) can tomato sauce                 |
| 1 pound cubed pork stew meat               | 6 cloves garlic, minced                    |
| 1 large onion, chopped                     | 4 cubes beef bouillon, crumbled            |
| 1 fresh jalapeño pepper, seeded and minced | ¼ cup Kentucky bourbon                     |
| 3 tablespoons chili powder                 | 2 (12 oz) cans pilsner-style beer          |
| ½ teaspoon cayenne pepper                  | 2 cups water                               |
| 1½ teaspoons ground cumin                  |  |

#### DIRECTIONS

Melt the butter in a large pot over medium heat. Cook the venison, beef, and pork in the melted butter until completely browned. Add the onion and jalapeño; cook until tender. Season with chili powder, cayenne pepper, and cumin.

Stir in the stewed tomatoes, tomato sauce, garlic and beef bouillon. Pour the bourbon, beer, and water into the mixture and stir. Bring the chili to a boil; cover and reduce heat to medium-low; simmer about 1 hour, stirring frequently.

SOURCE: ALLRECIPES.COM

### Statement of Nondiscrimination

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