

enchantment

The Voice of New Mexico's
Rural Electric Cooperatives

**OTERO COUNTY
ELECTRIC
COOPERATIVE**

SEPTEMBER 2024



Light Up Navajo

Lineworkers from a New Mexico co-op help electrify Navajo Nation **Page 12**

PHOTO BY
LONNIE-TUCKER

Otero County Electric Cooperative



A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

Chief Executive Officer

Mario Romero

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Office Hours

8 a.m. to 5 p.m. (M-F)

Board of Trustees

President

Charles Mulcock, SE District

Vice President

Denny Burnett, SE District

Secretary

Marty Mills, Central District

Treasurer

Scott Shafer, NW District

Kenny Blazer, SW District

Bill Bird, NE District

Cheri Hass, Central District

David Powers, NE District

Tim Rabon, SW District

Preston Stone, NW District

Board Meeting

The board of trustees meets at 8:30 a.m. the third Friday of the month at the cooperative.

This institution is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

MEMBER APPRECIATION PICNIC

Come join us for a fabulous picnic featuring hamburgers, hotdogs, giveaways and an opportunity to visit with trustees and employees!

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 20, 2024

11 A.M.-2 P.M.



OCEC Headquarters - 404 Burro Avenue - Cloudcroft, NM



Otero County Electric Cooperative is closed Monday, Sept. 2, in observance of Labor Day. OCEC and the board of trustees wish you a happy and safe Labor Day!

Annual Meeting Includes Updates on Vegetation Management, Finances

OCEC held its annual membership meeting Saturday, Aug. 3, at the Cloudcroft High School Gymnasium. The quorum was met, with 317 members registering.

The 2024 Annual Meeting Report was passed out with registration gifts. It contained written officer reports for the president and treasurer of the board, as well as a report from the general manager. The annual report is also available at www.ocec-inc.com. You can pick up a copy at your local OCEC office if you are interested in staying up to date with the cooperative.

Treasurer Scott Shafer updated the membership on the co-op's financial health, reporting the co-op is in good financial condition. Operating margins for the year were strong, with net margins of \$1.3 million. OCEC deferred \$1.5 million of operating revenue in 2023. This is the first time the co-op has used this financial tool.

This deferred revenue can be used in the future for special projects or general operation expenses and may assist in delaying a rate increase for members.

Strong net margins also allowed \$869,000 in capital credit patronage to be returned to members, covering all the unretired capital for 1998 and most of 1999. This exemplifies the cooperative principle of returning net revenue not needed for operations to the members. This was completed without any negative effects on the financial health of the co-op.

Members who attended the meeting could pick up their checks; others were mailed after the meeting.

General Manager Mario Romero spoke about the risk of wildfires and how preventing a catastrophic wildfire is one of the co-op's highest priorities.



More than 300 members attended the Otero County Electric Cooperative annual meeting.

Each year, OCEC spends more than \$1 million on vegetation management and triple that on system maintenance. Even so, preventing every tree, branch or limb from coming in contact with almost 2,800 miles of power line in the OCEC service area is all but impossible, especially given the 100-plus-foot tall trees paired with easements that only allow us to maintain the right of way up to 15 feet from the centerline.

What we do in this arena has numerous impacts on our members. Tree cutting, vegetation management, right of way maintenance and line maintenance all increase expenses, which members pay as higher rates. As we expand these efforts, your cooperation is requested. Our crews are simply trying to protect our communities and membership from the

next outage, fire or lawsuit.

OCEC Education Foundation scholarship recipients were recognized, and a brief overview of scholarship totals since the program's inception was given. Since 1989, 392 students have been awarded \$1.72 million in funding for continuing education.

Elections were held for three positions on the board of trustees. Preston Stone, NW District; Scott Shafer, NW District; and Charlie Mulcock, SE District, ran unopposed. They maintain their positions.

The meeting was livestreamed on the OCEC Facebook page and is available for anyone who wants to watch it.

After the meeting was adjourned, the drawing for more than 115 door prizes was held, and the Cloudcroft Culinary Arts Program provided a barbecue lunch. ■



Mark your calendars in advance for next year's annual meeting Saturday, Aug. 2, 2025.