



ENCHANTMENT

THE VOICE OF NEW MEXICO'S RURAL ELECTRIC COOPERATIVES

**OTERO COUNTY
ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE**

SEPTEMBER 2026

New Mexico Is for the Birds

New Mexico is home to hundreds of species of birds and thousands of people interested in birding—a hobby with huge economic impact **Page 14**

Although not a native species to New Mexico, feral colonies of peacocks (Indian peafowl) are commonly seen in Albuquerque's North Valley and even elsewhere in the state. PHOTO BY JAY ESCHENBERG



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. (Monday-Friday)

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.



ABOVE: New Mexico Rural Electric Cooperative Association CEO Vince Martinez updates members on issues facing New Mexico cooperatives. **OPPOSITE PAGE:** Otero County Electric Cooperative members Matt Flotte and Bob Flotte register for the 87th Annual Meeting.

Looking Back, Moving Forward

Highlights from the Otero County Electric Cooperative 2026 Annual Meeting

Otero County Electric Cooperative held its 2026 Annual Membership Meeting on Saturday, Aug. 1, at the Cloudcroft High School Gymnasium. A total of 368 members registered, providing the quorum needed to conduct cooperative business.

Members received the 2026 Annual Report as part of their registration packet. The report includes updates from board President Charlie Mulcock, Treasurer

Scott Shafer and General Manager Mario Romero. Copies are also available online at ocec-inc.com or at any OCEC office.

Scott shared a brief financial update, highlighting another year of strong financial performance. Total assets grew to \$139 million, up \$8 million from 2024, while member equity increased to \$44 million. The value of the cooperative's plant and equipment also grew from \$102



million to \$107.5 million.

Strong financial results also allowed OCEC to return \$884,000 in capital credits to members. This year's retirement covered all remaining capital credits from 2000 and 2001, along with a portion of 2002. Members attending the meeting were able to pick up their checks, while remaining checks were mailed following the meeting.

Mario recapped another successful year for the cooperative, highlighting continued investments in reliability, safety and long-term financial stability. He reported major transmission line improvements serving Cloudcroft and surrounding mountain communities were completed in the past year, including replacement of a vandalized transmission structure and other aging infrastructure.

Mario also announced OCEC will begin a major vegetation management project along the transmission corridor in the coming months as part of the cooperative's ongoing wildfire mitigation efforts. The project is funded through previously deferred revenues, allowing important

reliability improvements without affecting current or future member margins.

While OCEC posted another strong financial year with \$2.3 million in margins, Mario noted rising costs across the utility industry will likely require a modest rate adjustment in 2028. Even so, the cooperative has maintained stable electric rates since 2020 despite several years of record inflation.

Mario recognized OCEC employees and trustees for work anniversaries, including Charlie, who has served on the board for 35 years. He also thanked employees for their continued dedication to safely serving members through system maintenance, construction projects, broadband expansion and power restoration efforts.

Mario concluded by discussing the cooperative's ongoing wildfire mitigation work, partnerships with state and federal agencies to improve powerline management in national forests and emerging challenges facing the electric utility industry. He also thanked members for their patience during January's historic winter storm and commended employees for their tireless work restoring power under extremely difficult conditions.

Board elections were held for two trustee positions. Cheri Hass, CN District; and Kenny Blazer, SW District, were unopposed and will continue serving on the OCEC Board of Trustees. No petition was submitted for the NE District position. More information about how that vacancy

Trustee Position Available in Northeast District

The Board of Trustees for Otero County Electric Cooperative seeks interested candidates to fill a vacant position. The board will appoint a trustee to serve for a term that ends Aug. 4, 2029. At the end of the term, the appointed trustee would need to file a petition for candidacy and be elected by the members of the Northeast District of OCEC to continue serving.

To qualify for the position, applicants must live within the Northeast District of the OCEC service territory, which includes Hondo, San Patricio, Glencoe, Tinnie, Arabela, Lincoln, Picacho, Riverside and Alto.

Those interested in the position should submit a letter of interest and/or resume to board President Charlie Mulcock at charliem@ote-coop.com. The deadline to submit information for consideration is Sept. 18.

For questions, contact Kelley Sanders, 575-682-7606 or 1-800-548-4660.

will be filled is provided

Following the business meeting, members enjoyed a barbecue lunch prepared by students in the Cloudcroft High School Culinary Arts Program and participated in the drawing for nearly 100 door prizes.

Next year's Annual Membership Meeting will be Saturday, Aug. 7, 2027. ■