

NEW MEXICO PUBLIC REGULATION COMMISSION

COMMISSIONERS

DISTRICT 1 KAREN L. MONTOYA, CHAIRWOMAN
DISTRICT 2 PATRICK H. LYONS
DISTRICT 3 VALERIE ESPINOZA
DISTRICT 4 LYNDA LOVEJOY, VICE CHAIR
DISTRICT 5 SANDY JONES



NMPRC MEDIA CONTACT

Carlos A. Padilla
Public Information Officer
Office: 505-827-4446
carlos.padilla2@state.nm.us
1120 Paseo de Peralta
Santa Fe, NM 87504

CHIEF OF STAFF

S. Vincent Martinez

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: March 6, 2015

NEWS RELEASE

Renewable Taos Project Wins RMI eLab Invite

Taos team will join national experts for renewable energy transition planning

TAOS—The Rocky Mountain Institute (RMI) and its Electricity Innovation Lab (eLab) recently selected the Renewable Taos Project to join teams from throughout the nation who are “...leading the most impactful and innovative projects at the distribution edge of the electricity system,” according to a press release issued today, Friday, March 6. These teams are all creating groundbreaking electricity system solutions based on new utility business models for building and distributing locally generated renewable energy. The 12 teams will meet March 23-26, at Sundance Mountain Resort, Utah.

“RMI is a world leader in transforming global energy use to create a clean, prosperous and secure energy future,” Bob Bresnahan, Co-Founder of Renewable Taos, stated. “Our successful application is based on establishing the Kit Carson Electric Cooperative (KCEC) service area as a new energy innovation district. Taos has a long history of leadership in solar energy.”

“The Renewable Taos Project is to be applauded. It has been an extremely competitive process,” according to Martha Campbell, Senior Associate for Communities at RMI.

The Renewable Taos Project core team members are: Luis Reyes, CEO of KCEC; Valerie Espinoza, New Mexico Public Regulation Commission; Andrew Gonzales, Taos Town Councilor; Jay P. Levine, Levine Mesa Web and Board Member, Renewable Taos; and two business and industry principals now being interviewed. Energy Consultant Bill Brown of Arroyo Hondo is the Team Coordinator.

“It speaks well of the State of New Mexico to be selected from a field of so many applicants,” stated Public Regulation Commissioner (District 3) and Renewable Taos Project core team member Valerie Espinoza. “I look forward to joining the national experts as we plan for more renewable energy distribution in our future. New Mexico should be on the forefront of the push toward solar power.”

Renewable Taos began working with RMI advisors in the summer of 2014 to determine ways to supply Taos area energy demands with renewables.

“We began building a microgrid in earnest in 2009 when the solar array at UNM-Taos went online,” said Team member Luis Reyes. “Today, we generate nearly 6 megawatts of power from four large solar arrays, several smaller arrays, and nearly 250 residential and business solar arrays.”

“KCEC has almost maximized the amount of local solar power it can generate under the terms of its contract with Tri-State Generation and Transmission Association (Tri-State). Tri-State recently approved our request to install three community solar arrays in our service area that will generate an additional 1.5 megawatts,” said Reyes. “However, we need to have a new and better contract with Tri-State or another wholesale electricity provider in order to move forward with our community’s demands for substantially more renewable energy.”

“Renewable Taos’ modeling efforts for KCEC show we can generate the bulk of our energy demands from solar arrays, and sell our excess generation to the regional grid,” said John Gusdorf, Renewable Taos Co-Founder and Energy Analyst. “Our local demand peaks in the winter months, whereas grid demand in most of New Mexico peaks during the summer due to the use of air conditioning. A local microgrid could produce income from our solar power generation in excess of our demands throughout more than half the year.”

“All local governments in the KCEC service area that signed a joint resolution on renewable energy will participate,” said Team Coordinator Bill Brown. “We will involve major players from the State of New Mexico and from the renewable energy groups of large utilities like Tri-State and PNM. The momentum of what we have already done locally is having an impact on the way these large utilities are thinking about their futures. The move to business models based on clean-energy microgrids is well underway in both the USA and the world. What we are doing here in Taos is a leading example of what is possible for all of Tri-State’s member Rural Electric Cooperatives (RECs), and RECs and municipal utilities across the country.”

“We have to be realistic as we phase into the renewable energy realm,” Commissioner Espinoza said. “We’re ready to shift to the age of the new millennial. We all want a cleaner environment, and we need to appeal to the newer generation of energy consumers. I am honored to partake in such a distinguished group of experts to research innovative solutions as we transition into the future of the new energy economy.”

For more information, visit <http://renewabletaos.org>; and <http://www.rmi.org/elab>.

###