

[MCREA News]

PLEASE VOTE NO ON PROPOSITION 112

DAVID FRICK || GENERAL MANAGER

Very soon, Colorado voters will cast their ballots on several important issues and elect local and state leaders. One of the measures appearing on the ballot is Proposition 112 (originally Initiative 97), which would establish the minimum setback of new oil and gas wells on non-federal ground to 2,500 feet around “occupied structures” such as homes, schools and hospitals, and “vulnerable areas” such as playgrounds, parks and open space, public drinking water sources, irrigation canals, reservoirs, lakes, rivers, and perennial and intermittent streams and creeks. Current Colorado law designates setbacks at 500 feet for homes and 1,000 feet for schools.



David Frick

After much consideration, the Morgan County Rural Electric Association Board of Directors is urging voters to vote no on Proposition 112.

The State of Colorado Oil & Gas Conservation Commission conducted an impact assessment of the ramifications of Proposition 112 (Initiative 97 at the time of the study) and released its findings on July 2, 2018. Its report states, “An estimated 54 percent of Colorado’s total land surface would be unavailable for new oil and gas development by adopting the buffer zone setbacks and federal land exemption proposed by [Proposition 112]. Of the non-federal land in Colorado, 85 percent would be inaccessible using these same criteria.”

The state commission’s report had even worse news for the top five oil and gas producing counties, including Weld County, easily the largest county for oil and gas production in Colorado. The commission found that 85 percent of Weld County’s non-federal surface land would be off-limits to new oil and gas development. In Colorado’s top five oil and gas producing counties combined, that number jumps to 94 percent of non-federal surface acreage.

It’s the position of the MCREA Board of Directors that, if passed, Proposition 112 would destroy the oil and gas industry in Colorado, and cause severe and irreparable harm to both our local and state economies. And we’re not alone in that assessment.

An economic impact study conducted two years ago by the University of Colorado found that the 2,500-foot setbacks would cause a \$7.1 billion blow to the state’s gross domestic product and 54,000 fewer jobs in the first five years, and would result in a \$14.5 billion loss and 104,000 fewer jobs through 2031.

In an article written by Jennifer Kovaleski and posted August 7, 2018, on Denver 7 News’s website, the president of the Colorado Oil and Gas Association Dan Haley said that the measure would

“decimate” the oil and gas industry in the state, warning that the initiative would affect “private property rights, more than 100,000 good paying jobs, and more than \$1 billion in taxes that now go to schools, parks and libraries across our state.”

According to a July 26, 2018, article by *The Denver Post* reporter Aldo Svaldi, former U.S. Interior Secretary Ken Salazar also weighed in against Proposition 112 at the State of Colorado Energy Luncheon. Salazar, who served as interior secretary under President Barack Obama from 2009 to 2013, told the crowd at the luncheon he believes the courts would throw out the measure if approved by voters, calling Proposition 112 “fundamentally unconstitutional.”

Closer to home, Pro 15, a membership-based advocacy group for northeast Colorado, also came out officially opposing Proposition 112. Formerly known as Progressive 15, the organization, comprised of members from 15 counties, said in a statement, “This [initiative] would virtually shut down oil and gas development in our region and have an adverse impact on the economy, school districts, fire districts, library districts, hospital districts, main street business and the lodging industry.”

So, why would the board of directors of a not-for-profit electric cooperative be concerned with a ballot measure that affects the oil and gas industry? Good question. Here’s why.

According to the 2017 Morgan County REA Annual Report, nearly 50 percent of our annual revenue comes from the Large Power and Industrial rate classes, much of which is comprised of oil and gas services. If the negative economic impacts of Proposition 112 discussed earlier carry over to our cooperative (which is likely), the resulting revenue loss could force MCREA’s directors to implement electric rate increases across the board to maintain our cooperative’s financial stability. And, to be frank, we really don’t want to have to do that.

Additionally, the seventh cooperative principle is Concern for Community. When we as a cooperative see something come around such as Proposition 112 that could have a devastating impact on the well-being of our membership and communities, we feel that it’s our duty to say so.

On behalf of the MCREA Board of Directors, I encourage all MCREA members to exercise your right to vote and cast a ballot in the upcoming election. And when you do, please vote no on Proposition 112.

Is 100 Percent Renewable Energy Realistic or Wishful Thinking?

GEOFF BAUMGARTNER || COMMUNICATIONS SPECIALIST

Here we are again, knee-deep in the political whirlwind. Politicians and pundits are all over the television, radio and social media with campaign ads and interviews promising this or that if we elect them to office or vote a certain way on their ballot measure.

One popular talking point I've heard over and over is the promise of 100 percent renewable energy by a certain time, usually around 30 years from now. And not just from those seeking office in Colorado — it's a popular campaign pledge around the country.

I'm skeptical of campaign promises in general (especially this one, since I work at an electric cooperative), but I also like to be informed. I decided to do a little digging to see what I could find on the subject.

Before I go further, I emphasize that electric cooperatives, including Morgan County Rural Electric Association, are not against renewable energy — we actually promote the responsible integration of renewable power. More than 30 percent of the energy generated by Tri-State Generation and Transmission (the power supplier for MCREA) comes from renewable energy sources, and they are working every day to find more renewable energy to add to the mix. For our part, Morgan County REA's member services department enthusiastically works with our members to assist them in adding solar or wind to their homes and businesses, and we have more than a dozen small-scale renewable sources in operation.

Back to the topic at hand. After a quick internet search, I found a paper published in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* journal in November of 2015 titled "Low-cost solution to the grid reliability problem with 100 percent penetration of intermittent wind, water and solar for all purposes." The publication cites four researchers as authors of the paper, with Mark Jacobson, professor of civil and environmental engineering at Stanford University, listed as lead author.

The paper is riddled with numbers, statistics, charts, graphs and more that would be cumbersome to try to explain in detail here. In short, Jacobson's analysis claims that a full transition of all sectors of the U.S. energy system to wind, water and solar power by 2055 is "technically and economically feasible with little downside."

Okay, that's interesting. Remember, there were a total of four researchers on the paper. That's going to be important in a moment.

Almost immediately after finding Jacobson's paper online, I came across several articles disputing Jacobson's findings. An article that caught my attention was written by James Temple and published by MIT *Technology Review* in June 2017. The title of the article is "Scientists Sharply Rebut Influential Renewable Energy Plan," with the subtitle "Nearly two dozen researchers



Geoff Baumgartner

critique a proposal for wind, solar and water power gaining traction in policy circles." *Nearly two dozen.*

The first paragraph of the article states that "a team of prominent researchers sharply critiqued an influential paper arguing that wind, solar and hydroelectric power could affordably meet most of the nation's energy needs by 2055, saying it contained modeling errors and implausible assumptions that could distort public policy and spending decisions."

A team of scientists *five times larger* than the number of authors of the original paper promoting 100 percent renewable energy came out in an official capacity to dispute Jacobson's claims that the 100 percent goal is easily attainable by 2055. Hmmmm.

The MIT article also points out that the researchers and scientists contesting Jacobson's paper are not opponents of renewable energy. On the contrary, the lead author of the rebuttal is Christopher Clack, chief executive of Vibrant Clean Energy and a former NOAA (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration) researcher. Other contributors to the rebuttal include "energy, policy, storage and climate researchers affiliated with prominent institutions like Carnegie Mellon, the Carnegie Institution for Science, the Brookings Institution and Jacobson's own Stanford."

Second paragraph of the article: "The rebuttal appeared in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, the same journal that ran the original 2015 paper. Several of the nearly two dozen researchers say they were driven to act because the original authors declined to publish what they viewed as necessary corrections, and the findings were influencing state and federal policy proposals."

Third paragraph: "The fear is that legislation will mandate goals that can't be achieved with available technologies at reasonable prices, leading to 'wildly unrealistic expectations' and 'massive misallocation of resources,'" says David Victor, an energy policy researcher at the University of California San Diego and coauthor of the critique. "That is both harmful to the economy, and creates the seeds of a backlash."

To summarize — a team of experts who support renewable energy are saying that the findings of researchers promoting 100 percent renewable energy by 2055 are unrealistic, limited by available technology and too expensive. They also warn that politicians, proponents and pundits are using those inaccurate and false conclusions to push a political agenda.

When we hear candidates and commentators tout the "100 percent renewable energy" promise, is their rhetoric based on realistic, verified data? Or is it wishful thinking in order to promote an agenda and score political points?

There's much more information in the MIT article, Jacobson's paper and many other articles and websites. I encourage our readers to do some research and draw your own conclusions. However, based on my research — and in my opinion — when I hear the 100 percent renewable promise, I'm taking it with a large grain of salt.

MCREA IN OUR COMMUNITIES



MCREA Member Services Representative Bill Annan demonstrates electrical safety to onlookers at the Fort Morgan Police Department's National Night Out at Fort Morgan City Park.



Starting from left, Member Services Representative Bill Annan, Member Services Specialist Jamie Plakorus and Director of External Affairs Dave Henderson represent MCREA at the Morgan County Fair Steak Fry.

Educate Your Teen Driver About Electrical Dangers

For Brie Renfroe and her four friends, it was just a typical summer afternoon in the Midwest when clouds started rolling in. Before they knew it the winds picked up and they found themselves in a dangerous situation. "All of a sudden a domino effect of utility poles came down. We tried to reverse and they fell down behind us," Renfroe said. "The power line was on our car, so we started freaking out a little bit."



Luckily for Renfroe and her friends, they calmed down quickly thanks to a live line demonstration performed at their school. The demo educates teen drivers about potential electrical

dangers while driving. Thanks to the demo, Renfroe and her friends did just as they were taught: They contacted emergency crews and stayed in the car until linemen arrived and cleared them to exit the vehicle. (Forrest Tappy, acct #xx0400)

The only reason you should ever evacuate your car in this type of situation is if the vehicle is on fire. If you are forced to exit your vehicle due to a fire, you should jump free and clear, land with your feet together and hop away. Remember, the ground could be energized. Separating your feet can create two points of contact with the ground and could result in shock.

Safe Electricity offers these additional tips to teach new drivers about electrical safety on the road:

- All downed lines should always be treated as though they are live with electric current flowing through them.
- Never approach or touch a fallen line with anything.
- Do not try to physically help someone else in a car that is involved with power equipment. If you do, you will become a path for electricity. First responders will know what to do.
- Never touch the vehicle and the ground at the same time.

While it is important to know the rules of the road, teaching teen drivers what to do in a situation like this can be lifesaving.

For more tips on electrical safety, visit SafeElectricity.org.



Maintain the Temperature

Set your water heater thermostat to 120 degrees. If it is an older unit, install an inexpensive insulating blanket to prevent heat loss.



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MCREA CELEBRATES NATIONAL COOPERATIVE MONTH

October is National Cooperative Month, and Morgan County REA will celebrate by giving our members the opportunity to win \$25 off their regular electric bill.

Beginning Monday, October 1, MCREA will have a box in the office lobby for members to register for a drawing. Each Friday in October, one member's name will be drawn from the box and that member will receive a \$25 credit on their electric bill. To enter, members must register at the MCREA office at 734 Barlow Road during regular business hours. Only one entry will be allowed per member for the entire month. MCREA will not discard the entries throughout the month, so once you register in the office your name is eligible for all remaining drawings. Thank you to all MCREA members for being a part of your local electric cooperative.

Win \$25 Off Your Electric Bill

Each month Morgan County REA gives two lucky members a \$25 credit on their electric bill, just by reading *Colorado Country Life*.

Congratulations, **Debbie K. Fiscus** and **Kim and Eric Evertse**, you saw your name and account number in the August edition of *Colorado Country Life*. You received a \$25 credit on your electric bill.

There are two more MCREA member names and their account numbers hidden somewhere in this issue. If you find your name and account number, call member services at 970-867-5688 by October 31 to claim a \$25 credit on your electric bill.

Colorado Cooperatives Sponsor Touchstone Energy Junior Livestock Sale

On Tuesday, August 28, nearly \$500,000 went to young people who brought championship livestock to the Colorado State Fair. The annual Touchstone Energy Cooperatives Junior Livestock Sale is the largest event of its kind in Colorado and the championship event for the state's 4-H and FFA youth. According to state fair officials, the 2018 sale accumulated \$495,000 from the state's supportive bidders from across the state.

The sale is sponsored each year by Morgan County REA, *Colorado Country Life*, the Colorado Rural Electric Association, the Colorado Rural Electric Members Service group, Tri-State Generation and Transmission and 17 other electric co-ops in Colorado, all unified under the Touchstone Energy brand name. (Josh Pralle, acct #xxx1200) The young exhibitors who won champion, reserve champion, first, second and third place in their livestock divisions have the opportunity to auction their animals at this sale. All proceeds from the sale go directly to the education funds of the youth exhibitors.

"The electric cooperatives in Colorado are honored to sponsor this event, especially since most of the exhibitors live in electric co-op territory," said Dave Henderson, MCREA's director of external affairs.

For the last 38 years, gross sales have totaled more than \$10.3 million, all of which went directly to the agricultural youth who raised the animals.

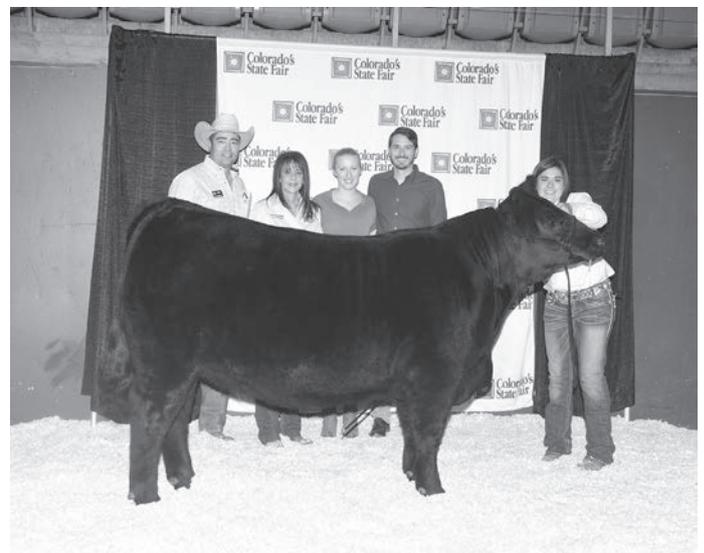
According to the sale's preliminary report, participants in and around MCREA's service territory at this year's Junior Livestock Sale included:

MARKET BEEF

- Madison Sneddon, Weldona – 1st Place Market Heifers
- Jared Wacker, Brush – 4th Place Market Steers
- Brealynn Huwa, Roggen – 4th Place Market Steers

MARKET HOGS

- Kashley Hayden, Keenesburg – Reserve Champion Light-Weight Crossbred



Madison Sneddon from Weldona (far right) with her first place market heifer. Photo appears courtesy of Beverly Englert Photography.

MARKET GOATS

- Karsyn Fetzter, Kersey – Grand Champion
- Faith Fetzter, Kersey – 2nd Place Medium Weight
- Cael Langford, Fort Morgan – 3rd Place Medium Weight
- Jordan Halley, Kersey – 3rd Place Lightweight

MARKET LAMBS

- Addicyn Kessinger, Akron – 1st Place Medium Heavyweight Blackface
- Kealy Langford, Fort Morgan – 2nd Place Middleweight Blackface
- David Vetter, Bennett – 2nd Place Middleweight Blackface

Congratulations to all these great kids from MCREA and Colorado's electric cooperatives.