



GCEA

OCTOBER 2024



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We want to be social with you!

Like us on Facebook and follow us on Instagram to find out about GCEA events, energy efficiency tips, safety tips and so much more.



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GunnisonCountyElectricAssociation](https://www.facebook.com/GunnisonCountyElectricAssociation)



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GCEA OFFICE HOURS

Monday - Thursday
8 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.



Taylor River Hydro Project stakeholders celebrate the completion of the project with a ribbon cutting ceremony.

GCEA and Uncompahgre Valley Water Users Association Celebrate Completion of Taylor River Hydro Project

After decades of research and negotiation, GCEA and the Uncompahgre Valley Water Users Association are pleased to announce the completion of the construction phase of the Taylor River Hydro project and the beginning of a new era of hydro power in the Gunnison Valley. Operating at or near full capacity 24 hours a day year-round, the 500-kilowatt hydro plant will produce an average of 3.8 million kilowatt-hours annually. This generation compares to a 2.5-megawatt fixed tilt-solar array and will provide clean electricity to approximately 500 local homes and businesses.

Mueller Construction based in New Castle, Colorado, began construction in May 2023 and Washington state-based Canyon Hydro delivered the turbine, generator and controls. With weather constraints and supply chain and permitting delays, it took months to coordinate the successful completion of the project. Now finished, the plant boasts the largest known single-phase power generator operating in North America.

When the Taylor Dam was constructed in the late 1930s, it was designed with hydro power generation in mind. The project connects to the existing dam penstock and GCEA's single-phase distribution line. The GCEA board of directors discussed upgrading the line to three-phase for a more powerful output of electricity, but felt the expense to do so would put too great a financial burden on the cooperative's members. Instead, the 500-kW generator is the solution to produce the most power possible on GCEA's existing single-phase distribution line.

In 2020, GCEA and the Uncompahgre Valley Water Users Association formed Taylor River Hydro, LLC to jointly develop, own, and operate the plant. Stakeholders have worked on the \$3.6 million project — permitting, design, and construction — for the last four years.

The addition of the Taylor River Hydro project will bump GCEA to nearly 3% local renewable energy generation, adding to its current portfolio of two community solar gardens: one at the Crested Butte wastewater treatment plant and one at GCEA headquarters in Gunnison, and a small wind turbine in Doyleville. Two more solar projects are currently in the works, and once completed, GCEA will nearly meet its current 7% local renewable energy goal set by the GCEA Board of Directors in the cooperative's 2023 strategic plan.

In addition to GCEA's local renewable energy goals, GCEA receives 34% renewable energy from Tri-State Generation and Transmission Association. Tri-State has commitments to be 50% renewable by 2025, 70% renewable by 2030, and achieve an 80% carbon reduction from their 2005 level by 2030.

With Tri-State's support and UVWUA's partnership, GCEA is excited to provide clean renewable energy to its service territory without any negative impact on member's electric rates.

To celebrate the project completion, GCEA and the Uncompahgre Valley Water Users Association held a ribbon cutting ceremony to commemorate this historic event in Gunnison Valley.

YOUR CO-OP NEWS TAKING CARE OF OUR MEMBERS

GCEA is fortunate to have a fantastic and diverse team of employees who collaborate with our members. Whether it's the Member Support Specialists or the engineering department, there are dedicated individuals here to assist you in initiating your service, joining one of our programs, and understanding your bill. Meet some of the awesome employees who enjoy helping our membership.



GCEA Employees

Member Services

Alliy Sahagun oversees member communication, education, and outreach for GCEA as our Member Relations Supervisor. Her team creates website, social media, newsletter, and email content; plans member engagement events such as the annual meeting and Coffee with Your Coop; and coordinates our school educational programs. One of her favorites is our EV loaner program. She enjoys test driving with members and educating them about the advantages of electric vehicle adoption and cost savings opportunities with our rebate program. Connecting with members and providing helpful information makes her day. If you have a question about any of GCEA's programs, Alliy and her team are here to help.



Alliy enjoys teaching Electricity 101 to kids at the library story time.

Sarah Tamarcaz, GCEA Billing Assistant, has been a part of the cooperative for six years. For any questions about your bill or account, Sarah is the go-to person. She diligently examines GCEA's systems to ensure accurate meter readings for precise billing. Committed to her position, Sarah works to provide members with the most accurate bills. With her outstanding problem-solving abilities, she promptly addresses any concerns that may arise.



Sarah works alongside Billing Assistant Chastity Miller.

Tracy Wheeler began her journey at GCEA as a Member Support Specialist 11 years ago. Tracy enjoys building personal connections with GCEA members and assisting them in any way she can. She prioritizes members best interests and ensures they feel comfortable approaching her with any concerns. Tracy likes guiding members to use the SmartHub app to better manage their energy consumption to help them save money on their bill.



Tracy helps members with billing questions.

Operations

Ron Copenhaver has committed 24 years to GCEA and still takes pride in helping members with their service. Initially working as a lineman, he moved to a staking engineer position 10 years ago. Ron provides support to members regarding new services, mapping, and cost estimates. He particularly enjoys map-related tasks and contributing to important power projects like subdivisions. When you have questions regarding your new build and new service, Ron is will help.



Ron helps members set up new service.

New Faces at GCEA

GCEA is thrilled to introduce three new members to the Operations Department.

Shawn Smithpeters

We are excited to share that Shawn Smithpeters is the new System Locator/Inspector. Shawn previously worked at CenturyLink where he specialized in the installation and maintenance of phone and internet services, as well as fault locating and diagnosing issues with damaged repair lines. He brings with him several years of valuable line locating experience.

Scott Faison

Let's give a warm welcome to Scott Faison, who has joined our team as the new Warehouse/Storekeeper. Previously, Scott served as the IT Service Manager at Western Colorado University, where he wore many hats for over a decade. He brings a wealth of experience in process improvements and has collaborated with a diverse range of vendors.

Joe Gornik

GCEA is thrilled to introduce Joe Gornik as our new Staff Engineer. Joe comes with an impressive background, with more than 29 years of experience in electrical engineering. Most recently, he held the positions of Project Electrical Engineer and Engineering Manager at the consulting firm Black & Veatch.

He specialized in project electrical design for both indoor and outdoor substations serving electric utilities. Additionally, Joe has experience in post-construction for small hydro generation and, more recently, in renewable energy interconnections.



L-R: Shawn Smithpeters , Scott Faison, Joe Gornik

FRUNK OR TREAT
AN EV EXPERIENCE

OCTOBER 23 • 2 PM TO 4 PM
CRESTED BUTTE TENNIS COURTS PARKING LOT
602 ELK AVENUE

FRUNK = EV FRONT TRUNK

FAMILY FRIENDLY

Come dressed in your costume for a "frunk-or-treat" EV experience! Enjoy EV test drives, learn about rebates and tax incentives, and learn about the Towns' joint EV readiness plan. Whether you're an electric vehicle enthusiast looking to share your vehicle or just interested in learning more, all are welcome!

   Visit www.gcea.coop for more information



STUDENT OPPORTUNITIES
YOU ARE THE FUTURE!

POWERING STUDENTS' FUTURES

GCEA has offered FREE student opportunities for decades! As your local electric cooperative, we are here to help enrich the lives of all our members.



WASHINGTON D.C. YOUTH TOUR JUNE 16-22, 2025

The Washington D.C. Youth Tour introduces students to the nation's capital with tours of museums and historic monuments, meetings with Colorado congressional delegations, and fun-filled activities.

COOPERATIVE YOUTH LEADERSHIP CAMP JULY 12-17, 2025

Cooperative Youth Leadership Camp is a weeklong adventure in Steamboat Springs. At CYLC, you develop leadership skills, learn about cooperatives, and have lots of FUN!

REQUIREMENTS

- High school juniors and seniors
- Must be 16 at the time of the tour or camp
- Must be a GCEA Member

APPLICATION DUE **DECEMBER 2**

APPLY AT
[GCEA.CCOP](https://www.gcea.coop)



SCAN ME