

Rachel Landis
LPEA 2020 Election Questionnaire

Submitted by Rachel Landis, Incumbent Candidate, District 3

Please give a brief list of your professional career and your educational background. (please answer in 100 words or fewer) :

I have spent my career in service to social & environmental change and my community. After a decade of teaching Social Change Leadership and Environmental Studies in experiential and higher education, I transitioned to the sustainability field where I served as the Director of the Environmental Center at FLC (2011-2018) and now as the Director of The Good Food Collective. I have founded several non-profits and served on numerous boards including Local first, 4CORE, and the Colorado Food Policy Leadership Council. I hold a B.S. in Biology and Environmental Studies and a certificate in Sustainable Development. I am a team-player, systems-thinker, strategist, and values-driven leader all of which have proven assets in my service to LPEA.

What is the primary reason you would like to serve on the La Plata Electric Association board of directors? (100 words or fewer):

I would like to continue serving on the LPEA board because I firmly believe -- and in the past three years have seen -- that our electric cooperative can operate in a way that makes a tremendous difference in the vitality of the community and wellbeing of our members. By using clean power, we are able to protect our air and water, while also doing our part to stabilize the climate. By seeking to develop local energy projects, we are able to create local jobs; by taking proactive financial measures, we can keep rates low; and, by putting the community first, we can provide support in times of crises like today.

LPEA is examining buying out its contract from Tri-State Generation & Transmission. Do you believe buying out the contract is the proper course to follow, please explain your position? (100 words or fewer)

I am a vocal advocate that the coop's goals should define any action that we take. In 2019, LPEA committed to reducing our carbon footprint by 50% by 2030 while maintaining rates at 70% of our peers. To achieve that goal, we are investigating three strategies -- 1) Work within our existing TSGT contract to push to increase local clean power production, 2) Participate in TSGT's Contracts Committee to create new contract options, and 3) Explore the process and implications of exiting our contract and acquiring cleaner power elsewhere. I will support the option that meets our above 50-30-70 goal and thus is of the most benefit to our members.

At what point is buying out the contract too expensive to consider? (100 words or fewer).

If a buy-out would end up costing our members more than TSGT's projected rates, I would consider the cost of a contract buy-out too expensive. To support a buy-out, the energy cost savings associated with buying cleaner and more affordable power must be equal to or greater than the cost of a full- or partial-contract buy out. Third party studies have shown that LPEA could save millions each year through a cleaner power portfolio. LPEA is currently asking the Colorado PUC to provide the TSGT buy-out number, so we can complete our calculations and make our determination.

Tri-State has recently allowed members to increase their local generation of energy from 5% to 7% or an additional 2 megawatts of electricity. One reason for seeking to buy out the Tri-State contract was the cap of locally generated electricity, especially renewable generation, to 5%. Does Tri-State's move to allow up to 7% or 2 additional megawatts, provide sufficient flexibility to negate the need to buyout the Tri-State Contract? (Please answer in 100 words or fewer).

While a small step in the right direction, Tri-State's recent shift to permit the installation of a solar community garden that is the lesser of 2% of load or 2MW 1) is not nearly of a sufficient scale to allow us to get anywhere near the substantial rate saving associated with large-scale installations, 2) is such a tiny part of our local electricity supply (less than 2% of peak), that it does little to decrease our carbon emissions and 3) is still governed by Tri-State Policy 119 allowing them to charge additional fees, as with our current solar gardens.

Please answer the following hypothetical question with either a yes or no answer: LPEA has an opportunity to provide 100% of its electricity generation from renewable sources, but it must increase rates on average by 10%. Would you vote yes or no? Please check yes or no. And provide a one sentence explanation of your vote.

Yes.

No.

Fortunately, this is not a choice we would need to make -- the cost of clean, renewable energy is far below that of carbon-based and nuclear-sources, which means that shifting to a 100% renewable portfolio would result in lower rates!