

# ENERGYWISE



Touchstone Energy® Cooperatives  
The power of human connections®

YOUR SAN MIGUEL POWER MEMBER NEWSLETTER



Touchstone Energy® Cooperatives  
The power of human connections®

## CONTACT INFORMATION

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**Both Offices Open:**  
M - TH, 7:00a.m. - 5:30p.m.

[www.smpa.com](http://www.smpa.com)  
[www.facebook.com/SanMiguelPower](https://www.facebook.com/SanMiguelPower)

In the event of a power outage,  
contact your local SMPA office to  
reach our 24-hour dispatch.

## QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS

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(970) 626-5549 x212

## SAFETY TIPS

### NEW YEAR'S SAFETY RESOLUTIONS:

- Reset and Install GFCI Outlets.
- Install a Whole-House Surge Protector.
- Replace the Batteries in All Your Smoke and Carbon Monoxide Detectors.

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Person with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotype, American Sign Language, etc.) should contact the responsible Agency or USDA's TARGET Center at (202)720-2600 (voice and TTY) or contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800)877-8339. Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English.

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(866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by:

(1) mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture  
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights  
1400 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410;

(2) fax: (202) 690-7442; or

(3) email: [program.intake@usda.gov](mailto:program.intake@usda.gov).

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## Despite Rising Fire Mitigation Costs, San Miguel Power Association Keeps Electricity Rates Unchanged In 2022

At their October Board Meeting, the Board of Directors of San Miguel Power Association (SMPA) approved a budget for 2022 that avoids a rate increase on the consumer-members. This was despite news of price increases for materials, tools, and delivery of these related to recent global supply chain challenges. "Not one item that we use has been unaffected by these market conditions," says SMPA Purchasing Supervisor, Rick Gabriel. "We've seen an across-the-board price hike of almost 20%."

Hitting particularly hard, are the prices of materials and services related to SMPA's increasing fire mitigation needs. With news of record-breaking Colorado wildfires in 2020 and the more recent Kruger Rock fire near Estes Park, Colorado that was sparked by a distribution power line, SMPA has been aggressively upgrading its equipment and clearing vegetation out of power line rights-of-way.

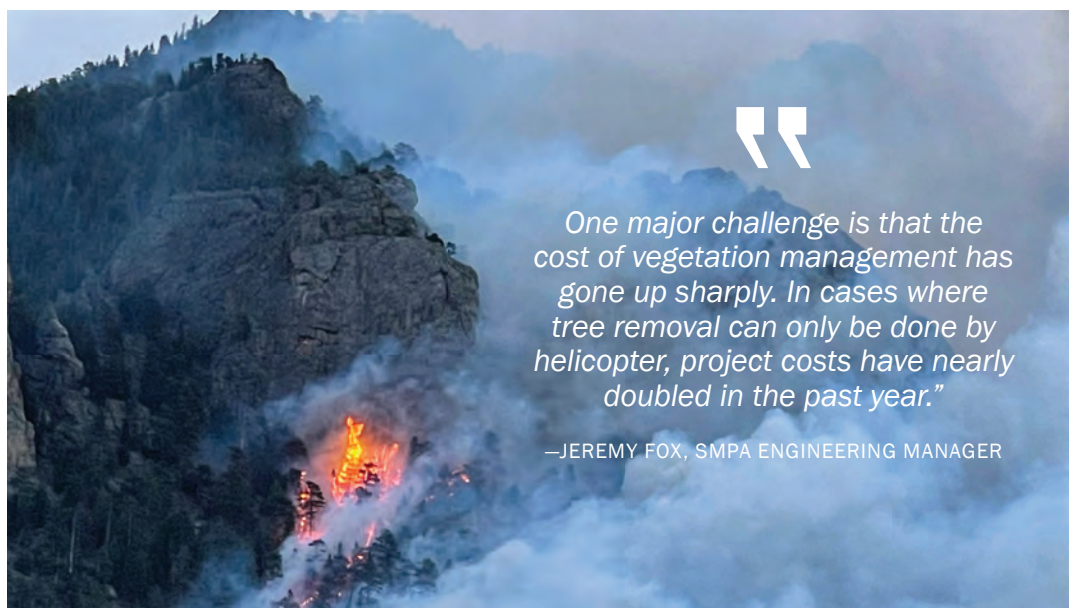
"One major challenge is that the cost of vegetation management has gone up sharply," says SMPA Engineering Manager, Jeremy Fox. In cases where tree removal can only be done by helicopter, project costs have nearly doubled in the past year."

Nonetheless, the SMPA staff was able to maximize efficiencies, and propose a budget

to the Board of Directors that did not call for an increase in rates on the member-consumers of SMPA in 2022. "The staff of SMPA has a great track record of maintaining tight margins and sticking close to their budget," remarked one board member as the board approved the 2022 budget.

However, the options for avoiding a consumer rate increase in the future are still limited, especially given the ballooning costs and needs of fire mitigation. When the time comes to draw more revenue from the membership, the Board has recognized that an increase in the access fee (the fixed portion of a consumer bill) will bring greater balance to SMPA's cost recovery mechanism while reducing financial risk. This charge remains the lowest of any neighboring cooperatives in the region. SMPA members are reminded to expect this charge to increase in the future.

"Running our cooperative in the middle of a supply chain crisis, a continuing global pandemic and unprecedented fire risk, due to drought conditions, is a significant challenge," remarked Board President, Rube Felicelli, "but our Board and Staff are some of the best people I've ever worked with; that gives me a great deal of confidence in our ability to tackle it."



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—JEREMY FOX, SMPA ENGINEERING MANAGER

The Kruger Rock fire burns and plumes of smoke rise near Estes Park in November of 2021. The fire burned over 145 acres. The blaze was likely sparked after a tree fell onto an electric distribution line amid high winds.

# Cooperation Carries the Day

In March of 2021, the Ouray Hydroelectric Plant, the oldest continually operating hydro plant in the United States, was dealt a devastating blow. About 80 feet of the penstock which feeds water to the plant was destroyed when an estimated 6 tons of rock sheared off a canyon wall and smashed into it.

The rockfall also took out an access bridge and a 4-inch water line that supplies the Ouray Ice Park. This attraction brings thousands of climbers to Ouray from around the world each year and supports the city's wintertime economy.

The Ouray Hydro Plant's owner, Eric Jacobson, and the Executive Director of Ouray Ice Park, Peter O'Neil, had to work together to plan and fund a re-build in one of the most difficult, least accessible work sites imaginable.

The two parties agreed to share costs. The Ice Park was humbled by the public response to its GoFundMe campaign, and local companies worked at cost.

This winter, as climbers are making their assents and warming up with electricity provided, in part, by the Hydro plant, they should know that their host community beat incredible odds to make it happen. Nicely done.



A new penstock is put in place to replace the one taken down by rockfall. Photo Credit: Rick Trujillo

# Tesla Supercharger Opens in Mountain Village Gondola Parking Garage

In November, The Town of Mountain Village announced the activation of the region's second Tesla Supercharger Station.

The new station, featuring eight Supercharger posts, is located on level three of the Gondola Parking Garage and is officially open to the public. Each of the chargers, entirely funded by the nation's leading manufacturer of electric vehicles (EV), Tesla, can provide 200 miles of range in just 15 minutes.

This new station provides critical road coverage for the deep southwest corner of Colorado. In time for the winter season, this node will delight customers traveling to and from Telluride. Drivers can enjoy the nearby Village Market, or take the gondola down to the village core to enjoy a variety of amenities.



# A New Year; A New SMPA.com

Intuitive design. Smart forms. Mobile friendly. The updated SMPA.com has a lot of useful features. Click around and take a little tour. Most menu paths are the same as our old site, but if you get lost, please don't hesitate to call (970) 626-5549 ext. 212. We appreciate your making this transition with us, and hope you enjoy the new site!

# Supporting our Communities with Sharing Success Economic Development Grants

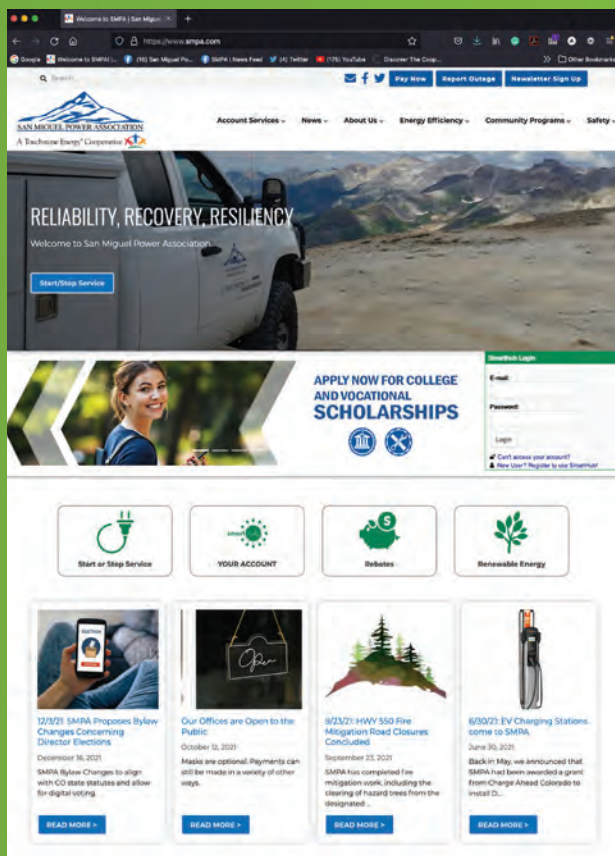
Congratulations to the winners of the 2021 Sharing Success Economic Development Grants:

**\$5000** **Ouray County Schools Community Resource Consortium – Voyager Youth**  
Enrichment programs that fill critical childcare needs of working families

**\$20,000** **The Telluride Foundation**  
Rural Homes: "For Sale, For Locals," an initiative to address a regional affordable housing gap



Thank you to our cooperative partner, CoBank for supporting our community initiatives.



# SMPA POWER PLAY

**This Month's Puzzle: SEE FACES C**  
**Hint: This part of your bill is meant to cover fixed costs.**

**SUBMIT YOUR ANSWER** and be entered into a drawing for a fun prize to: **EnergyWise PO Box 1150 Ridgway, CO 81432**

**Have you changed your phone # or email?**  
Let us know at 1-877-864-7311

Last Month's Scramble Answer: GREEN MEDALLION

Last Month's Winner: Marilyn Allen, Norwood