

YAMPA VALLEY ELECTRIC ASSOCIATION BOARD Q&A



▲ Sonja Macys,
Dist. 7 Representative

This section is dedicated to giving our members a chance to get to know their representatives. Below is our interview with Sonja Macys, who represents District 7 — Steamboat Springs.

Tell us about your professional background.

I've been involved in natural resource management for the past three decades, starting with migratory bird and sea

turtle conservation on Mexico's Yucatan Peninsula. Since moving to the Yampa Valley 15 years ago, I've worked to connect youth to the outdoors through environmental education at a nonprofit organization and served two terms as a city council member. I currently work for the Division of Water Resources.

Tell us about your personal/family life.

My husband, Chuck Willard, and I live on what we call an "urban farmstead," growing produce in our greenhouse and raised bed gardens. We love to hike, camp, ski and generally enjoy the outdoors year-round. I grew up riding horses competitively but have settled into trail riding and just having fun with my horse Tango Joe.

What inspired you to run for the YVEA Board of Directors?

YVEA has grown and changed over the last decade and the pace with which it will need to grow and change will only continue to accelerate. I embrace change and have enjoyed helping YVEA seize the opportunities that change has presented.

What strengths do you bring to the YVEA board?

Throughout my career I have consistently demonstrated my commitment to fiscal responsibility, transparency, good governance and local control. These are important qualities for a board member. In addition, my experience with energy, public policy and community outreach has prepared me to help YVEA negotiate the rapidly changing world of energy.

What major challenges do you believe YVEA will face in the next 5–10 years?

YVEA will need to invest in its distribution system to ensure continued reliability, given the influx of renewable energy we have

seen throughout the service territory and the significant growth and change in land use patterns. In addition, we need to lead the charge on beneficial electrification, including electrification of vehicles and homes, to ensure that the addition of this load has a positive impact to the distribution system.

What are your thoughts on the status of the electric industry in Colorado?

Many of Colorado's member-owned electric cooperatives, like YVEA, have stepped up to meet the infrastructure needs of their member-owners. We are no longer just an energy provider, having helped launch Luminare broadband to bring high-speed fiber internet to our service territory. As energy sources change, we must continue to innovate and collaborate with like-minded cooperatives in Colorado to provide affordable clean energy.

What changes do you believe will have the most significant effect on the electric industry in the next 10 years?

In the next 10 years we will see many of our coal-fired power plants retired, creating uncertainty as to what our future energy sources will look like. The cost of renewable energy has gone down to the degree that it makes financial sense to invest in it, but we need more than just renewables. As we navigate this transition, energy users will need to become more engaged in understanding their electrical use and making informed choices about how much electricity they need during what times of the day and night.

What is the greatest concern you have for the electric industry and how it will impact our service territory?

My greatest concern is how YVEA will become more resilient and less subject to fluctuations in energy costs, given the unpredictable weather events we see nationwide. Who would have thought that a storm in Texas could cost little old YVEA \$6.4 million dollars? This represents 30% of what we budget annually for our purchased power. We are pushing to put rules and regulations in place to try and prevent something like this from happening again. But for now, we are contractually obligated to continue to purchase power from the source that "surprise-billed" our member-owners \$6.4 million.