NEW MARKETING CAMPAIGN ENCOURAGES MONTANANS TO CHARGE! INTO ENERGY FUTURE

RENEWABLES & EFFICIENCY CAN KEEP MONTANA ENERGY ECONOMY COMPETITIVE FOR YEARS TO COME

HELENA, MT – A new marketing campaign will appeal to Montanan’s ‘can-do’ pioneer spirit to build demand for a new energy economy as regional markets gradually shift toward cleaner forms of energy.

‘Charge!’ was unveiled today by the Montana Renewable Energy Association and Renewable Northwest who say Montana can’t afford to wait and see what happens as west coast energy markets continue to move away from coal produced electricity.

“This is about focusing the conversation on what’s really driving change in Montana’s energy economy and taking control of our energy future,” said Jeff Fox of Renewable Northwest. “The argument isn’t whether things are changing, it’s how to respond. Montana needs to take charge of our energy future by investing in wind, solar, and efficiency technologies or we risk getting left behind.”

The integrated campaign leaves talk of the environment and climate change out of the conversation, focusing instead on economic reasons to turn to wind, solar, and energy efficiency measures, the foremost being a looming crisis in Montana’s energy generation industry.

More than half of all electricity generated in Montana is exported to buyers in Oregon, Washington, and California. But demand for coal-powered electricity is drying up as these west coast states gradually phase more renewable energy into their portfolios.

California recently increased its renewable portfolio requirements to 50 percent by 2030. Oregon meanwhile increased its renewable portfolio to 50 percent by 2040 and also stipulated a phase-out of coal electricity for their two largest utilities by 2035. And in Washington State, lawmakers have created a fund to pay for the retirement costs of Colstrip units I and II.

“Although coal is not in danger of going away tomorrow, Montana has a narrow window of opportunity to prepare for the future,” says Ben Brouwer of the Montana Renewable Energy Association. “As we work to meet the demands of west coast markets with
Montana’s powerful wind resource, it’s critically important that we modernize our own energy supply too. Rooftop solar and efficiency represent an opportunity to create new energy sector jobs while giving consumers the keys to energy self-reliance.”

To help get there, the campaign is promoting a video (viewed at ChargeMT.org) that uses historic images and context to highlight how Montanans have always moved forward even as other historical industrial booms have slowed or halted entirely.

In addition to the video, Charge! will feature a billboard campaign and invest in social media marketing that seeks to ask Montanans across the state a fundamental question: Should Montana take charge of its energy economy or wait to see what happens?

“We really do have a fundamental choice right now that will decide how competitive our energy economy will be in the future,” said Fox. “Montana’s major energy customers are telling us what type of energy they will buy ten or twenty years from now. If we play our cards right, we can take advantage of a new energy boom in renewables that creates thousands of new jobs and millions of dollars in new revenue, or we can settle for nothing. It’s really up to us.”

###

*Charge! is a collaborative endeavor between the Montana Renewable Energy Association and Renewable Northwest to expand the use of renewable energy in Montana. Montana-based Mercury csc contributed to the branding and development of the campaign.*