

## **SMEPA Leads Cooperative Renewables Effort**

*Scanner Magazine – July 2008*

South Mississippi Electric is a founding member of the newly created National Renewables Cooperative Organization (NRCO), a joint venture formed in May by the National G&T Managers' Association and NRECA. The organization's goals are to assist cooperatives nationwide in their efforts to develop new, economically viable renewable energy resources, while also enhancing the use of renewable technology currently available. Electric cooperatives across the country are now in the process of establishing a wide variety of renewable energy requirements and goals, and the new organization plans to help with research and development.

Jim Compton was elected to the new organization's 15-member board of directors and also elected treasurer. The board includes ten G&T managers, with SMEPA and Oglethorpe Power (Georgia) representing cooperatives in the southeastern U.S.

"At this point, it is difficult to pin down exactly how best to develop renewable resources, because what works in one area of the country may not work in another area," said Compton. "This cooperative effort will try to identify the best possible resources and assist with a coordinated plan to bring these resources on line. We hope to be able to identify renewable projects for Mississippi and our region. There will be co-ops of every size participating, so we want to ensure that participation is affordable and without unnecessary risks and duplication."

NRCO will provide expertise and research tools needed to search for and evaluate renewable opportunities and projects. Several states have already adopted required renewable standards for utilities. Some national legislative initiatives are also considering making renewable sources mandatory components of any future energy policies.

The initial goals of NRCO are to select an energy management company, finalize financial issues, and begin screening projects. The NRCO board hopes to initiate development of its first project in 2008.

"There is much to be explored regarding renewables," Compton adds.

"At this point, the demand required to keep up with ever-increasing customer growth far exceeds the potential for renewable sources, but every new source is important because the needs are so great. We want to find options that will be a good fit for the not-for-profit side of the electric industry, as well as what is beneficial for our Members, if national standards for renewables are enacted."