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Contact: Crystal Enkvist, Alaska Power Association

Direct: (907) 771-5711

E-mail: cenkvist@alaskapower.org

Main: (907) 771-5700

Fax: (907) 561-5547

www.alaskapower.org

703 West Tudor Road, Suite 200

Anchorage, Alaska 99503-6650

Fairbanks civic leader receives statewide electric utility association's highest award

Ron Bergh of Fairbanks, a longtime director on the board of Golden Valley Electric Association, received the Mason LaZelle Achievement Award from Alaska Power Association at its 60th annual meeting August 10 in Wasilla, Alaska. The highest honor conferred by the APA membership, the Mason LaZelle Achievement Award is given by the Alaska electric utility industry to individuals who have made outstanding contributions to electrification efforts in Alaska.

Bergh has served on the GVEA Board for 31 years and is a former president of the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association Board of Directors. He was nominated for the award by Brian Newton, CEO of Golden Valley Electric, and Meera Kohler, Alaska's director on the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association Board.

He received the award from APA President Brad Reeve who said, "Ron Bergh of Golden Valley Electric Association has worked tirelessly to promote Alaska's electric cooperatives and their unique challenges in both the state and national arenas. He has also made an invaluable contribution in bringing electric issues and especially Alaska issues to the forefront."

Alaska Power Association, formerly known as the Alaska Rural Electric Cooperative Association, is the 60-year-old statewide trade association for urban and rural electric utilities. It provides advocacy and program services to member utilities. APA members supply power to more than a half-million Alaskans in communities from Barrow to Unalaska and down the Inside Passage.

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Ron Bergh background information:

National Rural Electric Cooperative Association Board of Directors (1990-2009)

- 1996-1998 Chair of Research & Technology Committee
- 1996-2001 Chair of CEO Evaluation Committee
- 1999-2002 Chair of Strategic Planning Committee
- Served on the International Committee
- 2003-2004 Secretary-Treasurer
- 2005 Vice President
- 2005-2006 President
- 2007-2010 Immediate Past President & Director

Golden Valley Electric Association Board of Directors (1980-current)

- 1981-1983 Secretary
- 1984-1992 Chairman

Quote from award nomination:

“During the past 31 years, the Golden Valley Board of Directors moved forward with numerous major infrastructure projects, including the Northern Intertie, HCCP, BESS, North Pole Expansion Project, and most recently Eva Creek Wind. Ron has been a supporter and proponent of ground-breaking projects such as these and has served the GVEA membership well.”

HCCP: Healy Clean Coal Project

BESS: Battery Energy Storage System

Award background:

Mason LaZelle, for whom the APA award is named, was General Manager of Matanuska Electric Association in the 1960s, a time when cooperatives were helping communities establish central station service. LaZelle was very active in this effort. Under his leadership, the utility built generation and distribution facilities for residents in Stony River and Unalakleet, and provided consultation for the community of Tyonek.

LaZelle disappeared Feb. 27, 1968, piloting a Cessna 185 on the way to Nulato and Unalakleet with fellow MEA employees Phil McRae and Alex Fuller. Four months later, a Bush pilot spotted the wreckage. It was determined that LaZelle, McRae and Fuller perished during their journey to help residents of remote Alaska villages have access to safe and reliable electric power.