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AUGUST  
2025

# Gussey explores Washington D.C.

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The North Dakota Youth Tour delegates and chaperones stopped to eat at the famous, Ben's Chili Bowl.



## YOUTH TOUR:

# Gussey explores Washington, D.C.

Each June, hundreds of high school students gather in Washington, D.C., for an opportunity to learn more about electric cooperatives and cultivate lifelong friendships and memories.

To earn a spot on the Electric Cooperative Youth Tour, sophomores and juniors in high school submit an essay to Slope Electric Cooperative. The student whose winning essay is selected earns the trip of a lifetime.

Kailee Gussey from New England was chosen as Slope Electric's delegate and joined other youth sponsored by their electric cooperatives in Washington, D.C., for a week of learning and networking.

### A memorable experience

Fourteen North Dakota youth gathered before the trip at the North Dakota Association of Rural Electric Cooperatives headquarters in Mandan for some team building before traveling to Washington, D.C. The group reviewed the itinerary and gathered coordinating T-shirts for the week. The group left on Sunday, June 15, and returned on Saturday, June 21. Each day included new learning experiences and sites to see.

These experiences and sites included eating at a famous restaurant, attending events and visiting various monuments and museums. One of Kailee's favorite parts of the trip was touring the U.S. Capitol. Reflecting on her experience touring the U.S. Capitol she enjoyed touring the building and getting to access the tunnels.

The Youth Tour is a balance of learning about history and cooperatives, and making connections, all packed into seven days. Networking was a valuable part of the experience for Gussey.

"It was fun to get to mingle with all the different people," she says.

These experiences helped build Gussey's networking and social skills. During the weeklong trip, students are encouraged to visit with other students from different states by trading pins. Trading pins helps spark conversations between students. The North Dakota group also joined Montana and Colorado for a cruise, giving students more time to network and make lasting connections.

"Without the support of my electric co-op, I would have not been able to do this," Gussey says. "I wouldn't be able to get into places like the White House, the



One of the highlights for **Gussey** was attending *Les Misérables*.

Capitol, FBI Museum."

At the end of the day, the delegates were tired, but it is worth it, because they get to see so much in one day, she says. Being in a big city like Washington, D.C., and navigating the different places will help Gussey in the future.

"Being able to have the experiences that I had is going to help me make more sound decisions in college," Gussey says.

Applications for the 2026 Youth Tour will be opening soon, and Gussey urges others to apply for this memorable experience.

"Even if you're shy, you're going to learn something about yourself and other people," Gussey says. "You'll be able to see things you wouldn't be able to see otherwise."

More information regarding the 2026 Youth Tour will be shared in the coming months. Keep an eye out in future issues of *North Dakota Living* and on our social media. ■

## MANAGER'S MESSAGE:

# Factors that impact your rates



**Jason Bentz**

Co-General Manager/CEO

One topic that frequents the boardroom is rates and the impact those rates have on our membership. Slope Electric Cooperative is dedicated to keeping rates affordable, while ensuring reliable service for all of our members. Through strategic investments in infrastructure and technology, we aim to enhance our efficiency and minimize costs, ultimately benefiting you, our valued members.

As a cooperative, we prioritize transparency in how your rates are set, ultimately ensuring you understand the factors which contribute to the cost of your services.

Several factors impact our rates, from the number of members per mile of line to our market conditions. This year, our cooperative saw an increase in our rates, primarily from the cost of wholesale energy.

The increase in costs can be attributed to new generation and transmission investments, inflation and power market volatility.

## New generation and transmission

Basin Electric Power Cooperative, one of our wholesale power providers, notes investments in new generation and transmission facilities are needed to support member load growth, and it's critical to invest in existing facilities to maintain reliability.

To accommodate these large loads, Basin Electric is investing over \$12 billion over the next 10 years in transmission and generation assets to ensure reliable electricity for our members.

## Inflation costs

Cost increases for internal labor, contracted labor, materials and maintenance, in addition to higher costs of borrowing money due to higher interest rates, contribute to rising costs.

## Volatility of power markets

Power markets have become more volatile, resulting in dramatic price movements. Increasing intermittent generation, swings in natural gas prices and increasing electricity demand are primary contributors to volatility. While Basin Electric manages volatility through generation and hedging, the cost of this is increasing.

We know we will have higher wholesale rates from both Basin Electric and Western Area Power Administration, but we continue to look for ways to maintain our reliability as a cooperative, while ensuring affordable rates for the services we provide to our members.

We are dedicated to keeping rates affordable, while ensuring reliable service for all of our members. Thank you for your ongoing support of our cooperative. Together, we can navigate the complexities of energy costs and continue to provide you with the reliable service you deserve. ■




## WALTNER COMPLETES MIP

Congratulations to our manager of member relations, Brooke Waltner, on graduating from the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association's Management Internship Program (MIP). MIP is one of the most exclusive management development programs in the nation for electric cooperatives.

## MESSAGE FROM WAPA:

# Adapting to meet growing grid demands

BY LLOYD LINKE, WESTERN AREA POWER ADMINISTRATION SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT  
AND UPPER GREAT PLAINS REGIONAL MANAGER

*Editor's note: WAPA is one of Slope Electric's power suppliers. We asked Lloyd Linke to update our members on what is happening at WAPA.*



**Lloyd Linke**

The Western Area Power Administration (WAPA) strives to keep pace with changes in the electric industry. This ensures we can fulfill our mission to safely provide reliable, cost-based hydropower and transmission to our customers and the communities we serve.

Core to meeting the industry's changing demands is our commitment to exploring centralized market

solutions on a region-by-region basis. This supports our ability to continue to reliably deliver hydropower to our region's diverse, 340+ customer base.

Earlier this year, WAPA marked the four-year milestone in energy imbalance markets throughout much of our footprint. Across all our regions, WAPA is now fully participating in energy imbalance markets. In the Upper Great Plains (UGP) region, which I oversee, we have been full participants in Southwest Power Pool's Western Energy Imbalance Service market since it launched in February 2021.

On Sept. 8, 2023, WAPA Administrator and CEO Tracey A. LeBeau authorized UGP to pursue final negotiations with the Southwest Power Pool (SPP) to expand our participation in its regional transmission organization (RTO).

In the works since 2020, three of WAPA's regions have been working toward full participation in SPP's RTO. Other participants in the initiative include Basin Electric Power Cooperative, Colorado Springs Utilities, Deseret Generation and Transmission Cooperative, Municipal Energy Agency of Nebraska, Platte River Power Authority and Tri-State Generation and Transmission Association, all of which are WAPA customers.

UGP in the Eastern Interconnection is already a member of SPP, having joined the RTO in 2015, when we placed our east-side facilities under SPP's tariff. UGP's facilities in the Western Interconnection are

expanding participation in the SPP RTO.

Upon go-live, SPP will assume the balancing authority responsibilities for our Western Area Upper Great Plains-West balancing authority area (BAA), which UGP operates in the Western Interconnection today, in a single SPP-West BAA and will implement its Integrated Marketplace across UGP's facilities in the existing BAA footprint.

Full SPP RTO go-live in the Western Interconnection is scheduled for April 1, 2026.

Participating in this initiative to expand the SPP RTO into the West is consistent with WAPA's commitment to retain and increase the value of WAPA's resources in a dynamic energy industry.

UGP's transmission assets are included in SPP's annual planning process as appropriate. SPP's 2024 integrated transmission planning assessment identified a portfolio of transmission projects comprised of reliability, winter weather, economic and operational projects that will mitigate many system issues.

To address rapid load growth in North Dakota, SPP staff recommended a network of new and upgraded lines across the state. One of the major projects in the WAPA footprint is a new 439-mile, 345-kilovolt (kV) line from Belfield to Maurine, S.D., to New Underwood, S.D., to Laramie River in Wyoming, that brings large economic benefits to North Dakota and the SPP region. This project aims to address the lack of extra-high-voltage lines in this area and benefit rural communities in western Nebraska and the Dakotas. Another major project for North Dakota is a new 230-kV line from Dawson County, Mont., to Williston that would provide reliability and economic benefits.

Other projects identified by WAPA-UGP in the North Dakota area include a Fargo bus upgrade, Charlie Creek to Garrison transmission line rebuild and Jamestown reactor replacement. These projects will increase capacity, alleviate congestion, increase storm resilience and provide for continued stability in their local areas. These updates seek to increase transmission reliability in North Dakota, ensure worker safety, and aid in controlling voltage and providing stability to the region.

We have also been working diligently to modernize the IT and operational technology systems that keep the grid humming and minimize outages. On



June 4, our UGP operations team, in partnership with UGP maintenance and IT, successfully cut over to AspenTech Monarch, WAPA's common supervisory control and data acquisition vendor. With this milestone, half of WAPA is now operating on a unified energy management system. This effort will improve operational flexibility, enhance cybersecurity and simplify support across regions – a significant

achievement that reflects strong collaboration, dedication and perseverance.

Looking ahead, WAPA will continue to work closely with customers, generating agencies and partners to identify the best path forward that protects the value of hydropower and transmission services, as well as power system assets, for the benefit of preference customers and the nation. ■

## MESSAGE FROM MEMBER RELATIONS: Stay in the know



**Brooke Waltner**

*Manager of Member Relations*

Slope Electric Cooperative is constantly striving to improve our operational efficiency to provide the most reliable electric service possible for our members.

We rely on data for nearly every aspect of our operations, which is why we need your help. By making sure we have your most accurate and complete contact information, we can continue to provide the high level of service you expect and deserve. Accurate information

enables us to improve customer service and enhance communications for reporting and repairing outages. It also allows you to receive information about other important programs, events and activities.

Up-to-date contact information can potentially speed the power restoration process during an outage. For example, the phone number you provide is linked to your service address to our outage management

system. This means when you call to report an outage, our system recognizes your phone number and matches it with your account location. Accurate information helps our outage management system predict the location and possible cause of an outage, making it easier for our crews to correct the problem.

While we always do our best to maintain service, we occasionally plan outages to update, repair or replace equipment. In these instances, we can provide advance notification to affected members through automated phone messages or email, if we have your updated contact information and communication preferences.

Many of you have been members of the co-op for years, and it's likely your account information hasn't been updated for some time. We recognize many members now use a cellphone as their primary phone service, and we might not have that number in our system.

Please take a moment to confirm or update your contact information by visiting your SmartHub account or calling the office at 701-579-4191. By doing so, you will be helping us improve service and efficiency, so we can better serve you! ■



## DO WE HAVE YOUR CURRENT CONTACT INFORMATION?

If you no longer have a land line or your mobile mailbox is full – we may not be able to reach you in regards to information about your electric service. Update your phone number and email address by:



**Logging into your SmartHub Account**



**Call us at 701-579-4191 or 800-559-4191**

## SAFETY STARTS WITH ME: Storm safety

In North Dakota, we endure our fair share of storms over the summer months. A mix of high winds and heavy rain can cause a fair share of damage. As we continue through summer, we want to ensure you are equipped and prepared if a storm occurs.

"We are ready to take the necessary steps during storms to ensure we can return power safely to homes and businesses," says Jon Lawhead, line technician. "We also want to encourage members to practice safety and keep these tips in mind when a summer storm rolls through."

Here is how you can ensure your safety:

- **Stay away from downed power lines and avoid walking through flooded areas.** Power lines could be submerged and still be energized with electricity. Report any downed lines you see to Slope Electric Cooperative by calling 701-579-4191 immediately.
- **Never use electrical equipment that is wet.** Electrical equipment, especially outdoor electrical equipment, could be a potential danger after a summer storm. Water can damage electrical equipment and parts, posing a shock or fire hazard. In addition, if lightning strikes a home, the electrical charge can surge through pipes and utility wires. That means you can get shocked if you're touching water or any device that's plugged in.
- **Take special care with portable electric generators.** While they can provide a good source of power, they can become deadly if improperly installed or operated. Do not connect generators directly to household wiring. Power from generators can backfeed along power lines and electrocute anyone coming in contact, including lineworkers making repairs. A qualified, licensed electrician should install your generator to ensure it meets local electrical codes.



When a strong storm comes through, rest assured employees at Slope Electric are diligently and safely working to restore power in the event of an outage. This may take additional time for employees to navigate and analyze the situation due to the spread and severity of a storm.

If you experience a power outage, you can assist us by reporting the outage by calling our office at 701-579-4191. This information helps our operations department gather information to assist in the restoration process. ■

## WORK SAFELY ON THE FARM.

DON'T STACK HAY BALES UNDER POWER LINES.  
KEEP IN MIND TO STAY 10 FEET CLEAR OF POWER LINES.



## MESSAGE FROM OPERATIONS: A look back on the June storm



**Dean Volk**

Chief of Staff/  
Operations Manager

When a storm rolls in, Slope Electric Cooperative employees are committed to addressing and restoring outages as soon as it is safe to do so. In late June, Slope Electric's service area was engulfed in dangerous weather, with damaging winds accompanied by hail and thunderstorms. During these conditions, vegetation and buildings do not fare well, which will occasionally impact our system. While a cooperative can be prepared

for storms and utilize technology to identify outages and damage, we would not be able to assess the full impact without our employees and members.

During this storm, a North Dakota Agricultural Weather Network station near Hettinger clocked a 94-mph wind gust, with other gusts ranging up to 74 mph. High winds across a vast prairie can do a fair share of damage.

Several Slope Electric substations experienced intermittent power bumps, also known as power blinks, due to the weather conditions impacting our system as well as our power supplier's system. The Amidon Substation transmission line sustained significant equipment damage and was out for 14 hours while crews worked to diligently perform repairs. Dedicated crew members work through the night and into the early morning to restore power to members.

Due to the vast area impacted by the storm

stretching from south of Marmarth to east of Hettinger, help was enlisted for restoration efforts. Slope Electric employees and contractors from 3C Construction worked to reenergize substations and make repairs for the next several days. The impact to Slope Electric's system included 27 utility poles in Adams and Bowman counties that needed to be replaced and a large number of broken power wires due to falling trees and flying debris.

We understand when a storm hits our service area, it impacts everyone, from homes, businesses and operations. It is our top priority to restore power to members in a safe and efficient manner. We are grateful to have understanding members who make these tasks a bit easier, from reporting power outages to lending a helping hand to crews in the field. Thank you all once again for your patience and assistance as we worked to navigate the impacts of this storm. ■



Some of the damage Slope Electric's infrastructure sustained.



3C Construction crews assist in the storm restoration process. 3C Construction is a electric construction company owned by four North Dakota distribution cooperatives including Slope Electric.

## SLOPE ELECTRIC BOARD MEETING HIGHLIGHTS: MAY 29

The regular meeting of the board of directors of Slope Electric Cooperative was held on May 29 at the cooperative's headquarters in New England. President Steven Wegner called the meeting to order at 9:15 a.m. A quorum was present. Slope Electric General Counsel Jennifer Grosz was appointed recorder for the meeting. Also present were Slope Electric co-General Managers/CEOs Travis Kupper and Jason Bentz, Chief Financial Officer Alex Craigmile, Chief of Staff/Operations Manager Dean Volk, Member Relations Manager Brooke Waltner and Board Liaison Connie Hill.

**Consent agenda:** An amendment was proposed to the consent agenda. The consent agenda was approved as amended.

**Strategic items:** Bentz and Kupper presented the co-general managers' report, which included updates on National Rural Electric Cooperative Association's Legislative Conference, National Information Solutions Cooperative

and more. Several additional Basin Electric Power Cooperative board documents were available for review.

**Department reports:** Craigmile provided a financial report. Volk provided a report, including an update on projects. Waltner provided a report, including annual meeting preparation and communications from the cooperative. Chief Information Officer Charlie Dunbar provided a report. Grosz provided a legal report.

**Action items:** The board reviewed and resolved various items including policy review.

**Discussion/general information:** The board discussed other updates and items, such as strategic planning.

The meeting concluded with adjournment. Secretary Angela Carlson certified the accuracy of the minutes.

**Next meeting date:** The next meeting is at 9 a.m. Aug. 28 in New England. ■

## YOUR CALL MAKES A DIFFERENCE!

**If you experience a power outage, please call us immediately at 701-579-4191.**

The more members who report an outage, the better our outage management system can pinpoint the location and extent of the issue. This helps our crews respond faster and more efficiently to restore power to everyone.

Thank you for helping us serve you better!



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800-795-0555 or 811

## SLOPE ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS

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## MANAGEMENT

Jason Bentz  
CO-GM/CEO

Travis Kupper  
CO-GM/CEO

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