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PHOTO BY JEFF GOOSS

Fishing tournament participants line up to receive awards after a day of fishing with professional anglers.

## WHEELCHAIRS AND WALLEYES: Creating milestones and memories for all

BY SAMANTHA VANGSNESS

As we travel and explore the world around us, we can find ourselves discovering the unexpected and encountering details that quietly shift our perspective and leave a lasting impression.

This is the case for Jeff and Jennifer Gooss, avid anglers who have cast their lines in lakes across the country. On these travels, Jeff began to notice something he didn't know would have the impact it does today.

"While fishing on these lakes, I started looking around and questioning what people do if they don't have the ability to jump in and out of a boat," Jeff says as he described the stray thought that drifted into his mind.

This realization sparked a life-changing initiative for communities across North Dakota and across the nation. In 2024, Jeff and Jennifer founded Wheelchairs

and Walleyes, a foundation dedicated to making fishing and boating accessible to everyone, regardless of mobility or adaptive needs. The goal of this organization is to make outdoor recreation accessible to those with adaptive needs, which began by constructing ramps.

"I started to research and look around at other lakes to see if they had anything," Jeff says. To no avail, he began looking at adaptive equipment at swimming pools. From there, Jeff began to sketch and work with engineers to build something safe that can withstand the elements.

In July 2024, Wheelchairs and Walleyes unveiled its first ramp in Beulah Bay. Four days later, calls flooded in from other communities and recreational areas inquiring about ways to apply this in their own local communities.

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PHOTO BY JEFF GOOSS

*A ramp was recently dedicated to Hazen Bay in June.*

After working with engineers and contractors, Jeff shared the information with others who were interested. Thus far, additional ramps were built and dedicated on Devils Lake June 8 and Hazen Bay on June 23. With the addition of the ramps in Beulah Bay and Hazen Bay, Mercer County is now the most inclusive county for individuals with adaptive needs who enjoy lake recreation, boating and fishing in the north central United States. Jeff says there are eight additional ramps in the works for next year.

Throughout his efforts, Jeff's inspiration has always been to help better serve his community.

"This is about taking care of my community," Jeff says. "I want everyone to be able to have a full experience of outdoor recreation."

Jeff and Jennifer have created this experience beyond the ramps through the Children's Mobility Awareness Day festival. This is an entirely free festival dedicated to wheelchair-accessible needs. The festival includes inflatables, games, face painting, treats, toys and more.

"We do it so that they can truly enjoy a day that is for them," Jeff says. "This is to celebrate them, their families and their achievements."

Along with the Children's Mobility Awareness Day festival, the Wheelchairs and Walleyes organization hosted a Wheelchairs and Walleyes Charity Fishing Tournament in June. This tournament is for kids and

young adult wheelchair users, who are given a full fishing tournament experience, thanks to professional anglers. Participants board a boat with a chaperone and a professional angler for a day on the water. Throughout the day, they spend time on the lake and catch fish. Once the tournament ends, the boats head to shore and fish are weighed, photos are taken and participants gather onstage for awards.

Wheelchairs and Walleyes was recently recognized by Gov. Kelly Armstrong for driving tourism to North Dakota. Jeff says people have come from all over to experience outdoor recreation for all abilities. He says Beulah Bay, Devils Lake and Hazen Bay are places the whole family can enjoy, no matter their ability ranges. Jeff and Jennifer don't plan on stopping at ramps on lakes, but plan to work with local recreation departments to make outdoor experiences more inclusive for all ages.

"Since we have hosted these events, we have noticed other projects that could be more accessible for wheelchair users," Jeff says. This includes picnic tables, bathrooms and play areas.

The feedback Jeff and Jennifer have received has been overwhelmingly positive. One memorable interaction occurred in a gas station parking lot. Jeff says a Vietnam War veteran saw his pickup, which is wrapped with the Wheelchairs and Walleyes logo, and knew he wanted to visit with him. The veteran asked Jeff how he could get involved in the organization. He said an organization like this could change his and other veterans' lives by allowing them to volunteer and be a part of this.

"This is such an honor," Jeff says. "I get to see the pure unbridled joy this brings."

Another story Jeff recalls is from a fellow angler, whose wife and fishing partner was in an accident and hasn't been on a boat since. Their home lake in Wisconsin raised funds and is now getting an adaptive ramp, and his wife will be able to join him fishing again.

"This is so much more than getting people on a boat," Jeff says. "This is changing people's lives."

Wheelchairs and Walleyes is creating an inclusive outdoor environment for families and friends to gather and enjoy boating and the outdoors. It is creating a community for people to come together and serve. It creates milestones and memories. ■

*Roughrider Electric Cooperative is proud to support local community initiatives such as the Wheelchairs and Walleye's Hazen Bay ramp dedication. Roughrider Electric donated funds to this project which were matched by our partners, Basin Electric Power Cooperative and CoBank's Sharing Success fund. Through these partnerships Roughrider Electric is able to spark change in our service area and support impactful missions such as these.*



## 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. Roughrider 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. ■



## Kainz earns NRECA certificate



**Kainz (left)** receives award accompanied by Co-General Manager **Travis Kupper**.

Cooperatives adhere to seven principles known as cooperative principles, and our board of directors works to uphold those principles inside the boardroom as well as in their communities and everyday life. Through the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, our board engages in ongoing education and training,

upholding one of the seven cooperative principles, "education, training and information."

Throughout directors' terms, they must attend and maintain certain education certificates to ensure they are staying current and informed on the industry.

We recognize director Arnold Kainz for earning his Director Gold Certificate. Kainz earned his renewed certificate by completing approved educational courses and attending conferences. ■



One of Quinlivan's favorite stops was the Steven F. Udvar-Hazy Center.

Quinlivan explores National Harbor while in Washington D.C.

## YOUTH TOUR: Quinlivan 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 Roughrider Electric Cooperative. The student whose winning essay is selected earns the trip of a lifetime.

Caiden Quinlivan from Center was chosen as Roughrider Electric's delegate and joined other youth sponsored by their electric cooperatives in Washington, D.C., for a week of learning and networking.

### An eye-opening 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 Quinlivan's favorite places to visit was the Steven F. Udvar-Hazy Center.

"Being a plane guy, it was cool to see the rare and interesting parts they have there," he says.

This wasn't Quinlivan's first trip to Washington, D.C., but it was a unique experience.

"It was nice to be in a group that had connections to go to some of those places," he says.

He says they also attended a performance of "Les Miserables" at the Kennedy Center.

Another experience Quinlivan enjoyed was trading pins. Each Youth Tour participant receives 50 pins to trade with students from other states. This helps with starting conversations between students.

"I received over 47 pins," Caiden says. "It was a reason to go talk to other people."

Youth Tour participants also had the opportunity to visit with U.S. Sen. Kevin Cramer and Sen. John Hoeven while in Washington, D.C. The senators visited with students about energy policy and how it impacts cooperatives and communities in North Dakota. This interaction was impactful to Quinlivan. He said it encourages him to reach out to those in Washington, D.C., about issues.

Quinlivan urges others to "just do it" when applying for the Youth Tour. He says despite not knowing the other people attending at first and going outside of North Dakota, it was an eye-opening experience.

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. ■

# 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 Roughrider Electric's power suppliers. We asked 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

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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. ■

## SAFETY STARTS WITH ME: Storm safety

In North Dakota, we endure our fair share of storms over the summer. 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 Scott Leintz, working foreman.

"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. Report any downed lines you see to Roughrider Electric Cooperative by calling 800-748-5533 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 Roughrider 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 800-748-5533. This information helps our operations department gather information to assist in the restoration process. ■

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



**Shawn Olson**

Chief of Staff/  
Operations Manager

As potential storms approach, our committed team at Roughrider Electric Cooperative is prepared to respond quickly and safely, working to restore power as soon as conditions allow.

In June, Roughrider Electric's service area endured damaging winds accompanied by hail and thunderstorms. During these conditions, vegetation and buildings do not fare well, which will occasionally impact our system as well. 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.

Damage was found across the service territory for Roughrider Electric's infrastructure, including transmission and distribution poles. A tornado was identified near our Scheffield Substation located southwest of Dickinson. This resulted in damage to the transmission line serving this Sheffield Substation. Due to Roughrider Electric's underground distribution lines, which serves members from the Scheffield Substation, members' electric services were not disturbed and were able to be served from other substations in the area while repairs were made. The high winds also left nine transmission poles damaged in that area. Hazen and Center also endured damage due to high winds and lightning. Some of the impact in this area included damage to a transformer from a lightning strike as well as five distributions poles. Dedicated crew members worked through the night and into the next afternoon to fix damage and restore power to members. Electric construction companies, 3C Construction and Coal Creek Construction, joined Roughrider Electric to assist in the restoration process. 3C Construction is a electric construction company owned by four North Dakota distribution cooperatives including Roughrider Electric.

The technology Roughrider Electric utilizes helped the operations department identify a starting point for the restoration process. Supervisory control and data acquisition helps Roughrider Electric see where an open circuit breaker may be. Identifying an open circuit breaker helps pinpoint the location

of an interruption, which impacts members' electric services.

Damaging storms persisted for several days across North Dakota. Once Roughrider Electric crews finished restoring electric service to its members, they lent a helping hand to other electric cooperatives, including KEM Electric Cooperative and Mor-Gran-Sou Electric Cooperative, assisting in their restoration efforts. One of the greatest strengths of being a part of an electric cooperative is the mutual support cooperatives provide to one another in times of need.

We understand when a storm hits our service area, it impacts everyone, including 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. ■



*Crews work to restore the transmission line southwest of Dickinson which was damaged during one of the June storms.*



## Roughrider Electric board meeting highlights: May 30

The meeting of the board of directors of Roughrider Electric Cooperative was held on May 30 at the cooperative's Dickinson office. The meeting was called to order at 9 a.m. MT. A quorum was present. Also attending were co-General Managers/CEOs Travis Kupper and Jason Bentz, Chief Financial Officer Alex Craigmile, Chief of Staff/Operations Manager Shawn Olson, Director of Key Accounts and Member Services Leonard Hibl, Legal Counsel Jennifer Grosz and Board Liaison Connie Hill.

**Consent agenda:** Amendments were proposed to the agenda. The agenda was approved as amended.

**Strategic items:** Bentz and Kupper presented the co-general managers' report, which included updates on the 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 and discussed projects on which the department is working. Olson provided an operations report, which included an update on projects. Hibl provided a report, which included annual meeting information. Chief Information Officer Charlie Dunbar provided a report. Grosz provided an update on the status of projects.

**Action items:** The board reviewed and resolved various items, including board policies.

**Discussion/general information:** There were no other items brought to the board.

The meeting concluded with adjournment. Secretary Troy Sailer certified the accuracy of the minutes.

**Next meeting date:** The next meeting is 10 a.m. CT (9 a.m. MT) Aug. 29 in Hazen. ■

## Perbix completes MIP



Congratulations to our accounting manager, Michaela Perbix, 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.



[www.roughriderelectric.com](http://www.roughriderelectric.com)

### HAZEN OFFICE

701-748-2293 or 800-748-5533  
800 Highway Dr., Hazen, ND 58545  
7:00 a.m. - 3:30 p.m. CT Monday-Friday

Payments may be deposited in the deposit box by Roughrider Electric's main office entrance or in the drop boxes located at Krause's Super Valu in Hazen or Bronson's Super Valu in Beulah.

### DICKINSON OFFICE

701-483-5111 or 800-748-5533  
P.O. Box 1038, 2156 4th Ave. E.  
Dickinson, ND 58602  
7 a.m. - 4 p.m. MT Monday-Friday

Payments may be deposited in the deposit box west of Roughrider Electric's main office entrance or the west and south locations of Family Fare supermarkets.

### OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS

Greg Steckler, President, Dunn Center..... 548-8122  
Roger Kudrna, Vice President, Dickinson..... 483-8377  
Troy Sailer, Secretary, Golden Valley ..... 948-2427  
Bruce Darcy, Treasurer, Golden Valley ..... 983-4222  
Jesse Flath, Hazen ..... 880-0386  
Darell Herman, Beulah ..... 873-4371  
Arnold Kainz, Dickinson ..... 483-8207  
Dan Price, Hensler ..... 794-3779  
Callen Schoch, New England ..... 290-3836

### MANAGEMENT

Travis Kupper..... Co-GM/CEO  
Jason Bentz..... Co-GM/CEO



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