

EMPOWERING RURAL YOUTH:
McKittrick travels to
Washington, D.C., for Youth Tour



Slope Electric Cooperative Inc.

OUTLOOK

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YOUTH TOUR: **McKitrick 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.

Slope Electric Cooperative holds an annual contest for high school sophomores or juniors to be chosen to attend the Electric Cooperative Youth Tour. Students enter the contest by writing an essay in response to a question posed by the cooperative.

Landon McKitrick from Bowman joined other North Dakota youth sponsored by their local electric cooperatives, along with students from around the nation, in Washington, D.C., for a week of learning and networking.

A broadening experience

Sixteen North Dakota youth gathered before the trip at the North Dakota Association of Rural Electric Cooperatives headquarters in Mandan for some team building before taking off to Washington, D.C. The group was able to review the itinerary and gather T-shirts for the week. The group left on Saturday and returned late Friday night. Each day included new learning experiences and sights to see.

Once the plane landed, the students were off to their first stop: Ford's Theatre. Later in the week, students partook in a Co-op 101 and youth advocacy course. The

group was able to see much of Washington, D.C., by touring museums, national monuments, memorials and more. They also attended other activities, such as a riverboat cruise, a Medieval Times tournament and a Washington Nationals baseball game.

During his first trip to Washington, D.C., McKitrick says he enjoyed meeting new people from around the United States and exploring the city, including Capitol Hill. McKitrick's family farms and ranches, so he especially enjoyed exploring Mount Vernon, the home of George Washington.

"It was cool to see how involved in agriculture George Washington was," McKitrick says.

McKitrick will be a junior at Bowman High School and is active in FFA, cross-country and the school's Students for Positive Change program. He looks forward to bringing his broadened view of leadership and advocacy back to his peers and community.

"No matter your personality or passions, this trip will have something for you," McKitrick says, reflecting on the trip. He says he would encourage everyone to apply for this once-in-a-lifetime, all-expense-paid trip.

More information regarding the 2025 Youth Tour will be shared in the coming months. Watch for future issues of *North Dakota Living* and visit our social media. ■

MANAGER'S MESSAGE: **Beyond kilowatts**



Jason Bentz

Today, I want to take a moment to discuss an essential aspect of our cooperative's operations: base rates. A few members expressed concern about these rates in our recent member satisfaction survey, and I wanted to take the time to explain them a little more.

Base rates, which are the foundation of our rate structure, play a pivotal role in ensuring the financial sustainability and

operational integrity of our cooperative. These rates represent the fixed costs associated with maintaining and operating the infrastructure necessary to deliver electricity to your doorstep, regardless of the amount of energy consumed.

It's important to understand base rates encompass more than just the cost of electricity generation. They also cover a myriad of other expenses, including transmission and distribution infrastructure, equipment maintenance, grid modernization initiatives and compliance with regulatory requirements. These investments are essential for maintaining a reliable and resilient electric system that meets the evolving needs of our members.

Slope Electric Cooperative takes great care in setting our base rates to balance the needs of our members with the financial obligations of our cooperative. Our goal is to ensure rates remain fair, transparent and reflective of the true cost of service, while also promoting affordability and accessibility for all members, regardless of their energy usage.

However, it's essential to recognize our cooperative is more than just a utility provider of kilowatt-hours. We are stewards of an essential service that powers the homes, farms and businesses that form the backbone of our communities.

We are a community partner dedicated to enhancing the quality of life for our members and fostering economic prosperity in our service area. From supporting local initiatives and charitable causes to providing energy efficiency programs and educational opportunities, we strive to make a positive impact on the communities we serve.

Moreover, cooperatives like ours are uniquely positioned to serve areas for-profit utilities may overlook due to economic considerations, such as the challenges associated with fewer members per mile of line. Unlike investor-owned utilities, which prioritize

profitability, cooperatives are driven by a commitment to serving all members of our community, regardless of geographic location or population density.

As we navigate the complexities of setting rates and financial management, it's crucial to remember our cooperative is rooted in the principles of cooperation, democracy and member ownership. Your input and participation are invaluable as we work together to shape the future of our cooperative and ensure it remains a beacon of service and integrity for generations to come.

Thank you for your continued support and trust in Slope Electric. Together, we are more than just selling kilowatts. We are providing an essential service that powers the vitality and resilience of our communities. ■



NORTH DAKOTA
NORTH DAKOTA'S
BEST-READ
PUBLICATION **LIVING**

**WILL CONDUCT
A READERSHIP SURVEY IN AUGUST.**

Readership surveys are an important measurement tool and provide information about our members, their preferences and magazine habits, and trends.

You may be asked to participate:

- **Phone** – The caller will walk you through a list of questions and responses.
- **Text-to-web** – You will receive a text with a link to complete the survey online.

INNOVATIVE TECHNOLOGY: **SCADA**

Slope Electric Cooperative is leveraging technology to enhance reliability for its members. This includes installing supervisory control and data acquisition (SCADA) technology, which acts as a remote data monitoring and control system.

“SCADA is currently being installed around our service territory,” says Chief of Staff/Operations Manager Dean Volk. “This technology allows us to have real-time data at our fingertips, which will assist in more efficient system load switching and outage restoration.”

The cooperative’s priority is to ensure safe and reliable energy to our members, and SCADA will further assist us in having a cost-effective and reliable system, Volk says.

SCADA was an easy decision for Slope Electric

to implement, considering the recent installation of faster rural communications, such as fiberoptic communications to substations, along with Slope Electric’s existing equipment being SCADA compatible.

“Since SCADA technology allows us to see our infrastructure remotely, this will also assist in safer operations of equipment for our line crews,” Volk says. Being able to access this data remotely ensures efficient restoration times and allows line crews to respond more quickly and accurately to outages.

We look forward to implementing this technology to assist members more efficiently and effectively in ensuring reliable energy to homes and businesses in our service area. ■



SAFETY STARTS WITH ME: Safe harvest

Agriculture is the backbone of our country, and our livelihood greatly depends on the crops produced by North Dakota farmers. In addition to being one of the most labor-intensive professions, farming is also considered one of the most dangerous jobs in the United States.

The hard work and exhaustive labor are tough, but rushing the job to save time can be extremely dangerous – even deadly – when farming near electrical equipment.

“Every year, farm-related accidents happen when combines and other farming equipment collide with utility poles and power lines, causing injuries and power outages,” Journeyman Lineworker Jon Lawhead says.

Here is what YOU can do

These dangerous accidents can be avoided by looking up and around your surroundings when operating large farm machinery. If you’re preparing for harvest season, please keep the following safety tips in mind:

- Maintain a 10-foot clearance around all utility equipment in all directions.
- Use a spotter and deployed flags to maintain safe distances from power lines and other electrical equipment when working in the field.
- If your equipment contacts an energized or downed power line, call 911 immediately. Stay inside the vehicle until the power line is de-energized. If there is smoke or fire, exit by jumping clear of the cab without touching the equipment and hop away



to safety. We also urge you to contact your electric cooperative for additional assistance.

- Consider equipment and cargo extensions of your vehicle. Lumber, hay, tree limbs, irrigation pipes and even bulk materials can conduct electricity, so keep them out of contact with electrical equipment.

We hope you never find yourself in a situation where farming equipment contacts power lines or poles, but we hope you’ll remember these safety tips. If you see something while out in the field that needs our attention, please call the office as soon as possible. ■

TIPS FOR SAFE HARVEST

- Keep all equipment at least 10 feet away from power lines.
- Never try to raise or move a power line to clear a path
- Power line sagging? Don’t move it. Call us immediately.

SMARTHUB

SmartHub is Slope Electric Cooperative's free online bill payment system that allows you to monitor your energy usage and much more!

SmartHub Features:

- ▶ Access to your accounts anywhere, anytime.
- ▶ Electronic payments.
- ▶ Provides current and historical billing information and payment history.
- ▶ Outline energy usage in graphs.
- ▶ Manage your account's personal information such as billing address and phone number changes.
- ▶ Allows you to enroll in paperless billing.
- ▶ Lets those with multiple accounts pay with a single payment.



Visit scan the QR code or visit our website to enroll:
Slopeelectric.coop.



Download the app on your phone's app store:
SmartHub.



Call our office at
701-579-4191 or 800-559-4191 with any questions.

WAPA remains committed to securing the grid

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



Lloyd Linke

Each day, tens of thousands of megawatts flow throughout our nation's transmission lines, to include those maintained by the Western Area Power Administration, especially in the Upper Great Plains. From Minnesota to Montana and the Canadian border into Iowa, this lifeblood of power meets the demands of millions of Americans every day.

Throughout the numerous communities served by our more than 340 utility customers, most residents will never blink an eye at the incredible feat that takes place daily to ensure their world remains electrified.

These things don't happen by accident. Scattered throughout WAPA's UGP region, my teams defend and protect the grid 24 hours a day, seven days a week. We safeguard our vital power networks from Mother Nature herself, as the geography of our communities lends itself to severe blizzards and ice storms in the winter, as well as severe weather in the summer that spawns deadly tornadoes. Then, there are invisible threats we can't see with our eyes, such as geomagnetic disturbances from our Sun that can disrupt and potentially take our grid offline. With over 7,800 miles of transmission lines crisscrossing the UGP, we remain vigilant to keep power flowing.

As recently as late May, crews dispatched from Hinton, Iowa, made their way to the Greenfield community, located about 45 minutes west of Des Moines. These crews were responding to downed WAPA lines due to a weather system that spawned more than 15 tornadoes, ravaging the local area. These crews did the job expected of them: they responded, assessed, reconstituted our poles and lines, and ensured reliable power flowed back through the area once again. What truly showed WAPA's incredible commitment to their craft was that these crews had just finished being on the road the previous three weeks doing maintenance and upkeep in the field. Believing they would be heading home for the Memorial Day weekend to be with family and friends, they each diverted, ensuring their expertise and commitment made their way to the damaged communities of southwestern Iowa.

The same goes for the dead of winter. Many may recall the strong winter storm that pummeled North Dakota's I-94 corridor on Christmas Day last year. From Bismarck to Grand Forks, 20,000 residents and businesses lost power from severe ice that befell the region. This

resulted several large, 230-kV lines being brought down. Crews from three states responded to get the system back into service swiftly, reconstructing steel lattice towers, broken wood structures and downed static lines. Later, WAPA's helicopter crews performed aerial surveys, ensuring all damage to the grid had been adequately and properly repaired.

While storms on Planet Earth can be tracked and plotted, storms from outer space are more of a challenge. However, WAPA's advanced tools and technology are in place to give us as much of a heads-up as possible, providing a sense of security and reassurance to stave off potentially catastrophic outcomes.

In November 2022, our employees at the White Substation in South Dakota achieved a significant milestone by energizing WAPA's first-ever neutral blocking device. This device, known as an NBD, was installed in a large power transformer that aims to block geomagnetically induced currents, generated during a solar storm. This NBD is the first of its kind to be commercially developed and installed anywhere in the U.S. and only the second device of its type to become operational.

As we've witnessed this year across the northern states, severe geomagnetic disturbances from solar storms provide us brilliant views of the Northern Lights but also cause GICs that can saturate power transformers. This saturation can cause negative impacts such as reactive power absorption and voltage drops, either decreasing power flow to homes and businesses or stopping it altogether.

The NBD program is our version of an "early warning system" that, on average, gives us 45 minutes to an hour alert before we receive updates from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. This provides our dispatchers and maintenance personnel crucial time to prepare to protect the grid and respond more precisely to GIC incidents, ensuring our system is safe from overloads.

As you can see, WAPA is keenly aware of the threats to our grid in many situations. Fortunately, those concerned about the power grid and hydroelectric power alike can rest easy as our experts and dedicated staff throughout the Upper Great Plains remain at the read.

Whether it's storms here or from the expanse of space or any other crisis that arises, WAPA stands ready. We are committed to fulfilling our core mission of keeping the lights on, no matter the circumstances. ■



LOOK

SLOPE ELECTRIC BOARD MEETING HIGHLIGHTS: May 30

The regular meeting of the board of directors of Slope Electric Cooperative was held on May 30 at the cooperative's headquarters in New England. President Steven Wegner called the meeting to order at 9 a.m. A quorum was present. Slope Electric's 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, Operations Manager Dean Volk and Member Relations Manager Brooke Waltner.

Consent agenda: The consent agenda was approved as proposed.

Strategic agenda: Bentz and Kupper presented the co-general managers' report, with updates on Upper Missouri Power Cooperative, Western Area Power Administration and Basin Electric Power Cooperative meetings. Bentz and Kupper also presented a West Dakota Utility Services, 3C Construction and Basin Electric CEO report.

Department reports: Craigmile provided the board with April's financial reports. Volk reported on new projects on which the crews have been working as well as maintenance. Waltner reviewed her member relations report, which included the new bill layout and annual meeting information. Chief Information Officer Charlie Dunbar provided a written report for the board. Grosz provided her legal report.

Action items: Action items were resolved.

Discussion/general information: Jeremy Mahowald from Upper Missouri Power Cooperative discussed topics with the board.

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

Next meeting date: The next meeting is at 9 a.m. Aug. 29 in New England. ■



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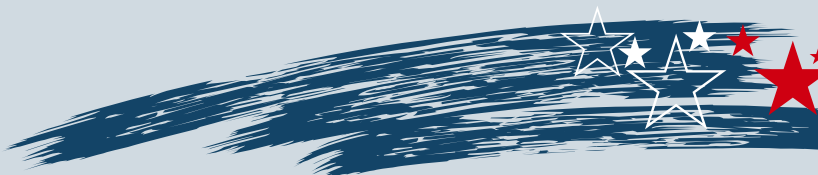
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SLOPE ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE WILL BE CLOSED SEPT. 2 FOR LABOR DAY.



Happy LABOR DAY