

June 2023

# THE WHEAT BELT CONNECTION

## STRATEGIC INITIATIVES UPDATE 2022-2024

### OPERATIONAL EFFICIENCY

In the June 2022 edition of The Wheat Belt Connection, Wheat Belt General Manager Lacey Gulbranson, discussed a summary of Wheat Belt's 2022-2024 Strategic Plan. Our goal is to keep our customers updated on the current status of these initiatives as we work through the strategic plan.

If you will recall, the plan consists of four initiatives: Culture, Operational Efficiency, Safety and Customer Experience. This month we will look at the progress in the Operational Efficiency Initiative. This initiative has four key parts. Finance, Data Integrity, Aging & Resilient Infrastructure, and System Data Sharing.

*Finance:* Our Corporate Services department did a lot of work on cleaning up our general ledger accounts. This along with the Cost of Service Study that was conducted in 2022, will streamline the financial forecasting and budget tracking for the District.

*Data Integrity:* In June of 2022, Wheat Belt hired a third party contractor to conduct service checks throughout our system. The project has been completed and our employees are busy validating all of the data to ensure our records are correct for every service in our territory. Processes are being put in place to ensure our data stays up-to-date and accurate moving forward.

*Aging & Resilient Infrastructure:* Over the last few years our third-party pole testing crew has flagged more than our average amount of rotten poles. This has a lot to do with the voles in some areas. Our crews will be working hard to get these poles replaced over the next year to get caught up with our pole replacement program. We will also be hiring a third-party contractor to rebuild six miles of sub-trans-



mission line and our crews are busy rebuilding other aging infrastructure that has been outlined in our construction work plan.

*System Data Sharing:* Wheat Belt has multiple software programs that help us manage our billing, transformers, mapping and inventory. The District is working with these programs to make sure that each program is talking to each other and the data is flowing from one-to-another in the appropriate manner.

As we make progress on the Districts Strategic Plan, you will continue to see updates in the Wheat Belt Connection.

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*Editor - Kelli Chaon*

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# THE VALUE OF FEEDBACK



**LACEY GULBRANSON**  
General Manager/CEO

Sometimes I liked the gift my grandma gave me for Christmas and sometimes I didn't. However, it didn't matter because mom told me I was to be grateful and show appreciation that someone thought enough about me to sacrifice of themselves to give the gift. And feedback is a gift.

I hope you have already seen that we are currently conducting a customer survey to gain your valued feedback about the service we provide. I truly hope you would take a couple of minutes to sacrifice your time to give us the gift of feedback.

Wheat Belt is committed to delivering electricity safely, reliably and efficiently by focusing on respecting individuals, producing quality work and valuing integrity for the greater good of our customers and employees.

We want your feedback to know where we have opportunities to improve, where we have failed in the past and what we are doing well.

Scan the QR code or go to [www.wheatbelt.com](http://www.wheatbelt.com) to take the survey. All you will need is your account number to enter the survey!



## LUCKY DRAWING



Congratulations to Jeff and Donna Hartwig, our April "Lucky Draw Winner"!

Jeff, Donna, and their two daughters; Autumn and Raina have resided in the Dalton area for the last 17 years. Jeff is a taxidermist and Donna is a nurse at SRMC.

In their spare time, the Hartwig's enjoy camping, fishing and being members of the Camp Clarke Raiders Black Powder Gun Club.

Jeff and Donna received a \$50 credit on their account for their prompt payment. If you would like to be included in our next drawing, and avoid a \$5 delinquent fee, please send your payment before the 16th of the month.

For your convenience, we offer several payment options. Please give us a call at 308-254-5871, or visit [wheatbelt.com](http://wheatbelt.com), and select the Customer Engagement page for more information.



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# Preparing to Serve You Better

By Anne Prince

Providing reliable power to you is and will always be top priority for Wheat Belt Public Power District. These days, power reliability seems to be making news now more than ever.

As the energy industry continues to transition and more segments of the economy are becoming electrified, such as vehicles, machinery and even lawn equipment, additional pressures are being placed on our nation's electric grid.

With summer storm season upon us, I thought it would be a good time to tell you about a few measures we're taking to ensure you continue receiving the reliable power you depend on and deserve.

Let me be the first to say I love trees and the charm they add to our communities, and I know you do too. While trees provide shade and add beauty to our area, you may be surprised to learn that overgrown vegetation accounts for about half of all power outages.



### BENEFITS OF TREE TRIMMING

Clearing trees and overgrown vegetation is vital to provide safe, reliable power to our consumer-members.

We clear certain areas in our service territory, known as rights of way, to:

- Keep power lines clear of tree limbs
- Restore power outages more quickly
- Keep crews and members of our community safe
- Reduce unexpected costs for repairs

**Vegetation management improves service reliability for you - our members!**

That's why we strive to keep the district's power lines clear in right-of-way (ROW) areas. A ROW area is the land a public power district uses to construct, maintain, replace or repair underground and overhead power lines. This ROW enables Wheat Belt to provide clearance from trees and other obstructions that could hinder distribution power lines. The overall goal of our vegetation management strategy is to provide reliable power to our customers while maintaining the beauty of our area.

## Modernizing Vegetation Management

Generally speaking, healthy trees don't fall on power lines, and clear lines don't cause problems. Proactive trimming and pruning keep lines clear to improve power reliability. However, traditional vegetation management is costly and time consuming. It entails on-the-ground, labor-intensive efforts involving dozens of workers assessing vegetation and overseeing the quality and completion of contractor work. Although this approach has worked for decades, advances and improvements in technology will allow us to reduce our costs and improve efficiency.

Drones are able to capture images of power lines and vegetation so we can accurately monitor the health of trees and pinpoint problems along the lines. In the future, drone data will be incorporated into our routine maintenance and inspections.

## Planned Outages Improve Reliability


Although it may seem counterintuitive, we also maintain power reliability through planned, controlled outages. By carefully cutting power to one part of our local area for a few hours, Wheat Belt can perform system repairs and upgrades, which ultimately improve electric service. Rest assured, we will always notify you in advance of a planned outage, so make sure we have your correct contact information on file to receive the latest phone calls.

Vegetation management is an essential tool in ensuring power reliability and minimizing the risk of outages. As advancements become more accessible and costs drop, we anticipate using additional technologies to ensure a consistent energy supply while managing the environment.

Lastly, I encourage you to follow Wheat Belt on social media so you can learn about the latest district updates.

# Moe's

**Brian (Moe) Moffat**




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## Our Mission

**Deliver electricity safely, reliably and efficiently.**