

October 2023

THE WHEAT BELT CONNECTION

Exploring Wheat Belt Public Power District's Payment Options

Whether you prefer the convenience of online payments, or the personal touch of in-person payments, WBPPD has you covered. The district's commitment to customer service ensures that customers can choose the payment method that best suits their preferences and financial situation, making the process of paying for electricity as smooth as possible.

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- *Mail: PO Box 177 (please do not send cash)
- *Drop box: 11306 Road 32 (please do not leave cash, checked daily except during office closures)
- *Pay at the office: cash, check or credit card

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Editor - Kelli Chaon

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LUCKY DRAWING

Congratulations to Robert and Eleanor Lafler, our August "Lucky Draw Winner"!

Robert and Eleanor 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, and select the Customer Engagement page for more information.

October is Public Power Month

CELEBRATE LOCAL CONTROL

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Unveiling Public Power in Nebraska

A Beacon of Community-Centric Energy

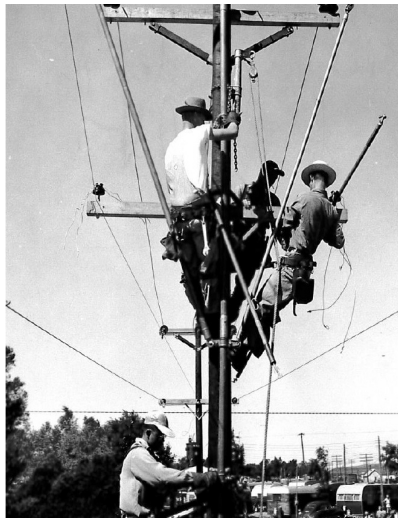
BY: KELLI CHAON

Customer Engagement Manager

Nebraska stands as a unique exemplar in the realm of energy infrastructure in the United States, owing much of its distinctiveness to its robust and enduring commitment to public power. Rooted in the principles of self-reliance, community empowerment, and local control, public power in Nebraska has played a pivotal role in shaping the state's energy landscape. In this article, we delve into the concept of public power in Nebraska, its historical evolution, its impact on communities, and its relevance in a rapidly evolving energy sector.

At its core, public power refers to a system of energy generation and distribution that is owned and operated by public entities, such as cooperatives, municipalities, and public power districts. This contrasts with investor-owned utilities (IOUs), which are privately owned and operated companies. Nebraska is the only state in the country that is completely served by consumer-owned public power systems delivering electricity as a nonprofit service.

The roots of public power in Nebraska can be traced back to the early 20th century when rural communities, often neglected by private utilities, sought a reliable and affordable source of electricity. Frustrated by the lack of attention from investor-owned utilities, Nebraskans took matters into their own hands. In the 1930s, during the height of the Great Depression, the Nebraska Legislature passed Senate File 310 which provided for the creation of public



power and irrigation districts. Public power districts, such as Wheat Belt, came into existence to provide electricity in areas which had previously been denied service. The impact of public power in Nebraska has been profound and far-reaching. By giving local communities control over their energy infrastructure, public power has fostered a sense of ownership and responsibility. Nebraska's public power entities prioritize customer needs over profits, resulting in more affordable rates and a focus on reliability. This has not only supported economic growth and devel-

opment but also helped keep energy costs manageable for both residents and businesses. Additionally, public power has contributed significantly



to rural electrification, bringing modern conveniences to remote areas and enhancing the overall quality of life. The model's decentralized nature ensures that decisions are made based on the unique requirements and priorities of individual communities, enabling tailored solutions that may not be feasible under a centralized corporate structure. In recent years, the concept of resilience and sustainability has gained prominence in the energy sector. Public power's emphasis on local control aligns well with these goals. Nebraska's public power entities have been able to swiftly respond to challenges such as severe weather events, maintaining a higher level of reliability compared to some larger IOUs. Furthermore, public power's community-oriented



approach often lends itself to the adoption of renewable energy sources and energy efficiency initiatives, in line with the state's commitment to environmental stewardship.

Continued on 12-C

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Unveiling Public Power in Nebraska cont'd from 12-B

Despite its many advantages, public power in Nebraska faces its share of challenges. Technological advancements, changing energy consumption patterns, and an evolving regulatory landscape require constant adaptation. Ensuring a balance between maintaining affordable rates and investing in modern infrastructure can be a delicate task.

Looking ahead, the future of public power in Nebraska remains promising. As the energy sector continues to evolve, the emphasis on sustainability and local empowerment aligns well with the changing preferences of consumers and policymakers. Collaborative efforts to modernize the energy grid, integrate renewable resources, and embrace emerging technologies will be crucial to the continued success of public power in the state.

Public power in Nebraska stands as a testament to the power of community-driven initiatives. From its humble beginnings to its role in providing affordable and reliable energy to residents across the state, public power embodies Nebraska's spirit of self-reliance and collective progress. As the energy landscape continues to transform, Nebraska's commitment to public power positions it favorably to adapt, innovate, and continue serving as a beacon of community-centric energy.

History of Wheat Belt Public Power District

March 31, 1941

Persons interested in Rural Electrification met in the Legion room of the city auditorium at Sidney. Mr. George Phillips, Manager of Pine Bluffs R.E.A. Cooperative, told the history of the R.E.A. and Miss. Elenor Wilson, R.E.A. fieldwoman from Washington, D.C., and Mr. Walter Phelan, attorney from Cheyenne, gave talks and answered questions. Thirty-six people voted in favor of forming a temporary organization and elected Art Borchert chairman, Louis Miller secretary, and Etheline Swanson treasurer. One person from each precinct was appointed to a committee to contact persons in their precinct and neighborhood and explain the R.E.A. program and collect membership fees (\$5.00).

August 9, 1941 (Cheyenne County Rural Electrification Association)

At a meeting of committee members, Art Borchert reported that the Rural Electric Association of Pine Bluffs had voted to accept the Cheyenne County Rural Electrification Association as an extension to their company. He also reported that 358 farmers had signed applications and that 396 miles of line had been mapped out.

(Excerpts from recollections of Mrs. Theo. Smith)

"It was shortly after this that the war broke out and everything was stopped for the duration. After the war, when material was again available, it seemed to us that Pine Bluffs was doing all the work on the west end of their system and we on this end were standing by anxiously waiting, but nothing would happen. I also think that Pine Bluffs was sorry of the annexing. So after various meetings, we voted to dissolve membership. So now we had to start all over again."

August 28, 1946 (Wheat Belt Electric Membership Association)

"So now we had a name, board members, but no money and no members. So we first had to negotiate for aid, and hire a manager. Also a place of business had to be found. Mr. Abe Moore was chosen as manager and a little white house, one block south and half a block east of the main intersection was our first office." (938 Jackson St, Sidney)

Board of Directors: Arthur Borchert, President; Theodore Smith, Vice President; Harold Spiker, Secretary – Treasurer; Gus Scheele; Emery Horrum; Herbert Linn; Anton Nelson; Arnold Peeks; George Zimmerman

(Mr. Spiker advanced \$200 to defray initial expenses – to be repaid as soon as funds became available.)

August 1947 - One Year later (Wheat Belt Electric Membership Association)

- 319 Consumers
- 390,264 kWh Sold
- \$6,480.99 Revenue
- \$512.00 Payroll (3 employees)
- \$165.27 Expenses



The first lines constructed by Wheat Belt were energized in October 1948. It was also that same month and year that the building and land at 2104 Illinois Street was purchased at auction for \$29,450 from A.S. and Clare Hardy.

December 7, 1954 (Wheat Belt Public Power District)

Wheat Belt becomes a Public Power District. The first meeting of Wheat Belt Public Power District was held on December 7, 1954, and the rest, as they say..... is *history!*

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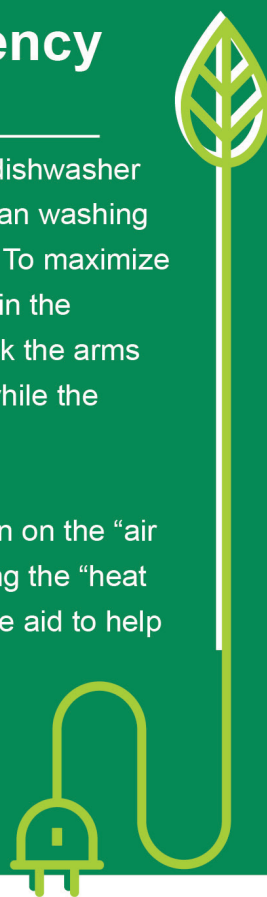


Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

Did you know using your dishwasher is more energy efficient than washing a load of dishes by hand? To maximize efficiency, wash full loads in the dishwasher and don't block the arms or other parts that move while the appliance is in use.

For additional savings, turn on the "air dry" setting instead of using the "heat dry" setting and use a rinse aid to help dishes dry faster without spotting and streaking.

Source: Dept. of Energy





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