



January 2026

THE WHEAT BELT CONNECTION

Introducing Joseph Michalewicz as Wheat Belt's New CEO

Leading with Experience, Integrity, and Homegrown Roots



What inspired you to join Wheat Belt Public Power District, and what excites you most about leading the District?

Wheat Belt Public Power District is a highly respected and community-oriented organization, dedicated to providing safe and reliable power to its customers. Their impact makes a significant difference not only

for the homes and businesses they serve but also for the agricultural industry in western Nebraska. This mission is what attracted me to the opportunity to serve our customers and to build upon the strong foundation laid by the district. I am excited to serve Wheat Belt's customers during one of the most tumultuous and rapidly changing times the power industry has ever faced. It is both an honor and an exhilarating opportunity to lead the district as we confront these challenges head-on.

How has your experience in the industry (and/or education) prepared you for this new role in western Nebraska?

I have had the privilege of working for several electric cooperatives throughout my career, most recently serving as the Chief Financial Officer for Grand Valley Rural Power Lines, Inc. in Grand Junction, Colorado. This leadership role has exposed me to the many com-

Continued on 3-C

LUCKY DRAWING



Wheat Belt Public Power District is pleased to announce Nick and Amanda Kepler as our November Lucky Draw winners. The Keplers are a busy family of five, with twin boys and a daughter just 15 months older who keep them on the go with a full schedule of sports and activities.

In addition to family life, the Keplers stay active in agriculture throughout the year. During the summer months, they put up alfalfa, manage several acres of corn, and care for a small herd of their own cattle. They also enjoy custom feeding cattle, adding yet another layer to their full and vibrant life on the farm.

The Keplers 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.

IN THIS ISSUE

Editor - Kelli Chaon

Introducing Joseph Michalewicz as Wheat Belt's in CEO	Page 3-A/C
Understanding Winter Peak Usage	Page 3-B
Scholarship Program	Page 3-B
November Board Meeting Update	Page 3-C
Wheat Belt Crew Preps for Parade	Page 3-D
Energy Efficiency Tips	Page 3-D

P.O. BOX 177, 11306 RD 32, SIDNEY, NE 69162

P 308.254.5871 | T 800.261.7114 | wheatbelt@wheatbelt.com | www.wheatbelt.com

Understanding Winter Peak Usage & How Wheat Belt Keeps Power Reliable Year-Round

BY: KELLI CHAON, Customer Engagement Manager

As temperatures drop and heating systems work overtime, Wheat Belt PPD experiences a noticeable increase in electricity demand. Our winter peak load reaches 20 MW, driven largely by heating needs, livestock operations, and the additional strain cold weather puts on equipment across our service territory. While this is significant, it's still well below the heavy 55 MW summer peak we see during irrigation season when pumps run continuously to support local agriculture.

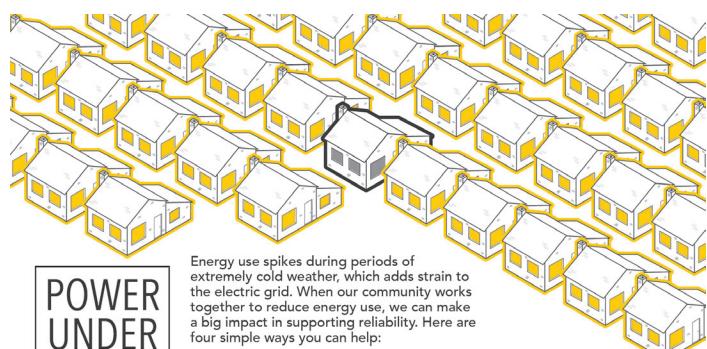
These large shifts in demand, nearly tripling from winter to summer, require careful planning to ensure reliable power is always available. Wheat Belt works closely with Tri-State Generation & Transmission, our power supplier, to make sure electricity is ready and available any time of year, no matter how high the demand climbs. That coordination ensures our customers' homes, farms, and businesses have the dependable power they need through both deep freezes and long irrigation days.

Last month, we shared information about Wheat Belt's 6.6% rate adjustment, which is driven by increased wholesale power costs from Tri-State, not from local operational expenses. As a reminder, customers can take more control of their bills by considering our Time-of-Use (TOU) rate.

This rate rewards shifting electricity use to off-peak hours, avoiding the higher-cost 1 p.m. to 9 p.m., Monday through Saturday window.

Whether it's running grain dryers, charging equipment, or powering irrigation systems, moving that usage to off-peak times can lead to meaningful savings—especially during months when energy demands are highest.

Wheat Belt remains committed to power our customers' lives safely, reliably and efficiently all year long.



POWER UNDER PRESSURE

Four Ways to Ease Grid Strain This Winter

Energy use spikes during periods of extremely cold weather, which adds strain to the electric grid. When our community works together to reduce energy use, we can make a big impact in supporting reliability. Here are four simple ways you can help:

1. Lower your thermostat. Even a difference of a few degrees can help.
2. Delay using large appliances. Run them in the evenings or midday when demand is lower.
3. Lower your water heater to 120 degrees and avoid back-to-back showers.
4. Unplug unnecessary devices. Electronics and lighting add up. Unplug any unused items.

SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

If you are a dependent of a Wheat Belt customer, you are eligible to apply for the scholarships listed below.

Wheat Belt Public Power District

- One - \$2,000 Lineman Scholarship **OR**
- Two - \$500 Vocational/Technical Scholarships

Basin Electric Power Cooperative

- Two - \$1,250 Scholarships

Tri-State Generation & Transmission Assoc.

- Two - \$500 Scholarships

Arbor Wealth Management, Inc.

- One - \$500 Scholarship

Dennis Peters Memorial Scholarship (Lineman Scholarship)

- One - \$1,000 Scholarship

For further information and qualifications, visit our website.

wheatbelt.com/youth-info

Deadline to submit scholarship applications is February 6, 2026.

NOVEMBER BOARD MEETING UPDATE



- The Budget Hearing was held on October 24, 2025. No major changes or adjustments were made after the hearing. The board approved the proposed budget for 2026 as presented.
- Gulbranson proposed a change to Wheat Belt's 401K plan that permits employees participation immediately upon hire. The Board approved the change to the 401K Plan document.
- Wheat Belt received the obligation from FEMA for \$4M for the emergent phase of our 2024 storm, and another \$8M for the rebuild of 64 miles of line damaged during the storm that will be repaired in the future. Of the obligated funds, Wheat Belt will receive 75% of the funds. The Board approved the request for proposal from RMA Engineering for the engineering, staking and project management of the next rebuild phase.
- Representatives from Nebraska Public Power District (NPPD) were present to discuss transmission and generation options with NPPD.
- An in-depth and lengthy discussion was held on the options of buying out of our contract with Tri-State G & T. The Board will continue to analyze the risk and payback of the options.
- Waite reported on the May Day training that was held during the November Safety meeting. The training also included SRS and our local Communication 911Center.
- Complete review of the Three-Year Strategic Plan was reviewed with the Board by each initiative owner.
- The Board voted to Approve CFC to conduct the annual Board Assessment and for NRECA Executive Search to conduct the CEO Assessment.

Introducing Joseph Michalewicz cont'd from 3-A
plexities and opportunities that public power organizations encounter. Whether addressing supply chain issues, tackling power generation and transmission challenges, or working to attract and retain employees in rural areas, these challenges are also present in western Nebraska. My past experiences have equipped me with the knowledge and understanding needed to effectively serve the customers of WBPPD.

What similarities or differences do you see between serving customers in Colorado and those in Wheat Belt's service territory?

The customers I served in Colorado and those I look forward to serving at Wheat Belt have similar desires: safe, reliable, and affordable power. However, the challenges faced by these two groups are their largest difference. In Colorado, they deal with issues such as wildfires, state regulations, and rooftop solar. In western Nebraska, we encounter challenges like drought, high winds, and ice storms. Despite these unique differences, both customer groups desire the same outcome: to receive the best electric service possible while ensuring the safety of their electric utility employees and communities.

What would you like Wheat Belt customers to know about you on a personal level?

Although I am coming to the district from Colorado, I am proud to be returning to Nebraska. I was born in Scottsbluff, raised in central Nebraska, and am a proud Alumnus of the University of Nebraska. My wife and I are thankful for the chance to return and serve the communities of western Nebraska while raising our family with those Nebraska values.

What is one message you would like to share with our customers as you begin this new chapter at Wheat Belt PPD?

I am committed to maintaining the high standards of service that Wheat Belt Public Power District provides for its customers by ensuring a reliable electric supply, while keeping our foremost priority on the safety of both our employees and the communities we serve.



Thank you to Wheat Belt's very own Dan Westman, Valerie Richards, Shelley Peterson, Cory Lundgren, Ethan Mientka, Levi Berndt, Austin Dormann, Patrick Hansen and Eric Reimers (not pictured) for getting the truck ready for the Parade of Lights in Sidney.

We LOVE being part of our communities festivities.

ENERGY EFFICIENCY

TIP OF THE MONTH

Winter weather can cause your home heating system to work overtime. Check for air leaks and drafts around doors and windows, then seal them with weatherstripping or caulk. Close fireplace dampers when not in use, and consider installing insulating curtains to help keep warm air inside. You can also save energy by lowering your thermostat a few degrees. Even small adjustments like these can reduce heating costs and improve comfort during the coldest months.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

PRESIDENT

Brian Zimmerman, *Big Springs*

VICE PRESIDENT

Stuart Morgan, *Dalton*

SECRETARY

Brian "Moe" Moffat, *Oshkosh*

TREASURER

Marcus Milanuk, *Oshkosh*

ASSISTANT SECRETARY

Toni Blomenkamp, *Broadwater*

DIRECTOR

Jennifer Eckhardt, *Dalton*

DIRECTOR

Collin Anderson, *Dalton*

MANAGERS

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Joseph Michalewicz

FINANCE & ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES

MANAGER

Tim Jones

OPERATIONS MANAGER

Rollie Waite

TECHNOLOGY & SYSTEMS DESIGN MANAGER

Jim Weeda

CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT MANAGER

Kelli Chaon

OFFICE HOURS:

M-F 7:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

P 308.254.5871 | T 800.261.7114 | F 308.254.2384

wheatbelt@wheatbelt.com

Our Mission

Deliver electricity safely, reliably and efficiently.