

WAPA honors Moorhead Public Service with Administrator's Award



Moorhead Public Service General Manager Bill Schwandt talks to a local reporter at the 2015 ribbon-cutting ceremony for Capture The Sun. The municipal power provider is making more news this year by unveiling the second phase of its popular community solar program and winning WAPA's Administrator's Award. (Photo by Moorhead Public Service)

Moorhead Public Service is receiving well-earned recognition for giving its customers the choices they need to save energy, money and the environment. Mark Gabriel will present WAPA's Administrator Award to the municipal power provider, Oct. 11, at Moorhead City Hall in Minnesota.

One of the things we at WAPA most enjoy about our work is the opportunity to recognize our customers for their commitment to serving the community and using energy wisely. And MPS, with 18,000 meters, has much to celebrate, from successful development of utility-owned renewables to a broad range of customer energy-efficiency programs. "Moorhead Public

Service proves that a utility of any size can forge a powerful partnership with the community by being responsive to its customers' needs," said WAPA Administrator and CEO Mark A. Gabriel. "The Administrator's Award honors that dedication to service and best business practices."

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Upper Great Plains Customer Service Representative Jim Bach, who has worked with MPS for years, added, "The great thing about MPS is that it has been focused on customer service, environmental stewardship and supporting the community long before these ideas became marketing strategies. They just see it as how you do business," he added.

MPS General Manager Bill Schwandt, who will be accepting the award, confirmed Bach's observation. "To run a business successfully—especially one that the community relies on—you have to put the customer first," he said. "Recognition like the Administrator's Award is just evidence that we are on the right track."

"Capturing" clean energy

For example, MPS launched its customer-driven Capture The Wind program years before the industry was talking about community renewable projects. More than 400 customers signed up to support the construction of Zephyr, a 750-kilowatt wind turbine, in 1999. The program was so successful that MPS installed a second turbine, Freedom, in 2001, with the support of another 400 members. Capture The Wind has effectively prevented the emission of more than 16 million pounds of greenhouse gases, and boasts a 7-percent customer participation rate, one of the highest participation rates per capita in the nation.

Building wind power in the state that now ranks seventh in the nation for installed capacity makes sense, but solar power is a tougher sell in northern states. To alleviate concerns about the viability of solar in the local climate, MPS built a solar demonstration project in 2011.

A utility survey and public meetings followed the successful demonstration, all indicating that customers were interested in solar power in spite of the fact that many were unable to install arrays on their homes. A community solar farm offered not only a

tailor-made solution, but one that felt familiar to customers as well. In 2015, MPS built the first phase of its Capture The Sun community solar garden project. The demand for customers wanting to purchase solar panels was so strong that MPS expanded Capture The Sun in 2016 and is looking to expand again in 2017.

American Public Power Association has given both the wind and solar projects its Energy Innovator Award. Under the umbrella name, Capture The Energy, the programs will continue to meet customer demand for a clean energy option.

Putting efficiency first

As any good member services representative will attest, customers benefit as much—if not more—from energy-efficiency measures as they do from renewables projects, and MPS customers have plenty to choose from. As a member utility of Missouri River Energy Services, MPS offers the Bright Energy Solutions program, You are leaving WAPA.gov. a portfolio of energy-efficiency incentives to help customers reduce their electric costs and operate more efficiently.

Customers can find rebate forms on the website for lighting, heating, ventilating, air conditioning, motors, pumps, variable frequency drives and more. Both commercial and residential customers can subscribe to the monthly Bright Ideas newsletter. The e-newsletter features the latest in energy technologies and energy-saving tips, along with free features and tools connected to Bright Energy program to help customers reduce energy use at home and work.

Business and commercial customers can also sign up for free technical assistance through Questline. This free service provides customers with resources such as an online library of technical business and engineering documents, an online portal to targeted research tools and an "Ask an Expert" hotline, at no cost.

Saving energy in business

MPS recently awarded more than \$44,000 in rebate checks for energy conservation to American Crystal Sugar Company as part of the Bright Energy Solutions program. Earlier this year, in conjunction with MPS' Bright Energy Solutions program, American Crystal Sugar Company worked with the program to upgrade several of its process motors with variable frequency drives. This upgrade project will save the factory an estimated 863,081 kilowatt-hours per year.

Good business also means investing in your own infrastructure, which MPS did this year by building a new high-service pumping station. The purpose of the project was to replace outdated 1950s pumps and fixed-speed motors with new variable-speed pumps and to update backup generation for the pumps and an adjacent facility. Installing new variable-frequency drive-powered pumps reduced the station's energy use and maintenance costs and improved the system operation.

The capital project also included a 1.3-megawatt natural gas generator with an automatic switchover to provide emergency backup power supply for the pumping station. The generator also enables peak-shaving during peak-load situations, so MPS can use it for electrical containment. The generator and associated switchgear cost \$2,200,000, but the utility's savings on purchased power costs bring the payback for the project to around 17 years. The Minnesota Public Facilities Authority and Drinking Water Revolving Fund You are leaving WAPA.gov. are providing financing for the pumping station upgrade.

Partnering with state agencies, energy services providers and, most of all, customers has been the secret of Moorhead Public Service's ability to deliver reliable, affordable power and innovation. That neighborly attitude has given the Minnesota utility a strong base on which to build a successful future. WAPA is proud to honor that spirit with the Administrator's Award. ■

Colorado Energy Office, Grid Alternatives announce Holy Cross Energy Community Solar Project

Holy Cross Energy service territory to benefit from growing low-income solar access program

Holy Cross Energy is teaming up with the Colorado Energy Office (CEO) and GRID Alternatives to develop a community solar array that will lower the electric bills of qualified low-income residents in the electric cooperative's Western Colorado service territory. The project is part of a statewide initiative to demonstrate how the community solar model can be optimized to reduce energy costs for utilities' highest need customers—those who spend more than 4 percent of income on utility bills.

Colorado Energy Office Director Jeff Ackermann commended Holy Cross and GRID for their efforts to bring more clean energy options to low-income households. "A primary goal of this initiative is to comprehensively address the energy burden upon low-income households by linking low-cost renewable energy with the energy savings provided through our Weatherization Assistance Program," he explained.

GRID, a nonprofit solar development organization, received a \$1.2 million

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Holy Cross employees, subscribers, local officials, schools and others participated in the "barn-raising" installation of the utility's 145-kW community solar farm. (Photo by GRID Alternatives Colorado.)

Learn about green power marketing at Renewable Energy Markets 2016

San Francisco, California
Oct. 16-18

Caught between customers who are concerned about sustainability and state and federal environmental mandates, power providers are being called upon to add more clean energy to their electricity supply. Whether your utility is ahead of the curve or facing a steep learning curve, Renewable Energy Markets 2016 (REM2016) offers a variety of resources to help you meet your green power goals.

Now in its 20th year, this annual conference attracts stakeholders across the renewable energy industry. Generators, marketers, utility professionals, purchasers, policymakers and regional representatives will come to San Francisco, Oct. 16-18, to discuss

pressing issues, trends and opportunities in the national and international green power markets. “Any electric utility looking at expanding its voluntary green pricing program or getting involved in community- and utility-scale renewables development

should consider attending this event,” said Randy Manion, WAPA Renewable Resources Program manager.

Utility concerns addressed

The agenda covers much territory that utilities, both large and small, will find relevant, including sessions focusing on issues specific to power providers.

“Utility and Corporate Roles in a Changing Market” explores what changes utilities can expect in a world where non-utility customers are increasingly executing their own power purchase agreements. At the center of “Innovative Utility Products” are three case studies showing how utilities

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The annual Renewable Energy Markets conference gathers stakeholders from across the industry to discuss issues that concern power providers, whether they are just beginning to explore options or have an established clean power program. (Photo by Resource Solutions Center)



Renewable Energy Markets 2016

improved customer relations while adding more renewables to their portfolio. The challenges, successes and customer benefits of building energy storage into utility operations is the topic of "Utility Integration of Emerging Storage & Renewables."

Those sessions only scratch the surface of what power providers can learn at REM2016. For utility employees who are just wading into renewables procurement there is a pre-conference workshop, "Voluntary Renewable Energy Markets 101." A two-part presentation on how the Clean Power Plan might affect the renewable energy markets will be of interest to anyone involved in power purchasing.

Many utilities already have strategies for increasing renewables, such as community choice aggregation and community solar farms. Attendees will be able to examine these programs and others from multiple viewpoints throughout the conference.

Honor leaders

An event that attracts so many deeply committed clean energy stakeholders offers the perfect opportunity to recognize exceptional achievement in the industry. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Center for Resource Solutions (CRS) will present the Green Power Leadership Awards at a luncheon on Monday.

The annual Green Power Leadership Awards honor consumers, businesses and organizations that have helped to further the green power market. The CRS Market Development Awards recognize individuals, companies or other renewable energy industry leaders that are building the market for renewable energy.

The EPA Partner Awards recognize leading Green Power Partners and Communities based on their green power purchase or use of on-site renewable energy applications, overall green power strategy and impact on

the renewable resources market. WAPA customer Silicon Valley Power was among last year's recipients.

Stop by, say hi

WAPA is participating in REM2016 as a supporting organization and will have a booth on the exhibit floor. Manion will be there to answer your questions about our Renewable Resources Program, Energy Services and the Electric Power Training Center.

"I always welcome the chance to meet with customers, learn about their needs and discuss how WAPA can help them meet their resource planning goals," Manion said. "But I rarely have the advantage of being able to refer them to so many experts in one place. That is the exciting thing about this event." ■

Holy Cross Community Solar Project from Page 3

CEO grant in August 2015 to partner with utilities to implement low-income community solar. Earlier this year, CEO and GRID announced project partners, each of which is piloting a slight variation on the low-income community solar model to address the unique needs of rural utility service areas and their customers. The projects selected are both affordable and scalable for utility partners, and offer great potential to expand across the state.

"Holy Cross Energy has a reputation as a community solar leader in Colorado—they were the first utility in the state to embrace and develop a community solar project. It's exciting to bring HCE's innovation and GRID's innovation

together for a project that will help families in HCE's service territory," noted GRID Executive Director Chuck Watkins.

Holy Cross Energy Chief Executive Officer Del Worley said the utility is interested in expanding renewable energy access with this innovative model. "This project is a win-win, it helps Holy Cross members who are having a hard time making ends meet and adds more renewable energy to our power supply mix."

GRID's barn-raising model of engagement brought community members together in the town of Gypsum on Aug. 11 to install the 145-kilowatt (kw) solar array. Employees from the utility, the benefit-

ing subscribers, local elected officials, schools and others participated in installing 546 solar panels that will help save up to 35 to 45 local qualified families approximately \$500 per year.

GRID's team is excited to be working with local partners on this project. The Community Office for Resource Efficiency has long been a supporter and outreach partner with GRID in the mountain region and continues to be a strong advocate as this program develops. GRID is also partnering with Colorado Mountain College and Walking Mountains Science Center to offer practical hands-on solar job training and experience for local youth. ■

Celebrate energy efficiency, public power in October



(Artwork by American Public Power Association)

Public Power Week
Oct. 2-8

ENERGY EFFICIENCY DAY
Save energy. Save money.

Let your customers know Oct. 5 is Energy Efficiency Day.
(Artwork by ResourceMedia)

Energy Efficiency Day
Oct. 5

It is fitting that as the days get noticeably colder and darker, we recognize the people who make sure we can light and warm our homes (and cook hearty meals and take hot baths) all year around. Public Power Week You are leaving WAPA.gov. is Oct. 2-8, and this year, Oct. 5, Energy Efficiency Day, is dedicated to the role wise energy use plays in keeping electricity reliable and affordable.

American Public Power Association (APPA) sponsors Public Power Week and provides plenty of resources to help utilities get their celebration off the ground. You can suggest your local municipality issue a proclamation, send messages on your social media platforms and provide local media with news releases and public service announcements. Post facts from APPA's public power and energy-efficiency fact sheets on your website and make sure your member services representatives have copies handy to share.

Speaking of energy efficiency, do your customers know that this "power source" has prevented the need to build 313 large plants since 1990?

According to American Council for an Energy Efficient Economy (ACEEE), further ramping up energy efficiency could spare the country from having to build 487 large power plants over the next 14 years. The inaugural Energy Efficiency Day offers utilities the chance to educate consumers on the importance of saving energy.

Energy efficiency saves consumers and businesses money, creates jobs and stimulates the economy. It is also one of the lowest-cost ways to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The best part is that most utilities already have experience with energy-efficiency programs ranging from simple rebates for efficient appliances

to sophisticated demand-response programs. Reminding your customers of the benefits of energy efficiency measures can help to encourage them to participate in existing programs and make them more receptive to future offerings.

The inaugural Energy Efficiency Day is a collaborative effort of regional and national organizations working to promote energy efficiency, including the ACEEE, Appliance Standards Awareness Project and many others. APPA, colleges and universities, trade allies and investor- and publicly owned utilities are among the organizations supporting #EEDay2016.

If you would like to add National Energy Efficiency Day to your Public Power Week celebration, you can find a link to a toolkit on the SWEEP blog, Livewire. Feel free to supplement the material with your own success stories, and don't forget to share your plans with the Energy Services Bulletin, because every day is Energy Efficiency Day for WAPA Energy Services. ■

Check out Direct Current podcast from DOE

The Department of Energy recently launched Direct Current, a monthly podcast that seeks to present the human side of everything electricity.

Hosts Matt Dozier and Allison Lantero explore such topics as the electric grid, the “soft” costs of solar power, fighting climate change on a bicycle and what happens when a hurricane knocks out the power to whole cities. Fans of National Public Radio will recognize the friendly, conversational style of storytelling. The first episode even parodies This American Life with a skit called This American Lightbulb. The host is named—what else?—Ira Fiberglass.



The September installment, “The Future of Cool,” looks at how new air-conditioning technologies—personal robots!—will keep us comfortable, lower energy costs and fight climate change.

Most episodes clock in at around 20 to 25 minutes and offer a great starting point for classroom discussions. You can subscribe to Direct Current through iTunes or another podcatcher. Also, by subscribing to Energy.gov Updates, you will receive a notice when a new episode is available. ■



Follow energy-efficiency projects across the country

With demand on the rise and fossil fuels on the outs in some areas, utilities are turning more and more to energy efficiency to help them bridge the gap. To help utility professionals who may be navigating new territory, Energy Central has launched the Energy Efficiency Community Update, a regular round-up of energy-saving projects around the nation.

The first update ranges from California's challenges with the "duck curve" to energy policy developments in the state of New York. For WAPA customers, the Southwest Energy Efficiency Project recently completed a set of fact sheets reviewing the history and impacts of utility energy-efficiency programs in five states during 2008-15.

Join the password-protected community to follow energy-efficiency activities by municipal, state, federal and private entities (see the orange button in the upper right sidebar). Members are able to share their own projects and programs, post links and ask questions, as well.

Power providers in different regions face different challenges and issues, but we are all facing a rapidly evolving industry, and sharing ideas can be an indispensable tool for managing change. A utility program, even a thousand miles away, may plant the seed for your next big success. ■



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