

November 12, 2021



CONDENSER

Wisconsin Electric Cooperative Association Newsletter

Spotlight on Youth at 85th WECA Annual Meeting

The 85th annual meeting of the Wisconsin Electric Cooperative Association (WECA) took place in person this week in Stevens Point. More than 150 directors, managers, and other co-op leaders from all Wisconsin electric cooperatives gathered November 10–11 to talk about current issues, legislative proposals, and regulations affecting the industry.

"It's just fantastic to be able to meet face-to-face again," said Stephen Freese, WECA president and CEO in welcoming attendees. The 84th annual meeting was held as a virtual/hybrid meeting, with WECA staff and board members gathering in person and member co-ops attending the business-only event virtually.

WECA Secretary/Treasurer Dave Hischke reported the statewide showed a margin of \$200,000 more than expected. In his remarks, WECA President and CEO Stephen Freese spoke of the urgency to communicate with all co-op members about the implications of potential legislation, including the Clean Energy Performance Plan (CEPP), which was dropped from the Infrastructure Spending Plan in the 11th hour, and would have cost Wisconsin electric co-ops billions of dollars if they fail to meet clean energy goals that are, in most cases, out of their control. He said the *Wisconsin Energy Cooperative News magazine* is a critical tool to reach those members and urged co-ops not taking the magazine to reconsider.

At the WECA business meeting, the WECA board members elected at July's district meetings were officially seated, including:

- **Barbara Miller, District 1 director-director**
(seat previously held by Bill Fischer, who reached his term limit)
- **Dan Smrekar District 2 director-director**
(seat previously held by Judi Anibas, who reached her term limit)
- **Justin Jahnz, District 3 manager-director**
(seat previously held by Jim Anderson, who resigned, and Dallas Sloan, who retired)
- **Steve Johnson, District 3 director-director**
(Johnson was previously appointed to the vacant seat)
- **Karen Newbury, re-elected to the District 4 director-director seat**



Back row from left: Craig Buros, Mike Wade, and Roger Wiff. Front row Dave Hischke and Karen Newbury

The new WECA Executive Team includes:

Dave Hischke

Chair, Oconto Electric Cooperative

Karen Newbury

Vice-Chair, Price Electric Cooperative

Roger Wiff

Secretary/Treasurer, Pierce Pepin Cooperative Services

Mike Wade

Executive Committee, Central Wisconsin Electric Cooperative

Craig Buros

Executive Committee, Vernon Electric Cooperative

Barb Miller was also elected Federated Youth Foundation director.

Outgoing WECA Board Chair Judi Anibas recapped the challenges of 2021, including maintaining operations during an ongoing pandemic and experiencing a cyber hack. Anibas thanked the WECA staff and WECA board, and encouraged continued involvement. *"Your board of directors has been engaged. Most aren't shy, and take to heart the business of the statewide,"* Anibas said. *"I urge members to stay informed, support ACRE, and become engaged with your legislators. Continue to support young and old members and embrace the change that every day brings. It is with pleasure and honor to have served two terms on the WECA board."*



Newly seated WECA Board of Directors

From left to right: Mike Wade, executive committee, Central Wisconsin Electric Cooperative, David Hischke, chairman, Oconto Electric Cooperative, Justin Jahnz, East Central Energy, Joe Metro, Polk-Burnett Electric Cooperative, Dan Smrekar, Jackson Electric Cooperative, Daniel Hillberry, Richland Electric Cooperative, Barbara Miller, Rock Energy Cooperative, Roger Wiff, secretary/treasurer, Pierce Pepin Cooperative Services, Craig Buros, executive committee, Vernon Electric Cooperative, Jerry Sorenson, Riverland Energy Cooperative, Steve Johnson, Chippewa Valley Electric Cooperative, Karen Newbury, vice-chair, Price Electric Cooperative

Focus on the Future

A highlight of the conference was a panel presentation called "electric youth" about the value of engaging young people with electric co-ops through Youth Leadership Congress, internships, and more. The panel, moderated by WECA's Tim Clay, included former youth board member and Pierce Pepin intern Will Tuchtenhagen; former youth board member from Central Wisconsin Electric Cooperative Tyler Tautges; Dunn Energy Cooperative General Manager and CEO Jesse Singerhouse, who attended the Youth Leadership Conference as a teen in 1991; and Pierce Pepin Cooperative Services President and CEO Nate Boettcher, an advocate for youth cooperative opportunities and engagement.

"We're getting to the point where the generation that remembers when the lights first came on are starting to not be around anymore," said Boettcher, referring to the historic electrification of the 1930s and 40s. *"I think it's our duty to preserve our history, and it's our duty to tell our cooperative members and our youth about the significance of electrifying rural America and how that plays into the value that we create, even beyond the kilowatt-hours that people are consuming."*

"The thing that sticks out to me most about cooperatives is you're willing to invest in people; you're willing to make connections..." Singerhouse said. *"You know your local communities, you know the students that are there. If you can connect with them and bring them into the cooperative, your cooperative is going to be even stronger. You never know where your next employee, or leader or board member is going to come from."*



Pictured from left to right: Will Tuchtenhagen (screen), Tyler Tautges, Nate Boettcher, Jesse Singerhouse, and Tim Clay

WECA facilitates electric cooperative youth connections through the Youth Leadership Congress (YLC), youth board, and other youth education and recreational events. To build on that, the youth on the panel said the best way to reach them is through social media, including Facebook, Snapchat, and Instagram.

In his remarks, Tautges assured attendees youth want to be involved. "The biggest thing I'm here to say is that the youth is interested in cooperatives," he said. "If you're willing to give us a chance, we're willing to take that chance."

Tuchtenhagen, now a junior studying political science and international studies at Luther College, appeared virtually and talked about how his experiences with YLC and Pierce Pepin Cooperative Services fueled his current interest in policy-making. Tuchtenhagen's cooperative involvement recently earned him the top scholarship award of \$10,000 from NRECA's Glenn English Foundation.

"My freshman year of college, I came back for Christmas break and Nate (Boettcher) reached out to me to talk about internship opportunities, which led to two summers of working at Pierce Pepin," Tuchtenhagen said. "I really appreciated that, and Nate taking that initiative was such an important step for me, and for engaging the next generation. I don't think we're going to have the same cooperative network of people if we don't put our best foot forward engaging college students, high school students, and offer the best the opportunities that we can."

The session struck a chord with attendees including Roger Wiff, who serves on the WECA and Pierce Pepin boards. Wiff recalled speaking with Tuchtenhagen's father at a Dairyland Power event they all attended not long after Will started his cooperative journey. *"Where this really hit home for me, his dad told me – 'You will never know the impact you have had on my son's life.' That just brings it home, it really does. It tells us that we're doing the right thing,"* Wiff said.

James Kinzie of Bayfield Electric Cooperative said he served as a chaperone for Youth Leadership Congress and urged others to do the same. He called it *"one of the most rewarding experiences I've had."*

Bayfield Electric board member Bob Kretschmar, who also served nearly two decades on the NRECA board, said, *“As far as I’m concerned, this is the most important panel we’ve had during this whole meeting. These young people are our future.”*

Federated Youth Foundation Reports Record Year

At the WECA Annual Meeting, the Federated Youth Foundation (FYF) also held its annual meeting, reporting that the most recent fiscal year was record-setting. FYF Treasurer Judi Anibas reported that during fiscal year 2020–21, contributions were at an all-time high of \$1.37 million. The Foundation distributed \$993,000 in scholarships and charitable donations and distributed almost \$727,000 back to member cooperative and endowment accounts.

FYF ended the year with more than \$5 million in assets. Earnings include about \$400,000 in unrealized gain, \$305,000 in realized gain, and \$95,000 in dividends. FYF awarded 676 college scholarships totaling over \$620,000 and made 215 charitable contributions totaling more than \$370,000 to various causes including 4-H, FFA, Rural Housing, local emergency responders, food pantries, libraries, and other community-based projects.

Mike Wade and David Cramer were both unanimously re-elected to three-year terms on the board with a voice vote. FYF Executive Director Ethan Giebel thanked Anibas for her service to FYF. She served on the board for six years, including the last four as secretary/treasurer.



Federated Youth Foundation Executive Director Ethan Giebel and FYF board member Judith Anibas, who fulfilled two terms on the FYF board.

More from WECA Annual Meeting

The annual meeting also included the Federated Group Retention Report which showed a significant increase in claims so no returns are expected. Other presentations included “Net Zero America” by one of the authors of the Princeton University study on what it takes to reach net-zero in the energy sector, a legislative and federal policy update by Bobby Hamill of NRECA, a panel discussion on broadband expansion and the role of electric cooperatives, and a panel on electronic voting. Read more about these topics in upcoming issues of Condenser.

Potthast, Leifer, and Ally Award winners were recognized at the annual meeting dinner and awards ceremony.



Major awards for 2021 were presented to Larry Hallett, chief operations officer at Richland Electric, who won the Potthast Award; Deana Protz, public relations and communications specialist for Oakdale Electric Cooperative, which won the Leifer; and Byron Nolde, CEO of Oconto Electric, who won the ACE Award.

To watch the WECA 2021 Year in Review, click the image below.



COP26: U.S. and Rival China Pledge to Step Up Efforts to Fight Climate Change

Summit slogan: "Keep 1.5C Alive"

The world's two biggest greenhouse-gas emitters, the United States and China, stood together at the COP26 climate summit in Glasgow and jointly pledged to step up actions to fight climate change. Nation leaders from both Washington and Beijing agreed to work together on several fronts, including a plan to reduce methane emissions. The two rivals did not officially sign on to a proposal for countries to update their emissions-cutting plans by the end of next year, however.



As the two-week United Nations summit winds down, the United States and China are coming under pressure from developing countries to bring their emissions-cutting plans in line with what scientists say is needed to fulfill the Paris Accord, which calls for governments to take necessary steps to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees, or close to it. The U.N. reported plans submitted so far under the agreement put the world on track for 2.7 degrees of warming.

"The statement is not enough to close the deal," said Bernice Lee, research director at Chatham House, a think tank in London told the Wall Street Journal. *"The real test of Washington and Beijing is how hard they push for a 1.5 Celsius aligned deal here in Glasgow."*

Developing countries not only looking for stronger commitments, but they also want increases in funds to assist to help poorer nations adopt renewable energy.

One draft of an agreement released by the U.K. Wednesday calls for governments to accelerate the phaseout of fossil-fuel subsidies and coal, which has been opposed in the past by big fossil-fuel exporters including Saudi Arabia and Russia. The summit agreement, once finalized, is expected to be signed by more than 190 nations. The draft is not a new treaty, such as the 2015 Paris Accord, but it is a series of resolutions aimed at meeting climate change goals.

The summit is expected to wrap up today.

Biden to Sign \$1 Trillion Infrastructure Bill Monday



Following months of debate, the House passed the \$1 trillion infrastructure bill last Friday, sending it to President Joe Biden to sign. This week, Biden called the bill “a *once-in-a-generation investment to create good-paying jobs, modernize infrastructure, and turn the climate crisis into an opportunity.*”

The Department of Energy (DOE) this week highlighted investments in the bill including more than \$7 billion for the supply chain for batteries; \$3.5 billion for a weatherization assistance program; \$11 billion in grants for states, tribes, and utilities to bolster the resilience of the power grid against events such as cyberattacks and extreme weather; and \$6 billion for a nuclear credit program to help keep U.S. reactors operating. DOE also said \$21.5 billion will be available for funding clean energy demonstrations and research.

The infrastructure bill includes investments to modernize and upgrade the grid, including billions of dollars to develop new electric transmission lines, enhance the existing transmission system, and encourage regulators to prepare for expansive changes in energy resources and consumption needs.

It also establishes a \$2.5 billion loan program to boost the construction of new electric power transmission lines or help repair existing lines and adds \$3 billion in funding to an existing program at DOE that seeks to modernize the electric transmission and distribution systems. To further expedite the expansion of transmission, which is necessary for an expansion of renewable energy, the bill gives the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) the ability to overturn states’ objections to critical new transmission projects.

DOE plans to add about 1,000 workers just to implement the different aspects of the infrastructure bill.

The larger \$1.75 trillion “human infrastructure” reconciliation bill, which has been scaled back from the original \$3.5 billion spending plan, is still pending in Congress.

State and Federal Task Force Aims to Streamline High-Voltage Powerline Projects

Dairyland Power Cooperative’s Cardinal-Hickory transmission line is a good example of how the legal and regulatory process can delay transmission projects that advocates say are critical for the transition to more renewable energy.

This week the inaugural meeting of a new joint state and federal task force organized by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) took place. Regulators from 10 states, including Michigan, Maryland, Kansas, Pennsylvania, Idaho, California, Vermont, Massachusetts, North Carolina, and Arkansas, joined FERC to talk about the many challenges of developing high-voltage, long-distance power lines. This is a first-of-its-kind effort to ensure important cooperation between federal and state regulators, via a partnership between FERC and the National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners (NARUC), on electric transmission-related issues.



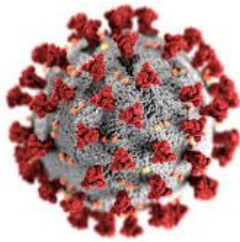
Lack of transmission upgrades has long been identified as a barrier to clean energy expansion, as wind and solar power must be able to be transmitted from areas where the resources are available, to areas that need the power. The problem is that much of the regulation falls to individual states, and transmission is a regional or national issue. States want a more streamlined process, while also maintaining a prominent role in the projects that affect them.

FERC Chairman Richard Glick said he’s aiming to get a “significant amount of input” from state utility regulators to inform the rulemaking process.

"It's important for the public interest of our country that we put aside some of our jurisdictional differences at times and see if we can work together," Glick said during the task force meeting yesterday.

FERC is considering a slew of reforms meant to make it easier to develop power lines critical to the transition to 100 percent carbon-free power that many states and electric utilities say they hope to achieve. The task force, which is expected to meet multiple times a year for the next three years, will play an advisory role for FERC as the federal regulators work to craft detailed reforms.

COVID WATCH: Northwest Wisconsin Counties "Critically High"

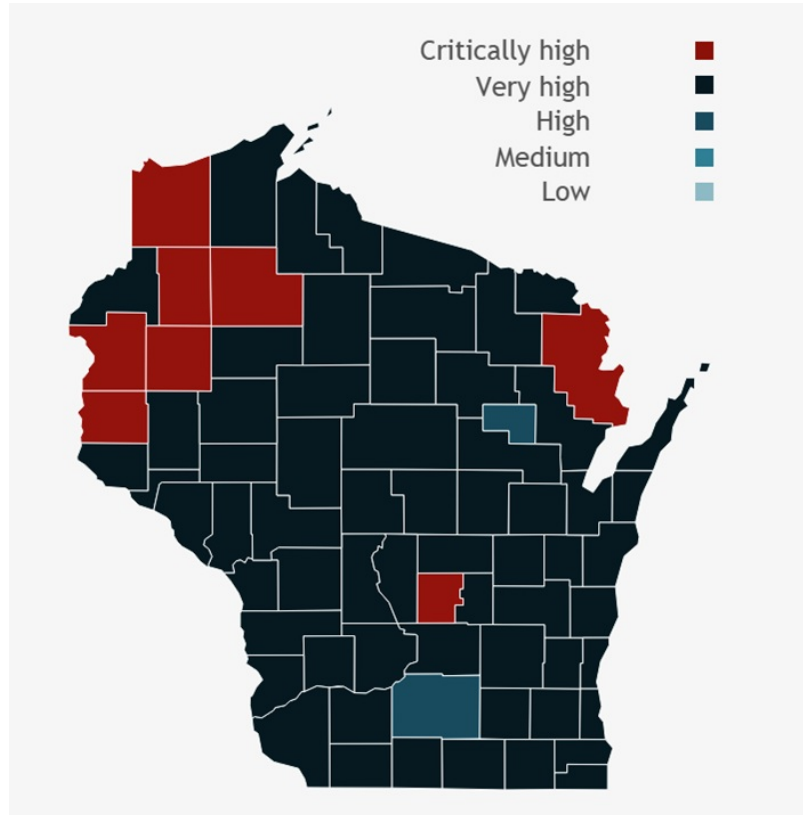


The Covidcoaster continues in Wisconsin with another uptick in cases, led mainly by counties in the northwest part of the state. According to the Wisconsin Department of Health Services, eight states are showing "critically high" numbers based on data from the past two weeks. The counties are, in order from highest rate of COVID cases per 100,000 people: Sawyer (1,448.5), Marinette (1,360.6), Washburn (1,337.3), Douglas (1,310.6), Polk (1,271.1), St. Croix (1,269.2), Marquette (1,131.5), and Barron (1,007.0) Counties.

All of the other counties in the state are classified as "very high," except Dane (315.6) and Menominee (228.2), which are showing the lowest rate of cases, and are classified as "high" activity. Dane and Menominee counties also have the highest vaccination rates in the state with 74.8 percent of people with at least one dose in Dane county, and 70.5 percent in Menominee county. Door County is also a leader in vaccinations rates with 73.6 percent of persons with at least one dose. Door County has a "very high" rate of cases at 499.1 per 100,000 people, which is lower than the state average of 625.9.

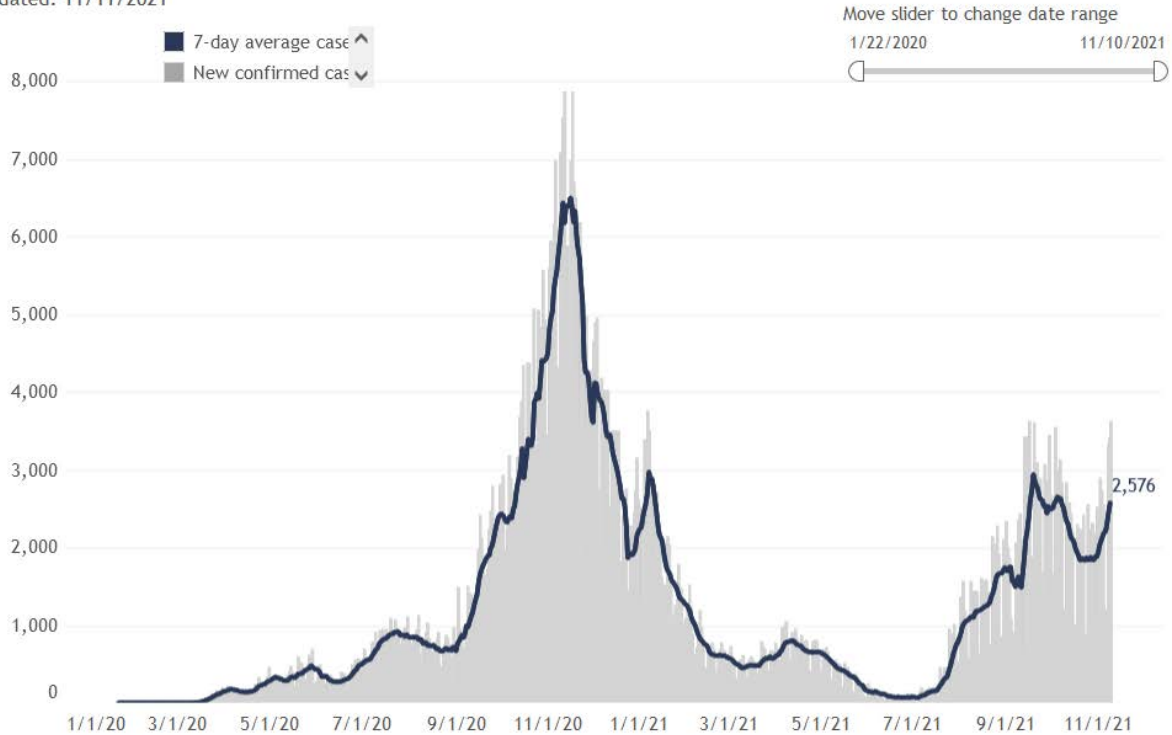
Dane County is still under a mask mandate as well.

As of yesterday, 58.1 percent of people in Wisconsin have had at least one dose of the vaccine.



New confirmed COVID-19 cases by date confirmed, and 7-day average

Updated: 11/11/2021



Job Market:

JOURNEYMAN LINEMAN

Polk-Burnett Electric Cooperative, Centuria, Wis. is seeking a journeyman lineman to perform all tasks necessary to construct, maintain and operate the electric distribution system utilizing methods and procedures which comply with all safety rules, regulations, and Polk-Burnett Electric Cooperative policies, procedures, and specifications.

The successful candidate must have a high school or equivalent diploma. Completion of additional education through an electrical power distribution apprentice training program is required. Experience with an electric distribution cooperative is preferred. Must possess good oral and written communication skills, be self-motivated to complete assigned and expected tasks using independent judgment. A working knowledge of computers is preferred. Must possess a valid CDL. Must be able to climb proficiently and have a thorough understanding of the theory of electricity and associated principles. The successful candidate must be able and willing to work outside in any kind of weather and be extremely flexible in the arrangement of working hours and days. This position will encounter and perform duties in adverse terrain either working alone or with others. This position will report to Siren office facilities and must reside within a 20-minute drive of the office. Skills test conducted if selected to interview.

Please submit an application, cover letter, and resume **on or before November 30** to: Human Resources, Polk-Burnett Electric Cooperative, 1001 State Road 35, Centuria, WI 54824 or hr@polkburnett.com. No phone calls, please. An application can be downloaded at www.polkburnett.com under 'My Co-op - Employment Opportunities'. EOE/M/F/V/D



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The Wisconsin Electric Cooperative Association would like to recognize all of our sponsors and associate members for supporting our efforts on behalf of the state's electric cooperatives, so they may continue to supply safe, reliable, and affordable electricity to members. Please join us in supporting these partners of the electric cooperative community.

This week we would like to highlight:



STAR Energy Services is a solutions-based organization that provides a portfolio of services to over 100 electric utilities in the upper Midwest. These services include: electrical engineering, GIS, software products and integration, IT management, electrical testing, safety compliance, and field inspections.

Utilize STAR's electrical engineering expertise for your next distribution plan, construction work plan, cost of service/rate study, distributed energy resource interconnection, SCADA design/installation, or stray voltage investigation.

STAR offers technology solutions and software products to enhance the delivery and reliability of electricity by focusing on the needs of our clients. STAR employees utilize all departments for a specialized approach to address the varying needs of each cooperative.

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