



# THE COOPERATIVE CONNECTION

An orientation program for new employees and first-term directors

**Sept. 9-11, 2025**

The Cooperative Center | NDAREC headquarters | 3201 Nygren Drive NW | Mandan, North Dakota

*The Cooperative Connection* is designed especially for new employees and first-term directors who want to learn more about electric cooperatives and the electric utility industry.

## SERVING RURAL AMERICA – SEPT. 9

This opening presentation will highlight the cooperative principles, and provide examples of how CoBank puts them into action.

## WE ARE COOPERATIVE – SEPT. 9

*Sponsored by CoBank*

Participants will learn about the cooperative business model, the importance of member ownership, democratic governance and local accountability. They will also gain insight on the fundamentals of electric operations, industry trends and challenges. This member-centric presentation will focus on safely delivering value, reliability and responsiveness.

### Key Topics

#### 1. The Cooperative Difference

- Overview of the seven cooperative principles and how they guide decision making
- Governance structure: role of the board, management and member-owners
- Historical development of electric cooperatives and their impact on rural America
- Importance of democratic control and member engagement
- Distinction between electric cooperatives, investor-owned utilities and municipal systems

#### 2. Electric Operations 101

- Basics of how electricity is generated, transmitted and distributed
- Key components of cooperative infrastructure: substations, lines, poles and meters
- Overview of system planning, maintenance and reliability standards
- Importance of safety, outage response and restoration procedures

#### 3. Industry Trends & Challenges

- The evolving regulatory landscape
- The shift toward renewable energy, distributed generation and battery storage
- Cybersecurity, electrification and the rise of electric vehicles
- Supply chain and workforce challenges in a rapidly changing utility environment
- The role of cooperatives in bridging the digital divide and supporting rural resilience

#### 4. Being Member-Centric

- Understanding the member experience: reliability, affordability and transparency
- Tools for improving communication, trust and responsiveness to member needs
- Aligning operations and services with member values and community impact
- Measuring success through member satisfaction, engagement and feedback
- Reinforcing a culture of safety, service and pride in meeting cooperative obligations

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## CHARTERED BUS TOUR – SEPT. 10

### BNI Coal

BNI Coal is developing North Dakota's abundant lignite energy resource. At its Center Mine, BNI mines and reclaims about 200 acres per year to supply lignite coal to fuel the nearby Milton R. Young Generation Station. Two power generating cooperatives, Minnkota Power and Square Butte, operate the Young Station, which consumes virtually all coal produced at Center Mine.

### Great Plains Synfuels Plant

The Great Plains Synfuels Plant is owned and operated by Basin Electric Power Cooperative's subsidiary, Dakota Gasification Company. It is the only commercial-scale coal gasification facility in the United States. It produces 13 products, including synthetic natural gas, fertilizers, chemicals and fuels from the lignite coal gasification process.

### Antelope Valley Station

Basin Electric's Antelope Valley Station is a coal-based power plant with two units, each rated at 450 megawatts. The units began operation in 1984 and 1986, and are located adjacent to the fuel supplier, The Coteau Properties Company Freedom Mine.

## THE POWER OF THE COOPERATIVE NETWORK – SEPT. 11

NDAREC Executive Vice President and General Manager Josh Kramer will provide an overview of the electric cooperative network – which stretches across the nation – and resources available to co-op employees and directors. He will also highlight the wide array of services NDAREC offers to its member-cooperatives.

## AN OPEN FORUM WITH ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE LEADERS – SEPT. 11

**Josh Kramer** will facilitate an open forum to answer your questions — no holds barred. The following co-op leaders will participate in this discussion:

**Angela Carlson**, director, Slope Electric Cooperative, and NDAREC board president

**Jon Beyer**, general manager, North Central Electric Cooperative, and president of the North Dakota Managers Association

**Chris Baumgartner**, senior vice president of member and external relations, Basin Electric Power Cooperative

## POWERING NORTH DAKOTA: NAVIGATING NORTH DAKOTA'S ELECTRIC LANDSCAPE AND PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION OVERSIGHT – SEPT. 11

Public Service Commissioner (PSC) **Jill Kringstad** will address how rural electric cooperatives differ from other electric utilities. She will also outline the PSC's regulatory role and highlight current trends shaping the electric utility industry.

## SCHEDULE AT A GLANCE

### Tuesday, Sept. 9

12:30 p.m.	Registration
1 p.m.	Serving Rural America
1:30 p.m.	We Are Cooperative
3 p.m.	Refreshment Break
3:15 p.m.	We Are Cooperative – continued
5 p.m.	Adjournment
5:30 p.m.	Dinner

### Wednesday, Sept. 10

7:30 a.m.	Hot Breakfast Buffet
8 a.m.	Board Tour Bus
8:15 a.m.	Bus Tour <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• BNI Coal</li><li>• Great Plains Synfuels Plant</li><li>• Antelope Valley Station (including lunch)</li></ul>
4:30 p.m.	Adjournment

### Thursday, Sept. 11

7:30 a.m.	Hot Breakfast Buffet
8:15 a.m.	The Power of the Cooperative Network
9:15 a.m.	Refreshment Break
9:30 a.m.	Open Forum with Electric Cooperative Leaders
10:30 a.m.	Refreshment Break
10:45 a.m.	Powering North Dakota: Navigating North Dakota's Electric Landscape and PSC Oversight
11:30 a.m.	Adjournment

**A tour of the NDAREC Lineworker Training Center will be offered after program adjournment.**

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## MEET THE GUEST PRESENTERS



**Josh Rife** has more than 19 years of experience serving rural communities as part of the Farm Credit System. He spent 15 years as a financial officer at Farm Credit Services of America. For the past four years, he has been with CoBank, initially as relationship manager in the Rural Agribusiness Banking Group, and most recently as vice president - a relationship manager. In this role, he assists electric distribution cooperatives in delivering energy services to their member-owners.

Josh holds a finance degree from the University of Notre Dame and an MBA from the University of Nebraska, Omaha. Based in Aberdeen, he serves electric distribution customers in Montana, North Dakota and South Dakota. Outside of work, Josh enjoys camping, hunting, golfing, attending his children's sporting events and traveling with his family.



**Bryan Singletary** is a seasoned professional with more than four decades of experience in the electric utility industry. He has spent his career translating the technical aspects of delivering high-quality electrical service into terms members can easily understand.

For the past 32 years, Bryan has owned and operated Practical Energies, a consulting firm specializing in helping cooperatives navigate the challenges of today's consumer-centric utility marketplace. His firm has worked with hundreds of utilities, designing, developing and implementing a wide range of member-focused programs. With the industry's increasing emphasis on reliability, Bryan has seen a growing demand for member-oriented marketing programs and training, particularly in key accounts and strategic planning.

He is a nationally sought-after speaker and trainer in utility operations, strategic planning, key accounts management,

### Registration Information

Online registration is available at [ndarec.com/ndarec-education-programs](https://ndarec.com/ndarec-education-programs). The registration deadline is **Aug. 22**. Early registrations are encouraged due to the program limit of 45 people. Registrations will be honored on a first-come, first-served basis. The registration fee is \$695/person and includes the cost of program materials, meals and refreshment breaks. No advance payment is necessary.

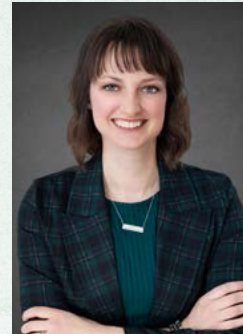
Spouses are also welcome to attend at a reduced registration fee of \$125. This includes the meals and refreshment breaks.

### Cancellations

If you need to cancel your registration, please notify Pamela Clark-Stein at [pstein@ndarec.com](mailto:pstein@ndarec.com) 14 days in advance of the program. If notice is provided 14 days or more in advance, there is no cancellation fee. If notice is provided less than 14 days in

demand-side management, member service and power quality. Bryan is also an accomplished writer, having authored and co-authored several books, papers and manuals on these topics.

A Florida native, Bryan holds a degree in mechanical engineering from Auburn University. He and his wife, Maggie, have four children and eight grandchildren.



**Jill Kringstad** was appointed to the North Dakota Public Service Commission in January 2025 by Gov. Kelly Armstrong. She fills the position vacated by U.S. Congresswoman Julie Fedorchak.

Jill heads the pipeline, electric transmission and energy conversion siting, gas economic regulation, and railroad safety and regulation portfolios. She serves as the state's

liaison to the Midcontinent Independent System Operator (MISO) and the Organization of MISO states (OMS).

Jill's passion for public service began at a young age when she started volunteering in elementary school for local charities and political causes. She served as a legislative page-for-a-day, interned for Sen. John Hoeven in Washington, D.C., and worked in Congressman Rick Berg's North Dakota office.

Jill has a longstanding interest in the energy industry. She began her professional career at Basin Electric Power Cooperative working in financial services and internal auditing. In 2016, she joined the North Dakota Public Service Commission as a budget specialist. In 2019, Jill was named the manager of business operations, which included expanded responsibilities for agency operations and planning, agency mission and strategic initiatives.

A North Dakota native, Jill earned a bachelor's degree in accounting and minor in economics from Minnesota State University Moorhead. Jill is a certified public accountant. Jill lives in Bismarck with her husband, Ben, and their three children.

advance, a cancellation fee of \$70/day will be charged. **Please note:** Substitutions are permitted at no extra charge if NDAREC is notified of the substitution prior to the program date.

### Hotel accommodations at the Days Inn by Wyndham, 2630 Old Red Trail, Mandan

A block of sleeping rooms has been reserved at the Days Inn by Wyndham for Sept. 9 and 10. To make room reservations, please use the online link below.

[wyndhamhotels.com/hotels/58467?checkInDate=09/09/2025&checkOutDate=09/11/2025&groupCode=NDAREC's](https://wyndhamhotels.com/hotels/58467?checkInDate=09/09/2025&checkOutDate=09/11/2025&groupCode=NDAREC's)

The room block will be released by **Aug. 22** so it's important to make room reservations as soon as possible. The rooms are reserved under "REC Cooperative Connection program."