

POWERING NORTH DAKOTA

March 26, 2026

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SUPPLEMENT TO:

Beulah Beacon , Hazen Star, Center Republican, The Leader-News,
McLean County Independent, Central McLean News-Journal

Welcome to Powering North Dakota

BY KELSEY MAJESKE
PUBLISHER

Whether you're simply flipping on a light switch, brewing your first cup of coffee of the day, or keeping the house warm during a -20°F January freeze, the energy that powers our lives starts right here in our backyard. In Mercer, Oliver, and McLean counties, energy is more than just an industry, it's our way of life.

In this special section, we're taking a closer look at the incredible work happening across our counties:

- **Local landmarks:** We celebrate the decades of reliable service from landmarks like the Garrison Dam, Antelope Valley Station, and Leland Olds Station.
- **Coal country legacy:** From the massive draglines at the Freedom, Falkirk, and Coyote Creek

mines to the one-of-a-kind Synfuels Plant, our local workers are the reason the Midwest stays powered.

• **The Next Big Thing:** We dive into the future with Talon Metals' proposed mineral processing, the expansion of wind and solar projects and a look into Applied Digital's high-tech data centers in other areas of the state as our communities make their own decisions on the future of local data centers.

• **More Than Just Power:** These industries support our schools, fund our county services, and provide thousands of family-supporting careers that keep our small towns thriving.

This section is a tribute to our neighbors, the miners, engineers, linemen, and plant operators who show up every day to keep the lights on for millions. Their hard work is the true "power" behind North Dakota.

We hope you enjoy this look at the people and projects fueling our communities today and for generations to come.



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Applied Digital

A question-and-answer segment with a leading developer of data centers in North Dakota

COMPILED BY KELLI AMELING
CENTER REPUBLICAN

The answers to these questions were provided by Applied Digital Media Relations and Content Manager Jo Albers. Answers to the questions were not modified by newspaper staff.

How would you describe who you are and what your company does to power North Dakota?

Applied Digital designs, builds, and operates high-performance, sustainably engineered data centers and colocation services for artificial intelligence, cloud, networking, and blockchain workloads. We've strategically selected North Dakota to develop our Polaris Forge AI Factory model because it is one of the few regions in the U.S. where environmental advantages, policy support, and infrastructure readiness align to power the age of intelligence.

We are committed to bringing high-paying, high-tech jobs to rural North Dakota. By hiring and training locally, we ensure that the vast majority of job creation and tax revenue stays within the community. Plus we are bringing new infrastructure, particularly vital fiber connectivity, to benefit the local area as well.

Once the Polaris Forge 1 AI Factory in Ellendale was operational, Applied Digital became the county's largest single-property taxpayer by far. In addition to this property tax benefit, our operations contribute significantly to local sales tax revenue. For example, prior to annexing the Polaris Forge 1 campus in 2025, Ellendale projected \$600,000 in total annual sales tax collections. Following the company's localized purchases, the city collected \$380,000 in a single month, nearly

doubling annual collections during the construction phase.

These community benefits are further boosted by long-term tax revenue from local hotels, dining, and fuel services. Most importantly, since Applied Digital began developing its data center campus in Ellendale, local utility customers have seen more than \$31 million in reductions on their electric bills as a direct result of our integration into the regional grid.

What is a brief history describing when you were established in ND to where your company is today?

Our journey in North Dakota began in 2021 with a single project in Jamestown, representing approximately \$40 million in construction spending. Since then, our growth trajectory has been at a rapid pace. As of today, we have an aggregate spend (completed and current) of nearly \$9 billion across the state. We have evolved from supporting blockchain infrastructure to building massive, high-performance computing data center campuses that meet the global demand for Generative AI.

What has been your top three accomplishments to date?

1. Bringing online the world's largest direct-to-chip liquid-cooled AI factory in Ellendale. This represents the largest capital expenditure (CAPEX) project in North Dakota's history, including public works.
2. Establishing successful, transparent partnerships with local communities where our impact is felt through job creation, long-term investment, and community grants via the Applied Digital Cares program.
3. Our ability to attract and train local talent. We take particular pride in providing opportuni-

ties for native North Dakotans to return home to the state to raise their families while working at the forefront of the tech industry.

What is the main focus of your company today?

Our focus today is meeting the unprecedented surge in demand for AI infrastructure by developing purpose-built campuses designed for performance and scale, leveraging repeatable, proprietary engineered designs that prioritize speed to market and sustainability.

As we move forward into 2026, we are building the blueprint for the next era of American industry. By leveraging our proprietary data center designs, we transform regional power that is otherwise underutilized into a specialized engine for innovation, ensuring that every megawatt deployed serves as a launchpad for the technologies transforming our world.

What does your company hope to accomplish this year?

For the 2026 calendar year, our goal is to execute our current development pipeline with precision and discipline. We are focused on continuing our construction projects on time and on budget, ensuring that we deliver on our promises to our customers and the communities in which we build.

What are the future goals of the company for the next 5 to 10 years?

Our vision for the next five to 10 years is to continue scaling our current and future data center campuses across North Dakota as well as in other regions. We are advancing a multi-gigawatt development pipeline designed to transform overlooked regional resources into thriving hubs of innovation, ensuring that the digital future is built in the heart

of America.

This vision is guided by our Polaris Forge philosophy, where the North Star of clarity meets the Forge of bold innovation: to turn raw power into a permanent engine for regional progress. By creating purpose-driven campuses that generate thousands of high-paying jobs and significant tax revenue, Applied Digital strengthens local economies for generations to come.

Central to this goal is our ongoing investment in the state's most valuable asset: its people. We will continue to expand our training programs to attract and retain native North Dakotans. Ultimately, Applied Digital is not just adding capacity; we are setting the global standard for how responsible, ethical, and sustainable digital infrastructure can shape tomorrow's economy while leaving a lasting, positive impact on every community we touch.

What are some upcoming projects your company is working on?

Our future project pipeline is centered on scaling our capacity to meet the global demand for AI infrastructure, specifically through the expansion of our purpose-built data center campuses. We currently have contracted customers secured at our two campuses, Polaris Forge 1 and 2, in North Dakota, and we expect to add new campuses both within the state and across other regions.

These upcoming developments are part of a broader, multi-gigawatt development strategy intended to turn power into progress. Each of these upcoming projects is designed to be a thriving hub of innovation that revitalizes overlooked regions by creating local jobs and driving long-term economic opportunity.

Where are your current locations in North Dakota?

Ellendale, Harwood, and Jamestown

Do you have any plans of being in or working with Mercer and/or McLean counties in the future?

Not at this time

Is there anything else you would like our readers to know about your company?

Beyond the technical and environmental advantages that make North Dakota a premier destination for digital infrastructure, the true cornerstone of Applied Digital's success is the state's human element. While we certainly benefit from the state's abundant energy, low operational costs, and a favorable climate that provides more than 200 days a year of "free cooling" for our data centers, these factors are only part of the equation.

The most significant benefit of operating in North Dakota is the people. We have found that the work ethic here is unparalleled and unlike any other state in which we operate. There is a genuine desire for progress and a culture of hard work that aligns perfectly with our Pioneer's Creed of moving fast and building things that matter. At Applied Digital, we believe that technology should serve people and that progress should strengthen communities. This is why we prioritize hiring and training locally, to ensure that the native North Dakotans who build and run these facilities can raise their families in the communities they love while working at the global forefront of the Age of Intelligence. We are not just building data centers; we are partnering with a resilient and resourceful workforce to forge a new era of American industry.

Blades among the fields

BY PHAIDRA YUNKER
LEADER-NEWS

Nestled amid rolling farmland and ranchland in western North Dakota, the Glen Ullin Energy Center produces about 106 megawatts of wind energy (roughly enough electricity to power 54,000 homes) while employing a small local workforce and contributing significant tax revenue to the region.

Owned and operated by ALLETE Clean Energy, which develops and operates wind and solar projects nationwide, the facility began development in 2015 and started delivering wind-generated electricity in the fall of 2019. The project supplies power to Xcel Energy under a power purchase agreement and has become a steady economic and environmental presence for the surrounding communities, according to Mitchell Bettenhausen of ALLETE Clean Energy.

Listening to the landscape

From the outset, planners conducted an extensive suite of environmental and cultural studies to guide the project's design. A comprehensive Site Characterization evaluated native grasslands, reviewed wetland inventories and assessed state and federally listed species along with local bird and bat communities. Additional surveys included cultural resource investigations and field-based wetland delineations.

Those studies shaped siting and construction decisions and helped ensure the project was planned with an understanding of environmental sensitivities and regulatory requirements, Bettenhausen said.

Prairie winds, practical gains

Since beginning operations, the Glen Ullin Energy Center has become a steady contributor to the local economy. The facility provides regular, full-time

jobs to about 10 people who live and work in Glen Ullin and nearby towns. It also contributes roughly \$450,000 annually in county and state taxes and has donated \$20,000 to support community initiatives and educational programs.

Bettenhausen said the project was designed to coexist with farming and ranching. Lease payments and other revenues provide a steady income stream that can help local farmers and ranchers manage financial challenges during periods of low cattle or crop prices, allowing them to continue producing commodities for the nation.

From start-up to steady output

In its first five years of operation, the Glen Ullin Energy Center generated 2.4 million megawatt-hours of clean energy. The facility's three top accomplishments, Bettenhausen said, are its energy production, its contribution to local tax coffers and community donations and

the role it plays in supporting agricultural operations in the area.

The facility's current focus is on reliable, large-scale renewable energy production, maintaining infrastructure that includes 16 miles of access roads and supporting the local economy and workforce. Bettenhausen described maintenance as a blend of traditional mechanical work and modern software upkeep.

"I always describe a turbine half like a car, you want to check your oil levels, change as necessary, do regular preventative maintenance," he said. "And the other half like a computer that requires updates and software changes to gain efficiencies."

Glen Ullin Energy Center works with local fire and emergency health and safety teams to ensure proper response procedures and to navigate turbine access roads, Bettenhausen added.

Funding the future

ALLETE has proposed a neighboring project that would add 200 megawatts to the company's North Dakota portfolio. If built, that expansion would generate an estimated \$53 million in state and county tax revenues over a 35-year span and help meet regional load growth.

Technology and operations continue to evolve, Bettenhausen said, with improvements aimed at making work more ergonomic for technicians while preserving routine preventative maintenance practices.

Wind at work

Western North Dakota's combination of strong wind resources, reliable electric transmission infrastructure and a long history of coexisting with agriculture has made the region attractive for wind development. For Glen Ullin, that has meant a project designed to balance energy produc



Submitted photo | Mitchell Bettenhausen
Turbines silhouetted against a winter prairie sunset, quietly turning wind into power.



Submitted photo | Mitchell Bettenhausen
Two antelope graze in a stubble field as a Glen Ullin Energy Center turbine turns quietly in the background.



Submitted photo | Mitchell Bettenhausen
Tractors line up beneath a towering turbine at Glen Ullin Energy Center as area Tractor Trek participants pause for a community lunch.



Submitted photo | Mitchell Bettenhausen
Students from NDSU's Bison to Bakken program pose with a turbine blade, the long sweep of fiberglass dwarfing the group and illustrating the size of modern wind technology.

NextEra boosts its role in North Dakota energy

BY TYSON MATTHEWS
MCLEAN COUNTY INDEPENDENT

NextEra Energy Resources, a long-standing contributor to North Dakota's energy landscape, remains committed to delivering reliable energy while supporting the communities that power the state.

"The company operates 16 energy centers across North Dakota, drawing on a diverse mix of natural gas, pipelines, battery energy storage and renewable resources," Marshall Hastings, Communications Specialist at Florida Power & Light Company said. "With new projects in the development pipeline, the company's statewide portfolio represents approximately 1,784 megawatts of operational energy and nearly \$3.7 billion in total energy infrastructure investment."

In addition to supplying power, NextEra Energy Resources highlights the economic impact its projects generate locally. Company representatives say its operations contribute roughly \$8.7 million each year in landowner payments and \$6.6 million in property taxes, revenue that helps fund schools, road improvements and other essential county services.

Long-Term Growth in North Dakota

NextEra Energy has been in the state spans more than two decades, with its subsidiaries playing an ongoing role in North Dakota's economic growth. Over the years, NextEra Energy Resources has contributed more than \$600,000 to schools, local nonprofits and community events in central North Dakota, reinforcing its commitment to community partnerships.

The company is among the state's leading energy investors, helping to advance North Dakota's reputation as a national energy leader.

Priorities for Today and Tomorrow

The company says its current focus is straightforward: providing dependable, low-cost energy while ensuring long-term financial value for local communi-

ties. This includes partnering with county, landowner and community leaders to develop projects generating lasting revenue and economic opportunity.

Looking ahead to 2026, NextEra Energy Resources plans to continue investing in local infrastructure and supporting North Dakota's growing energy needs. Among its upcoming initiatives is construction of the state's first battery energy storage projects, located in Emmons and Burke counties. These facilities will store energy produced when supply is abundant and deliver it back to the grid during periods of high demand.

NextEra also recently signed a memorandum of understanding with Basin Electric Power Cooperative to explore a new combined-cycle natural gas plant in Mercer County — an effort aimed at providing reliable, dispatchable energy for large commercial and industrial users.

Long-Term Vision

"Over the next five to ten years, company leaders expect North Dakota to continue playing a vital role in America's push for energy independence. Their goal, they say, is to meet rising energy demand in a way that is both responsible and community-centered," Hastings said. "That includes continued work with landowners, businesses and local officials to ensure economic benefits remain in the counties where projects are built."

A Continued Commitment to North Dakota

As the company expands its footprint, NextEra Energy Resources officials emphasized their dedication to responsible development. They note that every project represents a long-term partnership with the county and its residents, and that collaboration with first responders, local leaders and neighbors remains central to their approach.

"We believe strong energy development and strong communities go hand in hand," Hastings said. "We're proud to continue working alongside North Dakotans to help power the state's future."



Submitted photo | NextEra Energy Resources
Oliver II in Oliver County



Submitted photo | NextEra Energy Resources
Langdon II Energy Center in Cavalier County

COMPANY OFFICIALS POINT TO THREE MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

1. Strengthening North Dakota's energy leadership through billions in infrastructure investment supporting in-state energy production.

2. Building strong community relationships, contributing millions annually in land payments, tax revenue and local support.

3. Producing nearly 1,800 megawatts of energy, helping meet growing regional demand and bolstering U.S. energy reliability.



Submitted photo | NextEra Energy Resources
North Dakota Energy Center in LaMoure County

Garrison Dam: Powering North Dakota

BY TYSON MATTHEWS
MCLEAN COUNTY INDEPENDENT

Above the Missouri River and stretching more than 2 miles across central North Dakota, Garrison Dam remains one of the region's most significant engineering achievements, and one of the state's most important sources of renewable energy and water management.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers constructed the dam from 1947 to 1953. The embankment dam is 210 feet tall and stretches 2.5 miles in length and contains about 66.5 million cubic yards of earth reinforced by 1.5 million cubic yards of concrete. The base is 2,050 feet wide, narrowing to 60 feet at the top.

The Corps began operations here in the 1950s and has continued maintaining and updating the facility for more than seven decades.

The dam is an essential part of the state's infrastructure for powering homes, supporting communities and helping manage the waters from the Missouri River.

The Garrison Dam is a hydro-power plant, which houses five generating units with a combined capacity of 515,000 kilowatts. The facility produces 1.8 billion to 2.6 billion kilowatt-hours of electricity each year, supplying enough power for nearly 200,000 homes across the region. Electricity is transmitted through seven major transmission lines and marketed through the Western Area Power Administration.

GARRISON DAM TOURS

Visitors can learn more through guided tours, offered every hour from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. between Memorial Day weekend and Labor Day.

Off-season group tours of 10 or more are available by appointment.

Intake and spillway systems built for safety and control

The dam's intake structure houses hoisting equipment and gates for five power tunnels and three flood control tunnels. Each power tunnel includes a 24-foot diameter penstock extending 1,650 feet to deliver water to the turbines. The flood control tunnels, measuring 22 to 26 feet in diameter, allow the Corps to release water during high-flow periods.

A massive concrete spillway, equipped with 28 steel gates, provides emergency control during extreme weather events. Each gate measures 40 feet wide and 29 feet tall. At full operation, the spillway can discharge an extraor-

dinary 827,000 cubic feet of water per second, with flows reaching speeds of up to 75 mph before entering the stilling basin below.

Lake Sakakawea

Behind the dam lies Lake Sakakawea in one of the largest manmade reservoirs in the United States. The lake extends 178 miles westward to Williston and the Yellowstone River. On average, the lake is two to three miles wide, reaching six miles at its widest point, and around 180 feet deep close to the dam.

At full pool (1,850 feet above sea level), the lake covers 368,000 acres and boasts 1,300 miles of shoreline. The dam can store

See **GARRISON** on page A9



Submitted photo | Delanie Stafford, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
The spillway at the Garrison Dam.



Submitted photo | Delanie Stafford, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
An aerial shot of the Garrison Dam located in Riverdale.



The mission of the Garrison Area Improvement Association is to create an environment that will aid the retention and expansion of existing businesses within the community and encourage the development and success of all area business.

One of our primary functions is to provide business assistance to startups, expansions, and re-locations to the Garrison Area.

Business Start Up Grant, Employee Recruitment & Retention Grant, Internship Grant, Assistance with Business Planning and Grant Writing.

GAIA provides Garrison area businesses with:

- Business Startup Program
- Business Improvement Grant
- Business Tourism Grant
- Bank of North Dakota Flex PACE Program
- Community Betterment Grant Program for Building Demolition
- Community Challenge Grant
- Community Event Creation & Enhancement Grant
- Community Group Grant
- Daycare Provider Grant
- Employee Recruitment & Retention Assistance
- Entrepreneurial Grant
- Fishing & Hunting Guide Incentive Program
- Fishing & Hunting Guide Marketing Grant
- Internship Grant Program
- Local Community Development Project Incentive
- Essential Service Housing Grant Program
- Procuring low interest financing for businesses

GAIA also performs a wide variety of other services to support and benefit our existing businesses and community.



GET HOOKED ON
Garrison
— NORTH DAKOTA —

Contact Rachael at 701.463.2631
for more information regarding grants
and programs that GAIA offers.



THIS IS COAL COUNTRY

Where hard work powers homes, industries, and communities across the Midwest.

For us, energy is more than an industry. It is a way of life.

The story of coal in Mercer, Oliver, and McLean counties is written by the miners, mechanics, engineers, and operators who show up every day to do the work.

For decades, the mines and power plants of central North Dakota have provided the dependable electricity that keeps homes warm in winter, businesses running year-round, and communities growing.



Basin Electric Power Cooperative's Antelope Valley Station provides electricity generation 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

More than 12,000 North Dakotans work in jobs supported by the lignite industry. Together they provide electricity to two million customers across the Midwest and generate more than \$5.5 billion in economic activity for our state, including \$2 million of economic output in Mercer, Oliver, and McLean counties alone.



The coal industry provides employment and opportunities for generations of families.

Coal development strengthens the communities we call home. In 2024, the industry paid more than \$10 million in coal severance and conversion taxes directly to coal counties—money used to fund essential community services in the three counties. Those dollars support local schools, county services, small businesses, and family livelihoods throughout the region.



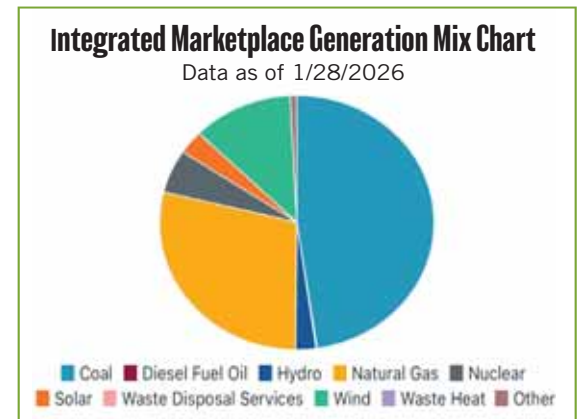
Community members in Beulah and Hazen team up during the region's annual Coal Bowl for the "Tailgating Together" fundraiser.

North Dakota's lignite industry continues to invest in new technologies that improve efficiency, enhance oil field production in western North Dakota, and unlock critical minerals needed for the future of American manufacturing and national security.

We are also preparing for the next chapter of energy demand by exploring new ways lignite power can bring even greater opportunity, investment, and stability across our region for generations to come.

At the same time, our power plants continue doing what they have always done best: delivering reliable electricity when people need it most.

Through blizzards, heat waves, and long winter nights, coal power stands ready.



When temperatures on the northern great plains dropped below -20 F in late January 2026, coal was the dominant source of power generation on both the MISO and SPP power grids. On January 28, coal accounted for nearly half of all generation in the SPP market.

Because when it comes to energy, where it comes from matters. And so do the people it serves.

We are proud to call this place home.

Strong energy. Strong communities. Strong future.



Supporting the workers, communities, and companies that power North Dakota.



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Building a sustainable future on a legacy of success

BY DANIEL ARENS
HAZEN STAR EDITOR

For over half a century, Basin Electric Power Cooperative's oldest power plant has been a source of stable and reliable electricity generation for the United States.

"Leland Olds Station continues to stand as a vital resource for communities across the region, delivering reliable power to 139 member cooperatives in nine states and supporting the farms, businesses and families who depend on it every day," Jena Gray, senior staff writer with Basin Electric's member and external relations, said.

Leland Olds Station is located 4 miles southeast of Stanton. The power plant's Unit 1 began generating 220 megawatts of electricity

in 1966, using locally abundant lignite coal. At the time, it was the largest lignite coal-fired plant in the Western Hemisphere.

"It reflected a major investment in affordable energy, jobs and regional growth," Gray said.

Basin Electric's membership expanded over the coming years, leading to growth at Leland Olds Station. The 440-megawatt Unit 2 was added to the plant in 1975, solidifying Leland Olds as a landmark facility in the cooperative's history and in the development of the Upper Midwest power grid.

Leland Olds Station consumes lignite provided by Dakota Coal Company, a wholly owned subsidiary of Basin Electric.

Currently, there are 147 people employed at Units 1 and 2 at Leland Olds Station. The station

generates an average of 3.5 million megawatt-hours annually and burns about 3 million tons of coal each year. This coal is delivered by train from the Coteau Freedom Mine, located several miles west-northwest of Beulah.

The plant crushes coal and burns it in a boiler to create steam, which spins a turbine and generator to produce electricity for the power grid.

Gray said that Leland Olds does not have any planned expansions or renovations in the near future. The plant conducts major outages every three to four years for repairs and equipment rebuilds to maintain reliability.

"The station is expected to continue operating and providing

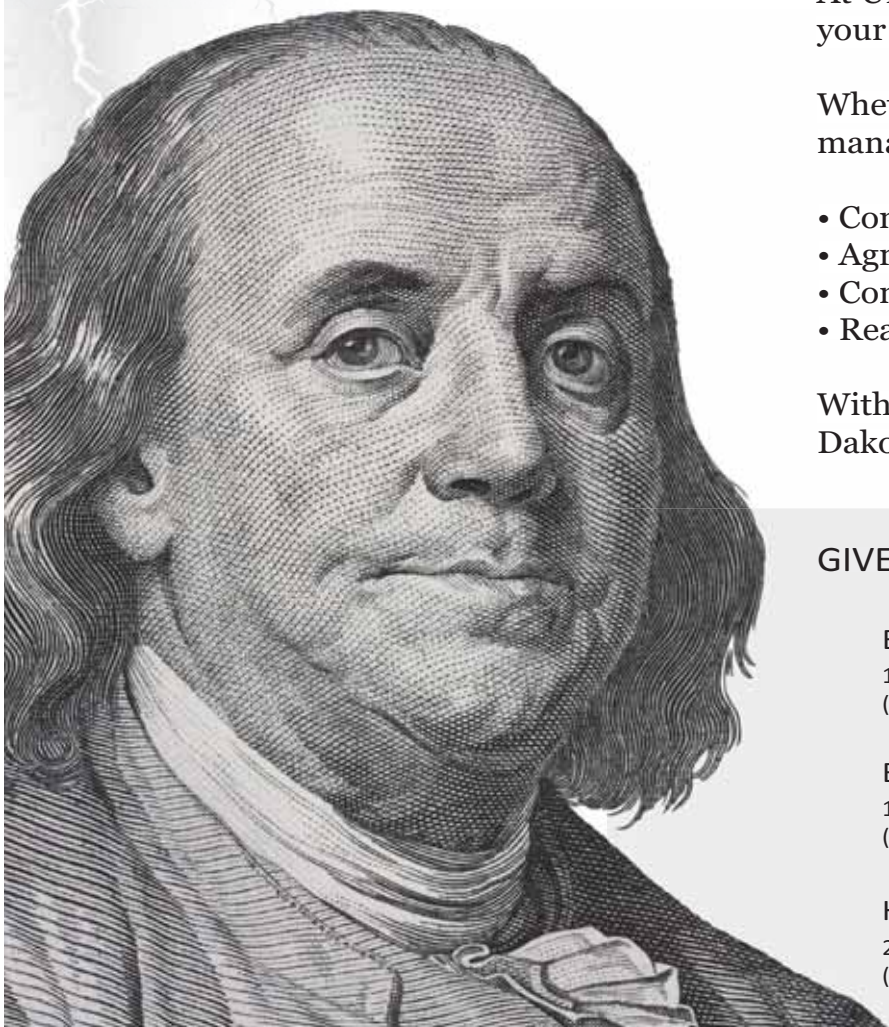
See LEGACY on page A11



Submitted photo | Jena Gray
A view of the Leland Olds Power Plant and surrounding area, including the Missouri River valley in the background.



Submitted photo | Jena Gray
Basin Electric supports the first responders who serve the Leland Olds Station, including the Stanton Rural Fire Protection District. The co-op donated \$15,000 to fund a replacement water truck. Pictured from left: Rural Fire Chief Lane Hall and rural volunteer/Basin Electric employee Brock Morgen.



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Talon Metals advances plans for mineral processing plant

BY DANIEL ARENS
HAZEN STAR EDITOR

For the past half a century, Mercer County and its neighbors have carved out a niche as a cradle for energy production, notably with baseload and reliable electricity production through coal mining and coal-fired power plants.

That industrial foundation also provides a firm basis for new and emerging industries to look to the area for their projects, bringing substantial opportunities for economic development and tax revenues to the local counties and communities.

When it comes to industry here in Mercer County, one of the looming questions for the last few years is the Talon Metals minerals processing plant, aiming to take iron ore mined from Minnesota, bring it here to extract nickel and other minerals from the ore, then use these minerals to produce electric batteries and other products.

Attention began to focus on this proposed project in October of 2022, when the U.S. Department of Energy under the Biden administration announced an \$114 million grant to help Talon Metals develop the minerals processing plant in Mercer County. In May of 2025, it was announced that the plant would be located at the former Westmoreland mine site during a signing ceremony.

During a Vision West Consortium Energy Workshop on Oct. 29, Jessica Johnson, Vice President External Affairs with Talon Metals, provided an update to the local and regional leaders gathered in Beulah on the current status of the project.

“Our goal is to be finding more nickel for America and support-

ing our domestic supply chain,” she said. “We are very behind in the U.S. We have only one active high-grade nickel mine in the country right now, and that is set to close soon.”

Johnson said having the United States produce its own nickel rather than relying on foreign imports is vital to national security. She said that nickel is not only used to produce batteries for electric vehicles, but also other products, noting in particular the development of stainless steel.

“It is very important to identify these resources and get them into production,” she said.

Johnson began by talking about the status of the Tamarack Mine in Minnesota (named after the nearby town), including the mine’s site and design and its current status regarding Minnesota state regulations and review.

“We have been in the review process in Minnesota for two years now,” Johnson said, adding the company has received about 1,600 public comments about the project. She said these comments have led to the company revising its original design for the facility in that state.

As regards the Minnesota mine, Johnson said the plan is to complete the review and permitting process over the course of the next two years, hoping to enter the construction phase by the end of 2027 or beginning of 2028.

Representative Bill Tveit of District 33, who attended the October meeting, asked Johnson if Talon Metals had a backup plan should the Minnesota state government not approve the mine near Tamarack. Johnson said she is confident the company will be able to work through the Minnesota regulatory process, but said

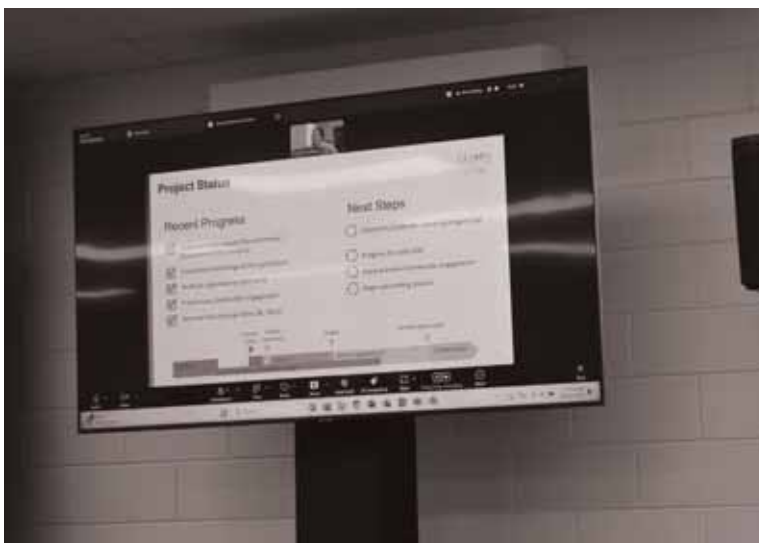


Photo Credit | Daniel Arens

Talon Metals Vice President of External Affairs Jessica Johnson (attending the Vision West Energy Workshop remotely via teleconference) shows a slide on the timeline for the proposed mineral processing facility near Beulah, listing steps that the company has recently completed in this process and its current priorities.

the company is also looking at a site in Michigan as well, near where the existing high-grade nickel processing plant is located.

Johnson added that she thinks there are additional sources in the general area of that mine (the Eagle Mine), so that even if the mine itself is depleted, there are opportunities for further mining in the area.

“We are definitely finding additional sources, but there is a lot more work to do on this,” she said.

Johnson turned to the Mercer County processing facility, saying the site was chosen due to its drier climate, its presence on an existing industrial site that can be repurposed to meet the new plant’s needs and its connection via BNSF railroad to the ore mine in Minnesota.

Johnson outlined the process that will be used in the facility. Initially, the ore will go through a crushing process, taking the rocks from the train cars and crushing them down. This is followed by a grinding process to further pulverize the material.

After this, the product goes into a “flotation” process, in which bubbles are used to float off different concentrates that have different densities. These are the “rare earth minerals,” that are the primary product that Talon Metals wishes to acquire, and these will be sent off in turn to help in the production of materials (such as electric batteries for Tesla vehicles, per a contract between the companies).

Once these minerals/metals have been removed through flotation, Talon Metals plans to use “dry stack

tailings” to dispose of the remaining material, in which water is removed from the material, leaving a compacted byproduct that is then disposed of.

Regarding this last point, Johnson added Talon Metals continues to pursue research and development for alternative ways to utilize this leftover material, beyond additional nickel recovery or tailings piles. She said there are possible options for different by-products, including pulling out iron sulfide (different from the iron ore) and using that for lithium batteries; working with the Argonne National Laboratory in Illinois on additional products; and making a cementation material as an alternative to cement for construction products.

“We think these are exciting opportunities to get the most benefit and least amount of leftover material,” Johnson said.

As regards the minerals processing facility, Johnson gave a timeline of past and present activities, saying the company had completed its preliminary engineering to support the Environmental Assessment for the site, as well as its metallurgical mini pilot plant. She said the draft Environmental Assessment was submitted by the DOE, the company had done preliminary engagement with stakeholders in the Beulah and Mercer County area and the land package for the site was officially secured on May 28, 2025.

Johnson said the company is moving forward with the DOE regarding the submitted Environmental Assessment while progressing with Feasibility Study test planning. She said the company also wants to expand its community engagement in the coming months and begin work on the permitting process.

GARRISON.....continued from page A5

almost 23 million acre-feet of water, which is enough to cover the whole state of North Dakota with six inches of water.

A key part of the Corps’ mission

David Beck, operations project manager with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Omaha District, said the dam serves many purposes beyond producing energy.

“Garrison Dam supports flood control, water supply, navigation, recreation, water quality and wildlife habitat,” Beck said. “We generate more than two million megawatt-hours of renewable electricity each year, but the dam’s benefits extend far beyond power.”

Looking ahead

Among the major initiatives underway is the Garrison Dam Spillway Modification Project, the largest dam safety modification effort in Corps history. The

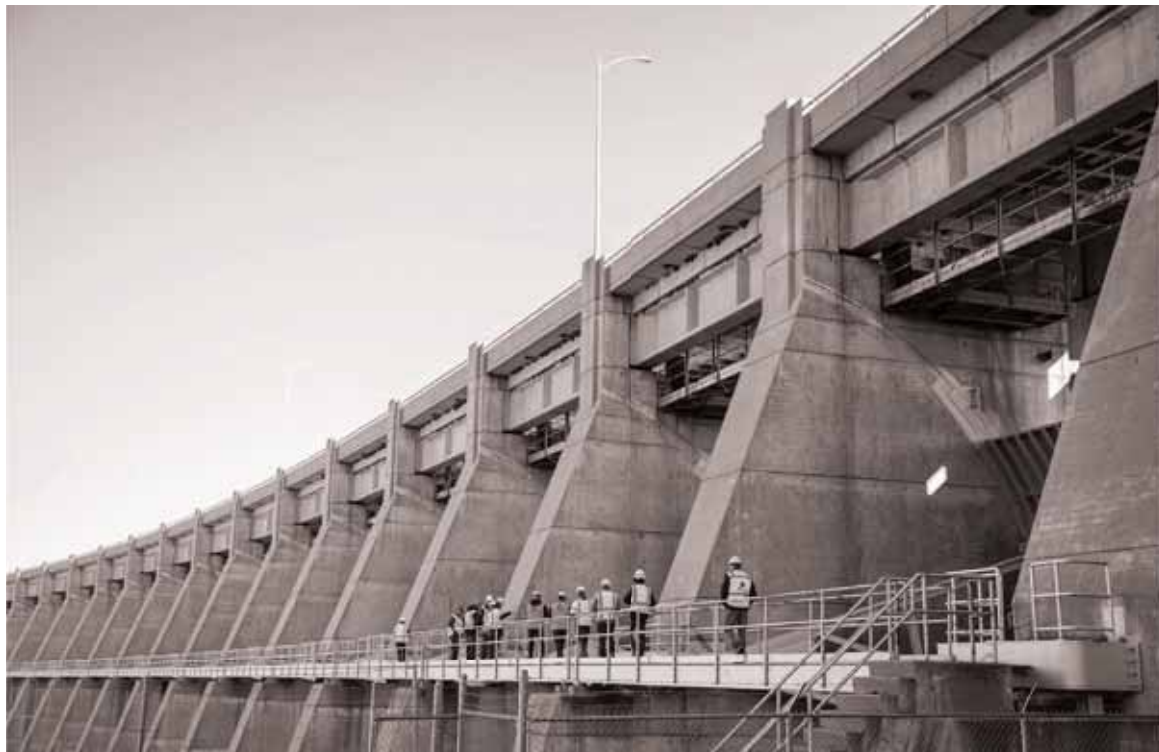
upgrades will address risk factors identified during the 2011 Missouri River flood and will include new spillway gate improvements, erosion protection, a new subdrain system and a concrete overlay of the spillway chute and stilling basin.

“These upgrades ensure the long-term safety and performance of one of the most critical pieces of infrastructure in the region,” Beck said.

A vital asset for generations

Today, Garrison Dam remains the largest reservoir operated by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and one of the defining landmarks of North Dakota.

“Garrison Dam represents far more than a single structure,” Beck said. “It is a renewable energy source, a flood protection system, a recreational destination, and a critical water resource that supports communities across the state. Our commitment is to keep it reliable, safe and sustainable for decades to come.”



Submitted photo | Delanie Stafford, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
Workers walk along a bridge on the Garrison Dam.

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Rainbow Energy Center powers region while looking to the future

BY ETHYN WILLIAMS-CALVERT
CENTRAL MCLEAN NEWS-JOURNAL

As energy demand continues to grow across the Midwest, Rainbow Energy Center has positioned itself as a key player in powering communities while working toward a more sustainable future.

Rainbow Energy Center, LLC, often referred to as REC, is the owner and operator of Coal Creek Station, located along the Missouri River between Underwood and Washburn.

The facility is widely recognized as North Dakota's most efficient power plant and serves as a cornerstone of the region's energy infrastructure.

Since acquiring the plant May 1, 2022, REC has employed approximately 200 people, reinforcing its role not only as an energy provider but also as a major contributor to the local economy

and workforce stability in McLean County.

Coal Creek Station has a long-standing history in the state, with construction beginning in 1974 and its first unit coming online in 1979.

Today, the plant produces roughly 1,151 megawatts of electricity per hour, making it one of the most significant sources of baseload power in the region.

The plant is fueled by approximately eight million tons of lignite coal each year, supplied by the nearby Falkirk Mining Company, creating a strong link between the energy and mining industries in central North Dakota.

That energy does not stay local. Through a high-voltage direct current transmission system known as the Nexus Line, electricity generated at Coal Creek Station is delivered eastward to a converter station near Buffalo, Minnesota.

From there, it is distributed

to homes, schools, hospitals, and businesses across the Midwest, ensuring reliable power for everyday life and supporting critical infrastructure in both rural and urban communities.

While coal remains a primary component of its operations, Rainbow Energy Center is also focused on diversification and innovation.

The company is actively working with partners to develop additional energy sources, including wind and solar generation, that can be integrated into its existing network.

Through these efforts, REC aims to support up to 400 megawatts of renewable energy delivery into the broader market, enough to power an estimated 144,000 homes while strengthening grid reliability.

Leadership at Rainbow Energy Center emphasizes a balance between reliability and responsibility.

Company officials highlight a commitment to safety, environmental awareness, and community engagement as core values guiding their operations.

By collaborating with landowners, local leaders, and stakeholders, REC is working to ensure that future energy projects align with the needs and priorities of the communities it serves.


One of the company's most forward-looking initiatives is its investment in carbon capture technology.

By exploring ways to reduce emissions and improve environmental outcomes, Rainbow Energy Center is aiming to lead in the transition toward cleaner energy while maintaining dependable power generation. These efforts position the company to remain competitive in an evolving energy landscape.

From its deep roots in North Dakota's energy history to its push toward innovation, Rainbow Energy Center continues to play a vital role in keeping the lights on across the region while helping shape the future of energy production.

Information for the story compiled from public information found on Rainbow Energy Center's website.

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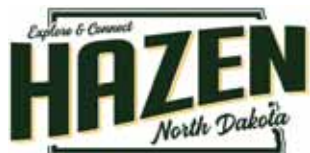


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Wind power on the plains

BY ETHYN WILLIAMS-CALVERT
CENTRAL MCLEAN NEWS-JOURNAL

As North Dakota continues to expand its role in the nation's energy landscape, wind power remains an increasingly important part of the state's diversified portfolio.

One of the most prominent contributors to that effort is the Bison Wind Energy Center near New Salem, a project steadily generated renewable energy for more than a decade while maintaining strong ties to the surrounding communities.

Owned by Minnesota Power, a regulated electric utility headquartered in Duluth, Minnesota, the Bison Wind facility has become a major presence in western North Dakota since construction first began in 2009.

Today, the project represents one of the largest wind developments connected to Minnesota Power's system and continues to serve as a key part of the company's renewable energy strategy.

Benjamin Reister of Bison Wind explained the facility plays an important role not only in producing electricity, but also in supporting local communities and maintaining the land where the turbines operate.

"The Bison Wind Energy Center, near New Salem, North Dakota, is owned by Minnesota Power, a regulated electric utility based in Duluth, Minnesota," Reister said. "Bison Wind's nameplate generating capacity is approximately 500 megawatts. The facility employs approximately 30 local, full-time employees."

Those employees help manage the day-to-day operations of a facility that spans a large footprint across rural landscapes in Morton and Oliver counties.

While the turbines themselves are the most visible part of the project, much of the work involves maintenance, environmental stewardship, and cooperation with local landowners.

"The company is focused on stewardship of the project footprint, to include preservation of wildlife, maintaining of roads, and working with landowners to minimize any impacts to their agricultural operations," Reister said.

The Bison Wind project began taking shape in the late 2000s, during a time when wind energy

development was accelerating across the northern plains.

Construction started in late 2009, launching a multiphase buildout that would continue for several years.

"Construction of the Bison facility began in late 2009," Reister said. "Four phases of construction subsequently occurred, with the most recent wind turbines being commissioned in 2015."

Once the construction phases were completed, the focus shifted from building turbines to ensure they continue operating efficiently and safely.

Today, the facility's primary work centers on maintaining equipment, monitoring performance, and keeping the turbines running reliably.

After more than a decade of operation, Reister says several achievements stand out for the company.

One of the most meaningful accomplishments has been Bison Wind's involvement in the surrounding communities.

Over the years, the company has contributed to numerous local organizations and events, helping support schools, community projects, and regional initiatives.

"Community engagement including donating to numerous local organizations and events throughout the years," Reister said when discussing the company's accomplishments.

Equally important has been maintaining strong working relationships with the farmers and ranchers who host turbines on their land, along with local government leaders who help guide development in the region.

"Maintaining good working relationships with landowners and local government authorities," Reister said.

Finally, the company takes pride in the operational side of the project, ensuring the turbines remain reliable while meeting strict safety and environmental standards.

"Keeping the facility in good operating order while maintaining high safety, environmental, and reliability standards," Reister said.

Looking ahead, Bison Wind's immediate focus remains straightforward.

According to Reister, the company's primary priority is continuing to run the facility safely

and efficiently.

"Safe, reliable operation of the Bison Wind facility," he said when asked about the company's current focus and goals for the coming year.

While the day-to-day mission centers on maintaining the existing facility, Minnesota Power is also exploring additional wind energy opportunities in North Dakota.

One potential development currently under consideration is the Longspur wind project, which would be built adjacent to the existing Bison Wind facility.

"Minnesota Power is working towards regulatory approval to begin construction of the Longspur wind project, which is adjacent to Bison," Reister said. "This project would add approximately 200 megawatts to our North Dakota wind generation portfolio."

If approved, the Longspur project would represent another significant investment in renewable energy within the region while further strengthening North Dakota's role in supplying wind-generated electricity.

Beyond new construction, Bison Wind also hopes to continue building relationships with local communities over the coming years.

Reister noted that the company remains interested in working with local leaders on infrastructure improvements and other initiatives that benefit the region.

"Continue to explore opportunities to work with local communities through infrastructure improvements or additions," Reister said when discussing long-term goals.

For many residents across central North Dakota, the wind turbines near New Salem have become a familiar part of the skyline.

But beyond their towering presence, the facility represents a broader effort to balance energy production, environmental stewardship, and community partnership.

As North Dakota continues to play a key role in the nation's energy future, projects like Bison Wind demonstrate how renewable power can complement the state's long-standing tradition of energy leadership while supporting local economies and communities along the way.

Legacy.....continued from page A8

safe and reliable electricity for the foreseeable future," Gray said.

The nearly 150 employees at Basin Electric's Leland Olds Station receive family-supporting careers built on competitive pay, strong benefits and long-term stability. Employees receive comprehensive health coverage, a solid 401(k) match, paid time off, dependable childcare through Energy Capital Cooperative Child Care and ongoing training and advancement opportunities.

"Basin Electric's cooperative foundation also informs its approach to its commitment to community," Erin Laverdure, project coordination representative with Basin Electric, said. "Basin Electric was instrumental in the founding of Energy Capital Cooperative Child Center, where we took a collaborative approach with other area employers to find solutions to gaps in child-care services. Today, employees serve on the board, and about a third of the children at the center are from Basin Electric and Dakota Gasification Company families."

Laverdure, who serves on the board of directors with the child-care center, said Basin recently funded a kitchen renovation, adding the renovation was much needed.

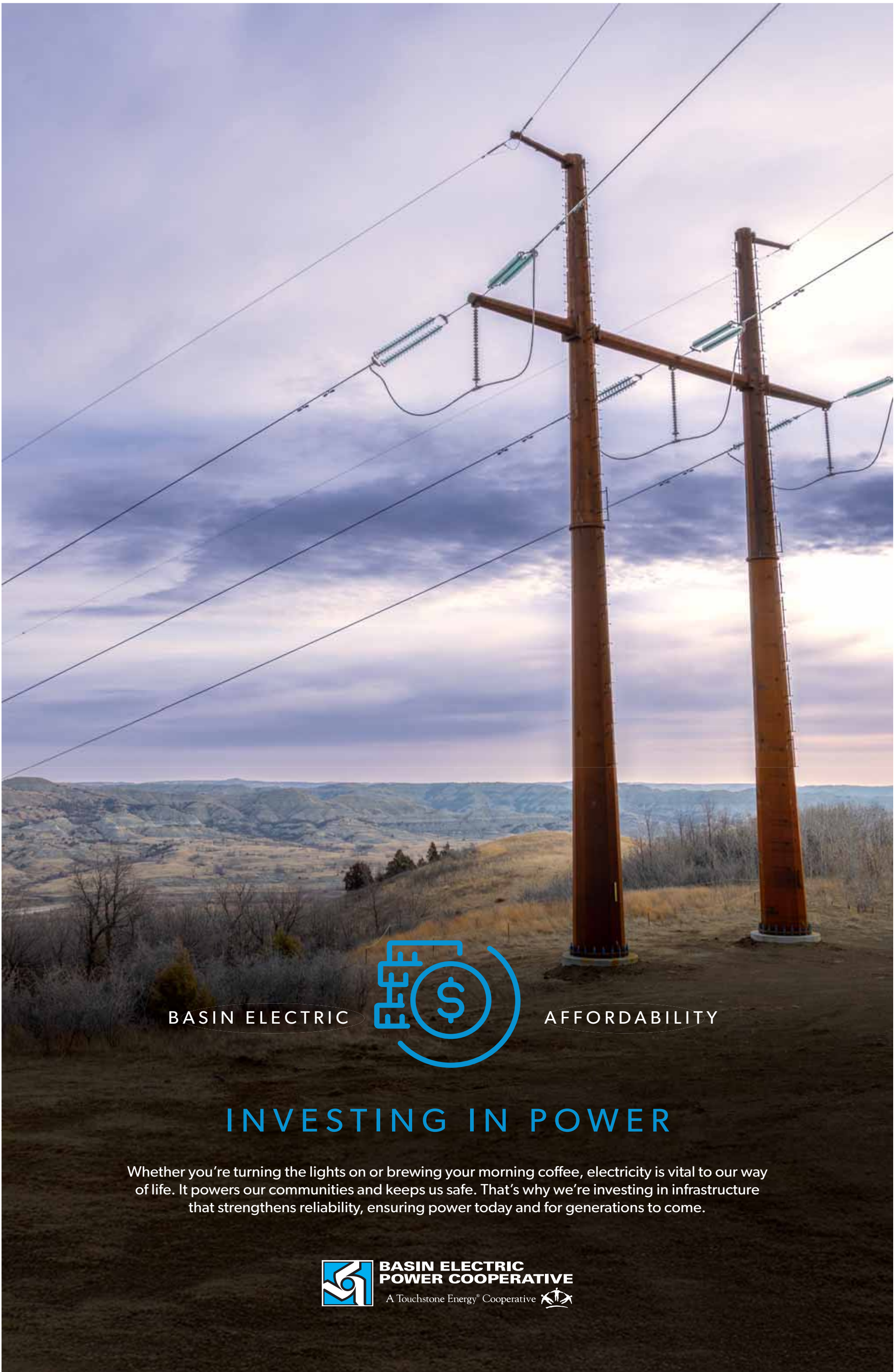
Gray said Leland Olds and Basin Electric strive to

create a culture that values a healthy work-life balance, community involvement and the cooperative mission of providing reliable energy.

"Together, these advantages ease common financial and personal pressures, helping attract skilled workers to the region and encouraging them to build lasting careers and lives there," she said.

Gray said Basin Electric supports student and community activities in the Center-Stanton, Hazen and Beulah communities and school districts, including supporting robotics and music programs in Center-Stanton, after-prom events, youth sports, summer library programs and local fire stations. It has also helped with funding for ADA-compliant upgrades to golf course restrooms and baseball grandstands.

"Leland Olds Station is known for its friendly, welcoming culture and the strong pride employees take in their work and in maintaining the facility, along with a consistent commitment to environmental excellence and compliance," Gray said. "Employees have the opportunity to lead tours for co-op members, students and job seekers, offering a firsthand look at how electricity is generated and sharing in the pride of the plant's mission."



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Antelope Valley Station

BY RYAN SCHLEHUBER
BEULAH BEACON

While it may not be as big as Dakota Gasification Company, the Antelope Valley Station is arguably just as important as any other subsidiary within the Basin Electric Power Cooperative.

Shortly after the Great Plains Synfuels Plant was built in July 1984, the Antelope Valley Station began commercial operation, feeding the growing energy demands. Since then, it has been working hand-in-hand with the Synfuels Plant and the nearby Freedom Mine, used as an alternative source of energy for the United States, which has had a goal of moving away from dependence on foreign supplies of energy.

“The Antelope Valley Station is commonly referred to as a ‘mine-mouth’ facility, since it is located next to a lignite coal mine and receives fuel from the mine,” said Erin Becker, a BEPC senior staff writer and editor.

Based in Beulah, the AVS first began with one 450-megawatt unit, but two years later, another 450-megawatt unit was built, now producing a total of 900 megawatts. The adjacent Freedom Mine provides the generation station with about 5 million tons of lignite coal each year.

The facility’s Unit 1 reached its 40th anniversary two years ago.

What makes the AVS such a



Submitted photo | Basin Electric Power Cooperative

Located near Beulah, the Antelope Valley Station has been a commercial operation in 1984 and has continued to feed the growing energy demands. Since its inception, the AVS has been working hand-in-hand with the Synfuels Plant and the nearby Freedom Mine, being used as an alternative source of energy for the United States, which had a goal of moving away from dependence on foreign supplies of energy.

good partner within the BEPC family is that it also works in unison with the Synfuels Plant, taking in lignite fines for fuel. Lignite fines are coal particles too small for the gasification process. With the help of the AVS, the Synfuels Plant has been able to increase its products from three to now 13.

The Synfuels Plant and Antelope Valley Station share certain facilities and coal and water supplies: Antelope Valley Station supplies the Synfuels Plant with electricity, and the Synfuels Plant

supplies several of Basin Electric’s gas peaking facilities with synthetic natural gas. The Synfuels Plant supplies carbon dioxide to the largest carbon capture and storage project in the world in Saskatchewan, Canada. It is the only commercial-scale coal gasification plant in the United States that was originally designed and operated to manufacture synthetic natural gas from lignite coal.

As of 2024, Basin Electric and

See ANTELOPE on page B2

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ANTELOPE.....continued from page B1

its subsidiaries have invested more than \$2 billion in environmental control technology, and more than \$190 million has been spent in 2024 alone to operate and maintain those controls.

Adding updated technology recently, all seven Basin Electric dispatchable generation units, including Antelope Valley Station, employ scrubbers, a process where flue gas desulfurization removes 80-90% of sulfur dioxide from plant exhaust stacks.

Antelope Valley Station uses baghouses equipped with tightly woven cloth bags that capture and collect more than 99% of dust particles (fly ash) in the flue gas.

What the average person may not see with the Antelope Valley Station is that it is connected to a transmission grid by a 300-mile, 345-kilovolt transmission line that runs from the plant to a substation near Huron, South Dakota. Another 70-mile transmission line connects Antelope Valley to the Charlie Creek Substation near Killdeer. A third double-circuit line connects Antelope Valley to Leland Olds Station near Stanton.

Also, since it began operating, Antelope Valley Station has consistently ranked as a low-cost producer of electricity when compared to other power plants in the United States.

Last June, AVS saw a new plant manager hired. Cory Bryngelson is now leading the teams at Antelope Valley Station.

“Supplying energy to an expanding market of consumers is a challenge I wanted to be part of,” Bryngelson said in a BEPC press release. “I look forward to working with the talented group of individuals at the Antelope Valley Station and Leland Olds stations to continue serving our customers today and in the future.”

Though AVS employs a fraction of the number of employees



Submitted photo | Basin Electric Power Cooperative

The Antelope Valley Station, just outside of Beulah, provides jobs for 158 people. Like its bigger sister facility, Dakota Gasification Company, the AVS has provided lifetime careers to people in the nearby communities, with numerous employees reaching the 30- and 40-year service plateaus.

the Dakota Gasification Company does, with a total of 158 people, like the DGC, it has been a great place to dedicate a career, with numerous employees reaching the 30- and 40-year service mark.

“We currently have one employee who was hired in 1983 and just completed 43 years of service with Basin Electric,” Becker said.

Becker said BEPC’s employees are the foundation of AVS’ success and their wellbeing remains cen-

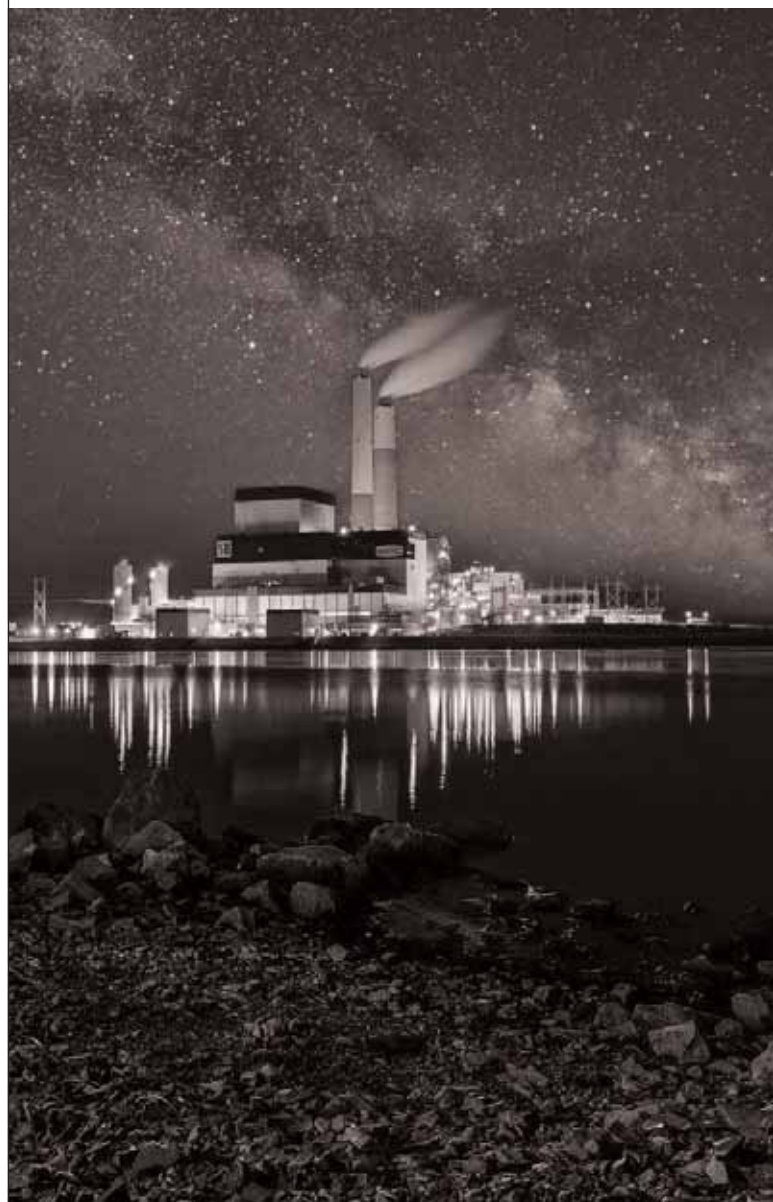
tral to the mission of the cooperative.

“The cooperative is committed to providing a safe and supportive workplace, strengthened by comprehensive safety programs, joint safety committees, employee safety observations, and training,” Becker said. “These efforts highlight Basin Electric’s dedication to safeguarding and empowering the people who make its mission possible.”



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North Dakota energy projects to watch in 2026

BY JOEY HARRIS
BISMARCK TRIBUNE

North Dakota state officials and companies are pushing multiple big-dollar energy projects in 2026.

Rising power demands have prompted proposals for huge natural gas and renewable energy generation and transmission efforts across the state. Research for maintaining a large oil industry presence in North Dakota is ongoing.

Most large projects are not planned to go into service this year, but key regulatory, financing and construction decisions are expected.

Here is some of what to watch in 2026.

Natural gas

Multiple projects have been proposed to transport and use the state's growing glut of natural gas out of the Bakken oil fields in western North Dakota. None will likely come online in 2026, but construction is set to begin for some.

WBI Energy Bakken East pipeline: The project was selected for a decadelong \$500 million financial guarantee from the state. It is planned to stretch from Watford City in the northwest to just outside of Fargo in the southeast.

Intensity Infrastructure Partners pipeline: Developers recently announced they plan to move forward with the first phase of the project which would bring gas to Underwood.

Bison Generation Station: Regulators approved Basin Electric Power Cooperative's 1,490-megawatt power plant in 2025. It is planned to be built near Williston. The co-op said the plant will serve long-standing electric supply is-

sues in the region that came along with the oil boom.

River Run Energy Center: Basin Electric and NextEra are exploring a 1,450-megawatt plant. The project is in very early stages but could be eligible for a quicker connection to the power grid.

Rainbow gas plant: Bismarck-based Rainbow Energy is also exploring the potential to build 2,100-megawatt of gas-fired generation near the Coal Creek Station in Underwood which would connect to the Intensity project.

Data centers and industrial projects

Both the Basin and NextEra joint effort and Rainbow Energy's project would serve data centers which are set to be the main uses for North Dakota's growing glut of natural gas. The WBI pipeline is expected to serve large data center demand, too. Some other industrial projects are also set to use large quantities of gas. Other major data centers and industrial facilities not directly connected to a gas project are also set for development.

Applied Digital's expansion: The Texas-based data center company plans to continue its infrastructure buildout in eastern North Dakota. The company broke ground in September on its new data center campus in Harwood, near Fargo. Progress also continues at its larger data center campus in Ellendale.

Cerilon Gas-to-Liquids: The little-used gas-to-liquids technology could make its North American debut at a plant near Williston. Natural gas would be refined into diesel, plastic feedstocks and other chemicals. Cerilon recently requested a brief time extension to tap state funding while it makes

an investment decision. A report to the state is expected soon.

Scranton Holding Co. iron processing: Minnesota-based Scranton Holding's project would derive hydrogen from natural gas to reduce iron ore to pig iron. A report to the state on progress is expected soon.

Talon Metals nickel plant: Canada-based Talon signed an agreement in May to build its nickel processing plant on part of the closed Beulah Mine. The company awaits a permit in Minnesota for its proposed nickel mine which has attracted some controversy due to concerns from the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe. Talon says it has other sources of nickel if the Minnesota mine falls through. It plans for construction to begin by 2027.

Wind, solar and batteries

Multiple wind and solar energy developers will seek to get their projects up and running over the next few years. Projects built after 2027 will no longer be eligible for federal subsidies. Despite the subsidies going away, North Dakota utilities still have big plans for renewables to help meet surging power demands. Battery storage could also play an increasing role in local power supply.

ALLETE Longspur Wind project: After a month of contentious hearings, the Morton County Commission approved ALLETE's wind farm. The project will need to get state approvals before construction can begin.

Flickertail Wind: The project would stretch between Wells and Eddy counties. Developer PRC Wind is still seeking local approval, but opposition has slowed the process, according to the New Rockford Transcript.

Badger Wind Farm: Construc-

tion on Demark-based Ørsted's Wind Farm in Logan and McIntosh counties is set to be complete in 2026. Bismarck-based Montana-Dakota Utilities was approved to purchase a 49% stake in the project in 2025. About 25% of the project's turbines have been commissioned as of Dec. 1, according to a progress report.

Homestead Wind: The 255-megawatt project by Apex Clean Energy recently received the approval of the Williams County Commission. It will need state approval prior to construction.

Southeastern solar projects: Construction on Harmony Solar in Cass County -- approved in 2018 -- and Flickertail Solar in Richland County -- approved in 2025 -- are expected to begin in 2026. These would be the first utility-scale solar farms in North Dakota.

Battery storage projects: North Dakota regulators recently approved a battery storage project in Emmons County and are set to make decision about a similar project in Burke County. Battery storage projects accumulate electricity from the grid and release it back when demands are high.

Power lines

It's not enough to just produce the power; it has to be moved, too. Multiple power line projects are set for further development or regulatory consideration in 2026.

Jamestown to Ellendale 345 kV (JETx): North Dakota regulators will consider the route permit for the JETx power line in 2026. The project is a joint development between Montana-Dakota Utilities and Otter Tail Power Company. The Public Service Commission ordered that it was necessary grid infrastructure by a

2-1 vote in 2024, but that decision faces a court challenge from local opposition.

Leland Olds Station-to-Tande 345-kV: Basin Electric's 162-mile power line is set to be operational in 2026. The infrastructure is intended to help resolve power grid constraints in northwest North Dakota.

North Plains Connector: Grid United, a Texas-based energy company, and ALLETE plan to seek regulatory approval in 2026 for the project. The 420-mile transmission line would travel between Colstrip, Montana, and Center, North Dakota, connecting the eastern and western grids.

Carbon capture

North Dakota got off to a hot start permitting projects that capture and store heat-trapping carbon dioxide emissions a few years ago with some relatively small projects at ethanol plants. The Great Plains Synfuels Plant has sent its emissions to Canada for enhanced oil recovery for two decades and more recently has stored them, too. Still, larger capture projects have stalled, and other states are catching up. Meanwhile, North Dakota's landmark law for CO2 storage permitting faces a state Supreme Court challenge.

Summit Carbon Solutions: The multistate pipeline was approved by North Dakota and Iowa regulators in 2024, but a new law in South Dakota that prevents the use of eminent domain for CO2 pipelines has stalled development. Legal challenges to the permit approvals are ongoing in North Dakota and Iowa. In October, the Des Moines Register reported that Summit may consider

See **PROJECTS** on page B8

McLean Electric Cooperative serves the community

BY TYSON MATTHEWS
MCLEAN COUNTY INDEPENDENT

McLean Electric Cooperative has been serving rural North Dakota communities for generations, but its beginnings were modest, rooted in a shared goal of bringing electricity to McLean County farms and homes.

"The cooperative was incorporated in 1945, when 16 local residents gathered to discuss how to extend electrical service to rural areas that had long gone without it," Mark Doyle, CEO, general manager of McLean County Electric said. "At the

time, many parts of McLean County lacked access to reliable power, making everyday tasks more difficult for families and limiting economic growth."

Their efforts reflected a broader movement sweeping across the country during the mid-20th century, as rural communities worked to modernize and improve quality of life through cooperative-owned electric utilities. Rather than waiting for private companies to expand service, local residents took the initiative themselves.

Momentum continued the following year.

In 1946, McLean Electric Cooperative held its first annual meeting, during which

members elected a board of directors to formally begin operations. That meeting marked the start of the cooperative transition from an idea to a functioning utility, governed by the people it served.

Based in Garrison, the cooperative grew alongside McLean County, helping power homes, farms and businesses as the region developed. Over time, access to electricity transformed daily life, improving safety, efficiency, and opportunity throughout rural areas.

Today, McLean Electric Cooperative stands as a reminder of what community collaboration can accomplish. Its founding members recognized a need and worked

together to meet it, laying the groundwork for decades of service.

As the cooperative continues to adapt to changing energy needs and technologies, its mission remains tied to those original values established in the 1940s: providing reliable electricity while remaining locally owned and member focused.

"McLean Electric Cooperative has been around for generations, but it all started with a pretty simple idea: getting electricity to rural McLean County homes and farms," Doyle said. "MEC is a cooperative and has its members top of mind. If you ever have any questions or comments, we would love to hear them."



Photo credit | Tyson Matthews
McLean Electric Cooperative is located on Highway 37 in Garrison.



Submitted photo | Mark Doyle
The McLean Electric Cooperative was awarded the Safety Performance Award last year. This award is presented to cooperatives with zero recordable injuries for one year from Dec. 1, 2024, to Nov. 30, 2025.



Photo credit | McLean Electric website
McLean Electric Cooperative's linemen are out working every day to keep the power on in the Garrison area for many years.

Demands of energy start from the top

BY RYAN SCHLEHUBER
BEULAH BEACON

Every day Americans turn on light switches, plug in their electronic devices to charge and adjust the temperature gauge to be comfortable in their own homes.

For many of us, the thought of how these are all powered may never cross most of our minds, until, at least, that power goes out.

Since the early 1960s, the Basin Electric Power Cooperative, a member-owned, regional generation and transmission cooperative that provides wholesale power to rural electric member systems across nine states, has been the backbone for as many as 139 member systems that serve approximately 500,000 square miles from the Canadian to the Mexican borders.

Together, they form an integrated network of generation, transmission and distribution infrastructure delivering electricity to more than 3 million members in parts of North Dakota, South Dakota, Wyoming, Colorado, Minnesota, Iowa, Nebraska, Montana and New Mexico. At the forefront of all this is the Basin Electric Power Cooperative, which, like a conductor in an orchestra, helps the many power facilities work in unison to continue to produce energy for Americans to enjoy the luxuries that most often are taken for granted across the country.

“One of the most fascinating things about the electricity industry is that power is always ready to use when you need it and most people never have to think about it,” said Dana Hager, BECP’s communications manager. “The power grid is a large, complex system that must stay in balance 24/7 to keep the lights on.”

Hager said governance and

strategic direction begins with BECP’s member-owners, who operate under the seven cooperative principles and the cooperative business model.

“Because of the cooperative structure, we don’t answer to outside shareholders, we answer to our members and their members,” she said. “This local connection is important to Basin Electric, and it keeps decisions grounded in the needs of the communities we serve.”

Of the many electricity supplier facilities under the direction of the BECP are the Antelope Valley Station and the Dakota Gasification Company, which includes the Synfuel plant, all located in Beulah, companies that have provide jobs and careers for many community members. Overall, Basin Electric has around 1,900 employees located in five of its nine-state service area.

“The communities surrounding our power plants and infrastructure are home to the men and women who keep the lights on,” Hager said. “They live in the same communities they serve, and we take great pride in the work they do to safely and reliably power homes and businesses every single day.”

Hager said BECP sees many employees within the energy supplying companies spending their entire working careers there. In fact, an employee was given a 50-year service award just last year, and she is still employed with the BECP today.

Not only is BECP good at sustainability, it is also working toward the future, continuing to meet the increasing demands for energy.

“Basin Electric and the electric industry as a whole are working to produce more energy at a time when demand is rising quickly,” Hager said. “People expect power



Submitted photo | Basin Electric Power Cooperative
The construction of the Basin Electric Power Cooperative headquarters building in Bismarck in 1976.

to be available every minute of every day, and that expected reliability is something we take very seriously.”

Among the biggest hurdles right now facing the energy industry are higher costs, supply chain delays, workforce shortages, permitting timelines and evolving regulations, according to Hager.

“It’s a challenging environment that requires long-term planning and steady investment to meet members’ needs today and in the future,” she said.

Currently, the BECP team is working on several significant initiatives that are “top-of-mind,” according to Hager. These include the upcoming groundbreaking for the new Bison Generation Station to serve the cooperative’s traditional member growth, the completion and energization of

the Leland Olds Station to Tandem transmission line, and the implementation of the cooperative’s Large Load Commercial Program to responsibly manage large-load growth in the region.

The Bison Generation Station will be a new natural gas-fueled generation facility located near the existing Wheelock substation along U.S. Highway 2 in Williams County, North Dakota. The project, which is estimated to cost nearly \$4 billion, includes two roughly 745-megawatt units that will be able to produce 1,490 megawatts, making it one of the largest electric generation projects in the BECP’s history. Construction is expected to begin in early 2026 with the power plant being fully in service in 2030.

The transmission line project includes a 345-kilovolt transmis-

sion line that will aim to enhance the transmission load serving capability in western North Dakota. According to BECP, the project was deemed necessary for the reliability of the transmission system by Southwest Power Pool, a regional transmission organization. The project will provide more reliable service to electric cooperative customers as well as diversify power resources on the larger transmission system.

Hager said each of the aforementioned efforts reflects Basin Electric’s long-term planning approach.

“Including investing in generation, strengthening transmission infrastructure and implementing thoughtful rate and load strategies to meet the evolving power needs of our member systems and the communities they serve,” she said.

Economic impact of powering North Dakota

BY KELLI AMELING
CENTER REPUBLICAN

While many companies are working to power not just North Dakota, but the nation, local leaders are seeing a bright future of how the industry’s growth will economically impact the area.

McLean County State’s Attorney Ladd Erickson, along with McLean County Commissioners, has been busy working with municipalities to try to be proactive in planning for the economic boom.

Erickson explained, currently, Rainbow Energy has purchased the Coal Creek Station Lignite Coal Power Plant and is now creating an energy park next to it, which will be filled with businesses.

“We are expecting a construction boom to start measurably impacting our local economy soon,” Erickson said.

He added coal and oil have created a large local economy in the area but said

the value in having those industries is the vendor businesses that support them, including businesses like restaurants and bars getting those macroeconomic dollars cycling back through them.

The momentum of economic development energy industry is bringing the area isn’t predicted to slow down anytime soon.

“On the back end of that five-year window, we’re expecting to have hundreds of new, good-paying jobs established in our area, which hopefully will provide opportunities for good off-farm income for our farm and ranch families,” Erickson said.

With all the benefits of the energy industry boom locally, Erickson said there are also challenges for communities.

“A growing energy sector cycles more dollars through other local businesses, but it also challenges businesses in finding employees and things like daycare and housing,” he explained. “Each community would benefit by creating

more housing opportunities, so families live here instead of in Bismarck and drive up here for work, for example. If we have local housing to support the new jobs being created, the schools will get more kids, youth coaches, volunteer fireman, main street businesses and all the other things that go along with an influx of families that have at least one spouse working in the energy industry.”

County leaders have begun meeting with local leaders to anticipate this growth and encouraging officials to plan for the influx of jobs, which Erickson said are just starting to materialize.

“McLean County is a great place to live, especially if you like outdoor recreation,” Erickson said. “If we all work together with proper planning, we can have some very special and stable economic vibrancy long into our future given what’s being brought in here by Rainbow Energy to be located next to Coal Creek Station.”

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Harvestone's Blue Flint plant pushing forward the clean energy transition

BY ETHYN WILLIAMS-CALVERT
CENTRAL MCLEAN NEWS-JOURNAL

In central North Dakota, where agriculture and energy production have long gone hand in hand, the Blue Flint Ethanol facility near Underwood has become a key example of how those industries can work together to power both the state's economy and the nation's evolving energy landscape.

Operated by Harvestone Low Carbon Partners, Blue Flint represents a unique intersection of agriculture, renewable fuels, and technological innovation.

Since first opening in 2007, the facility has grown into one of the region's most significant renewable fuel producers, helping transform locally grown corn into ethanol and other valuable products used across multiple industries.

Amy Jo Johnson of Harvestone Low Carbon Partners explained that the company's mission is centered on using agricultural resources to produce cleaner energy while strengthening rural communities.

"Harvestone Low Carbon Partners operates at the intersection of agriculture, renewable fuels, and the energy transition," Johnson said. "Our mission is to transform locally grown crops into low-carbon fuels and valuable agricultural products while strengthening rural economies."

Blue Flint Ethanol has steadily expanded since it first began operating nearly two decades ago.

Originally designed to produce 50 million gallons of ethanol annually, the facility now produces more than 75 million gallons each year.

To sustain that production, the plant purchases more than 23 million bushels of corn annually from North Dakota farmers, creating a dependable local market for regional agriculture.

In addition to ethanol, the refining process produces several valuable co-products that benefit other sectors of the agricultural economy.

Distillers grains, which are the nutrient-rich portion of the corn remaining after ethanol extraction, are widely used as livestock feed.

These grains provide cattle producers with a high-quality and cost-effective feed source.

Blue Flint and its sister facility, Dakota Spirit AgEnergy, also produce distillers corn oil, which is refined into renewable diesel and Sustainable Aviation Fuel, often referred to as SAF.

These fuels help reduce emissions while supporting both American agriculture and domestic energy independence.

"Simply put, crops grown in North Dakota are helping fuel transportation solutions around the world," Johnson said.

The roots of Blue Flint's success trace back to its strategic location alongside Rainbow Energy's Coal Creek Station, the largest power plant in North Dakota.

When the facility was designed, developers intentionally built the ethanol plant next to the power station to take advantage of excess steam generated during electricity production.

Through this co-location partnership, Blue Flint captures waste

steam from the power plant and uses it as thermal energy in its ethanol refining process.

The steam is also used to dry distillers grains produced at the facility.

By utilizing energy that would otherwise be lost, the plant has become one of the most efficient and cost-effective biorefineries in the country.

The company further strengthened its relationship with North Dakota farmers in 2010 with the construction of Coal Creek Drying and Storage.

The facility can dry approximately 5,000 bushels of corn per hour and store up to 1.8 million bushels.

That capability gives farmers greater flexibility in marketing their crops while ensuring the ethanol plant maintains a steady supply of corn.

As the company expanded its renewable fuel footprint, another facility was developed in Spiritwood.

Dakota Spirit AgEnergy began operations in 2015 and was similarly built next to Spiritwood Station so it could utilize steam from the power plant for its refining process.

Like Blue Flint, the Spiritwood facility produces more than 75 million gallons of ethanol annually while supporting regional agriculture and generating valuable co-products.

Harvestone Low Carbon Partners also operates Iroquois Bio Energy Company in Rensselaer, Indiana.

That facility began operations in 2007 and produces approximately 60 million gallons of ethanol annually using locally sourced corn.

In 2022, Harvestone Group partnered with Energy Capital Partners, an investor focused on energy transition infrastructure, to form Harvestone Low Carbon Partners.

Through that partnership, HLCP acquired ownership interests in Midwest AgEnergy, which owns Blue Flint and Dakota Spirit, along with the Indiana facility.

The company's growth over the years has also meant more jobs.

What began with approximately 35 employees has expanded to about 155 employees today, supporting renewable fuel production and innovation across the company's operations.

Together, the company's biorefineries now produce more than 200 million gallons of renewable fuel annually.

One of the company's most significant milestones occurred in October 2023 when Blue Flint became only the third biorefinery in the United States to capture and permanently store carbon dioxide using an on-site Class VI injection well.

Carbon dioxide is a natural byproduct of the ethanol fermentation process.

At Blue Flint, more than 200,000 metric tons of CO₂ are produced each year.

The facility's carbon capture system collects 100 percent of the carbon dioxide generated during fermentation.

The captured CO₂ is compressed and injected approximately 1 mile underground into the Broom Creek geologic formation, where it is permanently stored.



Submitted photo | Amy Jo Johnson
An aerial view of Harvestone's Blue Flint Ethanol plant in Underwood North Dakota, producing more than 75 million gallons of ethanol annually



Submitted photo | Amy Jo Johnson
A Harvestone Blue Flint Ethanol Technician checking one of many outdoor carbon capture devices Harvestone makes use of at their plant in Underwood

"Blue Flint is also the first Carbon Capture and Storage project to begin operations following the passage of the Inflation Reduction Act in August 2022," Johnson said.

The carbon capture system injects roughly 600 metric tons of CO₂ per day.

Since operations began, more than 440,000 metric tons have already been safely captured and stored underground.

Looking ahead, the facility is expected to capture more than 200,000 metric tons annually, an amount equivalent to removing nearly 42,000 vehicles' worth of emissions from the road each year.

Johnson said the company remains focused on advancing renewable fuel production while continuing to improve environmental performance.

"Today HLCP is focused on producing low-carbon renewable fuels while advancing technologies that reduce emissions across

the transportation and energy sectors," she said.

The company's operations convert corn grown on roughly 400,000 acres of Midwest farmland into ethanol, livestock feed, and renewable fuel ingredients that help reduce carbon intensity across fuel markets.

For the coming year, Harvestone Low Carbon Partners plans to focus on optimizing operations and continuing its carbon reduction initiatives.

"This year our focus is on optimizing operations, strengthening partnerships with farmers, and continuing to advance carbon reduction initiatives, including the continued success of carbon capture operations at Blue Flint," Johnson said.

Several improvements are also planned for the facility, including the Blue Flint Corn Skimmer project.

The upgrade will expand the plant's ability to recover distillers corn oil during ethanol produc-

tion.

Currently, corn oil is removed only from the syrup stream during production.

The new system will process the entire stillage stream, significantly improving oil recovery efficiency.

The project includes installing three large de-oiling centrifuges along with additional storage and transfer systems.

Increasing corn oil recovery allows more renewable fuel feedstock to be produced, which can then be refined into renewable diesel and Sustainable Aviation Fuel.

Beyond its industrial operations, Harvestone Low Carbon Partners also maintains strong connections to the communities surrounding its facilities.

In McLean County, the company supports a variety of local organizations and programs,

See PLANT on page B8



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PROJECTS.....continued from page 3B

other states besides North Dakota as endpoints for the pipeline.

Project Tundra: Minnkota Power Cooperative has long proposed capturing the emissions from the Milton R. Young Station near Center. But the \$2 billion project has run into repeated delays. A \$250 million loan pledge from the state will likely go away if Minnkota does not make decision on the project by the end of March. A report to the state is expected soon.

Coal Creek Station: Rainbow Energy is still studying the potential for carbon capture at Coal Creek Station in Underwood. The Blue Flint ethanol plant right next to the coal plant uses carbon capture, but the ethanol plant's emissions are much lower.

Net-Zero Richardton: Colorado-based Gevo, the owner of the ethanol plant in southwestern North Dakota, hosts one of the first commercial U.S. carbon storage projects. Gevo is eyeing an expansion both above and below ground at the ethanol plant with the potential for jet fuel production and expanded carbon storage.

Enhanced oil recovery

Though most carbon capture projects in North Dakota are for permanent storage, officials and the oil industry hope one day that CO2 can instead be transported to the Bakken for enhanced oil recovery (EOR).

EOR is already practiced in conventional oil fields, but the Bakken formation -- which is where most of North Dakota's production comes from -- is an

unconventional reservoir. A lot of research is needed before oil companies know if EOR will make economic sense in the Bakken, but it will likely be necessary to keep the state's oil production steady long-term.

About 85% of potential oil remains underground with existing recovery methods, and most potential wells will be drilled by the late 2030s.

North Dakota officials recently granted over \$40 million to companies for EOR research. The state, oil companies and researchers, however, are waiting on already allocated federal funds to come through after being delayed for all of 2025. Montana-Dakota Utilities was approved to purchase a 49% stake in the project in 2025. About 25% of the project's turbines have been commissioned as of Dec. 1, according to a progress report.

Homestead Wind: The 255-megawatt project by Apex Clean Energy recently received the approval of the Williams County Commission. It will need state approval prior to construction.

Southeastern solar projects: Construction on Harmony Solar in Cass County -- approved in 2018 -- and Flickertail Solar in Richland County -- approved in 2025 -- are expected to begin in 2026. These would be the first utility-scale solar farms in North Dakota.

Battery storage projects: North Dakota regulators recently approved a battery storage project in Emmons County and are set to

make decision about a similar project in Burke County. Battery storage projects accumulate electricity from the grid and release it back when demands are high.

Power lines

It's not enough to just produce the power; it has to be moved, too. Multiple power line projects are set for further development or regulatory consideration in 2026.

Jamestown to Ellendale 345 kV (JETx): North Dakota regulators will consider the route permit for the JETx power line in 2026. The project is a joint development between Montana-Dakota Utilities and Otter Tail Power Company. The Public Service Commission ordered that it was necessary grid infrastructure by a 2-1 vote in 2024, but that decision faces a court challenge from local opposition.

Leland Olds Station-to-Tande 345-kV: Basin Electric's 162-mile power line is set to be operational in 2026. The infrastructure is intended to help resolve power grid constraints in northwest North Dakota.

North Plains Connector: Grid United, a Texas-based energy company, and ALLETE plan to seek regulatory approval in 2026 for the project. The 420-mile transmission line would travel between Colstrip, Montana, and Center, North Dakota, connecting the eastern and western grids.

Carbon capture

North Dakota got off to a hot start permitting projects that capture and store heat-trapping

carbon dioxide emissions a few years ago with some relatively small projects at ethanol plants. The Great Plains Synfuels Plant has sent its emissions to Canada for enhanced oil recovery for two decades and more recently has stored them, too. Still, larger capture projects have stalled, and other states are catching up. Meanwhile, North Dakota's landmark law for CO2 storage permitting faces a state Supreme Court challenge.

Summit Carbon Solutions: The multistate pipeline was approved by North Dakota and Iowa regulators in 2024, but a new law in South Dakota that prevents the use of eminent domain for CO2 pipelines has stalled development. Legal challenges to the permit approvals are ongoing in North Dakota and Iowa. In October, the Des Moines Register reported that Summit may consider other states besides North Dakota as endpoints for the pipeline.

Project Tundra: Minnkota Power Cooperative has long proposed capturing the emissions from the Milton R. Young Station near Center. But the \$2 billion project has run into repeated delays. A \$250 million loan pledge from the state will likely go away if Minnkota does not make decision on the project by the end of March. A report to the state is expected soon.

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 Blue Flint plant clean energy - PG. B5
 Power beneath the plains - PG. B11

PLANT.....continued from page B5

particularly in the communities of Underwood and Washburn.

"Harvestone Low Carbon Partners is proud to support the communities where we operate," Johnson said.

Company support includes contributions to Underwood School, youth athletics programs, and local organizations that provide services to area residents.

Harvestone also participates in and sponsors community events such as the McLean County Fair, Washburn Riverboat Days, and youth development programs like 4-H.

Through these partnerships, the company aims to help strengthen the communities that support its operations.

"Our work demonstrates how agriculture and innovation can come together to provide clean energy for a better world," Johnson said.

From the corn fields of North Dakota to fuels that power vehicles and even aircraft, Blue Flint Ethanol demonstrates how agriculture, technology, and energy innovation can come together to help power a cleaner future.

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Submitted photo | Amy Jo Johnson
 Distillers Dried Grains with Solubles (DDGS), a high-protein, nutrient-rich byproduct of ethanol production, primarily derived from corn fermentation which Harvestone produces mountainous piles of annually as a result of their ethanol production

Beyond just a job

BY RYAN SCHLEHUBER
BEULAH BEACON

For the 540 employees at Dakota Gasification Company, things have been business as usual for the past few decades. However, for those outside the Beulah-based facility, the production, longevity and dedication to unique products has been quite impressive.

Since it opened in 1984, DGC, a \$2.1 billion build, has been producing 170 million cubic feet per day of synthetic natural gas, which is shipped via the Northern Border Pipeline to market.

The Synfuels Plant, built five miles northwest of Beulah in 1988, continues to be the only commercial-scale coal gasification facility in the U.S., has continued to supply carbon dioxide to the world's largest carbon capture and storage project in Saskatchewan, Canada. Dakota Gas currently delivers on average about 2 million metric tons of carbon dioxide per year. Using Lurgi gasifiers, the Synfuels Plant gasifies lignite coal to produce valuable gases and liquids.

"Originally built to produce synthetic natural gas, the Synfuels Plant expanded its operations over time to strengthen long-term viability," said Dana Hager, a communications manager for the Basin Electric Power Cooperative, which owns and operates the Synfuels Plant. "Today, 13 products are manufactured on-site."

More than \$1.3 billion has been invested in the Synfuels Plant since 1988 to achieve environmental compliance, improve efficiency and diversify the product slate. Most recently, about \$700 million was invested in a major expansion to produce urea, liquid carbon dioxide and diesel exhaust fluid.

Just last year, DGC broke the all-time world record for the amount of carbon dioxide (CO2) sequestered. The company actually broke the record three days in a row and now holds the record of 147.7 million standard cubic feet per day.

To the average person, the record may not relate to them as much as it may for the many local workers and their families in Mercer County. But what many people may not realize, says Hager, is how directly DGC's products touch their everyday lives.

"For example, nearly 90% of North Dakota's municipal water treatment systems rely on the beverage-grade CO2 produced here to ensure clean, safe drinking water," Trinity Turnbow, vice president and plant manager at Dakota Gasification Company, said. "The fertilizers we manufacture help farmers grow crops that feed communities across the country and around the world. What we produce here matters. While much of the work happens behind the scenes, its impact is felt every single day."

She said the success of the facility's carbon capture project means a great deal to the industry as a whole.

"It represents years of hard work, expertise and teamwork between our staff, partners and contractors," Turnbow said. "The project's success and recognition is a proud moment for everyone involved and a testament to what our employees can accomplish when we work together."

But impressive as production is at DGC, it doesn't happen without workers. That, said Hager, is the foundation of the success at DGC and Synfuels Plant and because of that, BEPC and DGC recognize and care for their entire staff. Hager said Basin Electric has long been more than an employer in Beulah and Hazen, creating stability, opportunities and growth for both communities over the years.

"For generations, families have built their livelihoods around careers at Basin Electric and its subsidiaries," she said. "These are not just short-term jobs tied to a single project, they are stable, family-supporting careers that allow employees to raise families, buy homes, and invest back in their communities. Many employees have spent decades with the cooperative, and it is not uncommon to see second- and third-generation family members choose to build their careers here, as well."

Many of DGC's employees dedicate their entire careers working there, which, Hager said having workers reach a 40- or 50-year milestone is common. The DGC recognized one such worker just last year for making her 50-year mark with the company.

"We are proud to have several employees who have built 40-plus-year careers at Dakota Gas," Hager said, "several of which are still working here."

Beyond employment, Dakota Gas supports the communities of Beulah and Hazen through Basin Electric's Charitable Giving Program. Each year, donations are provided to local nonprofits and community organizations.

"As a cooperative, Basin Electric is built on the principle that we exist to serve our members, and that means community is at the heart of everything we do," said Jen Holen, BEPC's charitable giving coordinator. "Our employees live and work here, and we are deeply invested in the towns and people we serve."

For the past 42 years, Dakota Gasification Company has been fine-tuning its production and time and time again it has led to great production of great quality thanks to great people, Turnbow said.

"Dakota Gas proves what's possible at a complex facility when people work together," she said. "From operating advanced technology to producing 13 products and managing large-scale carbon systems, it takes coordination, expertise and trust across hundreds of employees."

"Our success isn't just about equipment, it's about teamwork," she added. "When skilled people come together around a common goal, there is no limit to what you can accomplish. I am proud of this team."



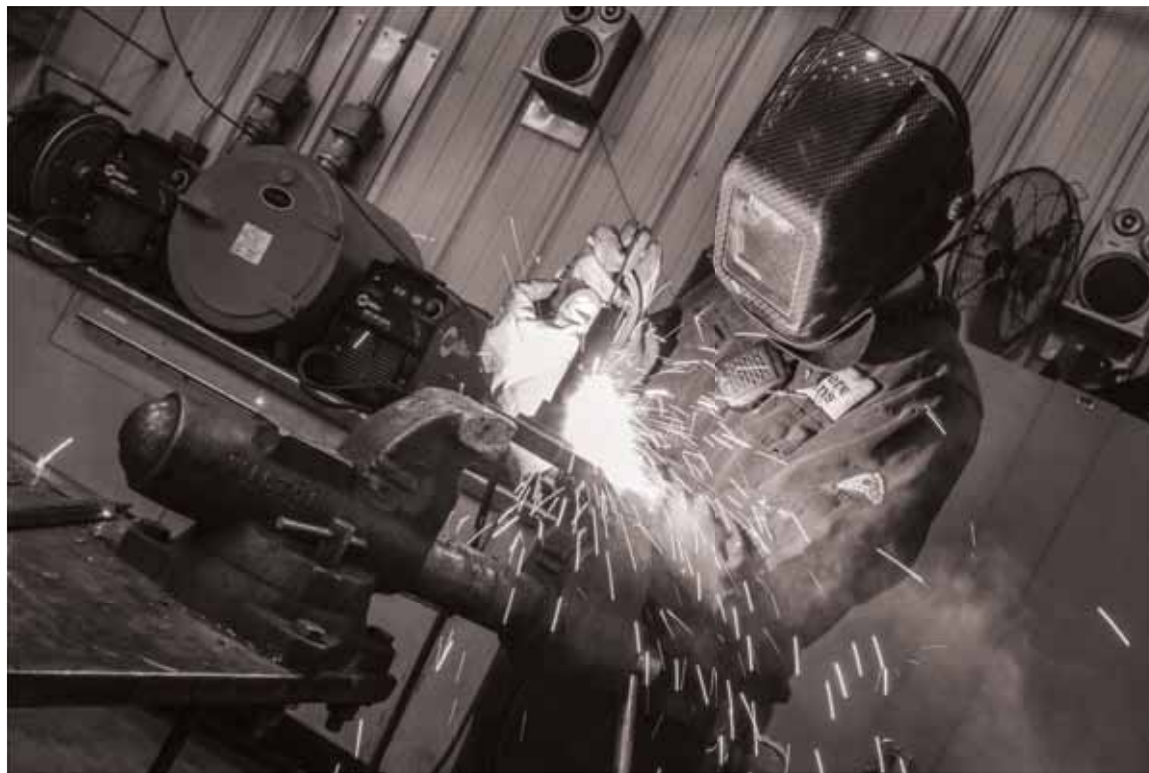
Submitted photo | Basin Electric Power Cooperative

Since it opened in 1984, DGC, a \$2.1-billion build, has been producing 170 million cubic feet per day of synthetic natural gas, which is shipped via the Northern Border Pipeline to market. It employs 540 people and has long supported the communities of Hazen and Beulah in Mercer County. "Our success isn't just about equipment, it's about teamwork," said Trinity Turnbow, vice president and plant manager at Dakota Gasification Company. "When skilled people come together around a common goal, there is no limit to what you can accomplish. I am proud of this team."



Submitted photo | Basin Electric Power Cooperative

Since it opened in 1984, Dakota Gasification Company, a \$2.1-billion build, has been producing 170 million cubic feet per day of synthetic natural gas, which is shipped via the Northern Border Pipeline to market.



Submitted photo | Basin Electric Power Cooperative

The Dakota Gasification Company employs 540 people, with many of them spending their entire careers there. "For generations, families have built their livelihoods around careers at Basin Electric and its subsidiaries," said Dana Hager, a communications manager for the Basin Electric Power Cooperative, which owns and operates Dakota Gasification Company and the Great Plains Synfuels Plant.

Driving a future of reliable excellence

BY DANIEL ARENS
HAZEN STAR EDITOR

For the last 43 years, Coteau Properties Co.'s Freedom Mine near Beulah has been a continual and dependable source of energy production, playing a significant role in helping to free America from dependence on foreign energy sources.

The Freedom Mine produces between 11.5 and 13.5 million tons of coal annually. Nearly 500 employees strong, the company works 365 days a year to provide dependable energy in a way that is safe and responsible, including in its reclamation efforts, which Coteau Properties Company Business Manager Mark Pierce said demonstrates the company's long-standing commitment to the community.

"We believe coal is a key component in maintaining low-cost, affordable electricity across the United States," Pierce said. "This electricity is a driving force for our economy and energy independence."

Pierce said the mining and reclamation process at Coteau's Freedom Mine goes through five basic steps. First, the company engages in baseline environmental research and data collection to provide a detailed pre-mining analysis of the land's resources, characteristics and composition.

After the data is collected, Coteau seeks permits granted by the North Dakota Public Service Commission, which include the pre-mine environmental information and the mining and reclamation plans.

"Before any mining can begin, a tremendous amount of planning and preparation must take place," Pierce said. "Applications to mine must be made to local, state and federal authorities. At a minimum, eight state and federal agencies review the mining application and reclamation plan for compliance with regulations."

These agencies include the PSC, the North Dakota Department of Water Resources, the North Dakota Department of Environmental Quality, the North Dakota State Historical Society, the North Dakota Game and Fish Department, the North Dakota Geological Survey, the United States Office of Surface Mining and the United States Fish and Wildlife Service.

The company takes conservation steps in capturing and settling runoff water in sedimentation ponds, and it also removes topsoil and subsoil and stockpiles

these for future reclamation work.

Suitable plant growth material, or SPGM, is removed by Caterpillar 657G tractor-scrappers or a fleet of trucks and shovels at both the topsoil and subsoil levels. Caterpillar end-dump trucks and an excavator are also used for the removal.

Mining follows the conservation step. At this point in the process, the coal is still 20 to 200 feet below the surface.

Overburden, the layer of rock above the actual coal seams, is removed by large draglines and other equipment to uncover the coal. Trucks and shovels remove any overburden in excess of 90 feet above the seam of coal, while three Bucyrus-Erie 2570 draglines then dig through and remove the remainder of the overburden above that particular coal seam.

"After the overburden is removed, a dozer cleans the coal surface, which then can be drilled and blasted to a size that can most effectively be loaded," Pierce said. "This allows the seam of coal to be loaded by a front-end loader or an excavator into the coal haulers."

Additionally, underneath the first coal seam in some areas is a layer of interburden, clay and sandstone, which can be over 20 feet thick. Due to the thickness, a CAT 6040 excavator or a PH 2100 shovel is used to dig out the interburden, uncovering the lower seam of coal. Once this coal is removed, the Bucyrus-Erie 2570 dragline will fill in this area as it digs the next pit.

The coal is blasted, loaded, blended, crushed and delivered. Then dragline spoils are graded into an approved topography and covered with stockpiled soils.

Currently, Coteau has permitted more than 44,000 acres of land for mining, with additional acres in the process of being permitted.

The final step is reclamation. "After the coal extraction process is complete, the obligation to the land is not," Pierce said. "Once all of the mineable coal is removed, the fleet of reclamation equipment regrades the land to the topography similar to what it was before the mining process began."

Soil is prepared and rock picking and seeding occur immediately after topsoil spreading. Once the soil is reclaimed and conditions approved, the land goes back to agricultural purposes if it is on farming and ranching land or back to reestablished habitat for wildlife.

As of December 2024, Coteau has reclaimed over 20,000 acres

of mined land and bond-released approximately 6,000 acres of reclaimed land. The land must be maintained for at least 10 years after reclamation has occurred, during which time the company keeps detailed records monitoring the productivity of the land.

"We strive to minimize the impacts of surface disturbance, and we practice contemporaneous reclamation," Pierce said. "We are committed to restoring areas disturbed by mining to ensure beneficial use for future generations. The Freedom Mine has received numerous Awards for Excellence in Surface Coal Mining and Reclamation from the North Dakota Public Service Commission and the U.S. Department of Interior. The mine has also been awarded the EPA's Environmental Excellence Award and honors from the North Dakota Game and Fish Department."

Pierce said Coteau prioritizes the safety of its workers as well as its dedication to restoring the land to its original purposes.

"We operate in a culture of safety and accountability," he said. "All employees share the responsibility of maintaining the highest safety standards for themselves and their coworkers. We're proud to say this approach works. The Freedom Mine has received numerous awards that recognize its outstanding safety achievements, including the Sentinels of Safety Awards in the large surface coal group."

Pierce said Coteau is very active in local communities, getting involved with community-building initiatives. In addition to providing well-paying jobs, the company supports employees in volunteer activities and provides financial support for local non-profits.

"We value the local communities where we operate and provide support by volunteering our time, making financial contributions and offering well-paying jobs," Pierce said. "We believe in making long-term investments in these areas by supporting numerous charitable efforts, including educational, arts and community organizations."

Pierce added that employees are also involved in different activities, projects and groups that serve the area. These include volunteer fire departments, youth organizations, medical centers, cancer research, food banks and educational programs.

Coteau works with local schools in career exploration. For example, in 2024, Coteau's



Submitted photo | Mark Pierce
Coteau's Freedom Mine hires many workers who live in local towns and help add to their community vibrancy. In addition, Coteau donates to local organizations and causes, including this photo of a check presentation by Coteau to the Energy Capital Cooperative child Care Center, a daycare facility in Hazen.



Submitted photo | Mark Pierce
An early sunrise over wide-open North Dakota lands shines on a North American Coal Coteau Freedom Mine dragline as it removes overburden above a coal vein at the mine's site north of Beulah.

Freedom

Mine hosted students from the Beulah Middle School's career exploration program for an exclusive tour of the mine site, offering them the opportunity to observe various jobs to gain firsthand experience of the mining process.

"We consider it a tremendous privilege to open our doors to children from our local community,

providing them with the chance to explore the myriad of opportunities right in their own backyard," said Erica Petrowitz, Human Resources Manager for Coteau.

Recently, Coteau's Freedom Mine received two notable awards for demonstrating excellence in reclamation and educational outreach. The Interstate Mining Compact Commission (IMCC) honored the mine with the Annual Minerals Education Award in the Public Outreach Category,

while the American Society of Reclamation Sciences (ASRS) bestowed the Distinction in Reclamation Award to the mine for its Pollinator Habitat Project.

According to the North American Coal Company's website, all coal produced at the mine is delivered to Dakota Coal Company, a subsidiary of Basin Electric Power Cooperative. Ultimately, coal from the Freedom Mine fuels up to 1,600 megawatts of low-cost, reliable electricity each day at the Antelope Valley Station and Leland Olds Station power plants and approximately 160 million cubic feet of natural gas daily at the Great Plains Synfuels Plant. These plants are located in Mercer County. Additionally, coal from the Freedom Mine provides the basis for the production of other value-added products including fertilizers utilized by family farms across the Great Plains Region.



Submitted photo | Mark Pierce
Nearly 500 employees make up the workforce at Coteau's Freedom Mine, using a variety of skills to keep the mine's processes operating efficiently, as Coteau produces 11.5 and 13.5 million tons of coal annually.

Power beneath the Plains

BY PHAIDRA YUNKER
LEADER-NEWS

county and the state,” Straley said, pointing to it as an example of what collaboration can accomplish.

Work done well

Over the years, Falkirk has built its reputation on three pillars: safety, land stewardship and reliability. Safety, Straley said, is one of the mine’s proudest achievements. Falkirk has earned industry recognition for maintaining the lowest accident rate among lignite operations, including the Lignite Energy Council’s Safety Excellence Award.

“Maintaining a strong safety culture in a large, complex mining operation is something our employees take very seriously,” he said.

Land reclamation is another area where Falkirk has distinguished itself. Since 1978, the mine has mined and restored more than 12,000 acres, returning the land to long term productivity. State regulators have honored the mine for the quality of its reclamation work, and several projects have been nominated for national awards. Straley describes reclamation as a responsibility that begins the moment mining starts, not something that waits until the end.

The third accomplishment is the one that underpins everything else: Falkirk’s long term role in keeping Coal Creek Station fueled. For nearly fifty years, the mine has supplied the lignite that powers homes, businesses and industries across the Upper Midwest.

“Supporting reliable electricity generation for the region is a major accomplishment in itself,” Straley said.

Giants on the Prairie

Today, Falkirk’s focus remains on operating safely and efficiently while planning for the mine’s long term future. That work depends on close coordination with Rainbow Energy Center, which operates Coal Creek Station.

“Together we focus on maintaining dependable operations while planning responsibly for the long term sustainability of the mine,” Straley said.

Innovation is part of that planning. One of the most visible developments is the construction of a third dragline, a machine so large it borders on surreal. The draglines already at Falkirk weigh more than 13 million pounds and stand over 200 feet tall, making them some of the largest pieces of mining equipment in the world. The new dragline will support future mining operations and reflects the mine’s commitment to long term investment.

Toward tomorrow’s power

Looking ahead to 2026, Falkirk’s goals remain grounded in the same principles that have guided it for

decades.

“As electricity demand grows, there is increasing recognition that dependable baseload power sources remain essential,” Straley said. “Our focus in 2026 will be continuing to deliver what our customers expect and need.”

Preparing for the future, he added, starts with maintaining strong operations today. Falkirk continues to invest in modern equipment, responsible land management and a highly skilled workforce. Straley said recent state and federal discussions have underscored the role coal still plays in energy security and grid reliability.

“We’re encouraged by local, state and federal authorities who have come to appreciate the role that coal has in supporting national energy security and maintaining the modern way of living,” he said.

A lasting foundation

The mine’s economic impact extends far beyond its own workforce. A recent study by North Dakota State University found that the state’s lignite industry supports more than 12,000 direct and indirect jobs and contributes roughly \$2.2 billion to North Dakota’s GDP. Total business activity tied to lignite approaches \$5.8 billion. Falkirk has been part of that foundation for nearly five decades, sustaining local businesses, schools and community organizations.

As Straley reflects on the mine’s nearly fifty-year history, he often returns to the people who have kept it running.

“Our employees take great pride in the role they play in helping power communities across the region,” he said. That pride, he believes, is what has carried Falkirk through decades of change.

At North American Coal, the company that operates Falkirk, the mission is “to bring natural resources to life.” Straley sees that mission reflected in the mine’s daily work, in the energy it produces, the land it restores and the communities it supports.

“Reliable electricity is essential to modern life,” he said. “Falkirk Mine and our partners at Rainbow Energy Center are proud to help provide that reliability while supporting local jobs, responsible land stewardship and the communities we call home.”

In the shadow of the draglines, the mine’s future still feels rooted in the same values that shaped its past: responsibility, reliability and a deep connection to the land and people of central North Dakota. For the workers who arrive before dawn and the communities that have grown alongside the mine, Falkirk remains more than an energy source. It’s part of the landscape, and part of the story, of North Dakota itself.



Submitted photo | North American Coal
Reclaimed farmland at Falkirk Mine demonstrates how previously mined land is restored and returned to productive agricultural use as part of the company’s long-standing commitment to responsible land stewardship.



Submitted photo | North American Coal
A dragline removes overburden at Falkirk Mine near Underwood, North Dakota.

Draglines rise out of the prairie like steel monuments, 200 foot giants that have watched over McLean County for generations. Below them, the earth carries the imprint of nearly 50 years of work at Falkirk Mine, a place where the story of North Dakota’s energy past and present still unfolds every day. For the people who work there, the mine isn’t just an industrial site. It’s a community anchor, a source of pride and a reminder of how deeply energy production is woven into the identity of central North Dakota.

Where it began

Falkirk Mine opened in 1978 with a straightforward mission of supplying lignite coal to the newly built Coal Creek Station. Nearly half a century later, that mission hasn’t changed much.

“Our goal has always been to safely, economically and responsibly produce fuel to support reliable electricity generation,” said David Straley, a representative for the mine. Today, Falkirk produces about 7.5 million tons of lignite each year, powering one of the region’s most important facilities.

From the beginning, the mine’s evolution has been shaped as much by people as by machinery. Many of Falkirk’s roughly 450 employees have spent decades at the operation, raising families in Underwood, Washburn and the surrounding towns. Their longevity has created a culture of expertise and stability that Straley sees as one of the mine’s defining strengths.

“Falkirk has always invested in the local workforce,” he said. “That commitment has never changed.”

A county’s backbone

The mine’s presence has helped shape McLean County’s economy for generations. High quality jobs have supported families, strengthened schools and kept local businesses thriving. Employees coach youth sports, volunteer in community programs and show up for the small town events that knit rural communities together. Falkirk itself supports education and workforce development initiatives, along with local events and youth activities.

One of the clearest examples of the mine’s community footprint sits near Coal Lake, where Falkirk donated land that became part of the Coal Lake Wildlife Management Area. The project preserved habitat, expanded public access and strengthened long term conservation efforts.

“It created lasting benefits for the



Submitted photo | North American Coal
Coal Lake near Falkirk Mine in McLean County, North Dakota. The surrounding area includes land donated in partnership with McLean County and the State of North Dakota that now supports wildlife habitat and outdoor recreation.

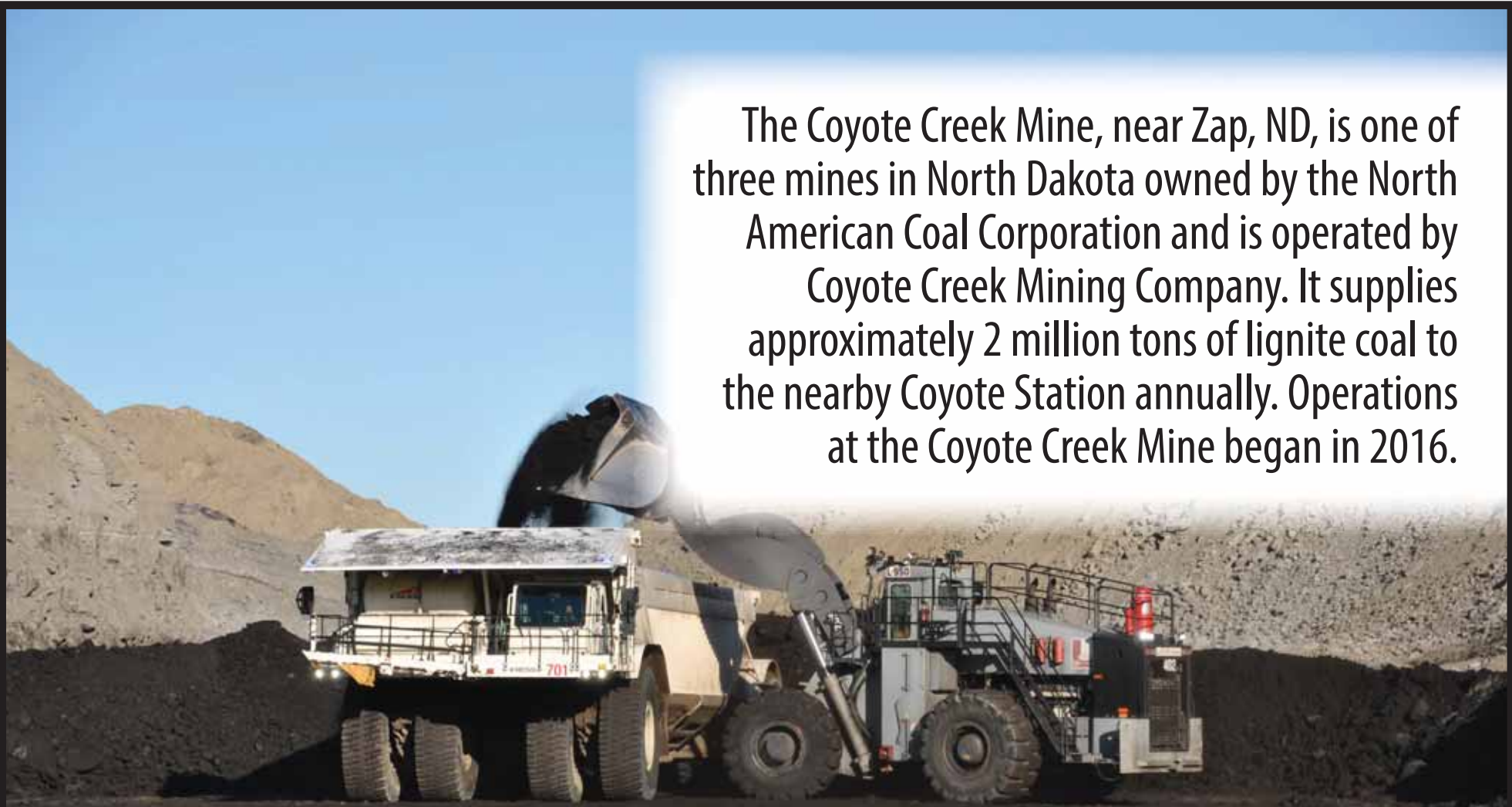
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The Coyote Creek Mine, near Zap, ND, is one of three mines in North Dakota owned by the North American Coal Corporation and is operated by Coyote Creek Mining Company. It supplies approximately 2 million tons of lignite coal to the nearby Coyote Station annually. Operations at the Coyote Creek Mine began in 2016.

POWERING THE GREAT PLAINS



Located in Beulah, ND, Coteau's Freedom Mine produces between 11.5 and 13.5 million tons of coal annually. Since coal deliveries began in 1983, our aptly-named mine has played a significant role in freeing America from its dependence on foreign energy sources. Our award-winning reclamation efforts demonstrate a long-standing commitment to the community. Nearly 500 employees strong, we work 365 days a year to safely and responsibly provide dependable energy.

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COYOTE CREEK MINE
FREEDOM MINE