

# Basin Electric 2012 Annual Meeting discusses challenges ahead

Speakers at the cooperative's annual meeting discussed the importance of coal and adding infrastructure to meet load.

Basin Electric Power Cooperative - November 9, 2012

Coal will be a part of this country's energy future for many years despite what some are predicting. That was the [message from Dr. Frank Clemente](#) to more than 800 guests and member system representatives at [Basin Electric's 51<sup>st</sup> annual meeting](#) held Nov. 7-8 in Bismarck. Clemente is a professor of Social Science and Energy Policy at Penn State University. "Coal is the cornerstone of our electric power system, whether people like it or not. It's there and it's not going anywhere," he said.

Clemente's research specializes in the socioeconomic impact of energy policy. He said the Department of Energy predicts that coal will still be the leading source of power generation through 2035, but he thinks even those projections are an underestimation.

"This generation today doesn't quite understand how important the United States' endowment of coal is," Clemente said. "Coal has tremendous flexibility (as a fuel source); it just isn't a national resource – it's a global resource. It's a resource that will be used. Coal offers tremendous flexibility and there are tremendous things you can do with it. One of those things is coal gasification – which is an integral part of Basin Electric's operation."

## Challenges ahead

In [his remarks to the membership](#), Roy Ireland, president of Basin Electric, said the business of power supply has many challenges. "There have always been challenges to providing power to its member systems, but in 2012, we need to stay up to the challenge to provide cost-effective electricity and services to Basin Electric member systems as the world changes around us."

Ireland said regulations continue to put pressure on coal as a fuel source for the future. "Institutions that have supported rural America, such as the Rural Utilities Service, continue to face funding and staffing pressures," he said. "It is only through strong political leadership that we will meet these challenges."

## Adding infrastructure to meet load

Adding infrastructure – such as transmission lines and power plants – to meet a growing need for electricity throughout Basin Electric's service territory is a major challenge.

Mike Paul, vice president of Construction and Engineering, said Basin Electric began construction this year on two natural gas-fueled peaking stations in northwest North Dakota to meet that need. Those plants are near Williston and Watford City. He also reported the process is under way to build four additional peaking units at those sites.

Mike Risan, senior vice president of Transmission, said while Basin Electric's combustion turbines north and south of Lake Sakakawea will support the growth, the long-term solution ultimately requires additional high-voltage transmission. "Transmission analysis has identified that without improvements, the existing system will experience loading and voltage issues if the load continues to grow," he said. "To resolve these issues, Basin Electric is proposing a 345-kilovolt line west out of the Antelope Valley Station (near Beulah, ND), around the western edge of Lake Sakakawea and terminating near Tioga. The line will be nearly 200 miles in length. Our goal is to have the line in service in 2016."

## Director elections

Four directors [were re-elected](#) to three-year terms at the annual meeting: **Kermit Pearson**, representing District 1 – East River Electric Power Cooperative, Madison, SD; **Arden Fuher**, representing District 3 – Central Power Electric Cooperative, Minot, ND; **Allen Thiessen**, representing District 8 – Upper Missouri G&T Electric Cooperative, Sidney, MT; and **Charlie Gilbert**, representing District 11 – Corn Belt Power Cooperative, Humboldt, IA.