

# MRES TODAY

July 2025

A NEWSLETTER OF



## MRES DEDICATES MARSHALL SOLAR PLUS

On Tuesday, May 20, Missouri River Energy Services (MRES) leadership and staff along with Marshall, Minnesota, city officials, community leaders and project partners gathered to celebrate the official dedication of Marshall Solar Plus (MSP).

The 10-megawatt (MW) solar energy and 5-MW battery storage facility, developed to support regional reliability and clean energy goals, has been up and running since December 2024.

MSP is owned by Marshall Solar Plus, LLC, a subsidiary of Western Minnesota Municipal Power Agency (WMMPA), and operated by MRES. The organizations partnered with US Solar, a Minneapolis-based renewable energy developer, for the facility's permitting, design and construction.

"Today, we celebrate more than a new solar project. We celebrate a step forward in the MRES promise to deliver reliable, affordable energy to the 61 member communities we serve," said Matt Schull, president and CEO of MRES during the dedication ceremony.

The facility is on track to generate approximately 21,000 to 23,000 megawatt-hours of electricity annually, sufficient to power approximately 2,000 homes.



*From left to right: MRES and WMMPA Board Members Ted Cash, David Schelkoph, WMMPA President Scott Hain, MRES Board Chair Vernell Roberts, MRES President and CEO Matt Schull, Rob Wolfington, Steve Lehner and Murray Hulstein, cut the ribbon to officially dedicate the Marshall Solar Plus project on May 20, 2025.*

The energy produced by MSP integrates directly into Marshall's distribution system and contributes to Missouri River's broader renewable energy portfolio.

*Solar Dedication  
Continued on page 2*



The facility comprises approximately 21,000 photovoltaic solar panels spanning 55 acres, making it a substantial addition to the region's renewable energy infrastructure.

One feature that sets the project apart from typical solar installations is its integrated battery storage system, which allows solar energy generated during peak sunlight hours to be stored and dispatched when demand is highest or when solar production is limited.

The battery storage system alone is equivalent to approximately 400 Tesla Model 3 vehicles in terms of energy capacity, said Reed Richardson, president of US Solar.

Presenters had a unique opportunity to highlight the battery storage during the ceremony. The dedication was initially scheduled to take place outside at the MSP facility, but clouds and rain thwarted the original plans. The ceremony was instead held indoors at The Upper Room in downtown Marshall.

"Despite all the clouds and rain today, the facility was producing about two megawatts of power on our way here – enough to power 350 to 400 homes during this weather," Richardson said.

David Schelkoph, general manager of Marshall Municipal Utilities and an MRES board member, praised the collaborative effort behind the project.

"The relationship Marshall Municipal Utilities has with the city and our customers, and the relationship we have with Missouri River Energy Services, is genius especially when it comes to efficiencies that we can apply to our rate structure for customers in the city of Marshall," he said.

Marshall city leaders echoed Schelkoph's remarks on the strength of partnerships. "We're very proud of the innovation that has gone into this vision," Marshall Mayor Bob Byrnes said.

"Missouri River Energy Services played a big role and continues to play a big role as the energy supplier for Marshall Municipal Utilities. Reliable electricity is essential for our quality industries and businesses," Byrnes said.

For MRES, the project represents a strategic step toward sustainability goals. MRES already sources 40% of its energy from renewable resources, primarily hydroelectric power from the Western Area Power Administration. With recent additions including solar facilities in South Dakota and the Red Rock Hydroelectric Plant in Iowa, MRES has achieved a power supply mix that is 45% renewable.

"The solar project represents a forward-looking investment in renewable energy and helps us work toward our long-range strategic goal of creating a clean, resilient energy future for generations to come," said MRES Board Chair Vernell Roberts.

Because rain moved the May ceremony indoors, MRES is offering tours throughout the summer. The first took place on Wednesday, June 11.

Destry Skjette, MRES operations and maintenance technician, led a small group that included Mayor Byrnes, Minnesota State Rep. Tom Murphy, (R-Underwood), and Brandon Antoine, utilities superintendent at the ADM corn processing plant located just across the road from MSP.

The project also incorporates environmental stewardship beyond clean energy production. Developers planted a native pollinator mix across portions of the 78-acre site, creating a habitat for local wildlife while maintaining the solar installation.

MPS officials are in communication with a local farmer about the possibility of sheep grazing the grass and other forages within the facility in the future, Skjette told tour participants.

MRES leaders indicated that MSP serves as a model for future renewable energy projects. The facility provides valuable experience in operating combined solar and battery storage systems — knowledge that will inform similar projects as the organization continues expanding its clean energy portfolio.



Nick Fanning, MRES resource engineer supervisor chats with Reed Richardson, president of US Solar, during the dedication ceremony.



From left to right: MRES President and CEO Matt Schull, Reed Richardson and Marshall (Minnesota) Mayor Bob Byrnes ceremonially cut the ribbon at the MSP dedication ceremony May 20.



## Tour the Marshall Solar Plus Project!

MRES invites you to take a behind-the-scenes tour of the Marshall Solar Plus Project.

This is a working energy site, so safety and preparedness are key. MRES will provide hard hats, safety glasses and vests for each participant, if needed.

### Some things to note:

- Participants must wear long pants and closed-toe shoes. Expect uneven or muddy ground.
- Those 16 and under must be accompanied by a parent or guardian.
- Tours may be canceled for inclement weather; registered guests will be notified in advance.
- Group size is limited to 10 participants per tour session.
- All tours will be 60 to 90 minutes in length.

### Choose from the following dates and sessions:

Aug. 14: 10 a.m. and 1 p.m.  
Sept. 11: 10 a.m. and 1 p.m.

Space is limited. Reserve your spot today at [www.mrenergy.com/event/marshall-solar-plus-tour](http://www.mrenergy.com/event/marshall-solar-plus-tour)



*Destry Skjefte, MRES operations and maintenance technician, shows Minnesota State Rep. Tom Murphy, (R-Underwood), the battery storage during an MSP tour on June 11.*



*From left to right: Destry Skjefte, Brandon Antoine, ADM utilities superintendent, Rep. Tom Murphy, Marshall Mayor Bob Byrnes and John DeCramer, MRES ambassador for Marshall Municipal Utilities, visit MSP during a tour on June 11.*

## EVENTS CALENDAR

AUG.  
1-3

### FLEKKEFEST

Elbow Lake, Minnesota  
<https://flekkefest.fun>

AUG.  
7-11

### FAITH STOCK SHOW AND RODEO

Faith, South Dakota  
[www.faith.govoffice.com](http://www.faith.govoffice.com)

AUG.  
8-9

### FORT PIERRE TRADER DAYS

Fort Pierre, South Dakota  
[www.visitfortpierre.com](http://www.visitfortpierre.com)

AUG.  
11-17

### STAPLES RAILROAD DAYS

Staples, Minnesota  
<https://discoverstaples.com>

AUG.  
20-24

### SOUNDS OF SUMMER

Marshall, Minnesota  
<https://visitmarshallmn.com/sounds-of-summer>

SEPT.  
24-25

### TECH DAYS

Sioux Falls, South Dakota  
[www.mrenergy.com/events/mres-technology-days](http://www.mrenergy.com/events/mres-technology-days)

To have your event listed, send the event's date, name, location and contact information to [info@mrenergy.com](mailto:info@mrenergy.com).

Visit [mrenergy.com/events](http://mrenergy.com/events) to see a full listing of calendar events for MRES and its members.



MRES Events

## DON'T MISS TECH DAYS SEPT. 24 – 25

MRES Technology Days 2025 will take place Sept. 24-25. Note this year the event is at a new location - Canopy by Hilton in downtown Sioux Falls, South Dakota. Here's a quick rundown of the two-day conference agenda.

Day one of Tech Days kicks off with opening remarks from MRES President & CEO Matt Schull, followed by an engaging keynote on "The Brain Science of Communication" by Scott Schwefel of Discover Yourself, Inc. Attendees will learn how to use Schwefel's "Insights Discovery" tool to improve relationships and maximize productivity through better understanding of individual communication styles.

The morning continues with practical cybersecurity measures for small and medium-sized utilities, presented by MRES Cybersecurity Architect John Bade, focusing on low-cost solutions you can implement today. After lunch, the afternoon features comprehensive Tech Talks covering new construction design review rebates, EPRI industrial audit wins, municipal power advantage reports, Hawarden's electric school bus experience, promoting public power, proactive maintenance services and an electrification journey.

Following the tech talks, hear from MRES members who have developed successful key accounts programs and learn about a 1.2-megawatt customer-owned solar installation case study in Luverne, Minnesota. The day wraps up with emerging technologies, followed by the popular 2025 WattSTARs awards with special entertainment by The Dock Dads.



*Kurt Hauser, MRES energy services technical supervisor, presents at Tech Days 2023.*

The first day concludes with the WattSTARs after party and dinner at Cherapa Place along the Big Sioux River, featuring fantastic food and amazing rooftop views of downtown Sioux Falls and the Big Sioux riverfront.

Day two starts with smart grid success stories from MRES members who have modernized their utilities through load management, AML and meter-data management systems followed by insights into tunable lighting and network lighting controls.

The day features two rounds of interactive roundtable sessions covering topics like member support services, promoting BES rebates, smart grid services, Tyler Technologies ERP Pro 10, load control strategies and key account development.

The conference concludes with a keynote on "Artificial Intelligence, Cybersecurity, and Energy Applications — Innovation Through Industry Partnership" by Dr. Mark Spanier from Dakota State University. Dr. Spanier will explore cutting-edge technologies driving innovation in the energy sector.

Members are encouraged to register for Tech Days online at [mrenergy.com](https://www.mrenergy.com) under the Events tab. The \$99 registration fee includes all meals. Registered attendees may bring a guest to the WattSTAR Dinner for an additional \$40. Room reservations can be made at the Canopy by Hilton with the MRES Group Rate of \$199 per night. Tech Days registration deadline is Friday, Sept. 12 and the hotel group rate deadline is August 22, 2025.

Find a detailed schedule and more information by scanning the QR code to the right or online at <https://www.mrenergy.com/event/mres-technology-days>

**TechDays<sup>25</sup>**  
Building a **Brighter** Future Together ●●●●●

**Sept. 24 & 25, 2025**  
Canopy by Hilton | Sioux Falls, SD

**EVENT REGISTRATION/LODGING**  
Register at [mrenergy.com](https://www.mrenergy.com) under **Events**  
or click/scan QR code below.

 

Registration Deadline: **Sept. 12**  
Lodging Group Rate Deadline: **Aug. 22**



# MRES ANNOUNCES 2025 SCHOLARSHIP WINNERS

MRES has awarded 12 scholarships to high school graduates as part of its annual commitment to supporting education and the development of future professionals in the energy industry.

“At MRES, we’re proud to support the communities we serve by investing in the next generation of leaders,” said MRES President and CEO Matt Schull. “These scholarships reflect our commitment to empowering students in our member communities and helping them pursue their education goals.”

Five recent high school graduates received a \$1,000 general scholarship to attend an accredited two- or four-year college or vocational-technical school. These scholarships are renewable for up to three additional years, based on academic performance and other criteria, for a potential total value of \$4,000.

## Recipients of the \$1,000 renewable general scholarships:

**Emily Bahnsen** of Denison, Iowa, plans to attend Iowa State University to major in accounting.



**Braeden Fagerlie** of Willmar, Minnesota, plans to attend South Dakota State University (SDSU) to study civil engineering.



**Evan Wallestad** of Willmar, Minnesota, plans to attend North Dakota State University where he’ll study engineering.



**Corynn Oye** of Luverne, Minnesota, will attend SDSU where she’ll major in business accounting.



**Devon Snyder** of Watertown, South Dakota, plans to attend Colorado Christian University where he’ll major in finance.



Seven area youth received a one-time \$2,000 powerline scholarship, designated for those enrolling in an eligible powerline-related program at a regional technical college.

## Recipients of the \$2,000 one-time powerline scholarships:

**Teagen Bahrenfuss** of Primghar, Iowa, plans to enroll in the powerline program at Northwest Iowa Community College.



**Bryce Becker** of Fort Pierre, South Dakota, will enroll at Mitchell Technical Institute in the powerline construction and maintenance program.



**Lincoln Fersdahl** of Dell Rapids, South Dakota, will enroll at Mitchell Technical Institute in the powerline construction and maintenance program.



**Cameron Flute** of Flandreau, South Dakota, will enroll at Mitchell Technical Institute in the powerline construction and maintenance program.



**Cyrus Jorgensen** of Renner, South Dakota, plans to enroll at Mitchell Technical Institute in the powerline construction and maintenance program.



**Trystan Traupel** of Salem, South Dakota will enroll at Mitchell Technical Institute in the powerline construction and maintenance program.



**Logan Wardner** of Madison, South Dakota will enroll at Mitchell Technical Institute in the powerline construction and maintenance program.





## Three steps to avoiding scams

Human risk management involves more than security awareness training, but training is a huge part of the mix. How else can organizations best fight a cyberthreat that is responsible for 70% to 90% of all successful data breaches after already bypassing every technical cybersecurity defense they have deployed?

At some point, a harmful scam message will make it to a user who will be called upon to evaluate its importance and treatment and make a decision that will impact their future happiness and maybe that of their employer. Training people how to recognize and mitigate scams as effectively as possible isn't easy, especially in today's world where anyone can use an AI-enabled deepfake to try to scam anyone else.

Here are three simple steps to avoid cybersecurity scams:

First, if a message arrives unexpectedly, research the request using an alternate trusted method before performing. Any message containing these two traits is at far higher risk of being a social engineering scam than other messages. Not every scam meets these criteria, but 99% of them do.

It doesn't matter how the message arrives. It could be in email, a text, a work chat channel or even a phone call. If an unexpected message arrives, it's already one of two traits that puts individuals at risk.

Second, often the request may ask the recipient to do something they haven't done before, often indicating they need to take the requested action ASAP. It claims that if they don't follow the instructions, some type of harm, usually financial, will befall them.



When dealing with questionable messages, the approach should be kept simple. If a message arrives unexpectedly and asks someone to do something they've never done before, the recipient should slow down and research it better before performing the requested action.

Third, recipients shouldn't use any of the contact information in the message. Scammers provide fake email addresses, fraudulent spoofed links and phone numbers that lead to phony call centers. It's best if

people try to contact the sender by a trusted and known phone number or go to the company's direct website or look up the phone number. People shouldn't trust phone number lookups in internet search engines. Many malicious phone numbers end up being mistakenly listed as legitimate.

By training ourselves to recognize that moment of confusion as a red flag, we can transform our automatic questioning response into a deliberate security check. This simple mental shift helps people pause and critically evaluate suspicious messages before taking action.



## CELEBRATING 60 YEARS OF MRES HISTORY — 1980s

On Sept. 6, 1980, the Missouri Basin Power Project (MBPP) marked a major milestone in public power history with the dedication of Unit 1 at the Laramie River Station (LRS). The unit is a high-capacity, coal-fired generating station built to serve communities across the eastern side of the transmission grid, including members of MRES, formally Missouri Basin Municipal Power Agency (MBMPA).

After four years of construction and backed by a \$1.6 billion investment, MBPP included not only LRS, but also the Grayrocks Dam and Reservoir, which provides vital cooling water for the station. Over the next two years, Units 2 and 3 were brought online, bringing LRS to its full 1,650-megawatt capacity.

Today, MRES maintains 16.47% ownership of LRS, allowing us to provide reliable, affordable baseload power to the 61 communities we serve.

**HERE'S TO THE NEXT 60 YEARS OF POWERING POSSIBILITIES!**



# DISCOVER CRITICAL INSIGHTS WITH COLLABORATIVE RETAIL CUSTOMER SURVEY

Strengthen customer connections, guide utility strategy and demonstrate your commitment to public power excellence by participating in the 2025 Residential Customer Survey.

For the second time, MRES is partnering with GreatBlue Research to provide members with access to professional, community-specific research. This collaborative initiative offers a cost-effective way to better understand the perceptions, expectations and priorities of your residential customers — and use that data to inform planning, engagement and investment decisions.

## Key Research Areas:

- ▶ Current satisfaction levels and service perceptions
- ▶ Community awareness of local utility value and ownership benefits
- ▶ Interest in existing and potential future service offerings
- ▶ Preferred communication channels and engagement methods

## Strategic Value of Customer Research:

- ▶ Stay aligned with evolving customer needs and their changing expectations
- ▶ Access insights from your entire customer base, rather than just vocal minorities
- ▶ Leverage research as an educational tool while gathering critical feedback from your customer base
- ▶ Demonstrate commitment to important customer input and community engagement
- ▶ Generate data-driven support for investment decisions and strategic planning
- ▶ Develop evidence-based strategies for your 2026 planning cycles

## Research Partnership:

MRES has selected GreatBlue Research as our research partner. Based in Glastonbury, Connecticut, GreatBlue brings over four decades of specialized experience in utility industry research. As the preferred research partner of the American Public Power Association and a partner of Hometown Connections, GreatBlue provides the Public Power Data Source quarterly survey information that MRES subscribes to on behalf of members.

## Participating Members Receive:

- ▶ Customized research report specific to your community
- ▶ Comprehensive summary report aggregating all participating members' results
- ▶ Professional survey platform accessible via QR code and web link

## You'll also get a complete promotional toolkit with customizable communication materials including:

- ▶ Bill stuffer templates
- ▶ Social media content with graphics
- ▶ Newsletter and newspaper article templates
- ▶ Print advertisement layouts
- ▶ Direct mail piece designs
- ▶ Envelope messaging and poster templates

MRES members save up to 90% on research costs through our survey development investment and Board-approved 50/50 cost-sharing program.

## Pricing by number of residential customers:

- ▶ 1,000 or fewer residential customers: \$435
- ▶ 1,000 - 2,500 residential customers: \$775
- ▶ 2,501 - 5,000 residential customers: \$950
- ▶ 5,001 - 10,000 residential customers: \$1,063
- ▶ Over 10,000 residential customers: \$1,350

**Note:** Pricing does not include individual promotional costs for survey deployment.

To participate in the residential customer survey, email Director of Communications Valerie Larson-Holmes at [info@mrenergy.com](mailto:info@mrenergy.com) or call her at 605-338-4042.



## CHANGES AND CELEBRATIONS



Jim Horan

### Changes at Mid-West Electric Consumers Association

Jim Horan stepped down as executive director of Mid-West Electric Consumers Association to join Basin Electric Power Cooperative as senior vice president and general counsel.

At Basin, Horan replaced Mark Foss, who retired after 47 years. Horan, who worked extensively within Basin Electric's service territory throughout his career, said the move allowed him to continue serving the region's network of consumer-owned utilities in a new capacity.

To fill Horan's role, Mid-West Electric's board appointed Chris Studer as interim executive director. Studer has been with East River Electric Power Cooperative since



Chris Studer

2013 and will continue in his role there while also leading Mid-West Electric during the transition.

Studer brings significant experience advocating for consumers of hydropower generated by Missouri River dams, having worked closely with Mid-West on policy and regulatory matters for nearly

a decade. He also served as a hydropower stakeholder on the Missouri River Recovery Implementation Committee.

### Vasichcek wins APPA award

Congratulations to Amie Vasichcek, city auditor at Lakota (North Dakota) Municipal Utilities.

She was awarded a Larry Hobart Seven Hats award during the 2025 American Public Power Association's (APPA) National Conference in early June. The award recognizes managers of utilities serving fewer than 2,500 meters, who work with a limited staff and must take on multiple roles.

Congratulations to Amie for continuously going above and beyond in her role. This honor is well-deserved.

