

News

MARCH 26, 2021

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Print Newsletter

Young Educators



Students from White Shield visited the Capitol this week to help promote SB 2304 about teaching Native American history (see story below). Pictured from left are Elijah, Sophie, Instructors Hunter Andes and Margaret Yellowbird, Raylene, Lexus and Eatosh.

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Julie Fedorchak Randy Christmann

Committee Debates Grid Responsibility Bill Incentivizes Utilities to Focus on Reliability

A House Energy and Natural Resources subcommittee is debating merits of a proposal from the ND Public Service Commission to put new life back into legislation aimed at promoting grid reliability.

An amendment to [SB 2313](#) would allow the PSC to impose big penalties if utilities fail to keep the lights on. The original bill would have imposed a "firming" requirement on utilities to maintain adequate dispatchable (reliable) generation, but it was opposed by utility lobbyists. The bill was watered down in the Senate to simply require the state transmission authority to gather information from utilities for a report to the legislature on the adequacy of the state's generation resources.

However, the latest version under consideration in the subcommittee would allow the PSC to determine "qualitative benefits" of generation resources and allow the PSC to impose penalties if a public utility fails to provide reliable service. PSC Chair Julie Fedorchak said the value that a utility's generation assets contribute to reliability needs to be an important consideration in the company's resource mix.

Click [here](#) to listen to Fedorchak's comments.

PSC Commissioner Randy Christmann said utilities need to be encouraged to secure firm capacity to meet customer demands. Christmann said at times companies have been too casual about their ability to secure backup power when non-dispatchable (wind and solar) resources are not available.

Click [here](#) to listen to Christmann's comments.

Christmann supports the penalty provisions in the bill, but opposed a suggestion that any fine be less than \$20 million. He said the bill should be amended to require utilities to provide a

capped at \$2 million. He said it would hardly be adequate in a worst case scenario where a power failure resulted in loss of life. Christmann said it's important that the law provides a powerful incentive to motivate utilities to maintain a reliable electric system.

Click [here](#) to listen to Christmann's comments.

Legislators have said they're frustrated by "finger pointing" in the wake of power outages, with different entities blaming each other and not accepting responsibility for the failure. Fedorchak told utility lobbyists at the hearing that the legislation should clearly assign that responsibility to the utility.

Click [here](#) to listen to Fedorchak's comments.

WDEA supports the PSC's proposal. WDEA Executive Director Geoff Simon said the legislation amounts to a state policy, communicating to utilities and grid operators that electric reliability is absolutely essential.

Click [here](#) to listen to Simon's comments.

The subcommittee took no action on the amendment, and urged the PSC and utilities to discuss language they could agree upon that would define the conditions under which a penalty could be imposed. The subcommittee will meet again at 8:00 a.m. Tuesday. The PSC has posted a [public meeting notice](#) that it will discuss the bill at 4:00 p.m. Monday.



**Coal Creek Sales Talks Down to One
GRE in Exclusive Negotiations to Sell Plant**

Gov. Doug Burgum announced this week that Great River Energy is now in exclusive negotiations with a single buyer to sell Coal Creek Station and GRE’s high-voltage, direct current transmission system.

Last year GRE announced plans to retire Coal Creek Station, a 1,151-megawatt coal-fired power plant near Underwood in the second half of 2022. Since then, state officials led by Lt. Gov. Brent Sanford have worked with GRE and potential buyers to keep the plant in operation. The facility has 240 employees, with another 450 working at North American Coal’s nearby Falkirk Mine, the plant's coal supplier.

“This is wonderful news for Coal Creek Station’s employees, their local communities and the entire state of North Dakota,” Burgum said. “We’re deeply grateful to Lt. Gov. Sanford, GRE, the legislature, our state’s congressional delegation and everyone involved in creating a viable path forward for Coal Creek Station and our lignite coal industry.”

According to the governor's office, the potential buyer would buy the plant and the DC line, and intends to pursue plans to capture carbon dioxide from the coal plant's emissions. This week, Burgum signed [SB 2152](#), which provides a sales tax exemption for carbon dioxide used for secure geologic storage, providing an incentive to continue developing North Dakota’s lignite coal reserves.

Click [here](#) for a Bismarck Tribune article about the negotiations.

**Bonding Bill Back to \$1.1 Billion
Loan Pool Added for CO2 Capture Projects
Committee Okays Coal Severance Tax Break**

A revolving loan fund added this week to a bonding bill under consideration by the North Dakota Legislature could help fund future projects aimed at capturing carbon dioxide from coal plants.

The \$250 million loan pool was tacked onto the bill by the Senate Finance and Taxation Committee, chaired by Beulah Senator Jessica Bell. It was added on top of a previous amendment to [HB 1431](#) previously pitched to the committee by Senate Majority Leader Rich Wardner. That amendment had increased the bill's price tag to \$860 million, adding back many items taken out in the House-passed \$680 million version of the bill. With the amendment approved this week by the Tax Committee, the bill is now back to \$1.1 billion, which is [where it started](#) the first week of the legislative session.

Although not exclusively dedicated to CO2-capture and sequestration, it is one of the primary



Jessica Bell

projects for which the "clean sustainable energy fund" is being developed. A separate bill, [HB 1452](#), establishes the clean sustainable energy authority, which would consider grants and loans issued to cutting edge, high tech energy projects. That bill is currently awaiting action in the Senate Appropriations Committee.

Other items added to the bonding bill by Wardner's amendment include \$60 million for career and tech ed projects; \$65 million for deferred maintenance on state buildings; \$30 million for township roads; \$10 million for state parks; \$4 million for digitization of documents for the Theodore Roosevelt Library; \$4 million to complete Pulver Hall at Dickinson State; and \$4.7 million for maintenance of historical buildings.

The Senate committee also approved an amendment to [HB 1380](#), which has become known as the Legacy Fund "streams bill." It would direct future Legacy earnings to various categories of spending. The House had reduced the streams to a trickle, directing funds to cover only the bonding repayment, \$40 million for the clean sustainable energy fund, and \$40 million to the infrastructure revolving loan fund. Additions to the streams bill approved by the committee include funds directed to economic diversification research at state universities, a workforce development enrichment fund, an infrastructure fund for one-time projects, a legacy project fund, and an innovation research and diversification fund.

The committee also approved [HB 1412](#), which would provide a 5-year reduction in the coal severance tax, but before doing so approved an amendment offered by Senator Bell. The change increases to 85 percent the amount the severance tax would be reduced, but excludes the 15 percent that goes to support counties, cities and school districts in the coal-producing counties. The original House version would have reduced the tax by just 60 percent.

All three pieces of legislation will move from the Tax Committee to the Senate Appropriations Committee.



House Considers Straddle Well Bill MHA Nation Wants Tax Sharing Deal

There are hundreds of oil wells around the perimeter of the Fort Berthold Reservation, many of which have underground laterals that begin inside the reservation and go out, while others have laterals that begin outside the boundary and go in. The state of North Dakota currently gets a share of the tax revenue from those inside the boundary, but the MHA Nation does not receive tax revenue from those on the outside. [SB 2319](#) would change that.

The bill, which narrowly passed the Senate 25-21, was heard this week by the House Finance and Taxation Committee. MHA Chairman Mark Fox told committee members there are currently 132 wells outside the reservation with laterals that go into it, and said the tribe is entitled to the tax revenue they generate.



Chairman Mark Fox

Click [here](#) to listen to listen to Fox's comments.

As a bargaining chip to entice the state to approve the tax sharing agreement, Fox has proposed seeking an exception from the Biden administration's ban on federal leasing to tap separate parcels under the control of the federal government. The areas, known as Blue Buttes in McKenzie County and Lost Creek in northern Dunn County, are currently inaccessible, but could be tapped with underground laterals from oil wells on the reservation.

Committee members heard a [presentation](#) from Joel Brown, vice-president of Mineral Tracker, who evaluated the potential production from oil formations under the two parcels. Brown said they have some of "the best geology in the state," and have EURs (estimated ultimate oil recovery) that are well above the state average.

Click [here](#) to listen to Brown's comments.

Brown said based on establishment of 10 spacing units, 67 new wells could be drilling in Dunn County and 43 in McKenzie County, producing upwards of 25,000 barrels of oil per day within five years. He estimated over the life of the wells, they could produce more than 90 million barrels, generating an estimated \$426 million in tax revenue for the state, \$50 million for Dunn County and \$40 million for McKenzie County. The counties would also receive a share of the federal royalties if the area is developed.

Fox shared with the committee a [draft letter](#) addressed to the Corps of Engineers requesting a

meeting to discuss the continuing operation of the Dakota Access Pipeline. Previous testimony indicated that DAPL transports about 225,000 barrels of oil per day that is produced on the reservation, and its shutdown could cost the tribe and the state's producers millions in lost revenue due to higher transportation costs. Fox was asked why the letter was just a draft and had not been mailed since it was in the tribe's interest to do so. The letter was subsequently mailed the next day.

To get the bill through the Senate, it was amended to delay the effective date of the tax-sharing agreement until 2023, and then only if at least one well is drilled in the federal land. It would also exempt Mountrail County from any tax loss if agreement is reached. Fox asked the committee to restore the bill to its original form.



Jordan Kannianen

**Senate Defeats Gas Tax Increase
Other Legislation Provides Road Funds**

The North Dakota Senate today soundly rejected [HB 1464](#), a bill that would have raised the state motor fuel tax by 3 cents to 26 cents per gallon, defeating the measure on a 29-16 vote.

The bill, which previously cruised through the House on a 62-32 vote, would also have included an annual registration fee increase of \$15 for electric vehicles and \$20 for hybrid vehicles. Senator Jordan Kannianen from Stanley said Senate Finance and Tax Committee members, who gave the bill a "do not pass" recommendation, felt other legislation could help meet the state's road construction needs. Kannianen cited the pending bonding bill, the streams bill and last session's

Prairie Dog bill, which would all direct funding for road and bridge infrastructure work.

Click [here](#) to listen to Kannianen's comments.

Sen. Kannianen also noted that a lower gas tax than surrounding states gives North Dakota a competitive retail advantage, particularly for border cities.

Click [here](#) to listen to Kannianen's comments.

Sen. Jim Roers of Fargo, who supported the bill, said the gas tax is a true user fee since the revenue generated through the tax can only be used for highways and cannot be diverted to fund any other government program. Roers said even with the proposed increase, North Dakota's fuel tax would still be lower than the neighboring states of Montana, Minnesota, and South Dakota.

Click [here](#) to listen to Roers' comments.

The state gas tax has not been raised in North Dakota since 2005. Click [here](#) for a story on the bill from KFYY-TV and [here](#) for Fargo Forum coverage. Click [here](#) for an article from the WDEA newsletter on House passage of the bill in February.



**Senate Kills Recreational Marijuana Bill
Public Safety & Workplace Issues Cited**

After more than an hour of debate, the North Dakota Senate defeated an effort to legalize, manage and regulate adult use of recreational marijuana in the state. The Senate vote was decisive, with the legislation failing by a 37-10 margin. Last month the House passed the bill 56-38.

Proponents of [HB 1420](#) viewed the legislation as a way to head off future citizen-initiated efforts to legalize marijuana with a constitutional measure. That view was advocated by West Fargo Senator Judy Lee, who presented the bill on the Senate floor.

Click [here](#) to listen to Lee's comments.

Senator Lee compared recreational marijuana use in the state to an oncoming train that the state has an opportunity to control.

Click [here](#) to listen to Lee's comment.

Lee said the Secretary of State has already approved the petitions that will be used to gather



signatures for at least one citizen-initiated measure for a constitutional amendment to legalize recreational marijuana.



Judy Lee



David Clemens



Janne Myrdahl

constitutional amendment, which she pointed out cannot be changed by the legislature

West Fargo Senator David Clemens opposed the legislation, citing testimony from health organizations, transportation groups, law enforcement agencies and business interests concerned about public safety and workforce issues. Clemens said he trusts the decisions of North Dakota citizens and prefers to “let the voters decide” the issue.

Click [here](#) to listen to Clemens' comments.

Edinburg Senator Janne Myrdal, picking up on Lee's analogy, said the train is heading in the wrong direction and North Dakota should not jump on. Myrdal said she sees nothing positive about legalizing marijuana.

Click [here](#) to listen to Myrdal's comments.

The bill would have restricted recreational marijuana to people 21 and older, limited possession to 1 ounce, limited and tracked purchase amounts, limited use to private property and banned home growing. A companion bill ([HB 1501](#)) that would have set a tax policy for recreational marijuana was unanimously defeated following the floor vote killing recreational use.

Click [here](#) for a Bismarck Tribune article on the Senate vote. Click [here](#) for WDEA's article on House action last month.



School Carry Over

Bill Passes House

Amendment Provides Two-Year Moratorium

The House this week overwhelming approved [SB 2165](#), a bill changing the amount of ending fund balances school districts are allowed to carry forward.

Prior to House passage, an amendment was added creating a two-year moratorium on implementing the ending fund balance law in order to give school districts the time they need to use federal assistance from the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund (ESSER), which they receive to handle impacts from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Williston Rep. David Richter said the moratorium will give districts the time they need to spend the federal assistance wisely.

Click [here](#) to listen to Richter's comments.



David Richter

State law currently provides two sections dealing with ending fund balances and amounts that can be carried forward. Both limit a school district's ending fund balance, but they're computed differently with different limitation percentages. One section is computed based on the current annual budget and there is no fiscal penalty for exceeding the limit. The second section is computed based on actual expenditures and results in a deduction of state school aid if the limit is exceeded.

SB 2165 aligns both sections to allow for 35% of actual expenditures plus \$50,000 or \$100,000 if the school district is in a cooperative agreement with another school district. Pending concurrence from the Senate, the carryover rule would be implemented July 1, 2023. The Senate unanimously approved the bill in January.

The carry forward limitation was put in place to ensure a local district did not continue to levy tax on its citizens or accept state funds while sitting on larger than necessary reserves. Click [here](#) for an article from the WDEA newsletter regarding the legislation from the House Education Committee discussion in early March.



Native American History Tied Up

Bill to be Reconsidered after 47-47 Vote





Steve Vetter

Those supporting the legislation said it would provide more structure to studies of Native American history, which they argued has not been sufficient to help students understand Native American culture.

The bill previously passed the Senate without a dissenting vote. Click [here](#) for an article from the WDEA newsletter about the initial discussion of the bill before the House Education Committee.

Click [here](#) for a Dickinson Press article about the debate.

A bill that would have required an emphasis on Native American history in all public and non-public schools in North Dakota appeared to have gone down to defeat, falling one vote short of passage on 47-47 tie vote in the House on Tuesday, but the following day Grand Forks Rep. Steve Vetter requested reconsideration of the legislation.

The House agreed to reconsider [SB 2304](#) and then re-referred it to the House Education Committee for further discussion and possible amendments.

In the floor debate Tuesday, legislators argued that schools already teach some form of Native American studies, and requiring such specificity in curriculum doesn't have a place in state law.



Lewis & Clark Plant Shutting Down Coal Plant Generated Power Since 1958

Its red and white smokestack has been part of the Sidney, Montana skyline for more than six decades, but next week Lewis and Clark Station will generate its last electron.

Montana-Dakota Utilities will shut down the 44-megawatt lignite-fired plant that has been generating electricity since 1958. The company also plans to shut down the two coal-fired units of

Hestkett Station in Mandan next year. In its [news release](#) two years ago announcing plans to shut down the plants, MDU said, "Low-cost power available on the market, due to low-cost natural gas and increasing wind resources, as well as rising costs to operate these facilities, led to the decision to retire the coal plants.

"The plants have served our customers well, providing low-cost energy for many years, operating roughly twice as long as expected when they were constructed in the mid-1950s and early 1960s," said Nicole Kivisto, president and CEO of Montana-Dakota, in the 2019 news release. "The age of the plants, low-cost competition on the market, and the ongoing cost to operate the plants all have contributed to the plants being too expensive to operate much longer."

Lewis and Clark Station will be officially shut down March 31, according to MDU spokesman Mark Hanson. He said the plant currently employs 27 people, some of whom will remain to operate the natural gas fired combustion engines at Lewis and Clark. Hanson said training was offered to employees who wish to fill open positions in other areas of the company, and some will remain on site in the early stages of the decommissioning work, which is expected to take three to six months.

The plant's fuel comes from the nearby Savage Mine operated by Westmoreland Coal. It's not known if the mine will continue to operate.



API Participates in DOI Leasing Forum NDPC Objects to State Representation Absence

The American Petroleum Institute participated in a forum conducted yesterday by the U.S. Department of the Interior to discuss the Biden administration's Executive Order in January that "paused" oil and natural gas leasing on federal land.

API Senior VP of Policy, Economics and Regulatory Affairs Frank Macchiarola participated in a panel with other national energy industry stakeholders. Macchiarola highlighted the importance of continued federal leasing and development for America's energy security and environmental progress.



"The Biden administration inherits a strong



Frank J. Macchiarola

American energy outlook, and ensuring access to federal leasing and energy development is imperative to continuing low household energy costs, record greenhouse gas emissions reductions and reduced reliance on foreign energy," Macchiarola said.

He encouraged Interior to complete its review quickly and fully reinstate federal oil and gas leasing.

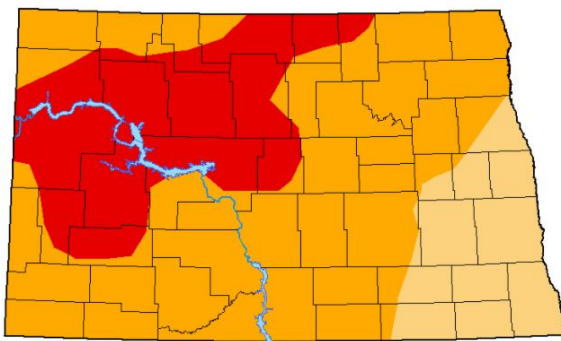
Click [here](#) to view Macchiarola's opening statement to the forum.

The North Dakota Petroleum Council also announced this week it was joining with other state oil and natural gas associations in protesting

the Biden administration's apparent decision to exclude state and local voices from the forum. Here is the full NDPC statement:

"As associations representing the natural gas and oil industry embedded in communities across our states, we are disappointed today's forum did not include a single state or local voice representing the hardworking men and women who produce safe, reliable and sustainable energy to fuel our lives. We speak for the people whose work, lives and livelihoods will be most impacted by Biden's orders regarding production on federal land. A return to centralized, command-and-control decision making in the hands of bureaucrats thousands of miles away from the people, lands, and waters where the impacts are most deeply felt is not a constructive path forward. We are hopeful the exclusion of local voices is not indicative of a pattern of disregard of our states, our people and our livelihoods."

In addition to North Dakota, states protesting the exclusion included Alaska, Colorado, Louisiana, Montana, Utah and Wyoming.



Drought Worsens, No Rain in Sight Outlook Offers 50-50 Chance of Improvement

With another dry week behind us and another dry week ahead, extreme drought conditions are spreading in western North Dakota.

According to the latest [Drought Monitor](#), more than 27 percent of the state falls into the extreme

category, and 85 percent of the state is considered to be in severe drought conditions. Extreme drought now covers nearly all of the big four oil-producing counties - Dunn, McKenzie, Mountrail and Williams - drying up pastures and creating dangerous fire conditions. Windy days are almost certain to prompt the ND Department of Emergency Services to issue a Red Flag Warning about the risk of rangeland wildfires.

As reported in [last week's newsletter](#), the drought comes as no surprise, considering the past six months have been the driest ever in North Dakota since record-keeping began in 1895. However, national climate forecasters still give North Dakota about a 50-50 chance of receiving normal seasonal precipitation in the [90-day outlook](#). The US Drought Monitor indicates that if below normal precipitation persists when spring temperatures warm, rapid intensification of drought conditions will occur.

Effects of drought in the extreme category include:

Crops stop growing; pastures go dormant,
Emergency haying of conservation areas is authorized
Blue-green algae blooms cause cattle death
Large wildfires can burn out of control

Click [here](#) to a Minot Daily News article about the drought. Click [here](#) to see NOAA's page of temperature and precipitation statistical comparisons.



Missouri Runoff Forecast Below Average Meetings April 6 to Discuss Operation Plans

Reservoir inflows in the upper Missouri River basin were well-below average in February, and the runoff forecast for the rest of the year remains below average.



"Missouri's February precipitation was well below average, and the runoff forecast for the rest of the year remains below average."



“Very cold February temperatures in the upper Basin locked up tributaries in ice and reduced inflows to the reservoirs,” said John Remus, chief of the Corps of Engineers' Missouri River Basin Water Management Division. “Mountain snowpack continues to accumulate in the Rocky Mountains; however, plains snowpack is well-below seasonal averages and soil moisture continues to be much drier than normal.”

February 2021 runoff in the upper Basin was 0.8 million acre-feet, 70% of average. The 2021 calendar year runoff forecast for the upper Basin is 21.8 MAF, 84% of average. During the February cold snap, the mainstem dams increased electric generation during the coldest days to compensate for the increased energy demands throughout the region. The six mainstem power plants generated 637 million kWh of electricity in February. Typical energy generation for February is 624 million kWh.

[Mountain snowpack](#) has been accumulating at below-average rates. The March 1 mountain snowpack in the Fort Peck and the Fort Peck to Garrison reaches was 94% of average. By March 1, about 80% of the total mountain snowpack has typically accumulated.

The Corps will hold virtual spring public meetings on April 6 at 1 p.m. and 6 p.m. to update the region on current hydrologic conditions and the planned operation of the mainstem reservoir system during the coming months. Click [here](#) for more details.



Roundtable to be Held in Halliday
Save the Date: May 6 Western Roads Event

An event that will bring together oil industry trucking interests and county and tribal road managers to discuss ways to improve the movement of oilfield traffic will be held May 6 in Halliday.

WDEA is teaming up with the Upper Great Plains Transportation Institute and its Local Technical Assistance Program (LTAP) to host a roundtable discussion at the new Dunn County highway shop in Halliday. The event will run from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. MDT and will feature a variety of topics aimed at improving communication between industry and the counties, and improving the efficiency of operations for both.

Among speakers confirmed thus far are Lt. Governor Brent Sanford and NDDOT Director Bill Panos. Other portions of the agenda are still being finalized, according to LTAP Director Dale Heglund, but he said road and bridge construction and maintenance needs will at the top of the list.

"We'll describe needs specific to western North Dakota, whether it be roads, bridges, culverts or repairing frost boils," Heglund said, "and we expect frost law seasonal road restrictions to be a topic as well.

WDEA and LTAP are working on a research effort that uses temperature and moisture sensors embedded in gravel roads to get a better handle on the rate at which roads firm up after the spring thaw, possibly reducing the period of time in which restrictions are in place.

The roundtable will also feature panel discussions about the oil industry's future and the ways in which local government can assist.



Underage Drinking Enforcement Campaign
Starting Next Week

A statewide campaign against underage drinking is starting next week as part of the state Department of Transportation's Vision Zero effort.

Drive Sober or Get Pulled Over runs from April 1 to May 23. Law enforcement across the state will be conducting compliance checks in an effort to prevent life altering consequences caused by underage consumption. Persons under 21 found to be consuming or in possession of alcohol could face stiff fines and end up in court.

Click [here](#) to view a short video on the campaign.

"There are zero excuses for underage drinking and for driving under the influence," said Bismarck Police Chief Dan Rosenthal. "The Drive Sober or Get Pulled Over campaign is a critical part of our effort to reduce alcohol-related crashes and fatalities."



Police Chief Dave Draovitch. "The *Drive Sober or Get Pulled Over* enforcement campaign is a great reminder to everyone, including young drivers, to make the choice to always drive sober."

Alcohol and drug-related crashes are 100% preventable. Many lives would be saved each year if drivers consistently make the choice to drive sober, designate a sober driver or use a ride-hailing service. State crash statistics are trending higher in 2021, with 21 fatalities to date, making the campaign a vital part of the [Vision Zero](#) strategy to eliminate motor vehicle crash fatalities and serious injuries on North Dakota roads.

Visit the [North Dakota Crash Memorial Wall](#) to view memorials built on the hope of preventing another death on North Dakota roads.



May 11-13, 2021 | Bismarck Event Center | Bismarck, ND

WBPC Announces 2021 Agenda Bakken CEOs and Executives Lined Up

The agenda for the 2021 Williston Basin Petroleum Conference has been released featuring over 70 speakers and presenters, each sharing insights on the latest issues impacting oil and natural gas development and what the future holds for the Williston Basin.

The conference, scheduled for May 11-13, is the largest conference in North Dakota with major networking opportunities for energy industry professionals.

"The WBPC is one of the top oil conferences in the country. We have an incredible lineup of speakers," said Ron Ness, President of the North Dakota Petroleum Council, the lead organizer of this year's conference. "We are excited to feature the latest technologies that have helped turn the Bakken into a world-class resource and discuss the way forward to help take the Bakken and Williston Basin to the next level."

The conference will feature CEOs and executives from key companies and organizations across the globe including:

- Bob Phillips, CEO of Crestwood Midstream – "Building Gas Capture Infrastructure"
- Chris Kendall, CEO, Denbury Resources – "EOR at Cedar Hills in Bowman County"
- Dan Clark, VP of ConocoPhillips Great Plains Business Unit
- Kelcy Warren, Executive Chairman of Energy Transfer LP
- Mike Sommers, President and CEO of API – "The State of American Energy"

Click [here](#) to view the agenda.

WBPC is partnering with Sanford Health Bismarck to host a COVID-Conscious conference. Meeting organizers plan to monitor the situation and take recommended precautions to ensure the health and safety of all conference attendees.



LEC Annual Meeting Set for April 22 Registration Now Open for In-Person Event

The Lignite Energy Council has announced that registration is now open for an in-person OR virtual annual meeting in Bismarck.

A Lignite Reception is set for Wednesday, April 21, to be followed with LEC's annual meeting on April 22.

"We haven't seen many of you in so long and we are very much looking forward to seeing you in person OR virtually at either or both of our two events that will comprise the two-day membership gathering and informational sessions," the group said in an email announcing that registration is open.

The Lignite Reception is new this year and will feature light hors d'oeuvres, two complimentary beverages, dinner and entertainment as well as networking.

To register, click [here](#). For event sponsorship information, click [here](#).



Quick Connect

- Agency reverses Trump-era oil rights ruling snubbing tribes -- [Associated Press](#)



- KX Conversation: Sen. Cramer on the energy industry in ND -- [KXMB-TV](#)
- Mineral owners take oil companies to court over royalty deductions -- [Williston Herald](#)
- Need for disputed pipeline argued in Minnesota appeals court -- [Associated Press](#)
- Oil and gas industry has huge impact on state's economy -- [McKenzie County Farmer](#)
- Domestic Energy Producers Alliance: Interview with Ron Ness -- [YouTube](#)
- EXPLAINER: Why is Biden halting federal oil and gas sales? -- [Associated Press](#)
- ND Legacy Fund poised to take big step for in-state investments -- [Bismarck Tribune](#)
- Potential loggerheads between ND House, Senate over bonding -- [Prairie Public Radio](#)
- Armstrong: We can't win fight without winning elections -- [Dickinson Press](#)
- House Committee holds hearing on annual legislative sessions -- [KXMB-TV](#)
- North Dakota lawmakers set to give themselves a pay raise -- [Associated Press](#)
- Bill for filling dead election victors' seats goes to governor -- [Bismarck Tribune](#)
- Senate reverses itself, defeats bill on polling places -- [Prairie Public Radio](#)
- Bill shields audit information before possible prosecution -- [Associated Press](#)
- ND House defeats 'primary' seat belt bill on tight vote -- [Prairie Public Radio](#)
- North Dakota warned Ten Commandments bill will spur lawsuits -- [Associated Press](#)
- Leaders aim to tune how legislator misbehavior is handled -- [Minot Daily News](#)
- Top ND Indian Affairs official to resign, join Sanford Health -- [Bismarck Tribune](#)
- Scott Davis reflects on 12 years as Indian Affairs Commissioner -- [KXMB-TV](#)
- Commission approves agreement to bring Delta Airlines back to Williston -- [Williston Herald](#)
- Williston Fire Dept donates \$32K worth of equipment to Glenburn -- [KXMB-TV](#)
- Five things to know about the API Chili Cook off on Saturday -- [Williston Herald](#)
- Experts explain why gas prices are rising in North Dakota -- [KFYR-TV](#)
- Oil industry pushes back as Biden launches review of federal drilling -- [Reuters](#)
- Don't ban fossil fuels: Absolutism in climate change is a vice -- [Forbes](#)
- Utilities continue to increase spending on the electric transmission system -- [EIA](#)
- 'Busy on other fronts' White House without Trump stays quiet on OPEC -- [Reuters](#)
- SEC unbound: Yet more regulatory creep expected to come with Biden -- [Yahoo News](#)
- Funding infrastructure Investment: Will there be a trucking tax? -- [IER](#)
- The long road to oil demand recovery is full of big obstacles -- [Rigzone](#)
- Oil producer Orintiv to sell Eagle Ford assets for \$880 million -- [Reuters](#)
- In 2020, China's refineries processed more crude oil than U.S. refineries -- [EIA](#)
- API, largest U.S. oil and gas trade group, backs carbon price -- [Reuters](#)
- China thrives on fossil fuels, while the rest of the world hopes -- [IER](#)



Factoid of the Week

The Dakota Access Pipeline has not impacted groundwater in any of the four states where it is located since going into service in June 2017. It crosses under the Missouri River at a minimum depth of 95 feet below the riverbed. The disputed area between Morton and Emmons County that could potentially shut down the entire length of the 1,172 mile pipeline is just over 1,000 feet of the path, and is controlled by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.



Source: [Dakota Access Pipeline: The Facts](#)



Upcoming Events

March 17 - 31, 2021

[ND Reclamation Webinar Series](#)

Virtual Event

March 27, 2021

[40th Annual Williston API Chili Cook-Off](#)

Williston

March 27, 2021

[Gumbo Cookoff - Dickinson API](#)

Dickinson

March 30, 2021

[North Dakota Historical Commission](#)

[North Dakota Industrial Commission](#)

via Microsoft Teams

April 6, 2021

[Corps of Engineers meeting on reservoir operations](#)

Virtual meeting

April 7, 2021

[ND State Fair Board](#)

State Fair Center - Boardroom

April 20 - 22, 2021

[Gravel Quality 3 P's: Prospecting, Production and Performance](#)

Valley City, Granville, Dickinson

April 21 - 22, 2021

[Lignite Energy Council Annual Meeting](#)

Hydrid

May 6, 2021

[Western Roads Roundtable](#)

Dunn County Highway Shop - Halliday

May 6 - 7, 2021

[Williston Economic Development Summit](#)

Williston

May 11 - 13, 2021

[Williston Basin Petroleum Conference](#)

Bismarck

Oil prices and rig count

March 26, 2020



WTI Crude: \$60.97

Brent Crude: \$64.57

Natural Gas: \$2.56

North Dakota Active Oil Rigs: 14 (Down 2) 3/26/2020 -- 48 rigs

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