



Northwestern University Electricity Dialogue
on
**“The Resilient West: Managing the
Many Electricity Challenges”**

Hyatt Centric Park City (Park City, Utah)
Thursday, December 4 - Friday, December 5, 2025

This Electricity Dialogue uses resilience as its organizing theme. The Western United States is at the forefront of a rapidly evolving energy landscape. The diverse geographical features, great size and distances, extreme weather variability, an expanding population, developing wholesale electricity markets are just a few of the issues the region’s policymakers, regulators, utilities and stakeholders coping with to ensure a Resilient West. Resiliency and being resilient in the electric utility context often refers to the ability of an energy system to withstand unexpected events and ensuring uninterrupted power supply to communities; to anticipate, absorb, recover from, and adapt to disruptions, whether they arise from resource inadequacies, natural disasters, extreme weather, cyberattacks, or operational failures.

Thursday, December 4, 2025

11:00-12:30 **Lunch** (White Pine Rotunda)

12:30-12:45 **Convening, Welcome, and Introduction** (Wasatch Ballroom)

Derek Gundersen, Assistant Director of Program Operations,
Northwestern Center on Law, Business and Economics

Lynne Kiesling, Director, Institute for Regulatory Law & Economics;
Senior Research Affiliate, Northwestern Center on Law, Business,
and Economics

Lincoln Davies, Professor of Law, Co-Director, Wallace Stegner
Center for Land, Resources, and the Environment, Executive Director,
Energy, Resource, and Environment Programs, University of Utah
S.J. Quinney College of Law

Jerry Fenn, Chair, Utah Public Service Commission

12:45-1:20

Opening Keynote Address: *Uniting Regulators, Harmonizing Impact: Advancing Reliable and Resilient Infrastructure*

Introduction: Jerry Fenn, Chair, Utah Public Service Commission

Keynote Speaker: Ann Rendahl, Commissioner, Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission; Incoming President, NARUC Board of Directors

1:20-1:30

Break

1:30-3:00

Session One — Resilience, Resource Adequacy, Markets, and Transmission: Where Are We Now and most importantly, Where Are We Going and How Will We Get There?

Resilience and resource adequacy are crucial for stable and reliable energy systems; markets and transmission are valuable components of these systems that can enhance resilience and resource accessibility. Given the breadth, depth, and importance of the numerous intertwined activities in the West, this panel will try to pull them all together and connect the dots and cast the breadcrumbs onto the paths to following forward!

Moderator: Hayley Williamson, Chair, Public Utilities Commission of Nevada

Panelists: Stacey Crowley, Vice President of External Affairs, CAISO

Sarah Edmonds, President and CEO, Western Power Pool

Chris Moser, Senior Vice President, Head of Competitive Markets and Policy, NRG Energy

Paul Suskie, Executive Vice President & General Counsel, Southwest Power Pool

3:00-3:30

Break

3:30-5:00

Session Two — Resilience, Wildfire, and Extreme Weather Challenges

Unfortunately, the world is learning what the Western US has known for years: extreme weather events are growing in numbers, severity, size and costs, both economically and to ecosystems. Regrettably, the west's electricity systems are often the vortex of these events testing their resilience. The number of extreme wildfires in the U.S. have doubled in the past 20 years. About 8.9 million acres burned in 2024, an area about the size of Vermont. This has led to more utility infrastructure, homes and businesses being impacted by a lengthy recovery process and high-cost damages, such as the \$130 billion of total damages and economic loss from the 2024 southern California wildfires.

As a result, utilities costs and operational risks are increasing significantly. How can customers be protected from those costs? How can states incentivize utilities to invest in wildfire prevention and protection such as improved powerline inspection, introduction of weather-resistant equipment, automated systems, and surrounding vegetation management?

Moderator: **Eric Blank**, Chairman, Colorado Public Utilities Commission

Panelists: **Indran "Indy" Ratnathicam**, Chief Growth Officer,
Technosylva

Caroline Thomas Jacobs, Director, State of California, Office
of Energy Infrastructure Safety

Michael Wara, Senior Director for Policy, Sustainability
Accelerator, Stanford Doerr School of Sustainability; Director,
Climate and Energy Policy Program and Senior Research
Scholar, Woods Institute for the Environment

5:00-6:00 **Break**

6:00 – 7:00 **Cocktail Reception** (White Pine Rotunda)

7:00-8:30 **Dinner & Keynote Address: *Growth Under Pressure: A Utility Perspective on Balancing Sustainability, Affordability, and Resilience***
(Wasatch Ballroom)

Introduction: John Harvey, Commissioner, Utah Public Service
Commission

Keynote Speaker: Ryan Long, Executive Vice President, Chief
Legal and Compliance Officer; President Minnesota, North Dakota,
South Dakota, Xcel Energy

Friday, December 5, 2025

7:15-8:30 **Breakfast** (White Pine Rotunda)

8:30-10:00 **Session Three – Resilience and New Large Load Customers: Resource Adequacy and Emerging Tariff Designs that Meet the Load, Protect the Grid, and Serve the Public Interest**

As demand from data centers and other large load customers increases, states are working to balance resource adequacy, reliability and affordability. Utilities, regulators, consumer advocates, and large load customers are exploring new rate structures and tariff designs to address cost allocation, risk mitigation, and resource procurement. How have existing large load tariffs addressed costs, risks, and resource procurement, and what changes are needed? What actions can increase transparency and customer protections with rapid load growth? How can regulators meet the needs of new large load customers, including sustainability and clean energy goals?

Moderator: **Brian Rybarik**, Chair, Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission

Panelists: **Jose Esparza**, Senior Vice President, Arizona Public Service (APS)

Melanie Frye, President and Chief Executive Officer, Western Electricity Coordinating Council (WECC)

Briana Kobor, Head of Energy Market Innovation, Google

Aroon Vijaykar, SVP Strategy & Commercial, Emerald AI

10:00-10:15 **Break**

10:15-11:45 **Session Four — Cost of Resilience and the Customers that Pay for It**

Resilience and consumer costs are tightly linked — strengthening one often affects the other. Paying for resilience (and wildfires) while managing consumer costs, is one of the central tensions in modern utility regulation. The threats to the West’s electricity systems are not insignificant; nor are the costs of the investment needed to address those threats and enhance resilience. Building on ongoing examples, this panel will identify and quantify those costs, describe how resilience investments are funded, and the challenges of cost allocation, and strategies to contain consumer impacts.

Moderator: **Nick Myers**, Vice Chair, Arizona Corporation Commission

Panelists: **Michele Beck**, Executive Director, Utah Office of Consumer Services

Cameron Brooks, Founder and President, E9 Insight

Bill Gaines, Executive Director, Alliance of Western Energy Consumers

Tori Villarreal, Head of Policy, Base Power Company

11:45 **Adjourn**

Confirmed Utility Commissioners (as of 12/2/2025):

1. **Gabriel Aguilera**, Commissioner, New Mexico Public Regulation Commission
2. **Eric Blank**, Chairman, Colorado Public Utilities Commission (*panel moderator*)
3. **Pradip Chattopadhyay**, Commissioner, New Hampshire Public Utilities Commission
4. **Stephen DeFrank**, Chair, Pennsylvania Public Utilities Commission
5. **Mark Dell'Orfano**, Commissioner, New Hampshire Public Utilities Commission
6. **Jerry Fenn**, Chair, Utah Public Service Commission (*welcome*)
7. **Hwikwon Ham**, Commissioner, Minnesota Public Utilities Commission
8. **John Harvey**, Commissioner, Utah Public Service Commission (*introduction*)
9. **Erik Helland**, Commissioner, Iowa Utilities Commission
10. **John Mitchell**, Commissioner, Missouri Public Utilities Commission
11. **Nick Myers**, Vice Chair, Arizona Corporation Commission (*panel moderator*)
12. **Les Perkins**, Commissioner, Oregon Public Utility Commission
13. **Tom Plant**, Commissioner, Colorado Public Utilities Commission
14. **Ann Rendahl**, Commissioner, Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission
15. **Brian Rybarik**, Chair, Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission (*panel moderator*)
16. **Katie Sieben**, Chair, Minnesota Public Utilities Commission
17. **Emile Thompson**, Chair, Public Service Commission of the District of Columbia
18. **Hayley Williamson**, Chair, Public Utilities Commission of Nevada (*panel moderator*)

Confirmed Participants (as of 12/2/2025):

19. **Michele Beck**, Executive Director, Utah Office of Consumer Services
20. **Cameron Brooks**, Founder and President, E9 Insight
21. **Stacey Crowley**, Vice President of External Affairs, CAISO
22. **Lincoln Davies**, Professor of Law, Co-Director, Wallace Stegner Center for Land, Resources, and the Environment, Executive Director, Energy, Resource, and Environment Programs, University of Utah S.J. Quinney College of Law
23. **Sarah Edmonds**, President and CEO, Western Power Pool
24. **Jose Esparza**, Senior Vice President, Arizona Public Service (APS)
25. **Melanie Frye**, President and Chief Executive Officer, Western Electricity Coordinating Council (WECC)
26. **Bill Gaines**, Executive Director, Alliance of Western Energy Consumers
27. **Lynne Kiesling**, Director, Institute for Regulatory Law & Economics; Senior Research Affiliate, Northwestern Center on Law, Business, and Economics, Institute for Regulatory Law & Economics
28. **Briana Kobor**, Head of Energy Market Innovation, Google
29. **Ryan Long**, Executive Vice President, Chief Legal and Compliance Officer; President Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota, Xcel Energy

30. **Chris Moser**, Senior Vice President, Head of Competitive Markets and Policy, NRG Energy
31. **Indran "Indy" Ratnathicam**, Chief Growth Officer, Technosylva
32. **Paul Suskie**, Executive Vice President & General Counsel, Southwest Power Pool
33. **Caroline Thomas Jacobs**, Director, State of California, Office of Energy Infrastructure Safety
34. **Aroon Vijaykar**, SVP Strategy & Commercial, Emerald AI
35. **Tori Villarreal**, Head of Policy, Base Power Company
36. **Michael Wara**, Senior Director for Policy, Sustainability Accelerator, Stanford Doerr School of Sustainability; Director, Climate and Energy Policy Program and Senior Research Scholar, Woods Institute for the Environment

Confirmed Registrants (as of 12/2/2025):

37. **Omayya Ahmad**, Manager, Regional Market Policy External Engagement, Arizona Public Service
38. **Robin Arnold**, Director of State, Federal, and International Affairs, Western Interstate Energy Board
39. **Lauren Barros**, President, Lauren Barros Law
40. **Lindsay Battenberg**, Director of Policy, West, Clean Energy Buyers Association
41. **Mathias Bell**, VP, Market Development & Partnerships, WeaveGrid
42. **David Boyd**, Regulatory and Policy Strategist, AESL Energy Consultants
43. **Melissa Chan**, Senior Director of Ecosystem Development, Analog Devices
44. **Emily Clay**, Principal, Advanced Energy United
45. **Peter Colussy**, Executive Director, NextEra Energy Resources
46. **Douglas Darrah**, Graduate Student, Energy System Management Program, University of San Francisco
47. **Megan Decker**, Consultant, Staircase Advisory / AESL Energy Consultants
48. **Alex DeGolia**, Director, Clean Electricity, Environmental Defense Fund
49. **Nicholas Dreher**, Energy Regulatory Manager, Renew Home
50. **Andy Dressel**, VP – Energy, Charles River Associates
51. **Frank Durnford**, Executive Director, Market Policy, Powerex Corp.
52. **Mark Ellis**, Senior Fellow, Utilities, American Economic Liberties Project
53. **Brooke Fallon**, Vice President, Trust Ventures
54. **Sarah Freeman**, Principal, Regulatory Assistance Project
55. **Edward Garvey**, Regulatory Strategist, AESL Energy Consultants
56. **Jason Holsman**, Director of Government Affairs, CCSA
57. **Sam Johnston**, Policy Director, Interwest Energy Alliance
58. **Philip Jones**, Executive Director, Alliance for Transportation Electrification
59. **Abigail Kuhn**, Senior Manager, Retail Policy, Vistra
60. **Scott Lipton**, Policy Director, Western Region, Enchanted Rock, LLC
61. **Erik Lyon**, Energy Regulatory Manager, Renew Home
62. **Kayla Martinez**, Policy Advisor, Western Freedom
63. **Julia Masters**, Microgrids for Community Resilience Program Manager, Colorado Resiliency Office

64. **Logan Mitchell**, Climate Scientist & Energy Analyst, Utah Clean Energy
65. **Ronny Sandoval**, Managing Principal, Regulatory Assistance Project
66. **Steven Noess**, Vice President, Reliability and Security Oversight, Western Electricity Coordinating Council
67. **Meghan Nutting**, President, Altitude Strategies Consulting
68. **Kim O'Guinn**, Senior Director, Regulatory Policy, Southwest Power Pool
69. **Jon Piliaris**, VP Regulatory Affairs, Puget Sound Energy
70. **George Randolph**, Senior Lead Solutions Engineer, Technosylva
71. **Jake Roeper**, Sr. Associate, Trust Ventures
72. **John C. Ruple**, Professor of Law, Wallace Stegner Center for Land, Resources, and the Environment, University of Utah, S.J. Quinney College of Law
73. **Nick Schou**, Director, Advanced Energy United
74. **Caitlin Shields**, Partner, Wilkinson Barker Knauer LLP
75. **Alex Smith**, Senior Technical Lead for Transmission and Markets, World Resources Institute
76. **Josh Smith**, Energy Policy Lead, Abundance Institute
77. **Brandon Steinbaum**, Account Executive, Technosylva
78. **Audrey Thacker**, Associate, Advanced Energy United
79. **Jon Wellinghoff**, CEO / Chief Regulatory Officer, GridPolicy / Voltus
80. **Jordan White**, Executive Director, NextEra Energy
81. **Christopher Winland**, Director, Project Development, ITC