



Western Interstate Energy Board

TO: Western Interstate Energy Board
FROM: Laura Rennick
DATE: July 15, 2024
SUBJECT: **WIEB August 2023-July 2024 Update**

WESTERN INTERSTATE ENERGY BOARD (WIEB)

This memo serves as an annual progress report on activities undertaken by the Western Interstate Energy Board (WIEB) over the past year. Additional information on the activities summarized in this report is available on [WIEB's website](#).

WIEB LEADERSHIP ELECTIONS AND GOVERNOR APPOINTMENTS

- On June 18, at the 2024 Annual WIEB Board Meeting, WIEB representatives re-elected the following officers:
 - **WIEB Chair – Andrew McAllister** (Commissioner, California Energy Commission)
 - **WIEB First Vice Chair – Janine Benner** (Director, Oregon Department of Energy)
 - **WIEB Second Vice-Chair – Michael Freeman** (Natural Resources Policy Advisor, Montana Office of the Governor)
 - **WIEB Treasurer – Richard Stover** (Administrator, Idaho Governor's Office of Energy and Mineral Resources)
- Over the past year the following appointment was made to WIEB:
 - **Colorado: James Lester, Senior Policy Lead on Transmission, Climate, and Energy, Colorado Energy Office**

WIEB NEW HIRES

Over the past year, WIEB has been building its team following the period of transition in the first half of 2023. In September 2023, WIEB hired Aaron Beard to fill a new position as Project Support Specialist in support of WIEB's Nuclear and Electricity programs. In October 2023, Robin Arnold was hired to fill the position of Director of State, Federal, and International Affairs. In January 2024, Chris Zawora was hired to fill the vacant role of Wholesale Electricity Market Analyst primarily in support of the Body of State Regulators.

NUCLEAR ENERGY PROGRAM

In November of 2023, WIEB's High-Level Radioactive Waste Committee (HLRW Committee) and Waste Isolation Pilot Plant Transportation Technical Advisory Group (WIPP TAG) held their fall meeting in Idaho Falls, ID, which included a tour of several Idaho National Laboratory (INL) facilities. On day one, DOE's Office of Nuclear Energy led a discussion on preliminary planning for a spent nuclear fuel transportation package performance study, and there were presentations on the Nuclear Regulatory Commission's new emergency preparedness rule for small modular reactors and New Mexico's conditions for renewal of the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act permit for the WIPP site. On the second day, meeting attendees visited INL's Naval Reactors Facility (NRF), received a windshield tour of the Idaho Nuclear Technical and Engineering Center, and toured the Radioactive Waste Management Complex (RWMC), where INL's transuranic waste inventory is stored awaiting transportation to and disposal at WIPP. The tour provided the group the opportunity to see what an integrated nuclear waste management system looks like, as well as explore the continuing challenges of the nuclear weapons cleanup programs. At the end of the meeting, the HLRW Committee elected Landry Austin from Idaho as Chair and Eletha Trujillo from New Mexico as Vice-Chair.

In 2024, WIEB began coordinating planning for a new style of WIPP transportation emergency preparedness exercise (WIPPTREX), to be held in September 2024 at three towns along I-80 in Nevada. This drill-style exercise, being planned with DOE's Office of Environmental Management's Transportation Emergency Preparedness Program, will allow more first responders to practice their skills than in a traditional accident simulation exercise. In June, the HLRW Committee and WIPP TAG held their spring meeting, in conjunction with the National Transportation Stakeholders Forum (NTSF) Annual Meeting, in Denver, CO. Agenda items at these conjoined meetings included an in-depth discussion of the new Settlement Agreement between DOE and Washington State's Department of Ecology over the clean-up of Hanford, as well as a presentation on how DOE's Carlsbad Field Office is going to define "legacy" transuranic waste. Meeting attendees were also able to take a bus to a nearby BNSF railyard to look at DOE's newly tested Atlas railcar, which is designed to carry spent nuclear fuel transportation packages.

WIEB also assumed its role as host of the 2025 NTSF Annual Meeting in January of 2024, and staff began preparatory activities for this meeting, including signing a contract to hold the meeting at the Paris Las Vegas on May 19-22, 2025.

COMMITTEE ON REGIONAL ELECTRIC POWER COOPERATION

The Committee on Regional Electric Power Cooperation (CREPC) is a joint standing committee of WIEB and the Western Conference of Public Service Commissioners. WIEB provides primary staffing and support for CREPC.

In January 2024, Rich Stover, Administrator, Idaho Governor's Office of Energy and Mineral Resources, was elected Co-Chair to replace the position vacated by Sarah Cottrell Propst when she left the New Mexico Energy, Minerals, and Natural Resources Department. Megan Decker, Chair, Oregon Public Utility Commission, continued as the other CREPC Co-Chair.

WIEB's subcontract with NREL completed year one significantly underbudget due to staffing transitions in 2023. Now that WIEB is fully staffed, expenditures for the second funding period (April 2024 through April 2025) are expected to be closer to the projected budget. In April 2024, WIEB initiated a new contract with AESL Consulting to continue their support of the Markets+ State Committee through March 2025 thanks to the NREL subcontract. The NREL subcontract includes funding for WIEB staff to attend regional conferences such as NARUC and NASEO, funding for staff support of the CREPC Transmission Collaborative, and strengthens WIEB's support of CREPC regional electricity

efforts and collaboration with the U.S. Department of Energy. The NREL subcontract also supports the new Project Support Specialist that WIEB hired in September 2023.

WIEB successfully completed its application for a new Cooperative Agreement with the U.S. Department of Energy's Grid Deployment Office in January 2024. This agreement is for five years, and supports the joint CREPC-WIRAB meetings as well as a WIEB Leadership Delegation trip to Washington, D.C. to meet with officials from DOE and FERC. Additionally, the first year of the Cooperative Agreement includes funding for Energy Strategies to work with CREPC on a transmission cost allocation study to design potential frameworks unique to the West. The Cooperative Agreement includes funding for a new Markets and Resource Adequacy Analyst with WIEB.

The CREPC Transmission Collaborative (CREPC TC) was launched in January 2024 as a sub-working group of CREPC to conduct a deeper dive into transmission issues in the West. The CREPC TC has informal membership and anyone from CREPC's member agencies may join (it is not limited to one person per state or province). The regular CREPC TC meetings are only open to state and provincial staff, to allow for robust and open discussion. The main priorities of the CREPC TC are to work with Energy Strategies in its transmission cost allocation framework study to ensure that it reflects the needs of the West, and to facilitate state and provincial representation in a new west-wide transmission planning effort underway by the Western Transmission Expansion Coalition ("WestTEC") being facilitated by the Western Power Pool. The CREPC TC also discusses other transmission issues as they arise, such as updates on the National Interest Electric Transmission Corridors and FERC Order 1920.

WIEB'S RESERVE EXPENDITURE PROGRAM

The WIEB Board adopted the Reserve Expenditure Program (REP) on July 27, 2017. Under the REP, the Board invites member states and provinces to propose studies on energy and non-energy projects. The dual purpose of the REP is to attain a targeted level of financial reserves and produce useful studies and projects for WIEB's member states and provinces.

As of June 2024, WIEB has completed 8 REP projects since 2021. Two projects were completed over the last year: the Advanced Nuclear in the West Workshop, and Mining Critical Minerals for Clean Energy in the West.

The Advanced Nuclear in the West Workshop was held in Boise, Idaho on May 29-30, 2024. Idaho requested this project to convene western state and provincial policymakers, regulators, subject matter experts, and utility representatives to explore the possibilities and challenges surrounding the deployment of advanced nuclear power in the Western Interconnection. This topic is particularly relevant to the West because several new small modular reactors (SMR) and other advanced nuclear projects are being proposed in Western states. The agenda took attendees through a holistic overview of the relevant facets of nuclear power, starting with its history in the West, then moving through its regulatory framework, economic dimensions, waste issues, deployment scenarios, and ending with a look at the international sphere. With this background in place, attendees were then put into small groups, assigned a role (e.g., utility commissioner or utility CEO), and asked to evaluate whether they would approve or reject a hypothetical small modular reactor project based on a life-like scenario. All attendees then engaged in a moderated discussion about their hypothetical decisions and what drove them, drawing on the topics that had been discussed over the past two days.

The Mining Critical Minerals for Clean Energy in the West project was requested by New Mexico and completed in December 2023. WIEB leveraged the mining expertise of the Colorado School of Mines to produce a webinar on December 13, 2023. Key findings from the project include the following insights: many renewable generating resources such as solar, wind, and battery storage require critical minerals; critical minerals are located across many

western states; and there are sustainable mining methods that could be encouraged and used to extract critical minerals.

Two other REP projects are in progress: GHG Accounting and Reporting Requirements, and Electrification Trends in Western States. These projects will be completed during the summer of 2024.

WIEB staff intends to announce a new round of study requests for REP projects on August 1, 2024.

OTHER WIEB PROJECTS, PARTNERSHIPS, AND INITIATIVES

SHULTZ ENERGY FELLOWSHIP

In 2023, WIEB hosted two Shultz Energy Fellows from Stanford University. The fellows investigated the forward contracting practices of electric utilities in the West. They presented to regulators and policymakers the goals and objectives of utility forward contracting, describing the risk management policies and procedures that guide and limit the utility contracting, and shared findings of ongoing and potential changes to forward contracting that could result in improved performance of organized wholesale electricity markets, regional resource adequacy programs, or regional greenhouse gas accounting and reporting programs. The presentation can be found [here](#).

WIEB welcomed the 2024 Shultz Energy Fellows this June. This summer's fellows will use publicly available pricing data to analyze recent trends in congestion and transmission usage in the Western Interconnection with the goal of helping regulators and policymakers incorporate the fellows' findings into resource planning, transmission planning, and cost allocation analysis across the West.

WESTERN GREEN HYDROGEN INITIATIVE

In the Spring of 2024, WIEB and the National Association of State Energy Officials (NASEO) decided to sunset their respective roles with the [Western Green Hydrogen Initiative](#) (WGHI). Throughout this effort, the Green Hydrogen Coalition (GHC), NASEO, and WIEB convened Western state energy officials, state regulators, industry leaders, utilities, and non-governmental organizations to accelerate progress for the clean hydrogen market and infrastructure development in the West. WGHI will deliver a final report during the summer of 2024 highlighting the work and accomplishments in the West.

WESTERN STATES TRANSMISSION INITIATIVE

The [Western States Transmission Initiative](#) (WSTI) was initiated in the Spring of 2023 by Gridworks for the benefit of CREPC's state energy office officials and public utility commissioners. The Initiative aimed to address the challenges of the historic "bottom-up" approach to transmission planning and development in the West through data gathering, education, and recommendations. Gridworks hosted a series of educational webinars over the summer of 2023, and conducted a series of discussions with states and provinces. The discussions resulted in a list of recommendations issued at the 2023 Fall Joint CREPC-WIRAB meeting. The recommendations included:

- Form a CREPC Transmission Working Group and seek US DOE funding to hire expert staff and consultants to facilitate greater understanding of, and better communication between the states, provinces, and stakeholders in the region on, Western Interconnect transmission topics.
- Seek US DOE assistance to identify interregional transmission projects. This involves hiring an outside consulting firm with significant transmission planning experience to provide an investment-grade analysis

of significant transmission needs in the Western Interconnect and working with DOE to designate corridors identified in the study as National Interest Electric Transmission Corridors (NIETCs).

- Support WIEB efforts to survey how the costs associated with multistate transmission projects have been allocated in the Eastern Interconnect and ERCOT, and facilitate consideration of the best approaches for cost allocation of multistate, including transnational, transmission projects in the Western Interconnect.
- Host a Western transmission conference.

CREPC adopted several of the recommendations, including forming a transmission working group and supporting WIEB efforts to study cost allocation and consider best approaches for the West. Around the same time that the WSTI recommendations came out, the Western Power Pool announced a new “Western Transmission Expansion Coalition” (WestTEC) aimed at conducting an actionable west-wide transmission study.

The transmission working group, called the CREPC Transmission Collaborative (CREPC TC), has been meeting regularly since January. WIEB also hired Energy Strategies to conduct the cost allocation work, titled, “State Exploration of Western Transmission Cost Allocation Frameworks.” The CREPC TC’s main goals are to facilitate state input to the cost allocation study and to help coordinate state and provincial participation in the WestTEC planning process. Plans to conduct an investment grade state-led study to identify interregional transmission projects are on hold, as the CREPC TC is currently engaging in and monitoring the WestTEC effort to see if that satisfies the need for a state-led study. CREPC is still considering if a transmission conference or workshop would add value to these efforts.

WEST-WIDE GOVERNANCE PATHWAYS INITIATIVE

In July 2023, several state commissioners sent a letter to WIEB and CREPC leadership to propose “the creation of an entity that could serve as a means for delivering a market that includes all states in the Western Interconnection, including California, with independent governance” (now known as The West-Wide Governance Pathways Initiative). In October of 2023, with the help of the Regulatory Assistance Project, a Launch Committee was formed. WIEB staff have been monitoring state committee meetings and have provided a landing page to [host materials for the Initiative on its website](#). The Launch Committee recently submitted a proposal to CAISO for the first phase, and is restructuring its committees to continue discussions on the second phase of potential governance changes. The WEIM Body of State Regulators has begun monitoring the first phase proposal as it works through the CAISO process.

WESTERN INTERCONNECTION REGIONAL ADVISORY BODY

The Western Interconnection Regional Advisory Body (WIRAB) leadership is:

- **WIRAB Chair: Chairman Mary Throne**, Wyoming Public Service Commission
- **WIRAB Vice-Chair: Commissioner Lea Márquez Peterson**, Arizona Corporation Commission

In November 2023, WIRAB Chair, Mary Throne, participated in the 2023 FERC Reliability Technical Conference in a discussion of the potential impacts on reliability from proposed regulations from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency on regulating greenhouse gas emissions from electric generation resources. She emphasized in her [remarks](#) the importance of regulatory entities and stakeholders needing to proactively engage in the regulatory processes to ensure that the final adoption of these energy policies mitigates the impacts on grid reliability.

In the first quarter of 2024, WIRAB submitted written [Advice](#) to the WECC Board of Directors on the organization’s proposed 2024 Reliability Risk Priorities. In the second quarter of 2024, WIRAB selected Strategic Initiatives for 2025 and approved its [2025 Business Plan and Budget](#). Additionally, WIRAB provided [Advice](#) to the WECC Board of

Directors on WECC's 2025 Business Plan and Budget and found the budget and assessment to be reasonable and in the public interest. WIRAB staff continues to engage with WECC's Study Program and WECC Technical Committees to identify and mitigate risks to the Western Interconnection's bulk power system.

STATE AND PROVINCIAL COMMITTEES

WESTERN ENERGY IMBALANCE MARKET BODY OF STATE REGULATORS

The Western Energy Imbalance Market (WEIM) Body of State Regulators (BOSR) continues to be actively engaged in California ISO activities that impact the WEIM and Extended Day-Ahead Market (EDAM). Members have spent much of the last six months understanding the complexities of two market initiatives underway at the California ISO: 1) Price Formation Enhancements and 2) the Greenhouse Gas Coordination working group. Additionally, in March, the BOSR filed [comments](#) to the California ISO on its Final Policy Catalog and 2023-2025 Policy Initiatives Roadmap.

At the BOSR's October 2023 meeting in Seattle, the BOSR elected Chair Hayley Williamson of the Nevada Public Utilities Commission to Chair of the BOSR and Commissioner Gabriel Aguilera of the New Mexico Public Regulation Commission to Vice-Chair.

In May, the BOSR hosted its annual Western Electricity Markets Training Forum at the California ISO Headquarters in Folsom, California. The training leaders, Stanford Professors Frank Wolak and Mark Thurber, guided 26 commissioners and staff through game-based wholesale electricity market simulations that covered the topics of auction pricing fundamentals, market power, the effects of transmission constraints on prices, and the role of the day-ahead market.

The Western EIM Nominating Committee, of which Vice-Chair Aguilera is the BOSR representative, assembled this spring to address two upcoming vacancies on the Western EIM Governing Body: both Vice-Chair Kondziolka and Member Wagner's terms expiring June 30, 2024. On June 14, the WEIM Governing Body announced the reappointment of both Governing Body members, each with a three-year term effective July 1, 2024.

On June 5, 2024, the West-Wide Governance Pathways Initiative Launch Committee filed a Phase 1 Straw Proposal for the CAISO Board of Governors and Western EIM Governing Body's consideration. The proposal is aimed at designing a more independent governance framework for both the Western EIM and Extended Day-Ahead Market (EDAM). On June 7, 2024, the CAISO Board of Governors and Western EIM Governing Body acknowledged receipt of the proposal and have directed the ISO management to initiate a stakeholder process, in partnership with the West-Wide Governance Pathways Launch Committee. Since one of the BOSR's main purpose and responsibility is to express a common position in ISO stakeholder processes or to the WEIM Governing Body on issues that may impact the WEIM or EDAM, the BOSR plans to actively participate in this initiative this summer.

MARKETS+ STATE COMMITTEE

The Markets+ State Committee (MSC) has been actively engaged in the Markets+ development process as the Southwest Power Pool (SPP) and stakeholders worked to finish the Markets+ Tariff and begin working on the Protocols. At the Fall 2023 Joint CREPC-WIRAB Meeting, the MSC and BOSR held a joint meeting to discuss Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Accounting in the EDAM and Markets+ markets. Experts in the field presented to MSC and BOSR members about the key similarities and differences between GHG in the two market constructs and the work that remains. The MSC remains heavily involved in the GHG discussions and regularly participates in the Markets+ GHG Task Force (MGHGTF) meetings as the discussion has evolved to address non-pricing programs.

On March 28, 2024, the Markets+ Tariff was filed at FERC. As active stakeholders in this process, the MSC formally submitted [comments](#) to FERC in response to the Tariff, highlighting the progress that has been as well as the significant issues that remain. The MSC expressed concerns around key elements of the market design such as transmission and GHG. The MSC continues to follow these issues in the Protocols development phase.

The MSC had its first leadership transition in May of 2024. With full support from the MSC members, Commissioner Nick Myers from the Arizona Corporation Commission and Commissioner John Hammond from the Idaho Public Utilities Commission assumed the Chair and Vice Chair positions, respectively. With new leadership, the MSC will continue to remain proactive and collaborative stakeholders in the Markets+ development process and monitor the progress of Markets+ as the footprint begins to develop throughout the year.

WESTERN RESOURCE ADEQUACY PROGRAM COMMITTEE OF STATE REPRESENTATIVES

The Western Resource Adequacy Program's (WRAP) Committee of State Representatives (COSR) has been actively engaged in the ongoing WRAP developments throughout the remainder of 2023 and into 2024. In August of 2023, COSR leadership and staff worked with the BOSR to create a Joint BOSR-COSR educational session with the CAISO and Western Power Pool (WPP) to address the resource adequacy seam between EDAM and WRAP. COSR members worked to understand how the seams and ongoing discussions may impact WRAP operations. While no actions were needed at the time, the COSR continues to monitor this development.

In the beginning of 2024, WIEB fully executed funding agreements for the COSR with all the State-Regulated WRAP Participants (SRWPs). COSR staff developed a 2024 Business Plan and Budget, which the COSR formally approved at their April meeting. The COSR is currently beginning preparations for the 2025 Business Plan and Budget for formal approval in the fall.

On April 22, 2024, the Resource Adequacy Participants Committee (RAPC) published a [letter](#) to Western Stakeholders announcing the delay of the WRAP binding season due to their inability to meet the WRAP forward showing requirements by the Summer 2026 season. In response to this letter and the challenges Participants are facing, the COSR prepared a [response](#) to the RAPC, outlining the importance of WRAP and ways to move forward. The COSR is currently working to meet with each individual SRWP to further discuss the issues raised in the letters and is monitoring the RAPC's progress on a Revised Transition Plan for the WRAP. This Revised Transition Plan is expected to be publicly available by the end of August, and the COSR anticipates engaging as part of the stakeholder process.

MEETINGS AND EVENTS

RECENT MEETINGS

FALL 2023 JOINT CREPC-WIRAB MEETING

[Fall 2023 Joint CREPC-WIRAB Meeting Page](#)

The Fall 2023 Joint CREPC-WIRAB Meeting was held in Seattle, WA, from Wednesday, October 4 to Friday, October 6, 2023. Agenda topics included wholesale electricity markets, resource adequacy, transmission, and emerging technologies.

WINTER 2024 CREPC MEETING

[Winter 2024 CREPC Meeting Page](#)

The first ever Winter 2024 CREPC Meeting was held virtually on Wednesday, March 6, 2024, from 12:00pm to 1:30pm Pacific Time, 1:00pm to 2:30pm Mountain Time. The agenda included updates from staff on WIEB initiatives and the state and provincial committees that WIEB supports.

SPRING 2024 JOINT CREPC-WIRAB MEETING

[Spring 2024 Joint CREPC-WIRAB Meeting Page](#)

The Spring 2024 Joint CREPC-WIRAB Meeting was held in Denver, CO, from Wednesday, April 24 to Friday, April 26, 2024. Agenda topics included reliability, history of Western electricity, federalism and energy policy, wholesale electricity markets, resource adequacy, and transmission.

2024 ADVANCED NUCLEAR IN THE WEST WORKSHOP

[2024 Advanced Nuclear in the West Workshop Page](#)

The 2024 Advanced Nuclear in the West Workshop was held in Boise, ID, from May 29 to May 30, 2024. Attendees included utility regulators, state energy officials, scientists, national laboratories, and industry experts who discussed and shared information on the potential for advanced nuclear power in the Western Interconnection.

UPCOMING MEETINGS

FALL 2024 JOINT CREPC-WIRAB MEETING

October 22-24, 2024

Wyndham Bayside, San Diego, California

[Fall 2024 Joint CREPC-WIRAB Meeting Page](#)