MPUA Magazine

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improving local quality of life through hometown utilities

MPUA brings together 120 hometown utilities for the collective good. We support community-owned, locally controlled electric, water, wastewater, natural gas, and broadband utilities in Missouri and beyond. MPUA provides utilities with energy supply, training, advocacy, and technical support. We're proud to collaborate with communities to achieve our mission of strengthening hometown utilities and improving the local quality of life.

MPUA Magazine

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cover photo

The third annual MPUA Lineworker Rodeo took place in Columbia, Missouri on September 10-11, 2026.

from the president's desk

Honoring service, investing in tomorrow



Steve Stodden,
President & CEO
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> In our industry, it is the relationships and people that carry us forward into greatness and take care of us during tough times.

The Annual Conference took place in early October in Branson, and it was another great event that had record attendance. Once again, thank you all for taking the time to attend, and thank you to our great staff for creating such a wonderful event.

In our industry, as in many others, it is the relationships and people that carry us forward into greatness and take care of us during tough times. We value those people and relationships. However, at some point, everyone has earned their right to retire and let someone else get their turn at the helm.

For our Board, that is Greg Beavers from Farmington, whom we recognized at the Annual Conference. Greg always stayed calm, evaluated the situation, and gave you very thoughtful advice. We will miss his guidance, wisdom, and friendship.

Another retirement announced at the Annual Conference was that of Connie Ford, MPUA's Chief Member Services Officer. Connie has been at MPUA for 10 years and spent much of the rest of her career at the City of Columbia. She plans to work through June 11, 2027, so that we can have time for a smooth transition for the next person in that role, and we have already begun the search. There's no replacing Connie, but we will fill the position with great care.

I am a firm believer that the organization should look both internally and externally to fill our leadership positions. We have some great internal candidates, but I think we owe it to all of you to make sure we find the best person possible to help lead the organization forward, so we want to cast a wide net.

As we plan for new leadership in both our cities and MPUA, we need to consider training. At MPUA, we will continue refining our training offerings to help prepare people for careers in public utilities.

The workforce development grant allowed us to expand our training, and since the grant has expired, we are working to ensure that we offer training that equips you and your employees to take the reins as openings present themselves. We will share the full 2027 training schedule with you at our December board meeting so you can plan with your team. Visit MPUA.org/Training for more information on available courses.

We have a lot going on at MPUA right now. With five different boards and various committees, projects, and power pools, we try to strike a balance between transparency and clear communication while being mindful of your time. We work hard to inform anyone affected by operational or financial changes so they can adapt.

Should you want more information, our meetings are open for committees, projects, and power pools. We would love to have you attend. If you let us know what you are interested in, we can get you the schedule for when that information is presented and to which group. We would love to inform you all in detail of everything that we have going on, but we know you have a day job.

On a statewide note, the Governor's Nuclear Task Force, of which I am a member, continues to meet. The State Energy Plan has also been published and contains a lot of useful information on moving forward, especially regarding nuclear development. I plan to ensure MPUA is at the table as we continue to explore what nuclear options would look like for Missouri.

We will continue to look at ways to provide value back to all of you, which is our sole purpose. Please feel free to reach out if you have a question or a problem you need help addressing, or just for some advice.

As I said at our Annual Conference, we are better together.

Calendar of EVENTS

November 2026

10	Legislative Roundtable – Nixa
11	Veteran's Day – MPUA Office Closed
12	Legislative Roundtable – Chillicothe
19	Legislative Roundtable – Rolla
26-27	Thanksgiving Holiday – MPUA Office Closed

December 2026

1	Substation Training for Lineworkers
9	MPUA Board of Directors, MJMEUC-EC & Budget Committee Meeting
9	Member Services Committee Meeting
10	MPUA Board of Directors, MJMEUC, MAMU, MGC & RSC Meetings
10	MPUA RTO – MISO & SPP Committees Meeting
15	Poly Pipe Joining for Utilities
15	Legislative Committee Meeting – Virtual
16	Lineworker Advisory & Mutual Aid Committee Meetings
24-25	Christmas Holiday – MPUA Office Closed

January 2027

1	New Year's Day – MPUA Office Closed
5-6	Disaster Management for Water Utilities
12	Legislative Committee Meeting
13	PSC Inspections Using Simple Record Keeping
26	MoPEP Committee Meeting
27	MMMPEP Committee Meeting – St. Robert
28	SWMPEP Committee Meeting – Virtual Only

For the latest information and registration, visit
MPUA.org/Events

Welcome, new members:

Associate:
Red Equipment LLC
Player and Company
Ameresco
Graybar
LangeTech Inc
Midwest Training & Consulting Services LLC
The Haskell Company

Municipal:
Amazonia
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Staff updates



Alex Buerck started as Student Engineering Assistant at MPUA on September 28. He assists with the Fulton Energy Center Project by being on site, working with the site superintendent and general contractors to create daily logs of the construction progress. Alex is currently enrolled in the Commercial Construction program at State Technical College of Missouri. He enjoys showcasing the vital role hometown utilities play as the backbone of their communities, providing essential services while supporting clean energy initiatives and economic growth.



Michael Hohne joined MPUA on October 10 in the role of Field Technician - Solar. He manages the operation, production, monitoring, and maintenance for each of the 12 solar farm sites. This includes extensive inverter service, site performance, and communication troubleshooting. Michael is a graduate of the University of Central Missouri with a bachelor's degree in Safety Management and a minor in Construction Management. He has built his career in the solar industry, focusing mainly on utility-scale projects, and has experience in the residential and commercial sectors. Michael loves assisting hometown utilities with their energy use and providing an additional source of clean power for their communities.



Professional Computer Solutions: Powering utility operations

Submitted by MPUA Associate Member: Professional Computer Solutions

Professional Computer Solutions (PCS), based in Denison, Iowa, provides a comprehensive ecosystem of integrated enterprise software solutions specifically designed to optimize the operations of municipal and cooperative utilities across the United States.

Operating for over 45 years, PCS delivers a unified platform called Springboard. This web-based hub seamlessly bridges utility billing, financial management, field operations, smart grid analytics, and customer engagement into a single, cohesive infrastructure.

The Springboard Platform: A Unified Central Hub

At the core of the PCS product offering is Springboard, a next-generation, web-based central hub designed to consolidate disparate utility workflows. Historically, public power and water utilities relied on siloed software platforms to handle front-office accounting, customer billing, and back-end field dispatch. Springboard eliminates these data silos by acting as a single pane of glass accessible from any modern web browser or connected device.

Whether deployed as an on-premises installation or hosted via the highly secure PCS cloud network, Springboard ensures real-time synchronicity. When a technician logs a field update, the office staff sees it instantly, and customer portals reflect the modification immediately. This continuous feedback loop mitigates manual entry errors, accelerates operational workflows, and ensures data integrity across the entire enterprise.

The Office Suite: Billing, Financials, and Workflows

The front- and back-office modules within the PCS ecosystem handle complex transactional and regulatory requirements specific to public infrastructure providers:

- **PCS Billing (Customer Information System):** This module accommodates utilities of all sizes, managing complex multi-service rate structures for electricity, water, gas, and wastewater. It acts as a comprehensive repository for customer accounts, tracking consumption history, service connections, and meter transitions.
- **Broadband Billing:** As more public utilities expand into telecommunications, PCS provides dedicated broadband and fiber billing software. This specialized tool features automated provisioning interfaces, enabling utilities to manage high-speed internet and communication services within the same billing architecture
- **PCS Financials (Financial Information System):** Built from the ground up for the utility sector, this application automates standard accounting, general ledger maintenance, accounts payable, inventory tracking, and project costing. It aligns perfectly with Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) and Governmental Accounting Standards Board (GASB) reporting frameworks.
- **Prepay and Workflow Solutions:** The PCS Prepay module empowers consumers to view and fund their utility accounts dynamically on mobile devices, minimizing standard collection cycles and past-due balances. Supplementing this are customized automated workflow processes that route approvals, manage document imaging through Scan Now, and streamline internal communication.

Field Operations and Engineering Integrations

Bridging the gap between administrative offices and field crews is essential for rapid infrastructure response. The PCS suite features native utility-focused field tools:

- **UtiliTrak & UtiliStake:** These GIS-centric engineering tools streamline staking processes and asset tracking. By embedding spatial intelligence into daily workflows, engineering teams can accurately plan line extensions and map critical utility assets.
- **UtiliGo & Outage Management:** Designed for modern field crews, UtiliGo ensures that service orders, infrastructure updates, and system data are fully portable. When natural disasters or equipment failures strike, the Outage Management System (OMS) cross-references incoming meter data to isolate faults, dispatch

crews effectively, and track restoration timelines.

- **Mobile Service Orders & Meter Readings:** Technicians can update service statuses, upload field notes, and record manual or drive-by meter reads directly through secure mobile channels, instantly feeding data back to office billing workflows.

Mobility and Customer Engagement Platforms

Modern utility operations demand open, responsive communication channels with end consumers. PCS addresses this via customer-facing digital applications:

- **Customer Portal & Phone Application:** Consumers can access secure online portals or branded mobile applications to review historical usage trends, update account details, register for utility programs, and process online payments.
- **PCS Notify & Integrated Messaging:** This communication layer allows utilities to blast critical updates—such as scheduled maintenance windows, extreme weather alerts, or past-due reminders—via automated SMS text messages or email campaigns directly from the central database.
- **Mobile Board Business Application:** Tailored for cooperative and municipal leadership, this application securely packages and distributes administrative agendas, financial reports, and meeting items directly to the tablets of board members, promoting paperless governance.

Advanced Smart Grid Analytics and Business Intelligence

As utilities deploy Advanced Metering Infrastructure (AMI), they generate vast waves of consumption data. The analytics modules built by PCS turn this raw data into strategic intelligence:

- **Meter Data Management (MDM):** This platform aggregates interval meter reads, validates consumption data, and flags irregular consumption patterns—such as continuous flow indicators for water leaks or sudden drops indicating potential energy theft.
- **KPI Dashboards & Power Search:** Utilizing robust business intelligence frameworks (including Microsoft BI integration), executives and operations managers can track organizational performance metrics through real-time visual dashboards. These insights guide budget forecasting, infrastructure investments, and efficiency audits.

Cybersecurity and Utility Hosting Infrastructure

Recognizing that public infrastructure is a frequent target for cyber threats, PCS integrates institutional-grade safety measures directly into its software delivery. Through the PCS Hosting facilities, utilities can delegate server infrastructure management to certified data specialists. The security suite includes multi-factor authentication (MFA), continuous intrusion detection, firewalls, regular security audits, and automated cloud or network-attached storage (NAS) backup layers to ensure operational continuity under any circumstance.

By maintaining a tightly woven ecosystem of native applications and supporting open smart-grid interfaces like MultiSpeak, Professional Computer Solutions enables utilities to maximize their operational efficiency, shield their systems from cyber threats, and offer top-tier digital service to their communities. If you would like to schedule a demo please contact: Doug Dorhout, PCS Regional Business Developer, doug.dorhout@pcs-csa.com



Grid Resilience grant drives reliability improvements across Missouri

The Missouri Joint Municipal Electric Utility Commission (MJMEUC) has secured a Grid Resilience grant from the Missouri Department of Natural Resources to modernize electric distribution infrastructure across nine municipal utilities: Centralia, Fulton, Harrisonville, Kahoka, Macon, Monett, New Madrid, Trenton, and West Plains.

This coordinated effort will improve grid resilience, reduce outage risks, and enhance reliability for essential services such as hospitals, emergency response, and water systems. MJMEUC will serve as project manager and grant administrator, providing procurement support, technical expertise, and centralized coordination. This structure allows small and medium-sized communities to execute complex infrastructure projects that would otherwise be difficult due to limited staffing and resources.

The five-year project includes planning and design in year one, construction and deployment in years two through four, and performance monitoring and reporting in year five. Across all participating communities, upgrades will include system hardening, undergrounding of vulnerable infrastructure, reconductoring of aging lines, and replacement of deteriorated utility poles.

The initiative is expected to improve reliability metrics such as SAIDI, SAIFI, and CAIDI by at least five percent while reducing both the frequency and duration of outages. Collectively, the nine utilities serve as critical regional hubs and produce 857,298 MWh annually, well within the small utility classification.

Centralia

Centralia's project focuses on targeted reconductoring to improve both capacity and reliability. The city will replace approximately 1,653 feet of aging three-phase line between Allen and Hickman Streets. Existing #6 bare copper conductor will be upgraded to 336 ACSR conductor, allowing the system to better support load growth and reduce line losses.

To support the heavier conductor, poles and crossarms will be replaced where necessary. A key upgrade includes replacing a pole near Casey's General Store at the Highway 22 crossing, along with the addition of sectionalizing switches. These improvements will allow crews to isolate outages more effectively and restore service faster.

Overall, the project will strengthen system performance, reduce outage duration, and improve long-term reliability for residents and businesses.

Fulton

Fulton's role in the project centers on upgrading existing generation assets to support grid reliability during peak demand and emergency conditions. The city operates two dual-fuel Nordberg generators that are currently limited to emergency use.

Through this grant, Fulton will upgrade emissions control systems, allowing these generators to operate beyond emergency-only restrictions without increasing their nameplate capacity. This change enables the city to provide dependable, dispatchable power in the constrained MISO Region 5.

The project strengthens local energy security, supports regional grid stability, and preserves skilled utility jobs by maintaining around-the-clock plant operations. It also enhances Fulton's ability to respond to capacity shortages and grid emergencies.

Harrisonville

Harrisonville will improve reliability in one of its most outage-prone areas by converting overhead distribution lines to underground service. The project targets neighborhoods along Delmar, Cherokee, Easton, Leawood, Hillside, and Prairie View Streets.

These areas experience frequent outages due to weather and wildlife interference. Undergrounding the lines will significantly reduce these disruptions and improve service for approximately 200 to 250 customers.

In addition to improving reliability, the project will reduce maintenance costs and minimize risks associated with falling limbs, wind, and animal contact. City crews will complete much of the work in-house, maximizing efficiency and cost-effectiveness.

Kahoka

Kahoka is undertaking a system-wide modernization effort by phasing out its aging 2.4 kV distribution network. This legacy system no longer meets current demand and contributes to higher losses and longer outage durations.

The project includes upgrading portions of the system to a 4.16 kV standard, replacing deteriorated infrastructure, and installing up to 20 new utility poles. Substation components will also be evaluated and upgraded as needed.

These improvements will increase capacity, reduce maintenance needs, and enhance operational flexibility. The result will be a more resilient and efficient system capable of delivering reliable service to residents and critical facilities.

Macon

Macon's project focuses on undergrounding electric infrastructure in areas prone to outages caused by storms and animal interference. By relocating vulnerable overhead lines underground, the city will reduce exposure to common outage risks.

The project is expected to improve reliability metrics while lowering long-term maintenance costs, particularly those associated with vegetation management and storm repairs. Macon will also involve lineworker apprentices in construction, supporting workforce development.

Improved reliability will allow utility crews to respond more quickly to outages elsewhere in the system, creating broader operational benefits across the community.

Monett

Monett is replacing aging utility poles and crossarms along a key distribution circuit that serves both residential and commercial customers. This circuit has been identified as vulnerable to storm damage due to aging infrastructure.

According to Utilities Superintendent Skip Schaller, the project aligns closely with the city's long-term system strengthening goals and allows work to begin sooner than would otherwise be possible.

With support from MPUA, Monett successfully navigated the grant process despite limited internal resources. The upgrades will reduce storm-related damage, shorten outage durations, and improve overall system durability. In the long term, the project enables the city to prioritize additional reliability improvements more quickly.

New Madrid

New Madrid's project addresses a critical gap in infrastructure management by implementing a formal utility pole inspection and replacement program. The city has experienced unexpected pole failures due to undetected below-ground deterioration.

Through this initiative, New Madrid will inspect, test, and treat its existing poles while replacing up to 40 of the most compromised structures. This targeted approach ensures that the highest-risk assets are addressed first.

The project will reduce outage risks, improve system reliability, and establish a proactive maintenance framework that supports long-term grid resilience.

Trenton

Trenton Municipal Utilities is undertaking a comprehensive reconductoring and voltage conversion project to modernize one of the oldest parts of its system. Much of the infrastructure in this area dates back to the 1930s, including original poles, wiring, and equipment.

Electric Distribution Supervisor Brad Griffin noted that the city had already begun exploring system upgrades when MPUA introduced the grant opportunity.

The project includes replacing outdated copper conductors with ACSR wire, upgrading all poles, and converting the system from 2.4 kV to 7.6 kV. These changes will increase capacity, reduce energy losses, and improve system resilience.

Long-term benefits include fewer outages, improved efficiency, and greater ability to support future technologies such as electric vehicles and electric heating systems.

West Plains

West Plains will conduct a system-wide pole inspection and replacement project to strengthen its distribution network. The city will evaluate poles across and prioritize the replacement of 45 structures identified as most at risk.

New 40-foot poles will be installed to improve durability and better withstand both daily operational demands and extreme weather conditions. This proactive approach will reduce the likelihood of outages caused by pole failure.

The project will enhance overall grid stability, reduce maintenance costs, and ensure more reliable service for residents and critical community infrastructure.

A model for collaborative resilience

This grant demonstrates the value of collaboration among Missouri's municipal utilities. By working through MJMEUC, participating cities can leverage shared resources, streamline procurement, and implement consistent, high-impact improvements.

The result is a stronger, more resilient electric grid that supports economic stability, protects essential services, and positions these communities for future growth and evolving energy demands.

Growth, costs, and local control: Missouri's utility debates heading into 2027

Missouri lawmakers have no shortage of utility issues to consider when they return to Jefferson City in January. Data centers are bringing new questions about who should pay for infrastructure. The state's recently released energy plan is putting nuclear generation back in the conversation. And concerns about affordability are influencing proposals that could affect everything from infrastructure planning and utility rates to customer assistance programs.

For community-owned utilities, much of the work ahead will come down to a familiar question: *How can Missouri address these issues without taking decisions away from the communities responsible for providing utility service?*

Data centers are likely to be one of the biggest tests of that balance. Several proposals were introduced during the 2026 legislative session addressing large utility users, and while none became law, the issue hasn't gone away. Discussions have continued throughout the interim, with growing attention on the costs and risks of serving large customers.

There is general agreement that economic development is important and that existing utility customers shouldn't be left paying for infrastructure built to serve a new development. The more difficult questions involve how to accomplish that and whether the state should establish specific requirements for every utility.

A large development may require substantial new infrastructure, and utilities need ways to protect their customers if the project doesn't move forward as expected. However, the appropriate protections can look very different depending on the utility and the customer.

MPUA has been discussing these issues with members in Legislative Committee meetings and legislative roundtables this fall. Preserving local control remains our priority, especially when it comes to utility rates and service agreements. Legislation is expected in early bill prefiling and these conversations are helping us identify potential concerns, evaluate what statewide proposals could mean for municipal utilities, and prepare to engage as legislation develops.

Another issue gaining attention is how Missouri plans to meet its future energy needs. The state's 2026 State Energy Plan notes that Missouri has shifted from a net exporter of electricity to a net importer over the past decade. Electricity demand is expected to grow and the plan emphasizes expanding in-state generation, particularly nuclear energy.

Some of the recommendations could require legislative action, including financing of nuclear projects and a statewide authority to coordinate development.

MPUA supports keeping nuclear energy available as a generation option and removing unnecessary state barriers to its development. As legislators evaluate recommendations from the State Energy Plan, our focus will be on ensuring that any resulting legislation recognizes the needs of municipal utilities and preserves their ability to make their own resource decisions.

Water and wastewater systems face a different set of pressures, but many lead back to the same concern… COST. Communities are working to maintain aging infrastructure while preparing for increasingly complex regulations.

One issue we're watching is funding for Missouri's water regulatory programs. The Department of Natural Resources has been reviewing program funding needs, including potential changes to clean water fees. Adequate funding is necessary for Missouri to administer its regulatory programs. At the same time, changes to the fee structure could have a significant impact on municipal systems.

MPUA supports maintaining effective state programs without placing disproportionate costs on municipal utilities. We also continue to advocate for reliable funding programs. With PFAS requirements and lead service line work continuing, communities need practical compliance timelines and financial support to meet those obligations.

Affordability is becoming a common theme in many of these discussions. Legislators are increasingly concerned about the impact of utility costs on households, and proposals involving customer assistance and utility service policies have been part of that conversation.

MPUA supports continued funding for programs such as LIHEAP and weatherization assistance. What we want to avoid are statewide requirements that create new costs without providing the funding to cover them. An assistance program intended to make utility service more affordable shouldn't inadvertently increase costs for other customers.

Of course, not every issue expected in 2027 will be new. We also anticipate continued discussions about electric deregulation, net metering, annexation authority, and utility billing arrangements. These proposals may not receive the same attention as data centers, but they can have a direct impact on municipal utility operations.

That brings us back to local control. Municipal utilities are governed by locally accountable officials who understand their systems and the customers they serve. State policy can provide important protections, but there is a difference between establishing a statewide goal and prescribing how every utility must meet it.

So what happens between now and January? For MPUA, much of the work is already underway. We're reviewing potential legislation, updating our issue statements, and continuing conversations with members about the proposals we're likely to see.

We're also preparing for substantial turnover in the General Assembly following the November election. That means new opportunities to introduce legislators to community-owned utilities and help them understand how decisions made in Jefferson City affect local operations.

Members play an important role in those conversations. A legislator may understand the goal behind a proposal without fully recognizing what it would mean for a municipal utility to implement it. Local examples can help explain those impacts far better than a general policy statement.

We encourage members to reach out to their legislators and share what's happening in their communities. MPUA can help coordinate meetings and provide materials to support those discussions.

The 2027 session will bring its share of challenges and opportunities, and MPUA will continue working with members and legislators to help shape policies that support Missouri's communities while protecting the interests of community-owned utilities.

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The intersection of environmental policy and affordability

regulatory update

Municipal utilities face increasing pressure to maintain reliable, affordable electric service while planning for future infrastructure investments. Recent federal regulatory changes and a pending Supreme Court case highlight how decisions involving greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions could influence long-term utility planning and costs.

In September 2026, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) finalized a partial repeal of its 2024 Carbon Pollution Standards for fossil fuel-fired power plants. The action eliminates GHG emission requirements for existing coal-, oil-, and gas-fired steam-generating units, including requirements that would have relied on carbon capture technology to substantially reduce emissions. It also removes carbon capture requirements for new baseload natural gas turbines. EPA maintains that these changes will reduce compliance costs and support electric reliability. However, other GHG standards remain in place, and EPA has separately proposed eliminating all remaining power plant GHG requirements under Section 111 of the Clean Air Act.

Meanwhile, the U.S. Supreme Court is considering Suncor Energy v. Boulder County, which examines whether state and local governments can sue energy companies for climate-related damages or whether federal law prevents such lawsuits.

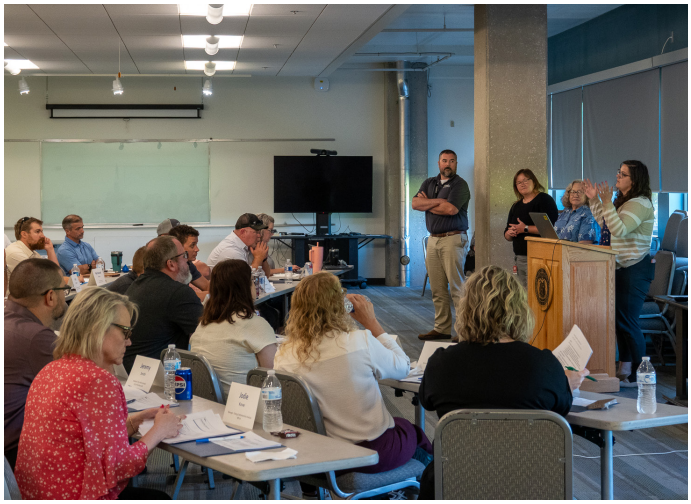
These developments are connected through an important question: If federal authority to regulate GHG emissions is narrowed, what role remains for states in addressing climate-related impacts? Although the two actions involve different legal issues, their outcomes could influence the regulatory and financial risks within the energy sector.

For Missouri's municipal utilities, these questions are closely tied to affordability. Generation investments, financing decisions, and infrastructure improvements often span decades. Changes in environmental requirements and potential exposure to litigation can complicate planning and create costs that may ultimately affect customers.

MPUA will continue monitoring these developments and working with state and federal partners to understand their implications for Missouri's municipal utilities. Regulatory clarity remains important in supporting responsible environmental stewardship, reliable infrastructure, and affordable electric service.

MPUA Leadership Lab develops next generation of utility leaders

A utility leader's day can take them from resolving an employee challenge to navigating a regulatory question, preparing for a difficult conversation with a customer, and explaining an important decision to elected officials. And that may all be before lunchtime. Leading a hometown utility requires the ability to connect with people, understand the bigger picture, and make decisions that serve an entire community.



Recognizing the importance of these skills, MPUA launched its first Leadership Lab in 2026 as part of its expanded training offerings. The three-part professional development series brought together current and emerging municipal utility leaders to explore the challenges of leadership, learn from experienced professionals, and connect with peers across Missouri.

The program focused on three essential areas of utility leadership, including managing people, understanding state government, and navigating the complexities within local government. Together, the sessions offered participants a broader perspective on what it takes to lead effectively in an industry where employee development, public accountability, and reliable service all go hand in hand.

The series began by establishing the fundamental skills of what it takes to lead people effectively. For many utility professionals, stepping into a supervisory role means taking on an entirely new set of responsibilities. Knowing how to do the work is one thing; helping others succeed is another.

The opening session, Totally Responsible Person Training, led by Charise Swanson, Utilities Executive Consultant, explored the skills needed to build effective teams. Participants discussed leadership mindset, resilience, accountability, and communication, along with strategies for managing conflict, navigating workplace challenges, and fostering a positive organizational culture.

Through practical exercises and group discussions, participants reflected on their own leadership approaches and considered new ways to support their teams. For municipal utilities working to retain experienced employees and develop the next generation of the workforce, these skills are especially important. Strong leadership requires setting clear expectations, building trust, and creating an environment where employees can grow and contribute to the organization's success.

"Adopting the mindset of being a 'leader' rather than simply a 'manager' has been the biggest change in how I approach my role and interact with my team," said Leadership Lab attendee Evan Kinder, Utilities Project Coordinator for the City of West Plains. "Helping our employees recognize that we are all part of the same team, working toward a common goal, has made a tremendous difference in how we work together and approach challenges."

But leading a team is only part of the job. Municipal utility leaders must also understand the broader environment in which their organizations operate, including the legislative and regulatory decisions that can affect their utilities and customers.

The second session of Leadership Lab took participants to Jefferson City for an inside look at state government. Through visits to the Missouri State Capitol and the Missouri Department of Natural Resources, attendees gained firsthand insight into the processes that shape municipal utilities. The experience connected decisions made at the state level with the realities of managing a local utility, highlighting how legislation and regulation can influence compliance, long-term planning, and daily operations.

The session also underscored the role municipal utility professionals can play in advocating for their communities and protecting local control. Attendees broke into groups to strategize on utility-related policy issues and participated in mock legislative meetings, complete with unanticipated roadblocks such as meeting time being cut short or trying to pull a leader off the legislative floor.

By understanding how policies are developed, building relationships with policymakers, and communicating the needs of their organizations, utility leaders can help ensure local perspectives are part of conversations affecting the industry.
While state-level policy shapes the broader operating environment, many of a utility leader's most important relationships are closer to home. Leadership Lab concluded with Local Government Basics for Management, which explored the unique responsibilities of leading within a municipal government structure. Participants covered topics including customer communication, media relations, crisis communications, human resources, capital improvement planning, the Missouri Sunshine Law, and other legal considerations.

These responsibilities illustrate the balancing act of municipal utility management. Leaders must address operational needs while maintaining public trust and communicating clearly with customers. Whether responding to a crisis, planning a major improvement or explaining a difficult decision, they must consider not only what needs to be done, but also how those decisions affect the people they serve.

A utility leadership panel brought these concepts to life, allowing participants to hear directly from experienced industry professionals. Panelists included Erin Keys, Utilities Director for the City of Columbia; Matt Hopper, General Manager of Chillicothe Municipal Utilities; and Dennis Klusmeyer, Senior Member Advisor at MPUA and former City Superintendent at the City of Shelbina.

Together, they shared insights and lessons from their careers, offering practical perspectives on the challenges of municipal utility management and the importance of strong relationships, thoughtful decision-making, and effective communication.

The Leadership Lab offered more than a series of training sessions. It also provided an opportunity to step back from day-to-day demands, gain a broader understanding of the industry, and consider how individual leadership decisions contribute to the strength of an entire organization. That investment in people is essential to the long-term success of municipal utilities.

"I believe anyone looking to take the next step in their career should consider applying for Leadership Lab," said Kinder. "The more you invest in the experience, the more you will get out of it. Developing strong leadership skills is essential to growing professionally and learning how to lead rather than simply manage is what can truly set you apart."

Although the first Leadership Lab has concluded, leadership development does not end with the final session. It continues in the conversations supervisors have with employees, the relationships they build with elected officials and customers, and the decisions they make on behalf of their communities.

MPUA will offer the Leadership Lab again in 2027, with applications opening in January and sessions scheduled for April, June, and August. Municipal utility professionals interested in developing their leadership skills and preparing for future opportunities can learn more at MPUA.org/LeadershipLab.





Smarter wastewater solutions deliver big savings

Strategic engineering improvements help the City of Farmington avoid a multimillion-dollar plant expansion while reducing energy consumption and improving treatment performance.

Submitted by MPUA Associate Member: Cochran

For municipalities across Missouri, maintaining wastewater infrastructure while managing rising operating costs and increasingly stringent environmental regulations is an ongoing challenge. The City of Farmington is demonstrating how strategic investments in existing facilities can deliver substantial savings, improve treatment performance, and extend the useful life of critical infrastructure.

Working with engineering consultant Cochran, the City has undertaken improvements at its East and West Wastewater Treatment Plants, addressing capacity, equipment reliability, and energy efficiency.

Avoiding a $10 million plant expansion

In 2020, Farmington faced a significant challenge at its East Wastewater Treatment Plant. During heavy rainfall events, peak flows reached as much as six times normal levels. Repeated exceedances of the plant's design capacity prompted enforcement action by the Missouri Department of Natural Resources (MoDNR), threatening a moratorium on new construction and development.

Rather than immediately pursuing a costly expansion, the City engaged Cochran to evaluate the existing facility and identify alternatives.

Through engineering analysis and coordination with MoDNR, Cochran obtained approval to re-rate the plant's treatment capacity from 2.0 million gallons per day (MGD) to 2.75 MGD, a 37.5% increase. This allowed Farmington to resolve the regulatory concerns and lift restrictions on new development.

More importantly, the re-rating eliminated the immediate need for a plant expansion estimated to cost upwards of $10 million.

Modernizing aeration to reduce energy costs

With the capacity issue addressed, Farmington turned its attention to aging aeration equipment at the East Treatment Plant. The existing mechanical aeration system had experienced recurring failures,



creating maintenance challenges, excessive energy consumption, and inconsistent treatment performance.

In 2021, Cochran began designing improvements to the plant's north oxidation ditch, incorporating a retrievable fine-bubble aeration system, two 75-horsepower variable-frequency-drive blowers, and two continuously operating mixers.

Unlike the previous system, the upgraded equipment uses dissolved oxygen (DO) probes to monitor oxygen concentrations and automatically adjust blower operation based on treatment demands. The mixers maintain continuous circulation while the blowers supply air only when needed.

This approach reduces unnecessary energy consumption while supporting consistent biological treatment and improved nutrient removal.

Cochran provided mechanical and electrical design, bid administration, and construction administration services. The improvements were completed in spring 2023.

Measurable results and long-term savings

The upgraded aeration system has delivered significant operational savings.

According to the equipment supplier, the previous system consumed approximately 80,000 to 90,000 kilowatt-hours (kWh) per month. Following installation, electricity consumption decreased to less than 40,000 kWh per month.

That reduction represents approximately $6,000 in monthly electricity savings, or $72,000 annually.

The improvements have also strengthened treatment performance. A case study reports treated effluent concentrations below 0.5 mg/L for ammonia, 5.0 mg/L for total nitrogen, and 1.0 mg/L for total phosphorus.

Beyond energy savings, the new equipment provides greater operational flexibility, improved reliability, and reduced maintenance demands.

Continuing improvements at the West Treatment Plant

Building on the success of the East facility, Farmington is advancing similar improvements at its West Wastewater Treatment Plant.

Cochran is designing new aeration and mixing systems for six treatment basins. The improvements include retrievable fine-bubble diffusers, new blowers, automated controls, and a jet mixing system incorporating recirculation pumps, distribution piping, and nozzles.

The upgrades are intended to improve oxygen transfer, maintain consistent mixing, and optimize energy consumption while making effective use of the existing treatment infrastructure.

Cochran's services include topographic surveying, demolition planning, mechanical and electrical design, and construction-phase services. Additional improvements are also underway at the East facility, including replacement of the existing headworks screens.

A practical lesson for Missouri communities

Farmington's experience demonstrates the value of evaluating existing infrastructure before committing to major capital expenditures.

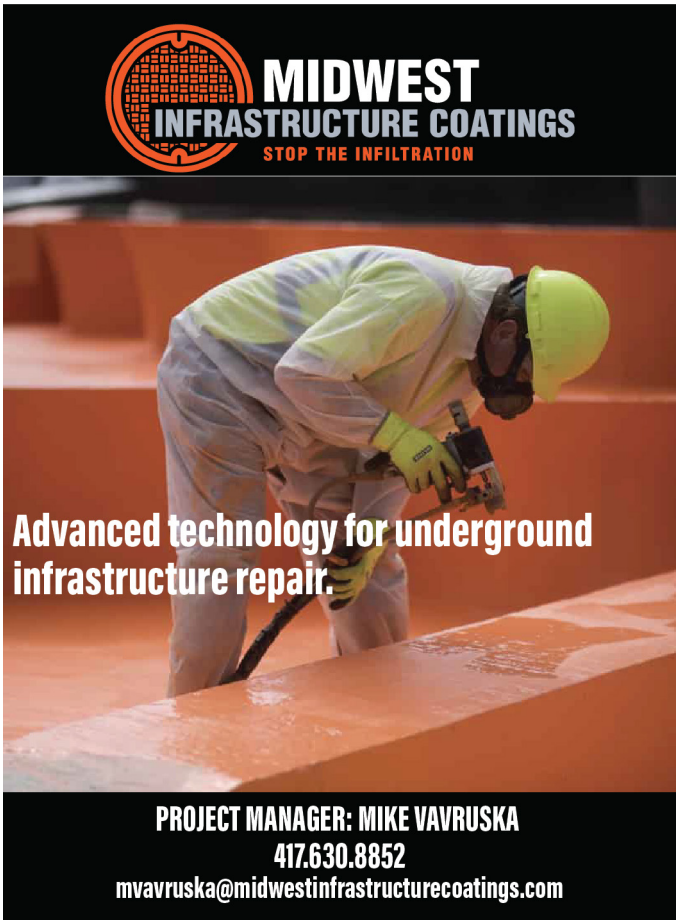
Through engineering analysis, regulatory coordination, and targeted equipment upgrades, the City avoided a multimillion-dollar expansion while significantly reducing operating expenses.

For municipal utilities facing similar challenges, investments in modern aeration technology, automated controls, and strategic infrastructure planning can deliver meaningful long-term benefits.

Sometimes the most cost-effective solution isn't building a larger treatment plant. It's making the existing one work smarter.

About Cochran: Founded in 1959, Cochran is a Missouri-based engineering, architecture, and land surveying firm providing water and wastewater infrastructure planning, design, and construction-phase services to municipalities and utility providers throughout the state.





Major investment brings new opportunities to Hunnewell

With a population of roughly 250 residents, it is quite easy to miss the small town situated between Shelbina and Monroe City in northeast Missouri. Like many rural communities, it has a strong sense of community and close-knit residents. However, in a town with no line crew and a limited budget, maintaining critical infrastructure and investing in the future of its utility system presents a significant challenge.

This is the reality facing Hunnewell, Missouri.

In April 2026, the City of Hunnewell, Missouri Public Utility Alliance, MECO Engineering, and Mark Twain Council of Governments began working together to improve the reliability of the town's electric distribution system. This project, titled the "Electrical Upgrade Emergency Project," provides approximately $523,000 in funds through a Community Development Block Grant (CDBG).



In communities the size of Hunnewell, funding major infrastructure projects can be difficult. Hunnewell lacked the cash reserves needed for large-scale capital improvements such as this one. In order to maintain safe and reliable power, something had to be done.

The project began with MECO Engineering, the project manager, conducting a system inspection that identified 36 needed infrastructure upgrades, including utility poles, conductors, and transformers. These improvements are expected to increase reliability, safety, long-term performance, and lead to community development opportunities for Hunnewell.

"By doing these upgrades, they're going to have some significant reliability improvements," said Mark Petty, MPUA Director of Energy & Supply Services. "They're really going to be able to then change the focus on their town to more redevelopment or better housing, or other types of improvements."

Grant funding administered by the Mark Twain Council of Governments provided the foundation, but financing was only part of the solution.

The next step was turning that vision into reality. MECO Engineering designed the project and prepared the construction drawings, while MPUA's Line Crew completed the work specified in the plans.

Petty described the Hunnewell project as part of MPUA's vision for helping communities tackle capital improvement projects that may otherwise be out of reach.

"This is the vision that we have for the work that the RSC line crew can do," Petty stated. "Particularly for cities that have not been able to save cash or have additional financing for capital upgrades."

Construction began in spring 2026, with the heavy construction workload falling between May and July. The project concluded in August 2026.

One unique aspect of the Community Development Block Grant is its workforce development component, which requires project partners to make a good-faith effort to hire a local Section 3 worker.

To meet this requirement, MPUA conducted a competitive hiring process which led to Talon McCoy, a local high school student, joining the team. After completing the OSHA-required and additional safety training, McCoy assisted with traffic control, ground support, site preparation, and line crew assistance during construction.

"It's very exciting to get a youngster like Talon McCoy that can join our team, be a part of the project, come from the local area, and maybe ultimately become a person that joins the trades," said Petty.

This opportunity gave McCoy firsthand exposure to a potential career in the utility trades after graduating high school, letting him experience day-to-day operations as part of a line crew.

The benefits of the project extend far beyond new electrical poles and wires. Reliable and safe power supports nearly every aspect of daily life.

From powering homes and businesses to running refrigerators that store medications and equipment that residents rely on, Petty emphasized that such infrastructure is the foundation for community growth.

"Once you have infrastructure, you can do those other things. That's part of getting some really good electrical infrastructure going in some of these towns," stated Petty.

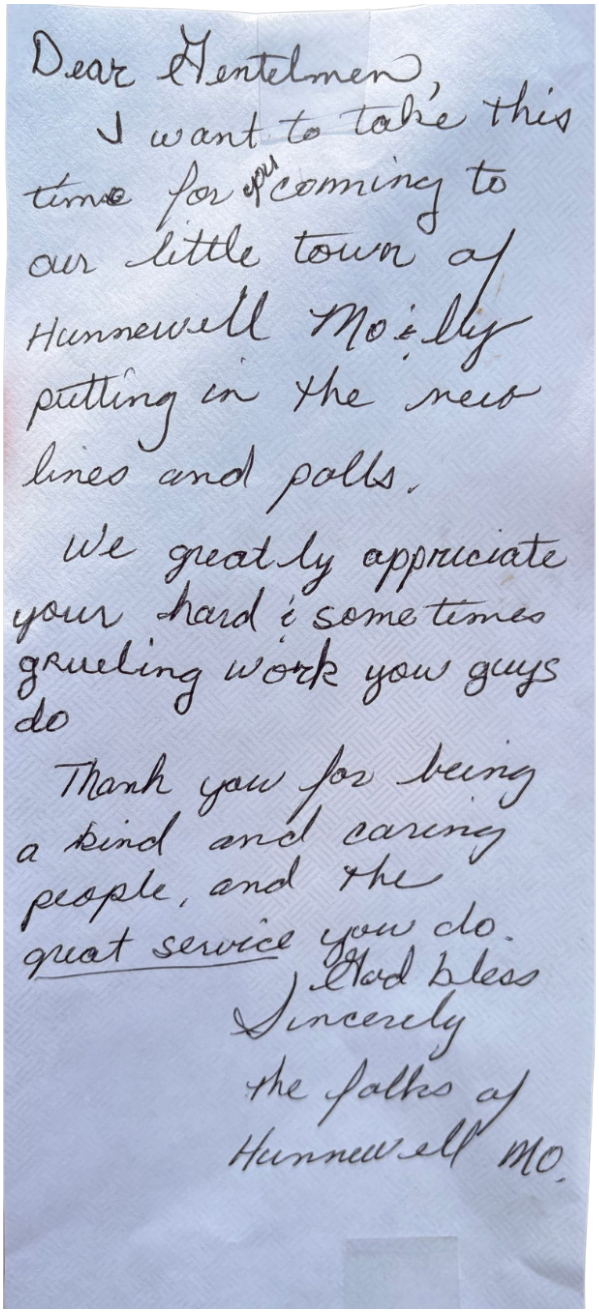
The project also helps the City of Hunnewell maintain ownership of its municipal electric utility.

For MPUA, however, the Hunnewell project is just the start. The goal is to build on the success, helping create a positive impact on communities throughout Missouri. The project will serve as a model for other small communities, showing how grant funding, engineering expertise, skilled utility crews, and local workforce development can work together to help small municipal utilities complete projects they otherwise could not afford.

"This project is a great example of things to come," Petty said. "We definitely like to make sure people hear about this and know that it's something that we can continue to do."






Dear Gentelmen,
I want to take this time for you coming to our little town of Hunnewell Mo. by putting in the new lines and polls.
We greatly appriciate your hard & sometimes grueling work you guys do
Thank you for being a kind and caring people, and the great service you do.
God bless
Sincerely
the folks of Hunnewell MO.

"Dear Gentlemen, I want to take this time [to thank you] for you coming to our little town of Hunnewell, MO and putting in the new lines and poles. We greatly appreciate your hard and sometimes grueling work you guys do. Thank you for being kind and caring people and the great service you do. God bless. Sincerely, The folks of Hunnewell, MO."

Inside the regional grid

The pace of change in the electric industry is accelerating, and at the RTO panel at this year's annual conference, we got the chance to learn firsthand from MISO and SPP about the shifts they're experiencing. From MISO, we heard from Aubrey Johnson, Vice President of System Planning & Competitive Transmission and from SPP, Charles Hendrix, Director of Resource Adequacy & Technical Studies.

When asked about the accelerated pace of change, Johnson noted that the industry already felt fast-moving ten years ago, when it appeared to be changing as much in a decade as it had during the previous fifty years; however, over the past five years, it has moved even faster, changing as much as it had during the previous 100 years. Both RTOs have also experienced a major shift in their Generation Interconnection (GI) queues from renewable generation to thermal generation (which was described as a 180-degree change in the past five years). Hendrix also highlighted projected increases in load, which could approach 70 GW by 2030 (potentially reaching 80-90 GW with data centers), up from a peak of 58 GW after years of minimal load growth.



The rise of data centers throughout the country led FERC to issue Show Cause Orders to each RTO earlier this summer to address integration of large loads and ensure appropriate cost allocation. In response, both RTOs are working on paths for expedited interconnection while maintaining reliability and appropriately allocating costs to the cost causer. New tariff provisions like Conditional High Impact Large Loads (CHILLs), Price Adaptive Loads (PALs), and Zero-Injection Generator Interconnection Agreements (ZGIA) are examples of progress (and RTO alphabet soup).

During this time of flux, grid operators across the country are working on ways to optimize the existing system through Dynamic Line Ratings (DLR) and Ambient Adjusted Ratings (AAR). MISO views the ability to adjust transmission line ratings for more capacity as a tremendous operational opportunity; however, using those ratings for planning remains challenging because planners must account for conditions on the hottest day of the year. SPP is currently focused on the operational use of DLR. Once Transmission Owners (TOs) begin monitoring their lines, they frequently find that existing ratings are too optimistic and that the expected headroom is unavailable. In addition, voltage impacts associated with DLR can reveal previously unknown stability issues.

In addition to deploying DLR and ARR, new transmission needs to be built. SPP's 2026 Integrated Transmission Portfolio includes almost $24 billion in projects to be built in the 2027-2038 timeframe. Average cost impacts for consumers is about $5.50/month for an average bill, offset by a net benefit of lower energy costs of $10.83. MISO's Transmission Expansion Plan represents almost $15 billion in 532 for transmission infrastructure investment projects.

MPUA will continue to monitor these changes and advocate on behalf of our members during the stakeholder process. If your city would like to stay more engaged with RTO activity, you can join our RTO committee meetings and receive our monthly newsletter.

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Congratulations, Alliance Award winners!

MPUA was honored to recognize individuals who go above and beyond to support their communities, organizations, and the people they serve at this year's Alliance Awards luncheon at the MPUA annual conference. Their dedication and impact make our work more effective and rewarding. These people were nominated by their peers to receive these awards, and MPUA is happy to honor these individuals.

Not pictured:
James Chrisco, Kirkwood - Paul Jensen Individual Achievement Award
Curtis Hammons, Fayette - Honor Award



Gregory S. Beavers, Farmington
Tinsley Distinguished Service Award



Sonny Conrow, Fayette
Honor Award



Chad Davis, Rolla
Kincheloe Value of Hometown Utilities Award



Joe Hegendeffer, Independence
Watkins-Whorton Personal Service Award



Cassandra Ludwig, Carthage
Watkins-Whorton Personal Service Award



Marsha McClanahan, Springfield
Honor Award



Ryan Norris, Winona
Watkins-Whorton Personal Service Award



Kelli Nugent, Carthage
Tinsley Distinguished Service Award



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2026 MPUA Lineworker Rodeo

The third annual MPUA Lineworker Rodeo took place in Columbia, Missouri on September 10-11, 2026. Participants from utilities across the state competed in a variety of events, either individually or as a team. Congratulations to all of the winners!



Andy Maxwell - Higginsville
1st Place Apprentice Written Test
3rd Place Apprentice Overall



Keetan Sutesmun - Nixa
1st Place Apprentice Overall



Gage Sulltrop - Columbia
1st Place Apprentice 2 Wire Tie/Untie
2nd Place Apprentice Overall

Not pictured:

Garrett West - Columbia
1st Place Apprentice Hurtman Rescue
1st Place Apprentice Egg Climb
1st Place Apprentice Crossarm Relocate



Justin Harnage - Benton, AR
1st Place Journeyman 2 Wire Tie/Untie



Spencer Barnes - Benton, AR
1st Place Journeyman Overall
1st Place Journeyman Load Transfer







Jonny Neal - Nixa
3rd Place Journeyman Overall
1st Place Journeyman Hurtman Rescue



Noah Smith - Carthage
1st Place Journeyman Egg Climb



Matt Fadler - MPUA
2nd Place Journeyman Overall



Columbia - Team Helms
1st Place Journeyman Team Overall
1st Place Journeyman Team Hurtman
1st Place Journeyman Team 4kV
Crossarm Replacement Rescue
1st Place Journeyman Team Transformer
Replacement



Columbia - Team Severson
2nd Place Journeyman Team Overall
1st Place Journeyman Team Egg Climb





2027 Water and Wastewater Tech Summit



Attend the 2027 Water and Wastewater Tech Summit for three days of practical technical training, key industry updates, and professional networking opportunities. Participants will dive into evolving water and wastewater topics while earning valuable MoDNR certification credit.

Who: Municipal water and wastewater utility professionals

When: Monday, February 8, 2027 – Wednesday, February 10,2027

Where: MPUA Office & Training Center, Columbia, MO

Cost: $150 members, $200 non-members. MoDNR vouchers accepted! Sponsorship opportunities available until filled.

MPUA.org/TechSummit

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