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PUBLIC POWER MAGAZINE

AMERICAN PUBLIC POWER ASSOCIATION



STRATEGY AND PLANNING

Improving emergency response and resilience p. 6

Rethinking power supply planning p. 14

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PUBLIC POWER MAGAZINE

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The American Public Power Association is the voice of not-for-profit, community-owned utilities that power approximately 2,000 towns and cities nationwide. We represent public power before the federal government to protect the interests of the more than 55 million people that public power utilities serve across the United States and its territories. We advise on electricity policy, grid technology and operations, and workforce development in support of safe, modern, and resilient utilities.

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PLOTTING A STRATEGY FOR THE SEA CHANGE IN PUBLIC POWER

BY SCOTT CORWIN, PRESIDENT AND CEO, AMERICAN PUBLIC POWER ASSOCIATION

Change in how electric utilities conduct business, from power supply planning to new technology to risk and compliance, takes as many different forms as the 2,000 community-owned systems across the country. Utilities successfully navigating this change are taking the time to strategically reflect on their priorities and the pathways for ensuring they can continue to offer reliable, affordable services into the future.

As evident in this issue of *Public Power* magazine, utilities engage in many forms of planning. The articles explore examples of how public power providers are planning for resilience and changing risk, technology, power supply, and major events. It also dives into what the strategic planning process looks like in public power (page 22) and what steps lead to an effective plan (page 40).

As our members are undertaking these plans, we at APPA have been engaged in a strategic planning process throughout 2026. Over the next three years, we want to be sure that APPA is poised to serve its members in this transformative time. Our latest strategic plan recognizes both where members aim to be and how APPA can evolve as an organization to offer the support necessary to get there.

APPA's 2027-2029 strategy includes twelve priority initiatives, supported by an extensive set of specific projects and tasks, that describe how we are navigating this sea of change through: (1) shaping policy by growing our national influence; (2) elevating our high value member experiences; and (3) advancing a forward-looking, high-performing organization. The priorities encompass a breadth of activities that will require commitment from our entire staff with

APPA's 2027-2029 Strategic Priorities



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S3. Strengthen Public Power's Voice and Influence



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E2. Expand Learning and Event Experiences

E3. Expand Member Access to Funding and Expertise

E4. Help Build, Develop, and Sustain the Public Power Workforce



support from our board and other member leaders, to achieve the measurable goals set forth. While extensive, these efforts build on the prior strategies we have collectively achieved through earlier plans.

Just as public power utilities are built to ensure community feedback is integrated throughout their planning processes, APPA's strategy grew out of listening sessions and surveys with members. With added input from a dedicated staff team and Board Committee, the plan lays out a path for how APPA can proactively shape the solutions and investments that will enable members in their local service areas to effectively meet the future.

At APPA we work with purpose, driven by our values and mission of empowering community-owned utilities to deliver affordable and reliable power for all. I welcome your continued input as we work to build on our role as an innovator and national leader through change and as an association that helps you realize your plans for your community.



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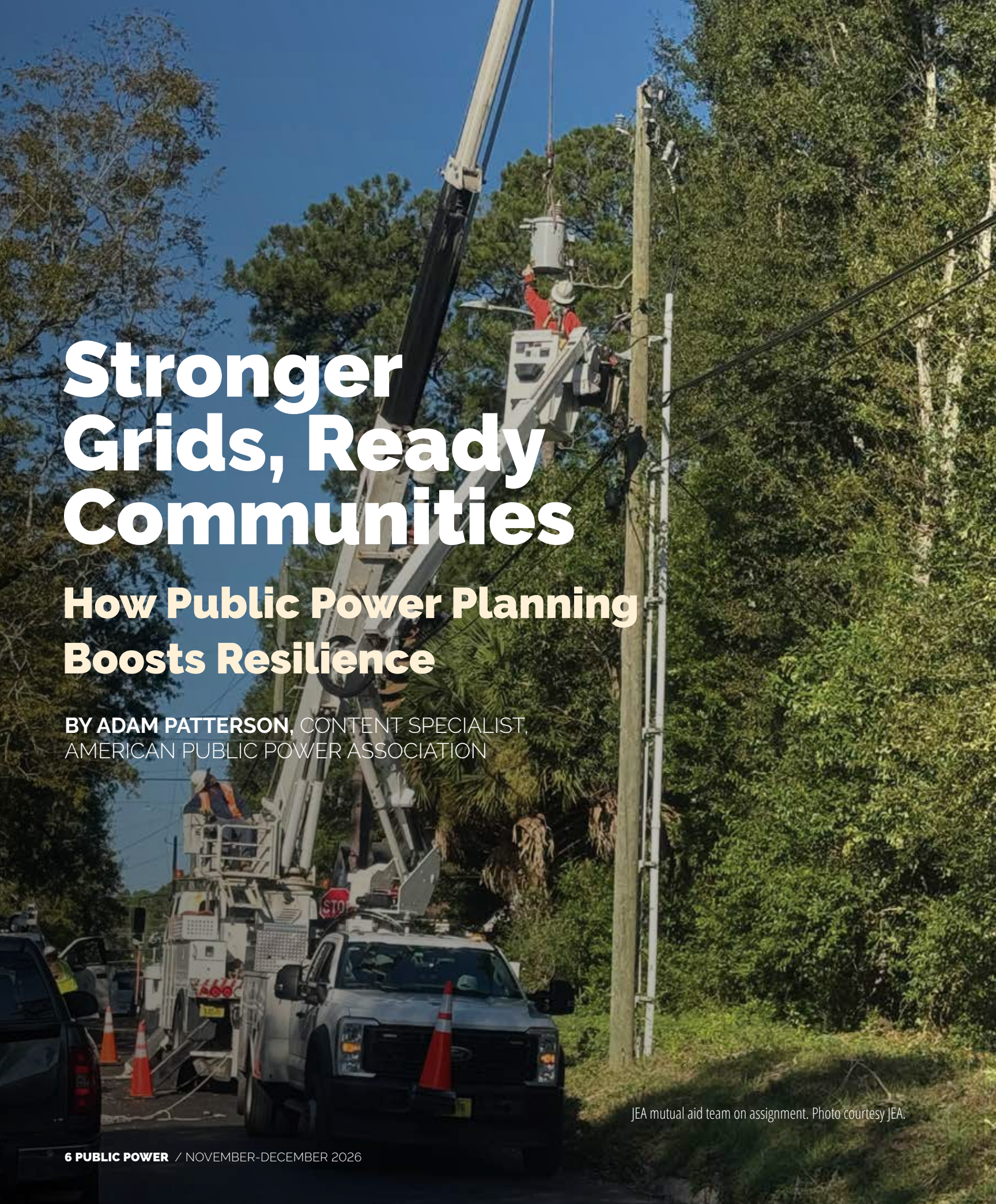
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Stronger Grids, Ready Communities

How Public Power Planning Boosts Resilience

BY ADAM PATTERSON, CONTENT SPECIALIST, AMERICAN PUBLIC POWER ASSOCIATION



JEA mutual aid team on assignment. Photo courtesy JEA.

As communities face increased risk of extreme weather events, emergency response must take a more predictive, rather than purely reactive, form. Utilities are adjusting how they prepare their systems and territories to better withstand, respond, and recover from natural disasters. Resilience planning efforts range from analyzing the array of risks and challenges a utility might face to reinforcing their grids, preparing public educational materials, and coordinating with state and regional organizations.

Preparing the Grid

Unlike cities in other parts of Florida, Jacksonville tends to be spared from more intense hurricane landfalls. However, JEA, Florida's largest public power utility and eighth-largest nationwide, has taken a proactive approach to disaster preparedness.

Adam Pendley, JEA's manager of emergency preparedness, said the utility's work has entailed addressing potential hazards before they become a liability during a hurricane or other disaster, including addressing vulnerability points on power lines, such as vegetation overgrowth.

"Over the past year, more than 1,300 miles of trees have been trimmed back to keep them from interacting with power lines during storms. We're also replacing older utility poles with more up-to-date poles, which has encompassed over 3,300 new utility poles across 300 miles of power lines and 5,900 transformers," he said. "One of the other things we're doing is replacing live front electrical cabinets with the dead-front cabinets for our underground lines, meaning they're fully sealed. It not only helps prevent disruptions during flood situations, but it also keeps the small critters out."

In addition to reinforcing the grid, JEA also oversees a public communications campaign designed to inform customers about storm preparation.

"As storm season approaches, we put together published media designed to keep Jacksonville informed," Pendley said, giving a recent example of a video that showed how to assemble a personal readiness kit.

Even as JEA has integrated updates to its grid and worked to expand partnerships with outside organizations, the utility's approach ultimately centers on ensuring the community comes first in both preparation and response.

"If you're going to open your doors to discuss your plans, make sure you open your doors to everyone in your community that's going to be impacted. Make sure you're talking to them, because anything that's going to affect us is not just going to be a utility problem. It's going to be a community problem," Pendley said.

Preparing the Community

New Bern rests along the North Carolina coast at the confluence of the Trent and Neuse rivers, putting the city and surrounding flatlands at risk of heavy flooding, whether from storm surges or hurricanes.

Hurricane Florence, which made landfall in southern North Carolina in September 2018, produced some of the most devastating flooding in New Bern's history.

Colleen Roberts, public information officer for New Bern, said the city immediately began organizing a study of Hurricane Florence's damage in the aftermath. "The decisionmakers came together so quickly that by February 2019, we had already started creating [a request for proposals] for someone to help us put together a hazard mitigation and resiliency plan."

The city government and utilities mapped out where the storm surge caused the greatest disruption and came up with informed solutions to mitigate the impact of future events.

"Not only did we bring together city leadership, elected officials, and scientists who study stormwater and flood risk in North Carolina, we did robust public outreach. We held public forums and hung maps where people could, for example, put up stickers showing where they live or where their businesses are located," Roberts said.



JEA staff attending a disaster response exercise. Photo courtesy JEA.

She noted that New Bern put together a flood-preparation checklist for the community. "We keep a stack of them upstairs outside the courtroom whenever we have governing board meetings. And we're often refilling them, especially once storm season starts for us."

Roberts outlined that New Bern has also shared information with other coastal communities and national-level partners. For example, in a recent session with representatives from the Federal Reserve in Virginia, she and other colleagues presented what the city went through and how it is preparing for the future.

Since Hurricane Florence, New Bern has installed flood-management devices that help water drain from the city, especially in areas where development has removed natural features (such as wetlands and forests) that would have helped to absorb heavy floodwaters.

"We were able to install a pump that will have an impact on 59 acres surrounding it," Roberts shared. "We can't keep the stormwater from coming in, but now we have a mechanism to help pump it out when that happens."

New Bern also has begun building the support needed to install a broader suite of storm management improvements.

"In fall 2025, voters passed a bond referendum in New Bern that includes $6 million in stormwater improvements. We really feel like we have the buy-in from the public to make these upgrades. … It's going to have a meaningful impact on how we handle runoff and floodwaters in the future," said Roberts.

Roberts recommends cities take a proactive approach to resilience planning.

"I would encourage governments to be more proactive in their messaging and consider making decisions earlier. What becomes more challenging during a storm is telling folks how to evacuate. If you share the most efficient routes in advance, your customers are more reliably able to make their way to safety. It all comes down to knowing what you need to address and getting ahead of that," she said.

A First Step

Like many communities throughout the Front Range of the Rocky Mountains, Loveland, Colorado, is dealing with increasingly severe wildfires. As a result, the city's public power utility has stepped up how it is evaluating wildfire risk and building out its emergency planning efforts.





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City of Loveland Utilities Senior Electrical Engineer Kent Coldsnow said that the utility had "quite a few processes in place" related to wildfire mitigation, but not a formal wildfire mitigation plan, when the Alexander Mountain Fire directly affected some of its infrastructure in 2024.

"We have a wildland-urban interface on the west side of town and winds frequently blowing in. So, we wanted to make sure that we were doing everything we could to reduce the risk … since wildfire threats are year-round now and not just confined to the mountains," he said.

Shortly after the 2024 fire, the utility began working with APPA on its Wildfire Preparedness Plan. (Loveland Utilities took part in a joint effort between APPA and Argonne National Laboratory on wildfire mitigation planning.)

The plan contains immediate resiliency measures as well as post-wildfire evaluation provisions. The resiliency measures include infrastructure upgrades designed to both protect its grid from wildfires and mitigate the grid's risk as an ignition point.

"We are planning to develop a project to install intumescent mesh on poles, which is covered in a black carbon material that when heated forms a shell that protects the pole from wildfire. We're also evaluating current-limiting fuses as an addition to our existing non-expulsion protection, where sparks are contained within the fuse itself, eliminating a possible ignition source," Coldsnow said.

In addition to protecting the poles in the moment, such measures reduce costs associated with replacing damaged poles that run throughout difficult-to-access, rocky terrain, and are an added safety feature for line crews.

Recent wildfires have elevated the budgetary priority of these projects. Coldsnow said the utility will review its wildfire mitigation plan annually to "ensure it's still adequate as new risks emerge and improved equipment becomes available."

For other public power utilities looking to build out their disaster response planning, Coldsnow encourages them to not feel intimidated by the potential scope of the project and to instead focus on taking the first step(s).

"Reducing the risk doesn't have to be a big cost investment. Just taking care of the low-hanging fruit first can build a lot of resilience and helps set the stage for future improvements you might want to make," he said. "With the APPA project, we participated with several other utilities, and some of them were larger and had whole wildfire mitigation-dedicated plans. It was interesting to learn from them and see what they had already implemented."



Aftermath of Colorado's Alexander Mountain Fire. Photo courtesy City of Loveland Utilities.



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Preparing to Collaborate

Sometimes, emergency response entails coordination with entities beyond a utility's service area. As such, planning for coordination activities, such as mutual aid, and fostering ongoing relationships with potential collaborators is critical to emergency preparedness.

New Bern is especially attuned to the resources visiting mutual aid crews need for days of deployment.

"We had to make sure we had enough catering to feed everyone, as well as enough hotel rooms for everyone who came to help. We also needed to have outbreak rooms on hand so people could have a place to come back to and plan. These are all things you need to ensure are in place for the other utilities who show up," said New Bern Director of Public Utilities Charles Bauschard.



Emergency responders in New Bern after Hurricane Florence. Photo courtesy City of New Bern.

Maintaining open lines of communication is key, Bauschard noted, for ensuring affected utilities have the material they need for restoration. "Most of the communities in our region that are responding to mutual aid are all watching the same storm system. And we're all asking each other who has what resources, and whether you need those at home or you can spare some for your neighbors."

As a larger utility with significant resources and ability to help, JEA has worked to build its mutual aid practice, particularly in ensuring the surrounding areas that are affected the most receive the help they need.

"We will get on the road to the first area that might need the help. And if we get there and their impact was not as bad, instead of turning around we divert to the next area that needs help. That's just a good best practice when it comes to municipals helping each other," Pendley said.

Another facet of JEA's emergency preparedness is ongoing collaboration and discussion with other stakeholders both within the city of Jacksonville and in surrounding areas. Regular exercises bring stakeholders from across the area together to game out various emergency scenarios.

"We have an excellent emergency preparedness team that gets us to think through these scenarios. They do training exercises and hold quarterly meetings at the [Jacksonville Emergency Operations Center]," said Myers Vasquez, public information officer at JEA. "We have great relationships with the city of Jacksonville and their emergency preparedness department, and our CEO coordinates with the mayor in informing the public of what's going on so they're getting the information they need."

Pendley noted that JEA makes an effort to incorporate state- and national-level stakeholders within its disaster planning and annual preparedness exercises, and it typically has a representative present from the Florida Division of Emergency Management, among others. In 2025, JEA's exercise included representatives from APPA and the Tillamook People's Utility District in Oregon.

"We always open our doors," Pendley said, "when a partner utility wants to learn from our work."

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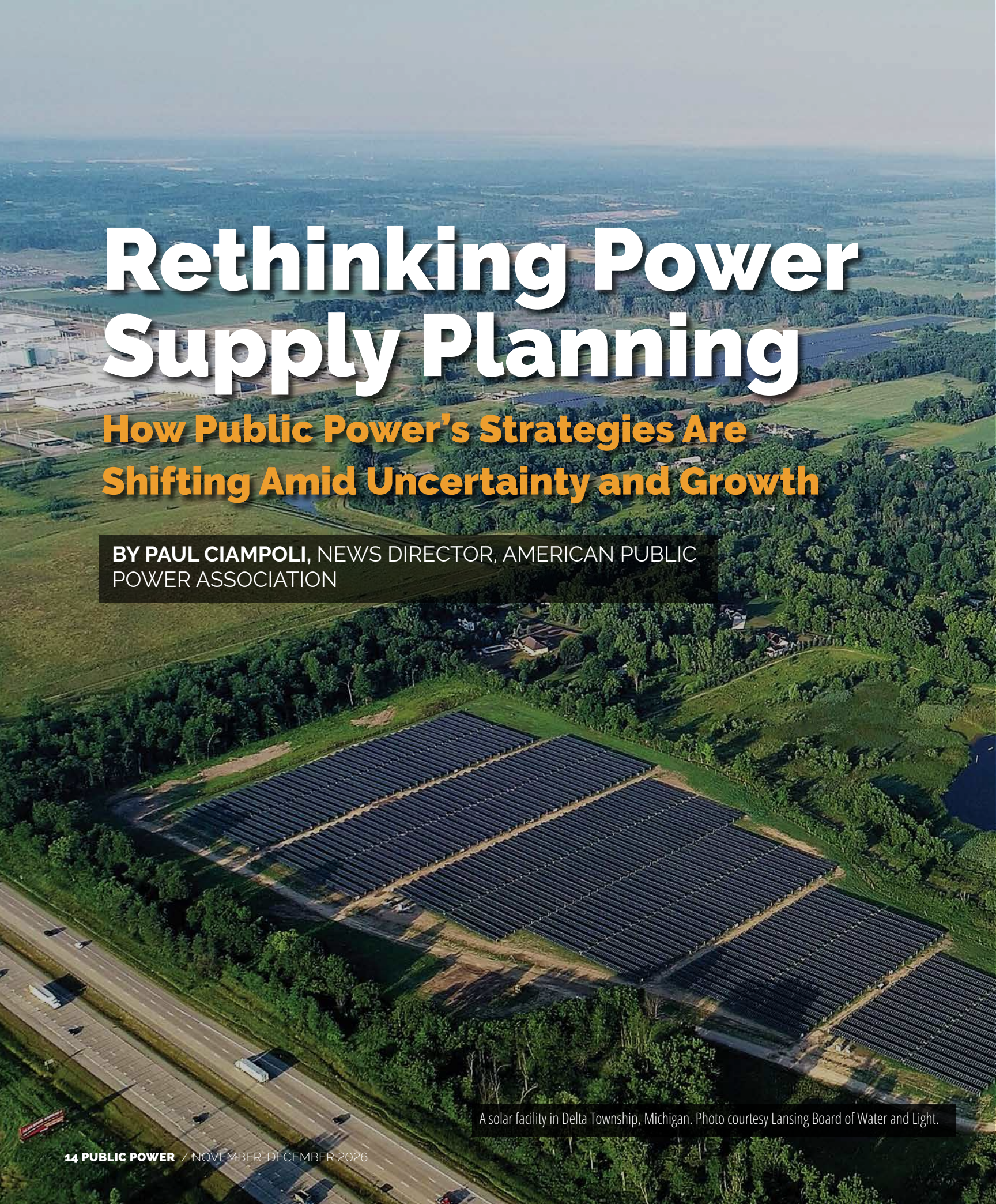
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Rethinking Power Supply Planning

How Public Power's Strategies Are Shifting Amid Uncertainty and Growth

BY PAUL CIAMPOLI, NEWS DIRECTOR, AMERICAN PUBLIC POWER ASSOCIATION



A solar facility in Delta Township, Michigan. Photo courtesy Lansing Board of Water and Light.

When it comes to developing power supply plans, public power utilities are grappling with a series of variables, including the nationwide surge in large loads and data centers. Tackling the uncertainties surrounding power supply planning is leading public power utilities to find fresh approaches, from weighing demand-side solutions alongside generation options to extended scenario planning and customer engagement.

Durable, Flexible Solutions

Salt River Project in Arizona shifted from an integrated resource plan, or IRP, to an integrated system plan, or ISP, in 2023. The ISP approved power system strategies to be implemented between 2025 and 2035.

"The power system as a whole is getting much more dynamic," said Mary Faulk, integrated system planning and support director at SRP.

Faulk said the ISP approach gives utilities "a much more comprehensive way" to evaluate the array of generation and distribution system options.

With an IRP, "you're really thinking about that generation mix only and thinking about what options you can choose to be able to meet that need on the supply side. An integrated system plan, you're looking at a lot of different options to be able to plan that power system holistically," she said.

She also addressed how much flexibility is built into SRP's ISP to account for changes in power supply dynamics. That includes looking at various scenarios "to be able to understand what system solutions or decisions perform well under all of this uncertainty in the future."

With scenario planning, "you're thinking about all these variables that are outside of your control as a utility: load growth, policy, cost," Faulk said.

"What you're looking for are things that stand the test of time and are durable solutions, regardless of a high load growth environment like we're in today, but also if we started to see some retraction in load growth or some slowdown," she noted.

"Not only is it an analytical framework, but we're also trying to understand our customers' sentiments and what they want out of the power system," Faulk said, adding that SRP actively engaged with customers during the ISP development process, including robust customer surveys, focus groups, and an advisory group.

"One of the things that was most beneficial coming out of the ISP was being able to ask customers in a choice-based exercise, 'If you have a power system that looks like this, what would you be willing to pay for?' Or 'If you have constraints with dollars, are you more concerned about spending money to make sure it's reliable versus sustainable?' Having those robust choice exercises allowed us to really get a sense of where customers wanted us to be spending their money," she said.

The ISP was developed with an eye toward helping to minimize the financial impact on customers.

"We looked at levers we could pull besides just building out the system to be able to meet the future needs," Faulk noted, listing energy efficiency and demand response as examples. SRP also analyzed how it sent price signals through its customer programs and time-of-use rates, and the ISP recommended some shifts in the hours and outreach strategies that would deliver customers better value and allow them "to be able to act in a more prudent way."

A Right-Size Horizon

Grant County Public Utility District in Washington adopted its 2026 IRP, which looks out over a 20-year horizon, in late August.

The utility's current power portfolio, combined with anticipated power supply agreements, contracted renewable generation projects, and continued participation in wholesale



energy markets, are expected to provide sufficient energy to serve customers through 2046, it said when commissioners approved the IRP.

Grant PUD Senior Manager of Power Portfolio Strategy Michael Frantz characterized two key aspects of the plan: acquiring the capacity for short-term needs, including building assets that can deliver by 2032, and exploring a path to fulfill a long-term clean energy need.

Frantz said the 2026 IRP places solar as a proxy resource for the latter, as it is currently the least-cost resource for the PUD based on its forecast assumptions.

Grant PUD is "not really comfortable with what our portfolio looks like with a whole bunch of solar, a whole bunch of battery, and obviously our hydro-based resource."

Therefore, Frantz said, the next IRP cycle will focus on exploring alternatives such as small modular reactors, or SMRs, and geothermal energy. The utility is also looking at natural gas generation as an option. That means doing testing and studies that are already underway to get a picture of what's available and what's possible.

This year, commissioners authorized Grant PUD General Manager and CEO John Mertlich to participate in the Mid-C Geothermal Interlocal Cooperative Agreement with Chelan County and Douglas County PUDs. The agreement calls for the PUDs to explore the potential of geothermal energy as an additional source to supplement the utilities' Columbia River dams.

For SMRs, Frantz said the PUD's focus is on understanding the cost risks in such projects so it can build comfort with those technologies ahead of the next cycle.

He also discussed how the PUD's integrated resource planning has evolved over the years to account for changes in power supply dynamics in the U.S.

There is a "chicken-and-egg relationship between load forecast and resource acquisition and the lead times associated with resource acquisition," he said, noting the need "to manage and right-size things over the right planning horizon."

"It used to be energy planning and volumes and being worried about critical water here in the Northwest, and now it's really becoming more of a capacity problem," Frantz said, noting how Grant PUD has become a dual-peaking system (with summer and winter peaks).

In its latest IRP process, Grant PUD needed to adjust its assumptions for its hydropower assets. "We've traditionally

had a strategy of selling off a lot of the surplus attributes to our hydro project," he said, "but given the way things have changed, we're having to retain a lot of those attributes, and that's a big difference for us."

Grant PUD's two Columbia River dams and smaller hydropower projects have a generating capacity of more than 2,100 megawatts. The Priest Rapids and Wanapum dams are collectively known as the Priest Rapids Project.

Frantz also discussed how the utility evaluates power purchase agreements and self-build generation project options as it works to get ahead of load growth and maintain affordable rates.

"Acquiring new resources is a fairly new exercise for Grant," he said. Through a series of contracts, "we've essentially been able to grow into our hydro projects. As we get more load, we were able to access more [of] Priest Rapids."

Grant's last two IRP cycles, 2024 and 2026, have reinforced "the recognition that we need to get new resources," said Frantz.

In 2024, he said, the capacity needs and timelines for fulfilling short-term needs meant PPAs were the only viable option for the PUD. "We just did not have the capabilities to respond ourselves."

With the 2026 cycle, Frantz said, the PUD is looking at some self-build options but still will rely on PPAs for short-term capacity needs. "Our internal interconnection queue is pretty booked up, so for us to insert ourselves into that to develop our own project, we're looking at years and years down the road."

Scenarios and Sensitivities

Lansing Board of Water & Light's 2026 IRP is a 20-year guide for meeting customers' energy needs while complying with the state's clean energy law.

The plan identifies pursuing nearly 1,400 MW of new renewable energy over the next 20 years to help the Michigan

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public power utility achieve its goal to use 100% clean energy by 2040.

In the near term, the utility is going to add proven technology such as solar energy, wind energy, and battery storage with shorter durations, said BWL Director of Strategic Planning Kellee Christensen.

"In the future, we're hoping to utilize new technology such as small modular reactors. We're studying emerging technologies as they come out, like fuel cells, and also keeping an eye on advanced battery storage."

The utility also has a natural gas generation fleet that it will continue to utilize, Christensen noted.

BWL has to be "responsible to stay ahead of growth and make really disciplined decisions as to whether we build something or we sign a PPA … because those costs get allocated differently," she said, with the overall objective to ensure "we're protecting the customer's affordability in the long run."

The utility's approach is to remain flexible in evaluating contract structures, ownership models, and risk allocations, while considering the full cost of each option, including energy and capacity value, transmission and interconnection costs, market exposure, operating costs, and project risk.

Based on customer feedback, the 2026 IRP includes five resource scenarios and four load sensitivities.

Each scenario represents a different package of technologies or a different approach to serving customers in compliance with PA 235, Michigan's clean energy and renewable standard law. Capacity expansion modeling then determines the least-cost way to achieve that goal for each sensitivity.

The reference case involves using currently viable renewable energy and energy storage technologies. The second scenario includes the possible addition of a small modular nuclear reactor and carbon capture and sequestration at current estimated costs. The third scenario includes all compliant technologies and carbon neutrality through the early retirement of the utility's REO Cogeneration Facility in 2040 and the purchase of carbon credits.

Scenario four evaluates a future in which a large wind project, for which BWL has a signed PPA, does not come into service due to interconnection costs, siting delays, or changes in federal policy related to wind energy. "This scenario reflects the uncertainty associated with renewable generation development and interconnection in the current policy environment," the IRP noted.

The fifth scenario is operating BWL's existing baseload generating resources with added storage to meet capacity requirements.

"As far as sensitivities, obviously our first sensitivity is just baseload growth. We look at our region and our economics and what we know is happening with our load growth for a base load case," she said.

The second sensitivity is a large new load of 45 MW.

The third sensitivity considers the possibility of a data center coming into the utility's service territory, a new large load of 500 MW, which would "basically double our actual capacity," Christensen said. The IRP includes a sensitivity tied to a potential data center "because we know there's potential we may end up with one."

"The fourth sensitivity was a high penetration of [electric vehicle] build-out and electrification measures, and we did that because we do have a fairly good penetration of that herein Lansing," she said.

Cultivating Certainty with Large Loads

Christensen said that BWL has had data center proposals, "and each time the energy group has run scenarios on the forecast, both short-term and long-term, on what that would mean to our load."

BWL's experience has been that addressing questions about possible sites and other concerns takes a lot of time and energy from its transmission and distribution engineering staff and its planning staff.

Christensen said the utility has updated and matured its large load process in the last year, including mechanisms to get money from prospective customers upfront. "We updated our interconnection process, and updated our rules and regs, and we're continuing to refine the process next year," to be flexible and to be prepared, she said.

Meanwhile, Grant PUD is focused on developing policies and processes that protect core customers from new large loads. Frantz said this goal is key for both commissioners and PUD leadership and is grouped under a "growth-management strategy" that aims to tie the IRP and the transmission planning and rate process. "All those things have to work in concert to make sure that we can do that."



> **"It used to be energy planning and volumes and being worried about critical water here in the Northwest, and now it's really becoming more of a capacity problem."**
>
> **MICHAEL FRANTZ,** SENIOR MANAGER OF POWER PORTFOLIO STRATEGY, **GRANT PUD,** WASHINGTON

Wanapum Dam. Photo courtesy Grant PUD.

The PUD recently implemented a large load application fee that Frantz said cut the interconnection queue by about half.

Unlike other utilities that saw relatively flat load growth in recent decades, Faulk said SRP has been in a prolonged period of growth.

"We have been building for decades now. We've been in a high load growth scenario in Phoenix since the 1980s, where we saw significant growth. And large customers aren't new to us, either. We've been supporting data center customers for the last decade-plus," she noted.

"What's different today is the scale and the volume of these customers, where we have single customers knocking on our door that would be 20% of our entire system load at one location."

SRP adjusted practices that work well "to scale with the volume as well as the size of the customers. Instead of looking at each customer in a serial process, we adjusted just over a year ago to looking at them as a cluster," Faulk said.

That cluster approach "has allowed us to accelerate and be responsive to all these large customers, but it also allows us to get a lot more certainty faster on which customers are moving forward versus which customers are [still] shopping around," she noted.

One of the things that SRP customers need is "to know how quickly they can connect and what the cost is, so being able to get that information to them as early as possible allows them to make a decision: 'Is this a good project for us? Is this the right location to invest?'"

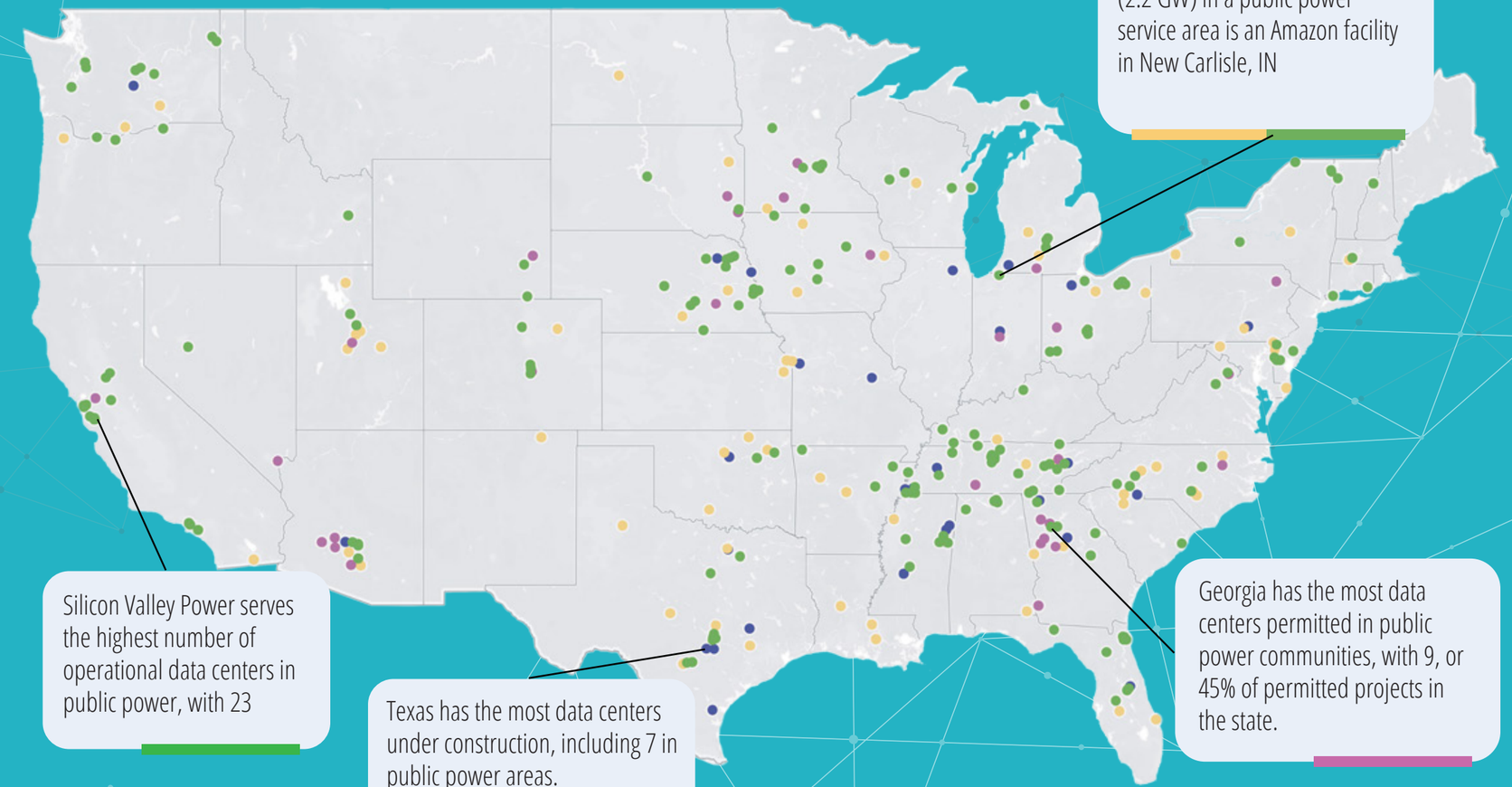
And as SRP shares that information, "we're asking for certainty also. Put up some significant dollars to show that you're serious about this so that we can start making decisions on investing in our system to support your load growth," Faulk said.

When SRP started the cluster process, Faulk said the utility had 24 customers in queue, whose collective demand for energy was close to what its entire system is today.

By the time "we got through this process, we were down to three customers, and it's still a significant amount of load that we're looking at trying to meet. But being able to go through that process has been really helpful to get down to the ones that we know are serious and that are going to be our customers in the long run," she said. Having an adjustable process with some early milestones, "we're essentially walking along with the customer at these different stages."

Where Data Centers Meet Public Power

Across the United States, there are over 950 data centers in operation, including 196 inside 89 unique public power service areas.



The data center reporting* both the highest operational capacity (590 MW) and proposed capacity (2.2 GW) in a public power service area is an Amazon facility in New Carlisle, IN

Silicon Valley Power serves the highest number of operational data centers in public power, with 23

Texas has the most data centers under construction, including 7 in public power areas.

Georgia has the most data centers permitted in public power communities, with 9, or 45% of permitted projects in the state.

Operational · Under construction · Permitted · Proposed

Source: "U.S. Data Center Map & Database", October 2026, Compute Atlas. www.compute-atlas.com/

*Note: Less than half of projects included in the data set had either an operational or proposed capacity figure.

By the Numbers

1 in 5
data centers in operation are in public power areas

16
public power utilities have 4 or more operating within their service territory.

13MW
median capacity*
of data centers in operation in public power areas (compared to 8 MW for data centers operating outside public power areas)

39
of the 250 data centers under construction 16% are in public power areas

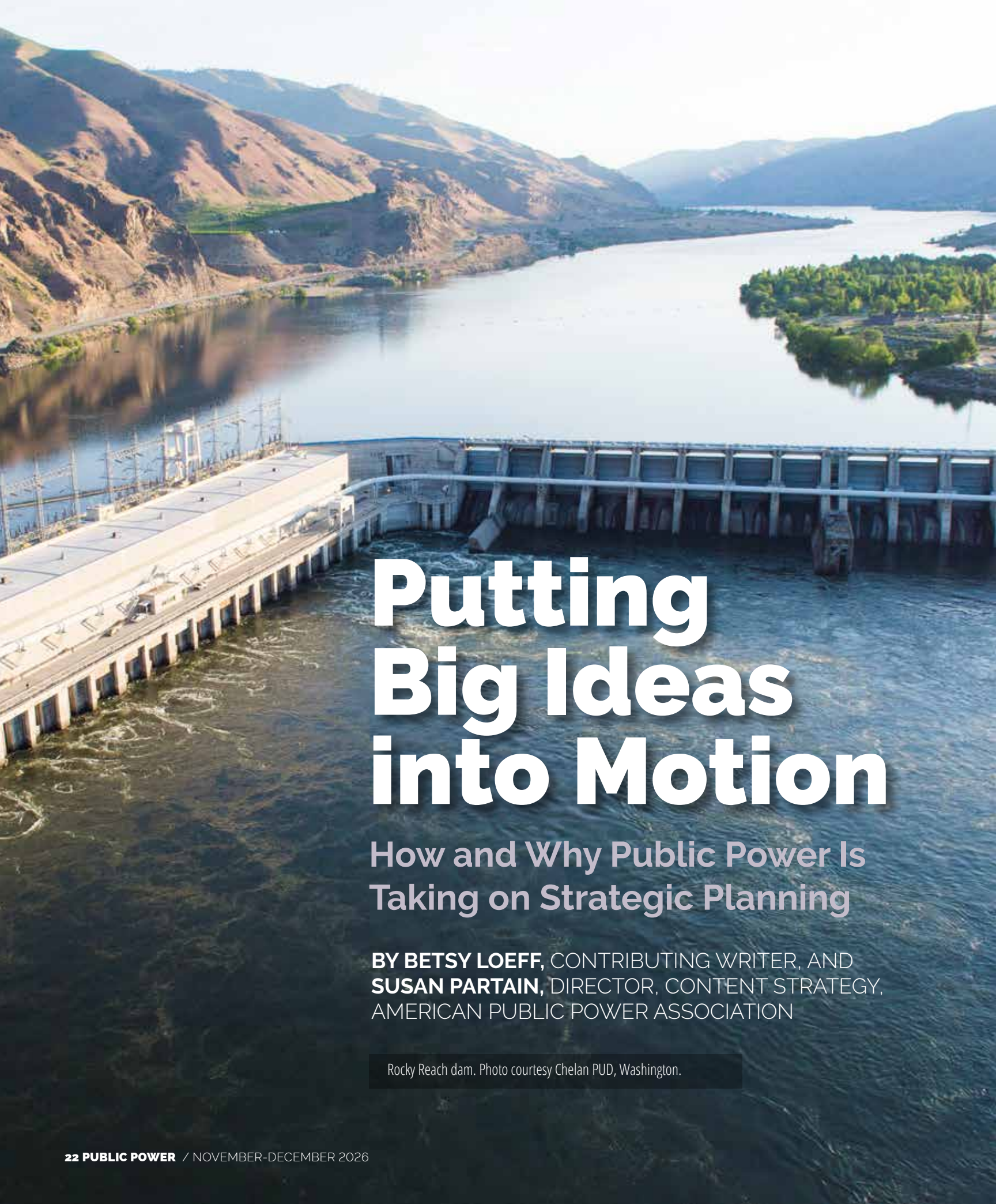
133 of 668
projects either permitted or proposed are in public power service territory (20%).

200MW
median capacity*
of permitted or proposed data centers in public power areas (compared to 300MW for data centers outside public power territory)

6
data centers in public power areas have operational capacities of 100 MW or more, and

61
data centers under construction, permitted, or proposed in public power areas expect to have operational capacities of 100 MW or more.

18%
of data centers proposed in public power areas have planned capacities of 500MW or greater, compared to 45% of proposed data centers outside public power service territories.



Putting Big Ideas into Motion

How and Why Public Power Is Taking on Strategic Planning

BY BETSY LOEFF, CONTRIBUTING WRITER, AND
SUSAN PARTAIN, DIRECTOR, CONTENT STRATEGY,
AMERICAN PUBLIC POWER ASSOCIATION

Rocky Reach dam. Photo courtesy Chelan PUD, Washington.



Amid a whirlwind of change and growth in the industry, public power utilities and other entities are setting distinct strategic plans that reaffirm their visions and lay a path for fulfilling key goals. Such planning requires a bigger-picture viewpoint than the typical utility planning processes used to guide operations. In developing strategy, whether long-term or short-term, utilities explore trends, aspirations, and expectations to shape priorities for years to come.

Changing Direction

For the Bonneville Power Administration, one of the federal power marketing administrations under the Department of Energy, updating its strategic plan was seen as an essential step for its new administrator, Travis Kavulla, to set expectations and align with the policies of the presidential administration.

Kavulla began as administrator in June 2026 and released BPA's updated strategic plan for 2026–2030 in late August. The revised plan updated three strategic goals in particular: grow the grid, increase productivity, and protect ratepayers.

"It's a personal mission of mine to make sure we put meat on that bone and fully explain what those concepts mean," said Kavulla, who added that the strategic plan details what those concepts mean in tangible terms for the ratepayers in the Pacific Northwest.

The plan to grow the grid would entail a significant turnaround for BPA. Kavulla harkened back to BPA's early days, when the efforts to electrify the region led to robust, fast-moving development that supported rural prosperity, production for World War II, and industrialization. After the grand scale of development in its first decades, he said, the pace slowed down significantly, adding about 3,500 miles of 500-kilovolt circuit lines in the 1960s and 1970s and fewer than 500 miles since the 1990s.

"Getting Bonneville off of pause and growing the grid is an imperative that I have heard from nearly every single customer of Bonneville, be they preference customers or our other transmission customers," Kavulla added.

He said BPA has already made strides in ramping up construction and development, including forming a contractor pool and drawing up transmission plans. The transmission plans would add 10 gigawatts of transmission capacity to the regional grid, supporting new generators and large load customers alike.

Another key area of focus of BPA's plan is increased productivity, which Kavulla said is about making more efficient use of the capital assets in which it has already invested. He sees this focus as particularly pertinent to other public power utilities.

"This is really a place where public power should be able to shine," said Kavulla. "In IOU world, the moment that dollar in capital is spent, there's really no incentive to increase the



> **"Bonneville really prides itself on stakeholder input and decision making … and that only works if those customers bring their best efforts and contribute."**
>
> **TRAVIS KAVULLA,** ADMINISTRATOR,
> **BONNEVILLE POWER ADMINISTRATION**

productivity of the capital asset that you've purchased, whereas public power has the opposite incentive of wanting to keep rates low and to stretch out a capital asset as much as possible."

Engaging Stakeholders

"During the past 20 years, I think we've seen more change in the electric power industry than we've seen in its entire history," said Sam Choi, director of strategy and planning for Orlando Utilities Commission in Florida.

"The volume and velocity of change are increasing exponentially, and we think that's going to continue," said Kirk Hudson, general manager of Chelan County PUD in north-central Washington state. "Our typical strategic planning process served us well at the rate of change during the time we needed it. Now, change is happening so fast, we have to change how we plan for the future."

The public utility district has a strategic vision covering the next 50 years, while Orlando Utilities Commission made its plan look 10 years ahead.

Both Chelan and OUC started by looking at trends.

"What defines a trend?" Choi asked. "These are not singular events. These aren't even sporadic signals: They're clear directional forces that we're seeing across the industry."

OUC created a list of 25 trends, then tapped 120 organizational leaders to score the trends' levels of impact and uncertainty. In the end, the utility identified 10 key drivers of change in the electric and water industry, which it used to focus the next steps in the process. Chelan also started with a list of trends and had community leaders, employees, and the broader community weigh in on their relative importance via an online survey.

Choi noted that OUC rolled out its 10-year plan to all employees through a series of meetings and train-the-trainer events with supervisors, giving the utility a chance to align the front line with organizational goals.

"We engaged all stakeholders to get their feedback," Chelan Commission President Kelly Allen said. "In that process, it became very clear that being good stewards for future generations is important."

Commission Secretary Steve McKenna said utility leadership adopted a quote from medical researcher Jonas Salk to guide much of their thinking: "Our greatest responsibility is to be good ancestors."

Both McKenna and Hudson point to their utility predecessors who had the foresight to leverage 50-year contracts for the power output of dams they built as generation resources for the PUD. "We asked the same question: 'How do we become good ancestors for the people of the future?'" McKenna said, adding that this question underpinned the planning process.

As for the trends exercise, the two utilities had very similar lists by the time they whittled down their trends to factors they wanted to address. Load growth, extreme weather, cybersecurity, water scarcity, and artificial intelligence made both lists. Chelan

also included increasing storage demand, wildfires, and new generation options for a more diversified portfolio on its list of 12 items to keep in mind, while OUC noted interest rates, emission regulations, supply chain issues, environmental consciousness, and changing workforce culture in its 10-trend list.

One aspect of BPA's updated plan is to maintain status as a provider of choice for public power. Kavulla strongly affirmed BPA's philosophy of not establishing mandatory full requirements agreements with customers, in part so there is a shared commitment between BPA and its preference customers "to fully subscribe the federal hydro resources of the Columbia River."

"I believe our customers should be able to choose their own supplier and do what's right for them and engage in innovative relationships around supply," he said.

Kavulla said that serving incremental needs beyond BPA's hydro resources has involved a system of purchases from the wholesale markets. The strategic plan lays out resource acquisition plans that he expects will provide more rate stability and certainty for its customers.

For utilities within BPA's footprint, Kavulla encouraged customers to read the plan so that they can hold BPA accountable for the activities and vision it lays out. "Bonneville really prides itself on stakeholder input and decision making … and that only works if those customers bring their best efforts and contribute."

He specifically invited customers to provide input on decisions regarding how BPA will go about its strategy of protecting ratepayers, citing a question on whether the agency should expect equity contributions from customers or lean more into debt to finance its growth activities.

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> **"Hopefully, strategic planning is getting more prominence. It's a muscle that all utilities can develop and grow."**
>
> **SAM CHOI,** DIRECTOR OF STRATEGY AND PLANNING, **ORLANDO UTILITIES COMMISSION,** FLORIDA

Imagining the Future

Both Chelan and OUC are targeting more partnership with the community, resiliency, workforce excellence, and sustainability of their power and water.

Strategic foresight is a systematic approach to exploring a variety of conceivable futures. "It's used to anticipate different possibilities that could unfold, look over the horizon, and plan against potential blind spots," Choi said.

For OUC, developing strategic foresight meant creating dramatic scenarios for the strategic team to work through. Scenario planners paired extreme weather events with supply chain issues to get the utility's team looking at what would happen if both conditions occurred simultaneously, damaging large transformers and other equipment that couldn't be replaced quickly.

Chelan PUD hired a futurist to help "stretch our thinking beyond the typical five- to 10-year horizon," Hudson said. As a hydro-based utility, Chelan's worst-case scenario would be losing its dams and hydropower. After putting that possibility on the table, the utility is exploring other generation options, including geothermal and fusion, Allen said.

One reason fusion is on the table is that it checks the box on one of the nine directives the long-term planning team wound up creating. Called Vision 2075, the directives include "harnessing the power frontier" by leveraging clean energy sources.

Hudson said the long-term strategy in Vision 2075 prompted the utility's interest in fusion. "When we looked out 50 years, we asked ourselves, 'What could possibly be as affordable or even less expensive than hydropower?'" he explained. "The only thing we could see out there was fusion."

The Chelan PUD commission also approved the purchase of 5,000 acres of land to support the utility in exploring new generation resources.

For its part, to identify projects to tackle first, OUC "went through a capability gap analysis across the entire business, covering everything from human resources to procurement and grid operations," Choi said. "That helped us drive what we identified as key strategic initiatives to close the largest gaps."

Among OUC's strategy-driven projects are grid modernization and hardening efforts. These include undergrounding lines, upgrading its energy management system, and adding automated reclosers. "All of that falls under improving our resiliency," Choi said.

Flexibility and Accountability

Both Chelan and OUC have woven flexibility into their strategic plans. McKenna explained Chelan PUD's strategic directives as "broad policies that are priorities" based on feedback from the community and utility staff. "We developed a set of directives that give some guidance to the organization as well as an amazing amount of flexibility to the utility."

One way the utility enables flexibility is by reviewing the trends its plan is built upon each year. "We've just put that review on our cycle," Hudson said. "It gives us the opportunity to refresh that strategic plan on an annual basis should something change significantly."

OUC also reviews its 10-year plan annually. Choi said planners check whether initiatives still align with where the utility should be investing or whether it's time to reallocate efforts and funds.

For BPA, Kavulla stressed the importance of accountability.

The plan is "an instrument of accountability. You should be able to look back at the strategic plan in four years' time and compare it to what Bonneville has accomplished and measure my success accordingly," he said. "The strategic plan is really a call to action for every single employee to be accountable for the momentum that we need to achieve. It should be something to empower people all the way down the line working at Bonneville to question stagnation or bureaucratic processes that



Dave Kirtley of Helion giving a community presentation. Photo courtesy Chelan PUD.

would hinder their momentum" toward the strategic goals.

He said someone at BPA has ownership over each goal, and those goals are factored into scorecards and performance indicators for senior executives and their team members.

Open for Innovation

Beyond providing direction, the strategy creation process can bring other benefits. Allen said the utility-wide focus on pioneering new generation resources has empowered Chelan PUD staff "to be innovative within their own team sets." As an example, a team of employees went to the board to spur a new IT initiative. "They walked us around a day in the life of how the IT systems don't work together," she explained. "Now, we're undergoing a large overhaul of our integrated resources, but the innovation we're seeing happen is also on the molecular level within our organization."

Meanwhile, McKenna said the board is free to become more strategic and leave day-to-day solutions to utility staff. "We have much more time with our executive leadership team and more time at staff meetings to talk and listen to people."

"The strategic plan should have a clear vision, but enough humility to know when it hasn't necessarily nailed down the precise answer on a particular question," Kavulla said.

"Having a capable and cohesive strategy is very important for utilities," said Choi. "Hopefully, strategic planning is getting more prominence. It's a muscle that all utilities can develop and grow."

From Reactive to Strategic: Building a Technology Roadmap for Your Utility

BY LUMI KOJCINI, SENIOR DIRECTOR, INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY, AND
RAYMOND LEWIS, IT MANAGER, AMERICAN PUBLIC POWER ASSOCIATION

Technology deployment often starts with simple questions: Is it time to replace our aging outage management system? How do we improve reporting? Should we explore artificial intelligence applications?

Each decision may be justified on its own; the challenge is determining which investments should take priority, which capabilities must precede others, and how technology decisions will support the utility's broader mission.

As utilities become more dependent on technology, decisions about business systems, operations, customer service, cybersecurity, and workforce productivity can no longer be made in isolation. Without a plan, organizations can find themselves managing disconnected systems, competing priorities, redundant applications, and growing complexity.

More than a project list, a technology and data roadmap connects technology decisions to business objectives, operational needs, customer expectations, and organizational priorities. The American Public Power Association developed its three-year technology roadmap in 2025 to align technology investments and capabilities with the association's strategic plan.



Start with the Current State

Before evaluating future technologies, utilities need an understanding of their existing environment, including business and operational systems, infrastructure, data, integrations, processes, staffing, and vendor relationships. Electric Power Research Institute's Digital Transformation Framework recommends utilities catalog current digital assets and assess the organization before developing initiatives and foundational investments. This work can reveal redundant applications, aging platforms, manual processes, integration gaps, and data quality issues.



Focus on Outcomes, Not Products

One of the most common planning mistakes is to center around a solution instead of the problem. Rather than asking, "What technology should we buy?" leaders should ask, "What are we trying to accomplish?"

If the ultimate goal is to improve reliability or enhance customer service, then technology should be evaluated according to how effectively it supports that goal. For public power, technology is an enabler of reliability, resilience, sustainability, or customer service rather than an end in itself.



Define the Future State

A roadmap will define where the utility wants to go over the next three to five years. The purpose is not to predict every project, but to define the capabilities the utility will need and determine the investments required to achieve them. EPRI's Information and Communication Technology Roadmap describes a similar process: Define future states, assess gaps in capabilities, and create sequenced action plans.



Make Data Part of the Strategy

Outage response, engineering analysis, financial reporting, customer service, asset management, and AI use all depend on accurate, accessible, and trustworthy data. Yet critical data often reside in multiple systems, follow inconsistent standards, or lack clear ownership and governance. An effective roadmap addresses governance, data ownership, quality, integration, access, and lifecycle management alongside system investments.



Consider Both IT and OT

Utility planning must include information technology and operational technology. IT supports finance, human resources, customer service, communications, and business operations. OT includes systems directly involved in delivering electricity, such as advanced metering infrastructure, outage management, SCADA, and distribution automation.

Historically, these environments were often planned separately. Today, they are increasingly connected through shared data, integrations, analytics, and business processes. A successful roadmap recognizes these dependencies and considers interoperability, support requirements, and investment timing across both environments.

Prioritize and Sequence Investments

Most utilities have more worthwhile projects than they have available budget, staff, or time. A roadmap helps utility leaders compare initiatives based on business value, operational impact, customer benefits, resource requirements, organizational readiness, risk, and dependencies.

Not every initiative belongs in the next budget cycle. Foundational systems, data, integrations, and processes might need to be strengthened before advanced capabilities can succeed. Public power utilities such as Northern Wasco County Public Utility District in Oregon and Traverse City Light & Power in Michigan use scoring to establish priorities.

Make It an Enterprise Effort

Technology planning is an enterprise-wide effort, not an IT-only exercise. Operations, engineering, finance, customer service, communications, executive leadership, and other stakeholders all bring perspectives. Their participation improves the roadmap, builds support, and identifies changes to processes, roles, and skills that technology alone cannot solve.

Keep the Roadmap Current

A roadmap is not a one-time exercise. Technology, customer expectations, regulations, workforce needs, and utility priorities will continue to evolve. Regular reviews allow leaders to reassess priorities, adjust timelines, measure progress, and incorporate new opportunities.

Public power utilities have long recognized the importance of planning for substations, distribution systems, and other physical infrastructure. Technology and data deserve the same discipline. A well-developed roadmap moves the utility beyond reacting to individual requests and toward coordinated investments that improve reliability, customer service, operations, and readiness for the future.

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ELECTRIC CUSTOMERS: **3,101A**
UTILITY FORMED: **1910A**
UTILITY EMPLOYEES: **8A**

One of New England's earliest incorporated towns, Rowley was founded in 1635 along Massachusetts' North Shore by a group of English Puritan families within the broader Massachusetts Bay Colony. During the Revolutionary War, volunteers from the town, known as the Rowley Minute Men, fought in notable events including the Battle of Bunker Hill.

Over the centuries of its existence, the town has balanced embracing its history with supporting a vibrant civic life. Rowley residents voted overwhelmingly to establish a municipal lighting system in the early 1900s, with Rowley Municipal Light Plant formally founded in 1910. It had just 32 electric customers in its first year of operation. Over the following decades, Rowley built out and strengthened its electric system, especially after a period of rapid population growth and local development in the 1980s.

The public power utility strives to uphold both exceptional service quality and strong community ties.

"One of the best parts of Rowley is that small-town feel of neighbor helping neighbor," said RMLP General Manager Matt Brown. "Whether it's a residential homeowner or a business owner in town, you really do get to know people. You're out here every day grabbing a coffee, you're grabbing lunch, you're supporting their business. You're aware of what's going on in town, and there's a sense of commitment and responsibility to help the people who you've come to know."

Brown said RMLP employees are attuned to and take great pride in being able to provide high-quality service with a high level of connection to the community, which he expressed was possible with public power. "When you work for an [investor-owned utility], you don't have that sense of community and responsibility because you might live 50 minutes away and not even know anyone who lives in town."

These values have also informed RMLP's attentiveness around system improvements and investments in the town's grid.

"Any money we make, we put back into our system, which we're constantly updating. If we see something that's a potential problem, it gets addressed quickly," he said.

For its accomplishments, RMLP has been recognized by APPA with a 2025 Certificate of Excellence in Reliability and was designated as a Smart Energy Provider in 2025.

RMLP staff members are closely involved with community events, which Brown described as a year-round commitment. "The line crew sets up the flags on Memorial Day, July Fourth, and Veterans Day. They decorate the [Rowley Town] Common



Rowley lineworkers on assignment. Photo courtesy RMLP.



with Christmas lights every year and are there for the Girl Scouts' tree-lighting ceremony. They also help the highway department load the sanders into the trucks in wintertime."

RMLP also publishes a quarterly newsletter as part of its community engagement and outreach efforts.

RMLP is looking to continue building out its distribution infrastructure to improve system reliability, with Brown noting the utility is on track to complete a major substation upgrade by the close of 2026. The utility is also working to replace its remaining copper wire with Hendrix tree wire. These grid buildouts are designed to get ahead of increasing electrification and customer adoption of solar.

Like other public power utilities throughout Massachusetts' North Shore, RMLP is also looking to meet the benchmarks laid out in the state's 2025 Decarbonization Roadmap, and it recently secured a power purchase agreement to source affordable energy from FirstLight hydroelectric.

Brown emphasized that this level of accomplishment wouldn't have been possible without the dedication from RMLP's staff and commissioners.

"For a small, local utility like us, it really comes down to the quality of the people. They're the reason we are where we are today," he said.

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Welcoming the World

How Public Power Prepared for Hosting the 2026 FIFA World Cup

BY SUSAN PARTAIN, DIRECTOR, CONTENT STRATEGY, AMERICAN PUBLIC POWER ASSOCIATION

June 19, 2026, was a big day for Seattle — it was a holiday, three cruise ships were coming into its port, and the city was hosting the U.S. Men's National Soccer Team for its second match in the 2026 FIFA World Cup, against Australia. Well beyond the stadium, enthusiasm and a celebratory atmosphere infused the numerous watch parties, fan zones, transit system, parks, and downtown businesses.

Amid all this activity, Seattle City Light was prepared.

Starting Early

Phil Ambrose, strategic capital programs manager at Seattle City Light, said the initial coordination calls began in 2024, and the robust coordination effort ramped up starting in June 2025. Even before then, Ambrose said, City Light recognized the scope of the planning needed for the 2026 World Cup after the city hosted the MLB All-Star Game in 2023.

For City Light, prepping for the World Cup meant taking a close look at its system and potential needs, including around Lumen Field and critical sites such as fan zones and improved lighting at points of interest. Ambrose said that assessment and planning focused on identifying what feeders it needed to reconductor, completing substation condition assessments, and circuit breaker maintenance to increase reliability.

A follow-up summary for Seattle noted that serving as a World Cup host city was one of the largest collaborative efforts in Washington state's history, bringing more than 400 organizations into the planning and delivery effort.

Underpinning the success of all this planning was a public power utility delivering on its long-standing promise to its



The Seattle waterfront during the 2026 FIFA World Cup. Photo by Anthony May Photography.

community: to deliver safe, high-quality, uninterrupted service.

While Seattle has hosted major events before, Ambrose said the scale this time was different, most notably because it was a monthlong event. An estimated 1.2 million people traveled to the city, many from abroad, which meant they were likely staying in the city for two or three days before and after the game they were attending. And unlike concerts or single sporting events, the activity was not concentrated at the stadium but included many concurrent events across the city. There also was the pressure that came with having billions of people across the world watching the broadcasts.

One major leg up for the city-owned utility: Not having to start from scratch on how to coordinate with other municipal authorities.

"For us, that wasn't as much of a struggle, because we are part of one structure," Ambrose said. "Compared to the discussions we had with [investor-owned utilities], we had regular discussions with permitting folks, with inspections ... we really functioned as a unified team."

Throughout the event, City Light stood up its incident management team, following a structure similar to its storm response, to coordinate with the office of emergency management.

Ambrose said the City Light team — along with city departments including transportation and emergency management — coordinated to move around and prioritize maintenance schedules to minimize effects on visitors and fans. The city also imposed a moratorium on construction activities during the World Cup.

"We always have ongoing work improving our system," Ambrose said. "We had to make decisions about prioritizing to get things done before [the World Cup] or having to push it to right after. We had to be deliberate on what work we could pause and what work could proceed during the moratorium." In some cases, that meant planning out windows between matches when certain work could proceed.

The goal of these efforts was to "ensure that our system was operating as normally as possible," Ambrose said. While the system saw some high demand, which was expected, there were no disruptions in service throughout the event.

"Except for the first match day, June 15, peak load during the World Cup was comparable to typical demand in June and July



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>
> **PHILIP AMBROSE,** STRATEGIC CAPITAL PROGRAMS MANAGER, **SEATTLE CITY LIGHT,** WASHINGTON

in non-event years. And the June 15 spike was primarily driven by near-record temperatures rather than World Cup activity," shared Kate Jacobs, media relations manager for Seattle City Light.

While by all measures the coordination was a success, Ambrose reflected that it would have been helpful to have started the planning and coordination even earlier.

"We didn't have any significant outages, lighting, or security issues, but … if we had more time, it would have allowed us to complete other improvements earlier."

Importantly, the efforts were not just for the event, but advanced Seattle's strategic priority to improve its long-term reliability.

"FIFA provided a really good way for us to see that we can accomplish a lot when we really focus on a certain event … that also supports our long-term goals," Ambrose added.



Seattle City Light crews completing some reliability upgrades in Pioneer Square. Photo courtesy Seattle City Light.

A Foundation for Success

For the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power, the 2026 World Cup preparations were a warmup for the 2028 Olympics. That's in part because the central stadium for the FIFA matches is served by the neighboring IOU, while the Olympics will use venues primarily within LADWP's territory. The eight World Cup matches hosted in Los Angeles brought teams from 12 countries across 28 days, whereas the Olympics

and Paralympics will involve athletes and fans from 180 countries over 68 days.

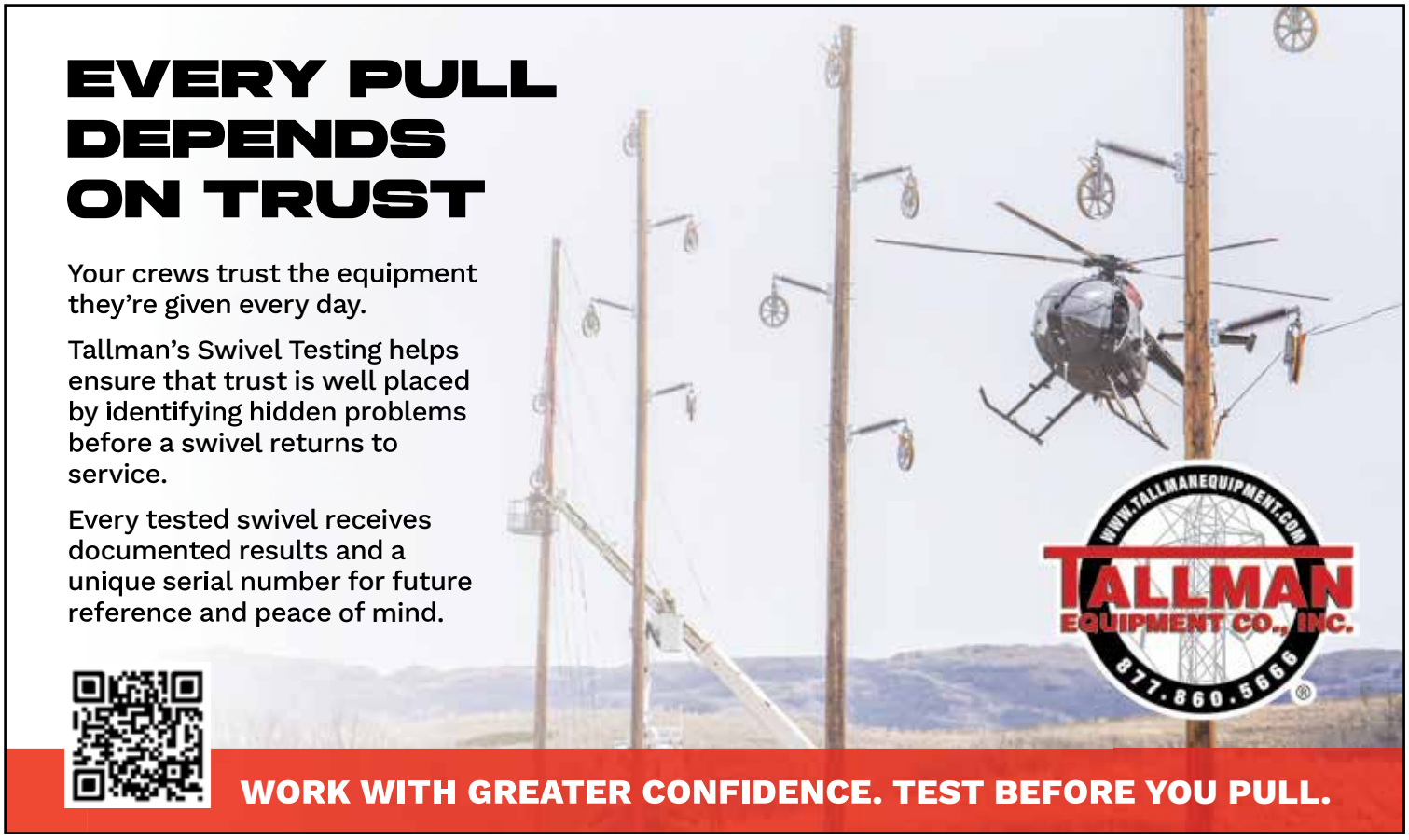
"We were very deliberate about leveraging the World Cup as a stress test of preparedness in order to expose any vulnerabilities and afford us plenty of lead time to make necessary corrections or modifications as we head into the Olympics," said Chief Resiliency and Emergency Officer Zoraya Oliver-Griffin.

While the city didn't have to develop new venues to host the World Cup, LADWP did ensure critical sites had adequate infrastructure, including creating utility-sponsored hydration stations.

"While Southern California Edison supported the actual delivery of power to [SoFi Stadium], we supported events occurring within the city," Oliver-Griffin said. These included hosting the U.S. Soccer House, concerts, park events, fan zones, and other simultaneous occasions.

"As soon as we were made aware of those locations, our preparedness planning began, because we are a foundational piece of the city's success," she said. That meant ensuring accurate forecasting to plan power delivery and prioritizing system improvements to support reliability, including upgrading and replacing aging equipment. The utility developed a specific special-event plan that detailed everyone's roles, responsibilities, and expectations across the organization. LADWP also ran stress tests for different demand scenarios and its cybersecurity response capabilities.

Upholding its part of the planning was "relatively easy for us because we do the same thing that we do every single day, which is go above and beyond and have a very high level of commitment to provide reliable water and power service to our customers and to the Olympic venues already in existence," she added.



"It takes attention by personnel from across the organization coming together to be very deliberate in our support of major initiatives."

ZORAYA OLIVER-GRIFFIN, CHIEF RESILIENCY AND EMERGENCY OFFICER,
LOS ANGELES DEPARTMENT OF WATER AND POWER, CALIFORNIA



Zoraya Oliver-Griffin speaking at an Olympics-related event. Photo courtesy LADWP.

Community ownership of the utility is also an advantage.

"Being one of the largest departments within the city does give you an advantage because you're already part of the city family. We are well-versed in each other's capabilities because we are collectively engaged in so many other aspects of overall city management and response," Oliver-Griffin said.

Like Seattle, LADWP took part in World Cup coordination calls that began as quarterly meetings, then monthly meetings, and ramped up to daily briefings during the event. LADWP activated its emergency operations center throughout the event and had a response team monitoring the system. Oliver-Griffin said the team consisted of representatives from across the organization, including power, water, communications, security, logistics, and customer service.

"We treated our response as though it was an emergency for us, where it's all hands on deck, and we had representatives from our major business lines ready to go," she said.

In addition to FIFA coordination, Oliver-Griffin said the mayor created an Office of Major Events to prepare for both the World Cup and the Olympics. The office focuses on alignment and awareness across city departments of the potential challenges or changes related to planned activities. Oliver-Griffin said the coordination helped ensure LADWP and the other entities involved "danced in sequence" throughout the event.

"Every day, everyone understood what the plan and the risks were going to be," she said. "We all understood who, and how, we would be partnering with should anything happen and there were clear lines of communication."

While planning helped LADWP be prepared for the coordinated events, the team had not anticipated the volume of pop-up events that occurred during the World Cup. Having a rapid response team and a stock of emergency supplies in its warehouse helped LADWP adjust to quickly meet the needs

for those events and gave the utility a better sense of how it will need to scale up accordingly for 2028.

Looking ahead, Oliver-Griffin said LADWP has expanded and accelerated its goals to identify and address system strengthening to its distribution system, substations, transmission system, and generation infrastructure to not only support the Olympics, but to advance the city's goal of transitioning to 100% clean energy.

While Oliver-Griffin leads the team responsible for event coordination, she said successfully planning for a major event requires everyone across the utility to be on board. "It cannot be executed effectively with only a program management office. It takes attention by personnel from across the organization coming together to be very deliberate in our support of major initiatives."

Capturing Lessons

Silicon Valley Power, which provides electric service for the city of Santa Clara, California, also focused on planning ahead of major events at Levi's Stadium (called "San Francisco Bay Area Stadium" for the World Cup) in 2026, including six World Cup games and Super Bowl LX in February.

Like Los Angeles and Seattle, Santa Clara has a long history of supporting major events. Still, SVP said the 2026 events "introduced a substantially different level of complexity, particularly because of their international significance, heightened security requirements, and the involvement of multiple federal agencies."

SVP's preparation began in early 2024 and included comprehensive infrastructure inspections and testing, physical and cybersecurity enhancements, development of contingency and recovery plans, and coordination of emergency response procedures. SVP also invested in significant upgrades to its security camera and monitoring infrastructure, working in coordination with the Santa Clara Police Department to strengthen protection of critical utility assets.

"The objective was to identify potential vulnerabilities in advance and establish clear procedures for responding to a range of operating scenarios," SVP Director Nico Procos said.

The effort required extensive coordination across nearly every aspect of SVP's organization, including utility operations, transmission and distribution, substations, communications, cybersecurity, and administration. SVP also worked closely with city emergency management, stadium representatives, neighboring utilities, and other regional partners.

SVP has been taking on unprecedented electric system growth, including major transmission, substation, and distribution infrastructure investments. "One of the most important management challenges was sequencing and prioritizing construction, maintenance, and operational activities to ensure that critical projects continued progressing while maintaining the necessary resources and system configurations to support the events," Procos said.

For each World Cup match, approximately 24 SVP employees were part of an incident command team that offered event support and response to potential electrical system disturbances.

"The first World Cup match required a level of coordination and execution similar to Super Bowl LX. As the tournament progressed, our teams became increasingly familiar with their assignments, communication protocols, and operational responsibilities. This allowed SVP to refine its execution and improve efficiency with each successive match," said Procos.

The utility took lessons from the event coordination and created a comprehensive, repeatable preparedness and response program structure for major special events. Some key takeaways for SVP include involving law enforcement and security agencies early on for threat awareness and operational planning, and to build the relationships essential for information sharing.

"I want to recognize the extraordinary commitment of the SVP team and our partners. Their preparation began long before the first game, and they balanced the demands of these international events with their daily responsibility to serve Santa Clara. I am deeply grateful for their professionalism, dedication, and teamwork," Procos said.

"Being a public power utility means our responsibility extends well beyond the stadium," added Procos. "While supporting an internationally significant event is important, our primary obligation remains providing safe and reliable electric service to Santa Clara's residents, businesses, and critical facilities. This required us to approach event planning from a broader community perspective, ensuring that the additional resources and attention devoted to the stadium did not compromise our ability to serve the rest of the city."

Public Power Leaders: **Kevin Maynard**

Kevin Maynard has spent more than 40 years in public power, serving at public power utilities throughout Ohio, Michigan, and Minnesota before joining American Municipal Power in Ohio in 2026. Maynard holds a Bachelor of Science in business administration from Defiance College and an Associate of Applied Science in electromechanical engineering from Northwest Technical College. He received the American Public Power Association's 2026 James D. Donovan Individual Achievement Award in recognition of his career accomplishments.



WHAT BROUGHT YOU TO YOUR CAREER IN PUBLIC POWER?

I was looking for jobs to help me through school when I was pursuing my associate degree in electromechanical engineering, and I saw an ad for a part-time engineering aide at the city of Bryan, Ohio, Municipal Light and Water Utilities. I worked that job through completing my degree, then they brought me on full time, starting in the water department. I stayed there for 17 years, working my way up to eventually becoming the director of utilities. I've worked in six municipal systems since across Ohio, Michigan, and Minnesota, bringing my time in public power to over 40 years.

IS THERE A PHILOSOPHY THAT HAS DEFINED YOUR LEADERSHIP IN PUBLIC POWER?

Over the course of my career, I increasingly came to understand the importance of both mentorship and building support networks. When I started with the city of Marshall, Michigan, the city didn't have an active relationship with AMP, APPA, or any other agencies that could be helpful to it. I really focused on building those connections so the people I worked with could access the knowledge and assistance they needed.

WHAT PROJECTS ARE YOU PROUDEST OF HAVING COMPLETED WITH THE CITY OF MARSHALL?

I wanted to make sure we were making best use of the assets we already had. Marshall has a small municipal power plant with dual-fuel reciprocating engines that had fallen out of use. Early in my tenure, the power plant operators came to me and said, "We believe this plant has value, but we don't know how to determine what that value is. Can you help us understand that?" We started by talking about capacity in [the Midcontinent Independent System Operator] and what the value of the plant was, and that its generating units avoided $60,000 to $70,000 a month in capacity costs. We got the plant operating reliably and began running the units when MISO hourly market prices exceeded their variable fuel and operating expenses, reducing costs for local electric consumers. We also returned a small hydroelectric unit to service at the cost of only $35,000, which provided a sizable return on investment. The city hydroelectric project went from 550,000 kWh generated in 2021 to 1.4 million kWh generated in 2025, providing emission-free renewable energy, renewable energy credits and capacity credit.

We also oversaw improvements on the reliability side. After conducting a pole condition assessment, we identified more than 200 poles in need of replacement. We set a goal to replace 70 poles a year so [the replacements] would be done within just three years. When electric department staff understood how faulty poles could impact reliability and costs, they started to take a more proactive approach to their work. That's what I really aimed for with my leadership approach — empowering our team to get ahead of potential problems and feel like they could make the best use of the assets we already had. It created a great sense of ownership with tangible results.

HOW DID BUILDING A STRONGER RELATIONSHIP WITH AMP BENEFIT THE CITY OF MARSHALL?

Marshall worked with AMP to install four 2.5-megawatt natural gas reciprocating engines. AMP suggested the utility needed to get additional capacity from MISO. So, we started looking inward, and, in our case, Marshall already had about 10 MW of generation from its reinvigorated power plant, but its average monthly peak was around 20 MW. The new reciprocating engines closed that gap. AMP controls those assets for Marshall from its Energy Control Center in Columbus, watches MISO market prices and operates the units remotely. The power sales revenue that Marshall is getting from those assets is predicted to reduce the effective cost of those units from $12 per kilowatt-month to $4 per kilowatt-month, which is about half of what the capacity market is here.

It's been a huge benefit for affordability. Marshall had its lowest monthly power bill in January 2026 at only 4.5 cents per kilowatt-hour, when we would normally pay about 7.5 cents per kilowatt-hour. Because of the power plant and those new engines, the utility was able to offset what would otherwise have been the high cost of winter power. Marshall is also now working with AMP and the Michigan South Central Power Agency on installing a 10.5-MW solar array in town in partnership with Madison Energy Infrastructure.

WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING TO ACHIEVE IN YOUR NEW ROLE AT AMP?

It's not easy to operate a municipal utility system. And it's even harder to be a village administrator in charge of police, fire, parks, streets, as well as water, wastewater, and electric utilities all at the same time. What I am endeavoring to do is go out and understand what issues our members have through face-to-face meetings so we can provide the knowledge and support they need. I'm focused much more on listening and understanding the lay of the land before making larger strategic decisions, which I've found throughout my career has been one of the most effective approaches to public power leadership.

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8 STEPS IN THE STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

Building and executing an effective strategic plan in public power entails eight critical steps that help your utility achieve long-term goals in a way that includes the community and other key stakeholders.

SETTING THE STAGE

1 BOARD COMMISSIONING

Ensure that all stakeholders — including employees and your governing body — agree to develop a strategic plan and on the approach to accomplish it.

2 DEFINE A VISION, MISSION, AND VALUES

Clearly state what your utility aims to achieve long-term, the general means in which you intend to get there, and the principles that guide how your work is conducted.

3 OUTLINE CUSTOMER NEEDS AND EXPECTATIONS

Lay out what the range of community stakeholders need and expect from your utility's services.

4 CONDUCT A SWOT ANALYSIS

Identify what your utility excels at, where you can improve performance, what gives your utility a competitive advantage, and what risks could harm or undermine the utility or community's success.

DEFINING THE PLAN

5 SET STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Define clear areas that your organization will focus on to help advance toward your goals.

6 ESTABLISH STRATEGIC DIRECTION

Describe the desired outcome for each strategic priority.

7 DETERMINE FIRM GOALS

Identify how you will measure and report on your strategic plan's success in real terms, including how outcomes will directly impact different stakeholders.

8 CREATE AN ACTION PLAN

Define a path to follow that tracks progress in executing the plan and sets expectations and accountability for who is implementing its components.



Learn more in Strategic Planning in Public Power: Creating a Guide to Enduring Success.

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