

State Utility Regulators Tour Coal and Carbon Capture Infrastructure in Wyoming

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The National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners (NARUC) hosted a site visit in Gillette, Wyoming, on June 26 to 28, 2024. Ten commissioners and commission staff representing seven states joined a series of tours of coal and carbon capture, utilization, and storage (CCUS) infrastructure in the Gillette area and participated in discussions with subject matter experts and local leaders. The event was made possible by the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE), Office of Fossil Energy and Carbon Management's Coal Modernization and Carbon Management Partnership with NARUC.

Participants arrived in Gillette on June 26. The following morning, the group toured Dry Fork Station, a coal-fired power plant owned by Basin Electric Power Cooperative (Basin Electric). Dry Fork began producing power in 2011 and is one of the newest coal plants in the country, running at 405 megawatts (MW) net power. The plant manager provided a safety briefing and plant overview followed by a walking tour of the site. Participants spoke to a Basin Electric staff member running the plant's control room about how Dry Fork functions in the regional electricity market, including changing output levels in response to load and availability of intermittent renewable generation. Dry Fork is fueled by a nearby non-profit mine and is often the lowest-cost coal plant in the U.S.

Campbell County Commissioner Jim Ford presented to the group regarding two projects co-located with Dry Fork: Wyoming's CarbonSAFE project and the Integrated Test Center. The former is a DOE-funded project with the goal of commercializing a large-scale CCUS project at the site. DOE is funding three other regional CarbonSAFE projects around the country. The Integrated Test Center is a test facility offering 20 MW of flue gas from Dry Fork Station to carbon capture researchers, offering them the chance to demonstrate how capture methods function on an operating coal plant.

Mark Lux of Black Hills Energy (BHE) discussed a partnership with technology firm Babcock & Wilcox to convert coal into clean hydrogen with carbon capture at BHE's Neil Simpson Complex. Mark also shared BHE's perspectives on state and federal policies and regulations affecting the energy sector, particularly coal production and the coal power fleet.

Former Campbell County commissioner Rusty Bell discussed the role of coal in economic development in northeast Wyoming. His presentation highlighted economic growth

prospects related to reclamation done on land used for coal mining, federal funding opportunities through the Interagency Working Group on Coal and Power Plant Communities and Economic Revitalization, and growth in oil and gas development and uranium mining. Bell also provided an overview of the supply chain for advanced nuclear reactors such as the Sodium reactor being constructed at a former coal plant across the state in Kemmerer, Wyoming.



State public utility commissioners and commission staff on a platform at the Navajo Transitional Energy Company's Cordero Rojo mine where they viewed a scheduled blast.

On June 28, the group toured Navajo Transitional Energy Company's Cordero Rojo mine, located south of Gillette. The mine employs over 200 full-time employees and produces between 6 and 13 million tons of coal annually. Commissioners and staff stepped into a mining bucket and, from a safe distance, viewed a scheduled blast loosening coal for removal.

To learn more about the DOE-NARUC Coal Modernization and Carbon Management Partnership, please visit <https://www.naruc.org/core-sectors/electricity-energy/coal-and-carbon-management/>.