2020 ACTIVITIES REPORT

Wisconsin Public Utility Institute
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN–MADISON

CELEBRATING OVER 35 YEARS OF SERVICE
A NOTE FROM OUR DIRECTOR

The Wisconsin Public Utility Institute (WPUI) is an educational outreach organization within the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Founded in 1982, the mission of WPUI is to advance understanding and discussion of relevant industry topics and emerging trends in the electric, natural gas, and water industries. The activities of WPUI follow the Wisconsin Idea of applying the resources of the University to meet the need for information outside of the University’s boundaries. WPUI provides programs and forums through nonpartisan formats that promote the exchange, creation, integration, transfer, and application of knowledge.

WPUI, along with every single other organization, business, school, and individual, went through and is still reeling from the impacts brought about by the unprecedented, in our lifetime, pandemic caused by Covid-19. Due to the pandemic, we quickly converted to online-only programming. We desperately miss holding programs in person, and we know you feel that loss as well. However, a significant benefit of online-only programming has been our ability to involve speakers that we would not otherwise have been able to tap due to travel and cost constraints. The absence of those same constraints has also meant that we have seen an increase in the number of attendees from outside the upper Midwest. In addition, we were able to substantially lower registration costs for our multi-day programs as well as provide single-day options to the multi-day programs. Regardless of when we can meet again in person, we will continue to offer an online option for our programs.

Although WPUI is an officially sanctioned UW-Madison Institute, it is completely self-funded, relying solely on membership fees and program registration fees. Additionally, WPUI is governed by an outside board of directors which is structured to represent WPUI’s membership. The board’s priorities are to ensure WPUI’s financial well-being and continuity of operations as well as to maintain and enhance WPUI’s role as a facilitator and leader of discussion about the utility of the future. We again saw several changes to the board’s makeup this year, including the retirement of our longest-serving board member and outgoing board chair Brian Rude (Dairyland Power Cooperative). The board prepared for these changes through its succession planning efforts which led to a smooth transition to incoming board chair Jordan Hemaidan (Michael Best and Friedrich) and vice chair Sarah Justus (American Transmission Company) and to the welcoming of several new board members. Because of the board’s active involvement and leadership, WPUI is built on success and continues to thrive.

WPUI’s 2020 programs were all based on feedback from members, and many of the speakers were from member organizations. WPUI would not exist without its members, and we are pleased to provide this opportunity to members. In 2021, we will maintain our emphasis on creating programs centered on member input. In addition, WPUI will continue to place heavy emphasis on engaging speakers from member organizations.

To our member organizations: THANK YOU!! WPUI is able to provide this programming only because of your organization’s support and input. Those who attend our programs greatly benefit from your guidance and feedback. If your organization would like to become a member, we would welcome your participation and involvement with WPUI programming.

Learn about WPUI’s programming at wpui.wisc.edu

Sincerely,
Lori Sakk
Director
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Economic Overview Regarding the Energy Industry (02.21.2020) - A member-only opportunity to hear from a UW-Madison economics professor on the utility industry’s economic outlook for 2020.

Public Utilities Law Update (03.04.2020) - Update on notable regulatory and legal cases, statutes, and administrative code provisions impacting practitioners in the energy and water arenas.

Natural Gas (03.25.2020) - Examination of the state of the natural gas industry at the national, regional, and state levels, as well as an examination of what the future looks like for natural gas and whether natural gas is still considered to be a bridge to a clean-energy future.

Regional Transmission Organization Fundamentals: Background, Purpose, Future (April/May 2020) - Comprehensive overview of regional transmission organizations in North America, how and why RTOs were created, what their many functions are today, how transmission planning is conducted, how resource adequacy is managed, how the system maintains operational reliability, and how financial markets operate.

Emerging Technologies (09.08.2020) - Discussion of continued evolution of emerging technologies in the energy industry, how and whether those technologies are reaching consumers, and what needs to be done better.

Energy Utility Basics (Sept/Oct 2020) - WPUI’s annual intensive course on the history of the utility industry and the fundamental concepts critical to being conversant in the industry today.

Water Affordability (10.21.2020) - Assessment of what the term “water affordability” means and discussion of options for addressing affordability concerns and steps for a potential path forward.
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2020 WPUI MEMBERS

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- Wisconsin Electric Cooperative Association
- Wisconsin Industrial Energy Group
- Wisconsin State Legislature

Learn about WPUI’s programming at wpui.wisc.edu

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Report Design
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2021 PROGRAM PREVIEW

Member-only Event – Utility Economic Outlook for 2021 (Early 2021) - Economic overview regarding macro trends in the energy industry.

Public Utilities Law Update (03.03.2021) - Notable regulatory and legal cases, statutes, and administrative code provisions impacting practitioners in the energy and water arenas.

Energy Storage (03.16.2021) - Discussion of current issues related to energy storage.

Regional Transmission Organization Fundamentals: Background, Purpose, Future (April 2021) - Comprehensive overview of regional transmission organizations in North America, how and why RTOs were created, what their many functions are today, how transmission planning is conducted, how resource adequacy is managed, how the system maintains operational reliability, and how financial markets operate.

Emerging Technologies (06.29.2021) - Update on status of new and emerging technologies in the energy industry.

Edison Electric Institute Electric Rates Advanced Course (July 2021) - Advanced rate design principles and examples of new rate options.


Energy Utility Basics (October 2021) - Intensive course on fundamental concepts critical to being conversant in today’s energy industry.

Water (10.19.2021) - Examination and discussion of pressing issues in the water industry.

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