

# PSC DEPARTMENT DIGEST

Nebraska Public Service Commission  
March 2023  
Edition 15 /Volume 15

## BEAD Planning Process On Track

The Nebraska Public Service Commission continues to work to meet federal deadlines for the Broadband Equity, Access and Deployment (BEAD) Program.

In November, the State of Nebraska was approved initial BEAD planning funds from the National Telecommunications Information Association (NTIA). Since that time, the PSC's Telecommunications and Administrative departments have been focused on meeting milestones to help ensure the state is best positioned to deploy broadband to unserved areas of the state.

One of the major milestones is the completion of a five-year action plan. Due in August, the action plan must provide a clear, specific picture of Nebraska's vision for broadband deployment and digital equity. It must contain goals that have achievable outcomes, and objectives that are specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and time based.

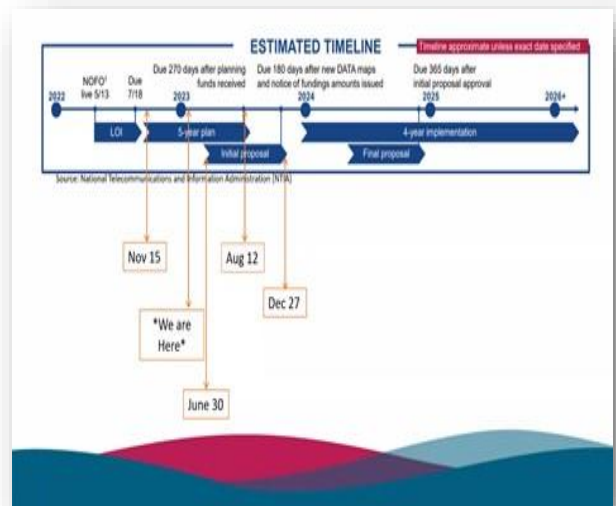
*"The five-year plan will present Nebraska's vision for broadband deployment and digital equity," said Cullen Robbins, Dir. PSC Telecommunications/ NUSF Department. "Where the state is now, where it wants to be and how it will get there."*

The goals and objectives of the five-year plan are meant to focus on the digital divide, and address:

- Deployment
- Economic growth & job creation
- Access
- Adoption
- Affordability
- Digital Equity

The BEAD funding announcement from the NTIA is expected in June. The minimum amount the state will receive is \$100 million dollars, with some estimates projecting two to three times that amount in total BEAD funding

For more on BEAD planning underway by the PSC view the 3<sup>rd</sup> in a series of BEAD webinars on the PSC YouTube channel @ <https://youtu.be/r50aUyal2eY>



# Applications Received for Capital Projects Fund Grants

130 applications have been received by the PSC for the 2023 Capital Projects Fund grant cycle.

Up to \$80 million in CPF grant funding is available in Congressional Districts one and three, with up to \$40 million available for eligible broadband projects in each district.

A list of applications received can be found on the [NBBP/Capital Projects Fund](#) page of the PSC website.

As part of the grant process, the PSC will now review the applications and any challenges received, before making a final determination.

CPF grants will be awarded the end of June.



## PSC's Top Telecommunications Expert Honored With NARUC's Ray Baum Award

The director of the PSC's Telecommunications/NUSF Department, Cullen Robbins, is the recipient of the National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners (NARUC) 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Ray Baum Award.

Created to honor the memory of Ray Baum a long-time member of NARUC, the go-to staffer on the House Energy and Commerce Committee and a nationally recognized expert in utility law, the award is given to a staff member of the NARUC Staff Subcommittee on Telecommunications who best reflects Baum's initiative and drive toward public service.

Commissioner Tim Schram, PSC Vice Chair said, "I can't think of anyone more deserving of this honor than Cullen. Not only has he proven to be vital to the Commissions efforts to bring advanced telecommunications and broadband services to Nebraska, on a national level he has played a key role in helping to create some of the most advanced communications policies in the country."

Robbins was presented the award by NARUC President Michael Caron, of Connecticut, during the NARUC 2023 Winter Policy Summit in Washington D.C.



**Cullen Robbins Receives Ray Baum Award from NARUC Pres. Michael Caron**



## PSC Presents on Broadband Funding at NARUC

A panel discussion on Broadband Funding, Offices and Coordination with the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) during 2023 NARUC Winter Policy Summit in D.C., had a Nebraska Flare.

Moderated by PSC District 3 Commissioner Tim Schram. The panel also featured PSC Director of Telecommunications/NUSF Cullen Robbins. They joined three other panelists to provide information and answer questions on the topic during a break-out session of the Committee on Telecommunications.

Commissioner Schram, acting Chair of the committee also sponsored two resolution for consideration. Resolution TC-1 Encourages the FCC to act to ensure federal support provided to success bidders in the Rural Development Opportunity Fund Auction 904 is retained for support in any jurisdiction where a successful bidder is disqualified by the FCC.

Resolution TC-2 would support further extension of the FCC's Spectrum Auction authority with a portion of auction proceeds to fund both the FCC "Rip and Replace" program and accelerate deployment of Next Generation 911 (NG911) systems.



## Knutson Returns as Broadband Attorney

Shana Knutson has returned to the PSC as its new Broadband Attorney. Knutson is familiar to both industry and organizations that come before the Commission having served as the PSC's General Counsel and Deputy Director from 2000-to-2021.

"Shana is a top regulatory law attorney with an extensive background in telecommunications issues," said Executive Director Tom Golden. "We are extremely fortunate to have Shana back with our PSC team."

Knutson will work primarily with the Broadband Equity, Access and Deployment (BEAD) and Capital Projects Fund (CPF) grant programs.



**Shana Knutson-  
Broadband Attorney**

# PSC Welcomes New Employees

Human Resources Generalist Erica Garcia joins the PSC after spending two years with human resources at the Nebraska Department of Correctional Services.

Raised in Grand Island, she has a bachelor's degree in Child, Youth, and Family (CYAF) Studies from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

Recently engaged, Erica and her fiancé Thomas plan to marry in 2024.

In her spare time, she enjoys baking, likes to read, and play video, board and card games with family.

After spending 10 years working in nonprofit community development, Rachael Surmick joins the PSC as the new Broadband Outreach Coordinator, in the Telecommunications Department.

She holds a B.A. from Gettysburg College and a Master of Public Management Degree from Carnegie Mellon University and is involved in various community groups.

Originally from Pennsylvania, Rachel moved to Lincoln in 2018. She is married to Eli and in her spare time, plays the clarinet with a local community concert band, watches too much television and takes advantage of Lincoln's extensive trail system.



**Erica Garcia**  
Human Resources Generalist



**Rachael Surmick**  
Broadband Outreach Coordinator

## Choice Gas Program Selection Process Reminder

The Natural Gas Department is reminding residential and commercial customers living in Black Hills Energy rate Area 5, that it is time to make your Consumer Choice Program supplier selection.

During the selection period (April 6 -26), Nebraska Choice Gas customers are given the opportunity to choose a third-party supplier to provide their natural gas. Consumers in areas served by the program should be receiving information from providers to help them make an informed choice on which company they would like to be their supplier.

Additional information on the Consumer Choice Program can be found under the Natural Gas tab of the PSC website @ <https://psc.nebraska.gov/natural-gas/consumer-choice-program>



### Nebraska Consumer Choice Gas Program

Nebraska residential and commercial customers that reside in Black Hills Energy's Rate Area 5 may choose a 3<sup>rd</sup> party supplier to supply their natural gas. The 3<sup>rd</sup> party suppliers are called Certified Natural Gas Providers (CNGPs).

#### Things you should know about the Consumer Choice Gas Program

- ✓ Not all natural gas customers are eligible to participate in the Choice Gas Program, only those that reside in certain areas of the state. If you are unsure whether you qualify, please contact Black Hills Energy at 1-877-245-2506.
- ✓ CNGPs must be certified by the Nebraska Public Service Commission (NPSC) to participate in the Choice Gas Program. For a list of certified CNGPs, please visit the NPSC website at <https://psc.nebraska.gov/natural-gas/participating-choice-suppliers>
- ✓ CNGPs only supply the natural gas commodity to your home or residence. Black Hills Energy as your utility and local distribution company, delivers your natural gas, reads your meter, bills your account, and handles emergencies. You are also billed by Black Hills Energy for delivery service and fixed customer charges. Black Hills Energy's role in serving you will not change, regardless of what CNGP you choose to supply your natural gas.
- ✓ Your bill from Black Hills Energy will also include the charges from your CNGP. You only pay one bill and Black Hills pays your CNGP.

## PSC Assesses Civil Penalty Against Florida Household Goods Mover

A more than \$7,000 civil penalty assessed a Florida household goods mover, comes with a reminder for citizens, check the PSC website to make sure the company you're hiring is licensed to provide moving services within Nebraska.

The [PSC levied the penalty against Confidant Movers, LLC, of Aventura, Florida](#) for providing intrastate household moving services without a Nebraska license (Neb. Rev. Stat. §75-303.03 and 75-307).

An online broker was used to hire the Florida company to provide moving services from Omaha to Crawford, both locations in Nebraska. The Commission's Transportation Department was alerted to the problem following an informal complaint from the person who retained the movers. The move ended up costing the resident more than double the agree upon price.

A formal complaint, and hearing followed, with the Florida company failing to appear. Confidant Movers, LLC, has 30 days to pay the penalty, or a collection order could be filed by the state. The fine if collected will go to the state school fund.

A list of household goods movers licensed to provide intrastate moving services can be found on the PSC website @ < <https://psc.nebraska.gov/transportation/household->goods-movers-licensees> >.

## Home & Outdoor Recreation Shows Prove Busy Time for PSC Housing/RV Department

It's a mid-winter treat, an opportunity for Nebraskans to see what's new and exciting in-home improvements and outdoor recreation through a series of shows at multiple venues across the state.

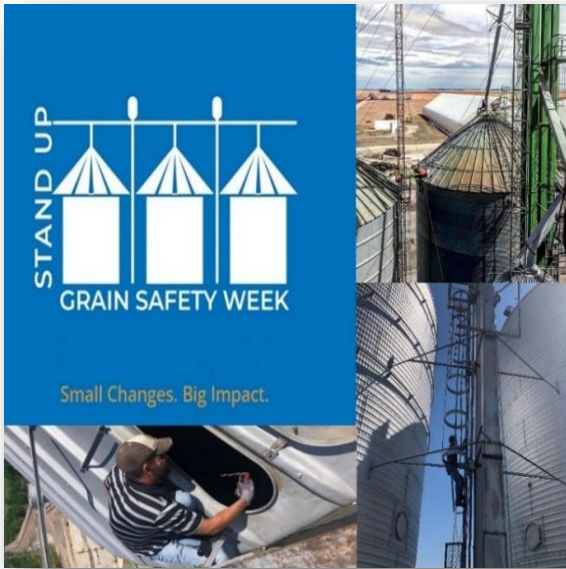
Each year, the Housing & RV Department team visits these home/outdoor shows to ensure the RV models offered for sale meet the safety criteria set forth in state law and in the Standard on Recreational Vehicles (NFPA 11912).

These rules and regulations cover the fuel systems and equipment, fire and life safety provisions plumbing systems, and vehicular requirements of all types of recreational vehicles. With a wide variety of sizes, layouts interior finishes, and optional upgrades, the RV industry continues to grow.

The Housing & RV Department's seal design has been reviewed to ensure safety...and fun!



# Grain Department Highlights Grain Safety



According to Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), suffocation is the leading cause of death in grain bins and each year hundreds of employees are injured or killed from preventable hazards while working in the grain storage and handling field.

That's why each spring the Alliance, a collaboration of agricultural industry groups, sponsors Stand Up 4 Grain Safety Week -March 27-31, 2023. This year, the focus was on making small changes in the workplace, that could have a big impact on safety.

"We encourage facilities to take this opportunity to focus and commit to providing a safe environment for industry workers," said Terri Fritz, Director, PSC Grain Department.

For information materials and more on Grain Safety, visit the Alliance website at <https://standup4grainsafety.org/>

## Twitter



## Facebook



## Calendar

28 FEB	Commission Meeting Location: Commission Hearing Room 10:00am
28 FEB	B-1994.01 SNP Consulting Services, LLC Showcase Hearing Location: Commission Hearing Room 10:00am
01 MAR	911 Service System Advisory Committee (911SSAC) Meeting Location: Commission Hearing Room 1:00pm
07 MAR	Commission Meeting Location: Commission Hearing Room 10:00am

Interested In what's going on at the PSC? Visit our [website](#) and follow us on social media:

Twitter @ [https://twitter.com/NEB\\_PSC](https://twitter.com/NEB_PSC)

Facebook @ <https://www.facebook.com/NEPSC/>



The Nebraska Public Service Commission regulates telecommunications carriers, natural gas jurisdictional utilities, major oil pipelines, railroad safety, household goods movers and passenger carriers, grain warehouses and dealers, construction of manufactured and modular homes and recreation vehicles, high voltage electric transmission lines, and private water company rates.

NEBRASKA PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

1200 N STREET, SUITE 300

LINCOLN, NE 687508

[www.psc.nebraska.gov](http://www.psc.nebraska.gov)

1.800.526.0017 (NE only)

402.471.3101

