

Northwest Rural Public Power District

Hay Springs, NE 69347

March 2026

Thustos Retires After 24 Years of Dedication

On Feb. 11 last month Les Thustos wrapped up his career at Northwest Rural Public Power after a 24 year stint. As Consumer Service Representative, Thustos has been a familiar and friendly face to countless consumers. It's always bitter sweet when retiring. Many of NRPPD's customers have spoken with Thustos at some point, whether over the phone or in person.

Thustos grew up on a ranch in South Dakota, graduating from Oelrichs High School in 1977. He went on to Chadron State College where he earned his Bachelor of Arts Degree in Business Administration, Management, Agri-Business and Marketing with a minor in Economics in May 1983. Before his position at Northwest, he was employed at Upper Niobrara-White Natural Resources District, beginning in April 1985 as a Conservation Technician. He served as Assistant Manager of Programs from July 1992 thru April 1996. He later became Assistant Manager until May 2001.

Thustos began his 24-year NRPPD career in June 2001 and moved his family to Hay Springs that August from Chadron. He and his wife Peggy have five children that were all school age back then.

Some of the programs and projects he worked on in a regular basis included the Irrigation Load Control Program, Energy Efficiency Rebates, Interconnection of Distributed Generation, the EV Drive and Ride educating the public about the efficiency of all-electric vehicles. Thustos managed all the advertising for NRPPD including print, radio and TV ads, in addition to digital ads, sponsorships, apparel, giveaways ad signage. Thustos was also responsible and took pride in the ability to assist rural students with scholarships

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annually. The Youth Energy Leadership Program was another youth program to educate students about electricity. His role at NRPPD often lead him to various workshops which involved some distant travel including Las Vegas, Florida and California. "These were always great if they were in the winter," noted Thustos.

Thustos enjoyed the old camaraderie with his former colleagues which included former director Rolland Skinner, Russ Reichenberg, LeAnn Jackson, Jim Anderson, Arlene Lahaye, Sheree Clift, Ron Housh and Wade Hanks. Some of the first Board Members he worked with included Jim Johnson, Gary Fuchser, Wayne Cobb and Bruce Troester. (Continued on Page 2)



A NRPPD employee photo from approximately 10 years ago. Seated from left, Kelsey Yada, Arlene Lahaye, Ron Housh, Vicky Henwood, Kelli Anderson; center, Terry Knapp, Matt Anderson, Erik Persons, Brad Johnson, Chance Briscoe, Les Thustos, Cale Anderson, LJ Prosser; back, Abe Young, John Hessler, Trampas Belknap, Darren Drabbels and Ron Olson. Right, a younger Thustos.



Interim Manager Has Extensive Background in Rural Electric

Northwest Rural Interim General Manager has stepped in to fill the position that Chance Briscoe left after he accepted a position in Minnesota.

Kory Johnson of Rapid City is filling in until Northwest Rural's Board finds a new manager. Johnson actually retired in 2022 but agreed to help NRPPD. He has worked at four electric cooperatives during his 39 plus years. His most recent position was serving as a CEO and General Manager of Agralite Electric Cooperative in Benson, Minn. from 2008 until his retirement in 2022.

Johnson began working in rural electric in 1983 as an engineering assistant at Agralite Electric Cooperative. "In 1996 I accepted the position of Director of Engineering and Operations with with Access Engery Cooperative in Mt.

Pleasant, Iowa. In 2001 we moved back to Minnesota where I worked as Manager of Engineering and Operations at Minnesota Valley Cooperative and Light and Power," he explained. Then in 2005 he was named the CEO and General Manager of Heartland Power Cooperative in Thomposon, Iowa. "In 2008 I was contacted to inquire if I would consider moving back to Benson, Minn. to assume the position of CEO and General Manager of Agralite Electric Cooperative," said Johnson.



Kory Johnson

Johnson earned his Bachelor of Science in Agricultural Engineering from North Dakota State University in 1982. He and his wife Ireta, now retired, have two children, daughter Ann and Son Mark. In addition they have three grandchildren, Eleanor, age 8; Thomas, age 5; and Nora, seven months. During his free time he likes traveling, golf, skiing and bicycling.

Johnson has been enjoying meeting the employees and the Board of Directors of NRPPD. "Throughout my career, I have found the employees of cooperatives or public power districts are the heart and soul of the organizations. These people are always willing to go the extra mile to get things done, whether responding to outages during a storm, answering questions of the customers, or stepping up to help in our local communities," ended Johnson.

Thustos Retires--

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Thustos will miss working with the consumers. He never met a stranger, and his cheerful personality made him easy to work with or to those who called or visited the office.

On the other hand, Thustos is looking forward to spending time with his grandkids and kids. His family include Erin Huth (Grace and Titus), Nicole and Jed Herblan (Holly, Lucy, Royce); Stephanie and Austin Reed (Billie, Georganne); Sydney and Nathan Talbot (KashLynn, Wilder); and last but not least son Wesley Thustos. He and his wife plan to do more fishing, golfing and traveling.



Countryroad Shot:

Dawes County - DMay 2018

~ by Jim Manternach

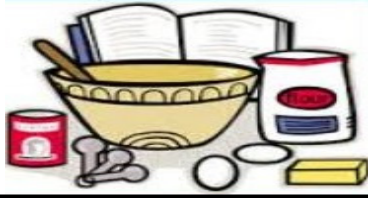
If you are interested in a print, you can contact Jim at jmm@millcomps.com or at www.jimmphoto.com



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Recipe Corner

Dublin Coddle

- 8 strips thick-cut bacon, cut into 1-inch pieces
- 2 tablespoons butter
- 2 yellow onions, chopped
- 4 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 cup chopped green onions, plus more to garnish top
- 1 cup stout beer
- 1 tablespoon fresh thyme leaves
- 1/4 cup chopped Italian parsley
- freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- 2 teaspoons kosher salt, or to taste
- pinch cayenne
- 3 pounds Yukon Gold potatoes, peeled and halved
- 4 cups chicken broth
- 6 large pork sausage links, about 2½ pounds total

Cook bacon in a Dutch oven or a large oven-safe pot with a lid over medium heat, turning occasionally, until evenly browned, about 10 minutes. Add butter, onions, and pinch of salt, and cook until onions are soft and translucent. Add garlic, and green onions, and cook stirring for 2 minutes.

Pour in beer, raise heat to high, and cook, stirring occasionally, until beer has reduced by about 75 percent. While beer is reducing, season with thyme, parsley, black pepper, salt, and pinch cayenne. Once beer has reduced, add potatoes and broth and bring to a simmer.

Preheat the oven to 300 degrees F (150 degrees C).

Prick sausage on both sides, and add to the pot on top of the other ingredients.

Cover and place pot into the preheated oven. Cook for about 2 1/2 hours. Remove the lid, and continue cooking uncovered for about 1 more hour.

Remove from oven and skim excess fat from top before serving. Garnish top with green onions, if desired.

Irish Stew with sausage and potatoes in a deep plate.



*Congratulations Les on Your Retirement!
It's been fun working on the NRPPD Insert
together the past 24 years.*

--Cindy



No one is more committed to protecting the land than America's farmers. Learn more about how farmers are Growing a Climate for Tomorrow during National Ag Day—March 24, 2026.

Tips to Prepare for Winter Weather Risks

Home Heating Fires

Home heating is the second-leading cause of fires, and winter is when most household fires occur. Fifty percent of carbon monoxide incidents reported to local fire departments occur between November and February, peaking in December.

Taking the precautions below can prevent emergencies and ensure a warm and safe living environment:

- Keep anything that can burn at least 3 feet from heat sources, including fireplaces, wood stoves, radiators, portable heaters or candles.
- Install and test smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors with battery backups.
- Clean dust or other build-up in heat sources.
- Always plug space heaters directly into an outlet, and make sure the cord isn't damaged or frayed.
- Maintain heating equipment and chimneys by having them cleaned and inspected each year by a professional.

Visit the U.S. Fire Administration Home Fires webpage to learn more about how to prepare for and prevent home fires.

Power Outages

Winter storms may bring power outages that can disrupt communications, utilities and complicate medical needs.

If the power goes out:

- Do not use a gas stove or oven to heat your home. Doing so can put you at risk for carbon monoxide poisoning.
- Keep freezers and refrigerators closed. Throw away any food that has been exposed to temperatures 40 degrees or higher for two hours or more, or that has an unusual odor, color or texture.
- Have alternate plans for medications or medical devices if they require refrigeration or depend on power.
- Disconnect appliances and electronics to avoid damage from

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Ag Humor...

- Don't shoot the IRS man, just give him your ranch and in a few months he'll shoot himself.
- He who marries a wife reared on the land marries strength and purity and compassion.
- Ironically, rural America become viewed by a growing number of Americans as having a higher quality of life not because of what it has, but rather because of what it does not have -- Don A. Dillman.
- Man - despite his artistic pretensions, his sophistication, and his many accomplishments - owes his existence to a six inch layer of topsoil and the fat that it rains.
- Question on a Department of Agriculture survey: "Which pest gives me the most trouble?" "That's an easy one to answer - the Department of Agriculture!"
- To life happily in the country one must have the soul of a poet, the mind of philosopher, the simple needs of a hermit - and a good SUV.
- To own a bit of ground, to scratch it with a hoe, to plant seeds, and watch the renewal of life - this is the commonest delight of the race, the most satisfactory thing a man can do. --Charley D. Warner.

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electrical surges.

Check with your local or state officials to locate the nearest community location with power if you can't safely heat your home.

Generator Safety

Portable generators can be useful but can cause injuries and death if not used safely.

If you're using a generator, remember these tips:

- Never use generators indoors. ONLY use them outside, in well-ventilated areas away from doors, windows and vents. Make sure your generator exhaust is pointed away from your home and is at least 20 feet from your house and/or garage before using.
- Do not use a generator in a wet area. This practice may lead to shocks or electrocution.
- Do not fuel your generator while it is running. Spilling gas on a hot engine can cause a fire.

Visit FEMA's Winter Ready webpage to learn more ways you can prepare for winter weather and limit risks by starting today!

A tip from a lineman working storm outages:

"When your power comes back on, flip your porch light on. It helps us see that your power has been restored without having to stop and check every meter. A little time goes a long way."

March Special Days...

March:

- March 1-7: Chocolate Chip Cookie Week
- March 15-21: National Agriculture Week
- March 1: National Pig Day
- March 2: Dr. Seuss's Birthday
- March 8: Daylight Savings Time Begins
- March 17: St. Patrick's Day
- March 19: National Agriculture Day & Poultry Day
- March 20: Spring Equinox
- March 29: Palm Sunday

March Birthstone: Aquamarine. Named after the color of seawater, aquamarine is the blue to blue-green member of beryl family. The traditional stone is the bloodstone.

March Birth Flower: Daffodil, referred to as the jonquil (which is simply a type of daffodil). Daffodils are one of the first signs of spring, bringing bright yellow and white blooms that symbolize rebirth, new beginnings, and good fortune. As the birth flower of March, they are linked to folklore, mythology and even Easter celebrations. The traditional daffodil is either yellow, white, or a combination of the two, with six petals and a trumpet or bell-shaped crown that is frilled at its edge.

Office Hours:
7 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.
Monday- Thursday
Service Calls
After Hours:

Please call
800-847-0492 if
your call is long distance or **638-4445**
for the local Hay Springs area at all times.

We have an answering service that answers these numbers on a 24-hour basis - after hours, Saturday, Sundays and holidays. Please state legal description, account number or meter number where the outage is and your phone number when you call.

Northwest Rural

Public Power District

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web page: <http://www.nrppd.com>

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