



broadband association of north dakota

BAND Together Newsletter

Executive Director Report: Same Communities, Two Missions

The longstanding partnership between BAND and NDAREC

When I am at a national conference, I can usually tell within a few minutes whether a state treats rural electric cooperatives and rural broadband providers as partners or as rivals. In more than a few rooms, the story is the second one. A farm family belongs to the electric co-op that keeps the lights on and to the telephone co-op that was supposed to connect the house — and those two co-ops are now bidding against each other for the same fiber customer.

That is not a rare exception anymore. The **National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA)** reports that more than 200 of the nation's roughly 900 electric cooperatives now offer broadband.

That is not the North Dakota story.

The **North Dakota Association of Rural Electric Cooperatives (NDAREC)** and BAND have a relationship that goes back more than 75 years. In fact, BAND's roots can be traced directly to **NDAREC**. In 1950, the statewide electric association formed a telephone committee to help bring telephone service to rural North Dakota. By 1953, several newly organized telephone cooperatives came together to establish the association that would eventually become BAND.

Our organizations didn't begin as competitors. We began with a shared mission of bringing essential services to rural North Dakotans. That relationship has continued throughout the years, including joint efforts in technology, economic development and supporting the communities our members serve.

Of course, history isn't the only reason our organizations continue to work so well together. I believe the way our members do business has a lot to do with it.

BAND members have spent decades investing in reliable, sustainable fiber networks throughout rural North Dakota. Together with **Dakota Carrier Network (DCN)**, they have helped make our state a national leader in fiber connectivity. Our rural electric cooperatives recognize that commitment and have had little reason to enter the broadband business themselves.

After all, why duplicate something that is already being done well?

Instead, we look for opportunities to work together.

For the past three years, **NDAREC** and BAND have hosted a joint managers meeting, bringing together leaders from both industries to collaborate, network and discuss issues impacting the communities and customers we mutually serve.

This September, our meeting included experts from the **Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA)**, who discussed current cybersecurity threats and risks facing our nation's critical infrastructure.

It was a timely reminder of just how interconnected our industries have become. Whether it's a farm, a hospital, a school or a local business, reliable electricity and broadband are both essential to keeping things running. Protecting those services requires communication, preparation and cooperation.

And that is exactly why relationships like the one between BAND and NDAREC are so important.

In North Dakota, we understand the value of working together. Our electric cooperatives power our communities, and our broadband providers connect them. By continuing to share ideas, learn from one another and find opportunities to collaborate, we strengthen not only our respective industries but also the rural communities we all serve.

Together, the members of BAND and NDAREC will continue connecting and powering North Dakota.

POWERING NDAREC

155,498
members

99.91%
system reliability

66,946
miles of line

3.2
meters per mile

17 + 5
distribution + G&T

53
counties — every one

250,000+ residents · 2023 NDAREC figures

CONNECTING BAND Members + DCN

97%
of ND geography

95%+
households at 100 Mbps

70%+
can reach gigabit

2028
100% fiber — or sooner

15
member companies

DCN
statewide network

Locally owned · decades of fiber already in the ground

BAND Member Spotlight: RRC

Fiber Fuels Economic Development in the Southern Red River Valley

For 75 years, **Red River Communications (RRC)** has been known for providing reliable telecommunications—and today, high-speed broadband—to homes and businesses throughout its service area. What may be less widely known is the significant role RRC's gigabit fiber network plays in supporting economic development across Richland County and the southern Red River Valley.

From precision agriculture and renewable energy to ethanol production, reliable fiber connectivity is helping major industries invest, operate, and grow in southeastern North Dakota.

RRC Supporting Agricultural Growth

Agriculture has long been an economic driver in the Red River Valley, but today's farms increasingly depend on technology—and the broadband infrastructure that powers it.

Riverview LLP dairy operations, based in Minnesota and extending into the **southern Red River Valley** in North Dakota, rely on fast, dependable connectivity to support precision agriculture technologies. Reliable fiber broadband helps enable systems used to monitor cattle health, manage feed, collect operational data, and support the technology behind modern dairy production.

Riverview LLP supplies dairy products throughout the Upper Midwest and Southwestern United States, demonstrating how advanced agricultural operations in the region can serve markets far beyond North Dakota.

RRC Powering Solar Energy

Reliable broadband infrastructure is also supporting the region's growing renewable energy industry.

Abercrombie Solar is developing a 295-megawatt solar generation facility in **Abercrombie Township**, North Dakota. Access to reliable fiber connectivity from RRC helps provide the critical communications infrastructure needed to efficiently operate and monitor a modern energy generation facility.

The project is expected to provide an estimated \$23.8M in local and state tax benefits over its 35-year operating life while creating approximately 300 jobs in North Dakota during peak construction.

The investment illustrates an important economic development advantage for rural communities: when robust fiber broadband infrastructure is already in place, communities are better positioned to support large-scale projects and the technology they require.

RRC Fueling Hankinson

Guardian Energy expanded into **Hankinson**, North Dakota, in 2013, bringing another major agricultural industry to the region.

One of the largest ethanol producers in the United States, Guardian Energy purchases locally grown corn for use in its processing facilities, where it is transformed into ethanol, high-quality distiller's grains (DDGS) for animal feed, and corn oil.

Why Hankinson? The region offers the agricultural resources necessary to support ethanol production, along with the reliable fiber infrastructure needed to operate a sophisticated processing facility. RRC's fiber connectivity supports critical operations ranging from grain storage and vehicle management to monitoring the fermentation process and ethanol storage.

The result is a powerful connection between local agriculture, advanced manufacturing, and broadband infrastructure—all working together to strengthen the regional economy.

Fiber Internet Is Economic Infrastructure

RRC is not building solar farms, operating dairies, or producing ethanol. It is providing something each of these increasingly technology-dependent industries needs: reliable, high-capacity fiber connectivity.

BAND members like RRC build and maintain the fiber networks that allow businesses to operate sophisticated technology in rural communities through private investment and the federal Universal Service Fund. In the southern Red River Valley, that infrastructure is helping agriculture, energy, and



Abercrombie, ND • 75 years • gigabit fiber

AGRICULTURE

Riverview LLP



Precision dairy in the southern valley. Cattle health, feed, and operational data run on RRC gigabit fiber.

RENEWABLE ENERGY

Abercrombie Solar



295 MW in Abercrombie Township. About 300 peak construction jobs and \$23.8M in tax benefits over 35 years — on RRC fiber.

ETHANOL • HANKINSON

Guardian Energy



One of the largest U.S. ethanol producers. Grain storage, fermentation, and plant operations run on RRC fiber.

manufacturing companies connect, operate, and grow. RRC's fiber network may operate behind the scenes, but it provides essential infrastructure supporting economic activity throughout the region.

That is an important part of the economic development story in rural North Dakota. When businesses evaluate where to locate or expand, access to reliable broadband infrastructure can be an important part of that decision. When fiber broadband infrastructure is in place, economic opportunity can follow—helping businesses build, grow, work, and invest right here in North Dakota.

Upcoming Events

Oct. 14

BAND/DCN Educational Workshop (Fargo, ND)

Oct. 15

BAND/DCN Educational Workshop (Grand Forks, ND)

Oct. 15

DRN Annual Meeting (Ellendale, ND)

Oct. 21

BAND/DCN Educational Workshop (Bismarck, ND)

Nov. 30-Dec. 2

BAND's Annual Meeting (Bismarck, ND)



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**Carissa Swenson,
Executive Director**

I am happy to provide information or speak at an event. If you aren't already subscribed to this newsletter, [please join our mailing list.](#)



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