



NREDA News Brief | April 2026

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President's Message

By Karla Organist, President, National Rural Economic Developers Association



Cultivating Our Future: Why Your Voice Matters

As the landscape of rural America begins its seasonal shift, I am reminded of the vital role each of you plays in ensuring that our communities don't just survive, they thrive. Just as a successful harvest depends on the spring preparation of the soil, the strength of NREDA depends on the active engagement of you - our members!

I want to personally invite you to take your membership to the next level by joining an [NREDA committee](#). While our association provides incredible networking and educational resources, the "magic" of NREDA happens behind the scenes in our committees. When you join a committee, you aren't just volunteering your time; you are gaining a seat at the table to shape the future of our work. Whether you want to sharpen your leadership skills, expand your professional network, or directly influence the advocacy work we do in Washington, there is a place for you.

[Click Here to Read More about NREDA Committees & the 2026 Regional Workshop in Marysville](#)

Join one of NREDA's Committees

If you have any interest in being a part of an NREDA Committee, please complete the Committee Interest Form below and select one committee from the options listed below, and the committee chairperson will reach out to you for further discussion.

NREDA Committees

- Annual Conference Planning Committee
- Awards Committee
- Membership Committee
- Professional Development Committee
- Publications & Marketing Committee
- Rural Issues Committee
- Sponsorship Committee

Rural Issues Committee Update, please [CLICK HERE](#)

NREDA Annual Washington, D.C. Fly-In

Each year, NREDA's board of directors, past chairs, and members of the Rural Issues Committee travel to Washington, D.C. to engage directly with federal policymakers and partnering organizations on issues impacting rural communities. Formerly held every other year, the Fly-In recently transitioned to an annual event to strengthen long-term relationships and partnerships at the federal level. This year's visit will take place April 29–May 1 and will include representation from across the rural landscape.

[Read More About the D.C. Fly-in Here](#)

New Member Spotlight

Learn more about NREDA's new members, and welcome **Melody Lockwood** to the NREDA community!

Melody Lockwood is the President and CEO of Livingston Economic Development Council in Livingston Parish (County), Louisiana. She is a Certified Economic Developer (CEcD) and a Master Economic Development Practitioner (MEDP) with more than 25 years' experience in the field. She has worked on the state and local levels in Louisiana for both public and private economic development organizations. Melody holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Business Management and a Master of Science degree in Economic Development (MSED) from Murray State University.



"I was drawn to NREDA because of its focus on rural issues, as much of Louisiana is considered rural. While Livingston Parish in Southeast Louisiana is situated between Baton Rouge and New Orleans, it is still quite rural. I joined the Rural Issues Committee right away so I could pool my experience with those from other parts of the country to try to influence policy changes on the federal and state levels and address the unique challenges our communities face."

Upcoming Webinars

Webinar

Expand your Network: Meet the Associations

Panelists

Jan Ahlen, CFC
Scott Bialick, NRECA
Chris Martin, NRTC
Joe McKinney, NADO
Josh Seidemann, NTCA
Sydney Spears, NREDA



2 PM EST/1 PM CST
April 23, 2026



nreda.org/webinars



Jan Ahlen



Joe McKinney



Scott Bialick



Josh Seidemann



Chris Martin



Sydney Spears

[Get More Info and Register Here](#)

"Expand your Network: Meet the Associations"

Thursday, April 23, 2026
2:00 p.m. EST / 1:00 p.m. CST

Join us for a collaborative webinar bringing together six associations for one dynamic session. Each association will share who they are, what they do, and the exclusive benefits available to their members. This is a unique opportunity to learn about expanded resources, build new connections, and discover how joining additional associations can strengthen your professional network and impact. Open to all—come explore what we can achieve together.

Webinars are a member-benefit to current (2026) NREDA members; this webinar is free for non-members.

Webinar

Data Centers: Technical Site Selection for Local Communities

with Trish Sieh, PE
Civil Engineer and Shareholder, Kimley-Horn



12:30 PM ET/11:30 AM CT
May 20, 2026



nreda.org/webinars



Trish Sieh, PE

"Data Centers: Technical Site Selection for Local Communities"

Wednesday, May 20, 2026
12:30 p.m. EST / 11:30 a.m. CST

As demand for large-scale data centers continues to expand, rural regions are increasingly considered for siting due to land availability, infrastructure capacity, and regional power resources. Presented by Trish Sieh, this NREDA webinar examines the technical drivers behind data center site selection, with a focus on how these facilities are evaluated and planned within Minnesota landscapes. Common misconceptions—particularly related to land use intensity, water demand, and infrastructure impacts—are addressed through a practical, engineering based lens.

Webinars are a member-benefit to current (2026) NREDA members; \$25 for non-members.

NREDA Podcast



NATIONAL. RURAL. CONNECTED.

Stay tuned for the upcoming April podcast! Jay Buchholz sits down with **Brad Ebersole**, NREDA Regional Event Committee Chair, and **Jason Duff**, Founder, Small Nation, to discuss the upcoming **Regional event in Marysville, OH June 16-17, 2026.**

If you haven't already listened to the February episode, host **Jay Buchholz** speaks with **NREDA President, Karla Organist** and **NREDA Immediate Past President, Lisa Hurley**, followed by a conversation with **Rural Issues Committee Co-Chairs Brandon Lane and Friday Otuya.**

[Listen to the February Podcast Here!](#)

NREDA Regional Workshop

June 16-17, 2026

Marysville, Ohio

**Making Regional Impact through Rural Routes:
Rural Strategies for Destination Development**

This year, NREDA is hosting our Biennial Regional Event in Marysville, OH.

Gather with other NREDA members to learn about local projects, the development of the Marysville and Bellefontaine area, and enjoy TWO tours to learn hands on about the effects of the effects of local businesses on the surrounding areas.

Registration is now open!

[Click here to view the 2026 NREDA Regional Event Agenda](#)

Registration information:

Member Registration - \$100

Non-Member Registration - \$150

[Click here for more information about the 2026 NREDA Regional Event](#)

[**Register Here for the Regional Event**](#)

NREDA Retiree Recognition

NREDA would like to recognize our members for their service! If you will be retiring this year, or know someone who is retiring from the industry, please complete the form below by October 16, 2026 to be recognized during the NREDA Annual Conference November 4-6, 2026 in Salt Lake City, Utah! (Annual Conference registration will open Summer 2026, so be sure to look for that information and register to attend the conference).

[**Retiree Recognition Form**](#)

Job Listings

Did you know you can view and post job listings right to the NREDA website?

Current Job Listings:

- Economic Development Director, City of Norfolk

[**View Job Postings Here**](#)

Newsletter Submissions

Call for Newsletter Articles

NREDA would love to share your unique stories, industry trends, best practices, white papers, and - of course - your successes in our bi-monthly e-newsletter!

Guidelines:

- You must be a current NREDA member to submit an article.
- Please email your article to Sydney Spears at sydney@assnoffices.com by the 15th of each e-newsletter month. Please include the subject line **NREDA Newsletter Article Submission**
- Please submit your article in an editable format (Microsoft Word or text in the body of an email preferred). Feel free to include a photo with your article.
- Please send information, educational, and/or newsworthy items. Please no ads or sales/marketing articles. NREDA reserves the right to exclude submitted articles as deemed necessary by the leadership.

[Submit a Newsletter Article](#)

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#NREDA Don't forget when posting on social media to use the hashtag #NREDA when sharing your stories! This way we can spread it to all of our members!



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