



SPARKS

MAY 2026

REDUCING THE RISK OF WILDFIRES

Gone are the days when wildfires were primarily confined to the western United States. Prolonged drought and shifting weather patterns are creating dangerous conditions in places that historically experienced few major fires. At High West Energy, protecting our members and the communities we serve is our highest priority. As we recognize National Wildfire Awareness Month in May, we want you to know that wildfire mitigation is not seasonal work for us. It is a year-round commitment embedded in how we operate and invest in our electrical system.

One of the most important ways we reduce wildfire threats is through our ongoing efforts with line maintenance and drone inspections. Our crews routinely inspect and maintain power lines, clear vegetation, and replace aging equipment to help prevent potential hazards before they become a problem. In addition, we utilize drone technology to safely and efficiently assess hard-to-reach areas along with inspecting structures from a different point of view. This allows us to identify issues with greater accuracy and respond more quickly. Together, these efforts strengthen system reliability and play a critical role in protecting our communities and the landscapes we serve.

Along with line maintenance and drone inspections, High West Energy has also implemented a fire mitigation plan. While you have most likely heard about HWE going into “fire mitigation,” we want to dive a little more in-depth into what that consists of. During normal operation, you may notice that when a problem or “Fault” occurs on the line, sometimes your

power blinks off and on four times before it goes completely out. This is caused by a device known as a recloser. These are simply a “smart” circuit breaker that has the ability to restore the flow of power on its own without a lineman coming out to patrol the line. Some faults are temporary and will clear without human intervention, allowing power to be restored through a reclose operation. When HWE initiates the “fire mitigation” mode, this removes the reclosing ability of these circuit breakers. This function is in place to limit the potential of ignition to a single source rather than four sources. While some faults are temporary, all faults have a cause and the potential to start a wildfire. When HWE is operating in fire mitigation procedures, all lines experiencing a fault must be patrolled to ensure re-energization will not cause a fire. HWE understands that this additional time patrolling the line is an inconvenience to our members, but we must evaluate every situation to the best of our crews' abilities to mitigate the possibilities of starting a wildfire.

Over the past couple of years, as advancements in technology have evolved, HWE has begun the installation of new devices in the field. Fault Indicators and Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition (SCADA) reclosers on the lines help to speed up outage restoration efforts for our members. These Fault Indicators look like a glass-shaped dome about the size of a softball. When a fault occurs on the line downstream of this device, it will begin blinking a red or amber flash, typically. The linemen use these flashing fault indicators to more precisely pinpoint the area where the fault is located.

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HIGH WEST ENERGY



IN THIS EDITION:

REDUCING RISK OF WILDFIRES

BOARD OF DIRECTORS NOMINEES

High West Energy's mission is to serve our members and communities by providing safe, reliable, and reasonably priced energy and services.

CONTACT US

307-245-3261
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MAIN OFFICE

6270 County Road 212
Pine Bluffs, WY 82082

OFFICE HOURS

Monday-Thursday
7:30 AM - 5 PM

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

- Mike Romsa, District 11
- Gary Smith, District 12
- Jessica Crowder, District 13
- John Thompson, District 14
- Damon Birkhofer, District 15
- Kosha Olsen, District 16
- Kevin Thomas, District 17

LEADERSHIP TEAM

- Jared Routh, CEO/General Manager
- Josh Gorman, Chief Financial Officer
- David Crouse, Chief Information Officer
- Konnie Keehnen, Member Services Manager
- Carol Macy, Employee Services Manager
- Nate Begger, Operations Manager
- Alex Henry, Engineering Manager

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SCADA reclosers allow for the non-reclosing setting to be initiated from the dispatch center instantly, instead of the lineman needing to drive to each device and manually initiate it. Additionally, the SCADA data acquisition portion allows personnel to evaluate the specifics of the fault that has occurred, which can help identify the direction and location of the fault. By relaying this information to linemen in the field, HWE can formulate a game plan to speed up outage restoration efforts for our members.

Advanced imaging tools (Drones) and system analytics (Fault indicator and SCADA operated equipment) allow us to detect abnormal conditions and respond quickly. By investing in these

modern technologies, we are shifting from reactive repairs to proactive prevention—identifying risks early and addressing them before they become emergencies.

Wildfires are becoming more complex and more widespread, but through proactive system management, smart investments, sound policy, and community partnership, we can reduce risks and strengthen resilience.

At High West Energy, we take this responsibility seriously. Our members depend on us not only for reliable power, but for leadership in safeguarding the communities we call home.

MEET YOUR BOARD OF DIRECTORS NOMINEES

The candidates for Districts 12 and 15 for the 2026 Board of Directors election have officially been determined by the nominating committee. There was one candidate nominated, Gary Smith, for District 12, and one candidate nominated, Damon Birkhofer, for District 15.



Gary Smith
District 12

Gary Smith represents District 16 on the High West Energy Board. Smith was born and raised on a small ranch in eastern Laramie County, and graduated from Carpenter High School in 1965. In 1966, he entered the US Navy and served four years, with 37 months in Vietnam. In 1977, Smith purchased an irrigated farm in Carpenter, and in 1978, married Lorraine Soppe. They have two sons, Cody Smith of Carpenter and Casey Smith, a transmission lineman of Sioux Falls, SD. They continue to farm and ranch with their son Cody.

After being honorably discharged, Smith returned to Wyoming. He was self-employed developing pivot irrigation in WY, NE, and CO, in which operated Rainmaker, Inc. until 1985. During the farm crisis of the mid-1980s, he had to dissolve his business. Smith then became employed by the Department of Defense at F.E. Warren Air Force Base in the activation of the Peacekeeper Weapons system.

He retired in 2006 from the federal government when the Peacekeeper weapons system was deactivated, and was elected to the High West Energy Board in 2014. Smith continues to serve on the board to help maintain reliability and cost-effectiveness for the cooperative members. He remains dedicated to this mission and strongly believes in the Cooperative Principles of this organization.



Damon Birkhofer
District 15

Damon Birkhofer has been living and farming south of Kimball since 1998 with his wife, where they raised their four children. Serving on the board since August 2019, Damon enjoys spending time with their adult children and traveling with his wife when they're not busy with the farm.

SAVE THE DATE FOR JUNE 18, 2026!

We are thrilled to announce our 89th Annual Meeting, taking place in person and online. This event offers a chance to connect with your cooperative, receive important updates, and learn about High West Energy's financials, projects, and future plans. Stay tuned for more details.

- ☑ ATTEND ONLINE AND RECEIVE A \$20 BILL CREDIT
- ☑ ATTEND IN PERSON FOR A COMPLIMENTARY LUNCH
- ☑ RAFFLE PRIZES WILL BE AWARDED TO BOTH IN-PERSON AND ONLINE PARTICIPANTS

