

## Leadership Connection: Barbara Walz' role in CURC supports key research

*Tri-State leadership is focused on connecting employees with the organization's vision and strategic direction. Throughout the year leadership will share employee accomplishments and organizational milestones, keeping us all aligned with the purpose of the work we do.*

Tri-State's leadership looks to innovative research to fulfill the organization's core mission of providing reliable and affordable electricity to our members.

This is familiar territory for Barbara Walz, Tri-State's senior vice president of policy and compliance, who strongly believes in the ongoing role of research and development in bringing new technologies to the electric generation and transmission world. Barbara grew up in a co-op family – her mother worked for Basin Electric – and has a passion for rural America.

Among other duties, Barbara is responsible for supporting corporate policies and initiatives related to Tri-State's compliance with all local, state and federal laws, regulations and permits and interfaces with state and federal elected officials, representatives from Tri-State's member co-ops and other key stakeholders in the association's service territory.

Barbara believes membership in trade and industry groups brings a visibility and credibility to Tri-State, allowing the organization to have a voice in discussions and decisions affecting the overall electric generation industry and the co-op industry in particular. Barbara enjoys building strong business networks benefiting Tri-State and ensuring cooperatives are well-represented in the broader world of municipal utilities and investor-owned utilities. Barbara's goal is to make sure under-represented co-ops have a voice.

As Barbara notes, "If you're not at the table, you're on the menu. My experience is that having the opportunity of being in the room where decisions are made is very valuable."

Barbara lends her leadership skills and experience to a number of industry organizations, one of which is the Carbon Utilization Research Council (CURC), a member-based organization devoted to securing congressionally-appropriated funds for electricity-related research. The group's goal is to use research funds to improve processes and efficiencies in the electric generation and transmission industry, such as emission reduction strategies, efficiency enhancements, increased reliability and cost reductions. Currently serving as lead chair, Barbara is in her fourth year in a leadership role with CURC.

CURC was formed in 1996 as the Coal Utilization Research Council. The organization recently changed its name to the Carbon Utilization Research Council, expanding membership to include the natural gas industry, and works collaboratively in advancing technology for more efficient electrification across both industries. Currently there is interest from several of the major natural gas companies to join.

CURC has three main areas of focus:

1. Secure research funding for existing coal-burning utilities to improve efficiencies throughout the lifecycle.
2. Secure research dollars for known technologies that are not yet commercially viable. For example, in 2009 the Department of Energy awarded a \$3.8M grant to a consortium consisting of Tri-State, Shell, Schlumberger and a number of state geological agencies for work on a Carbon Capture and Storage feasibility project near Craig, Colorado. The grant was led by University of Utah.
3. Fund transformational technologies which are still in the testing phase and require small-scale testing in a real-world scenario, such as the upcoming testing program at the Wyoming Integrated Test Center ([link to story](#)) and XPRIZE competition ([link to story](#)).

Barbara and other Tri-State employees are members of many different local, state, national and industry associations for a reason. “Membership in trade groups is so important as it leverages our ability to be more effective with limited resources,” said Barbara. “We see more opportunities and impacts when we join forces.”