

Ronald L. Lehr
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Ronald L. Lehr consults clients about energy regulation and business matters. Current assignments include work for Western Grid Group on western grid-level system, operations integration, and transmission planning and for a consortium of foundations interested in application of new financial approaches to address stranded utility assets resulting from retiring uneconomic generation plants. He has worked for the largest privately owned Swiss utility, private firms, trade and business associations, non-profit advocacy groups, national energy laboratories, and foundations on energy acquisitions, renewable energy policies and commercialization strategies. He represented the wind industry in the Western U.S. on regional transmission and related issues for over a decade, and has appeared as an expert witness, sponsoring testimony in administrative venues on utility planning and mergers, and in anti-trust, employment, and government claim litigation. He is currently board chair of New Energy Economics, which supports competitive acquisition of new utility generation and demand resource portfolios to manage risks, based on rapidly changing economic fundamentals. He served for seven years from 1984 to 1991 as Chairman and Commissioner of the Colorado Public Utilities Commission. He has served on corporate and foundation boards of directors and boards of advisors. He completed terms as an appointed member of panels charged to make recommendations on electric industry restructuring, renewable energy resources, and transmission needs to the Colorado General Assembly, and as President and Commissioner of the Denver Board of Water Commissioners, the water utility for Denver and surrounding suburban areas.

Education

Dartmouth College, University of Sheffield, BA, cum laude, history.
University of Colorado College of Law, JD.

Work History

Executive Director, Colorado Institute on Population Problems, 1972.

Legislative Lobbyist, Colorado Open Space Council, 1973-4.

Conservation Manager, Attorney, founding staff, Colorado Office of Energy Conservation, 1975-1981.

- Wrote DOE grant establishing Office of Consumer Advocate, later enabled by statute as Colorado Office of Consumer Council, now, with expanded scope Colorado Office of Consumer Advocate

- Filed a utility commission case, representing the state of Colorado, first developed by Environmental Defense Fund Oakland office, then by Arkansas Attorney General Clinton, based on “Energy Strategy, the Road Not Taken” in which Amory Lovins first pointed out that energy comprises both supply *and* demand side opportunities.

Attorney in private law firm, working with clients on corporate and partnership formations, real estate transactions, bankruptcy, mergers and acquisitions. Represented Electrowatt, the largest private Swiss utility in primary energy and hydropower acquisitions, 1981-1984.

Appointed Commissioner, Chairman of the Colorado Public Utilities Commission, 1984-1991.

- Presided over first commercial scale utility nuclear plant shut down and decommissioning, Fort Saint Vrain Nuclear Generation Station, enabled by a performance standard addressing plant failure to operate reliably.
- As a member of FCC Joint Boards representing NARUC, investigated whistleblower allegations of fraudulent FCC accounting filings by telephone utilities in the context of access charge tariffs reallocating billions of dollars of total industry investment and expense between local and long distance services that led to the largest fines for four Bell operating companies that FCC had levied.
- Worked with other commissioners to establish NARUC’s Energy Conservation Committee, now its Committee on Energy Resource and Environment. <https://maxxwww.naruc.org/forms/committee/CommitteeFormPublic/viewExecCommittee?id=764000C03D7>.
 - Worked with other commissioners to create and socialize integrated resource planning.
- Founded and supported western regional, cross-state regulatory approaches leading to creation of the Committee on Regional Electricity Cooperation (CREPC) within the Western Interstate Electric Board (WIEB) and the Regional Oversight Committee, aimed at curbing regional telephone monopoly misbehaviors.
- Created the basis for Colorado’s approach to new resource acquisitions by electric utilities, combining extensive planning with workably competitive procurements, resulting in today’s industry-leading numbers of bids and low prices. <https://energyinnovation.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/All-Source-Utility-Electricity-Generation-Procurement-Best-Practices.pdf>.

Opened the Texas wind market with partners Dennis Thomas and Will Guild using Deliberative Polls (created by Jim Fishkin) to consult random samples of Texas (and later Vermont, Nova Scotia, and Nebraska) utility customers about what they wanted utilities to provide. <https://www.nrel.gov/docs/fy03osti/33177.pdf>.

Founded and supported the Utility Photovoltaic Group, a DOE funded project to investigate and report on currently cost effective PV applications within utilities that found about 300 applications where PV was more cost effective, mainly providing alternatives to more costly line extensions to serve small loads. <https://aip.scitation.org/doi/10.1063/1.49362>.

Founded and supported the National Wind Coordinating Committee, a policy dialogue between the electric industry represented by the Edison Electric Institute, and the nascent wind industry, represented by the American Wind Energy Association, focused on answering the question “what can we agree on about wind energy?” starting with a series of single text, negotiated analyses of ten key wind and electric industry issues. Consensus was reached on nine describing such issues as technology, wind forecasting, avian-wind interactions, interconnection and transmission, but without reaching consensus on costs. Results were shared in state level wind outreach meetings in most states with good wind resources. <https://rewi.org/nwcc-timeline/>.

Founded and supported the Interwest Energy Alliance, combining clean energy companies and advocates to advocate for new policies in the Four Corners states plus Nevada and Wyoming. www.interwest.org.

Litigated the first occasion where wind integration costs were decided by a state commission, regarding client GE Wind’s Colorado Green Wind Project, rejected by PSCo adding \$61 million in additional integration and related costs to the bid price. Commission found additional costs to be \$3-5 million, resulting in the bid being the lowest cost resource in the bid stack, and requiring PSCo to negotiate a contract for the project. <https://www.nrel.gov/docs/fy01osti/30551.pdf>.

Founded and continues to support the Western Grid Group, and its supporting coalition, Western Clean Energy Advocates, addressing new wholesale and regional markets, improved planning and system integration approaches, and “smart from the start” transmission planning in the western electric interconnection. www.westerngrid.net.

Contributed to writing and provided advocacy support for legislation and ballot initiative (Amendment 37 on the 2004 state-wide ballot) that established the Colorado renewable energy standard, ten percent by 2015, first such standard resulting from a state-wide citizen vote. <https://programs.dsireusa.org/system/program/detail/133>.

Contributed to restarting and encouraging interest in performance based rate making, with partner Ron Binz, with analysis and a broadly based consultative process. <http://www.rbinz.com/U2020PublicReport.pdf>.
<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S1040619013002091>.
<https://energyinnovation.org/resources/project-series/going-deep-performance-based-regulation/>.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wJEzbE-iWFkhttps://>.

https://eta-publications.lbl.gov/sites/default/files/feur_8_utility_incentives_for_grid_mod_rev_062617.pdf.

Worked within the Western Electricity Coordinating Council to improve western regional markets and planning.

- Identified proposals for an Energy Curtailment Calculator and an Energy Imbalance Market within the WECC Markets Interface Committee, helped to bring attention to the EIM proposal among western regulators, resulting in the CAISO EIM market that has saved customers about \$2.5 billion to date. <https://www.westerneim.com/Pages/About/default.aspx>. <https://www.westerneim.com/Pages/About/QuarterlyBenefits.aspx>.
- Brought Global Business Network approach to scenario planning to the WECC Scenario Planning Steering Group, created scenario plans a decade in advance that accurately identified western electric sector driven by climate policy. <https://www.wecc.org/SystemAdequacyPlanning/Pages/Scenario-Planning.aspx>

As Commissioner and President of the Denver Board of Water Commissioners, brought integrated supply and demand planning, emphasizing important roles for water conservation as Denver's contribution to collaborative solutions to region-wide aridification and declining Colorado River basin water yields and started multisector attention to forest health in response to catastrophic wildfires and flooding that threaten Denver's water supplies and facilities long term.

<https://www.denverwater.org/your-water/water-supply-and-planning/watershed-protection-and-management>.

Analyzed and described Colorado's competitive procurement model for utilities using all source bidding to acquire new supply and demand side resources. Recognized in late 2013 that adding more wind and solar to Xcel's resource portfolios reduced costs of service for consumers, an early indication of shifting fundamental economics.

<https://www.utilitydive.com/news/xcel-record-low-price-procurement-highlights-benefits-of-all-source-compe/600240/>.

<https://energyinnovation.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/All-Source-Utility-Electricity-Generation-Procurement-Best-Practices.pdf>.

https://energyinnovation.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Monopsony-Brief_December-2019.pdf.

As part of broader work on utility financial transition, identified and adapted securitized or ratepayer backed AAA rated bonds used in 1990's electric industry restructuring for use in creating consumer benefits when applied to retirement and replacement of uneconomic generation facilities. Passed into law in Colorado in 2019, along with similar laws in New Mexico and Montana. Later adopted in Kansas and Missouri and currently under consideration in several other states. Added the policy goal of aiding workers and communities facing abrupt transition from fossil resources with low cost AAA bond financing to the Colorado legislation. Section 1706 of the Inflation Reduction

Act appropriates \$5 billion and authorizes \$250 billion to DOE to achieve these same purposes, among others.

<https://energyinnovation.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/Managing-The-Utility-Financial-Transition-From-Coal-To-Clean.pdf>.

<https://energyinnovation.org/policy-programs/power-sector-transformation/financial-transition/>.

https://energyinnovation.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Securitization-Brief_September-2020.pdf.

<https://rmi.org/important-clean-energy-policy-youve-never-heard-about/>.