

THE FARMER'S EDGE

Spring 2026 | VOL 31 NO. 1



HURLEY & ASSOCIATES
AGRI-MARKETING CENTERS

IRA, BBB and Batteries, Oh My!

By Dr. Detlef Hallermann

For decades, the power/electricity industry was considered a sleepy business where profit was not the primary driver for the industry. Profits were a secondary consideration to reliability. Firms built double and triple redundancies in their systems to ensure the lights always turned on for the customer. Public Utility Commissions (PUC) tend to target electricity rates that ensure a consistent return on equity for investors.

Because of the industry structure, utilities were able to make large investments into power plants that often took upwards of a decade to pay out. The utilities could do so to ensure baseload generation. The coal fueled power plants provided much of the base-load generation (units that ran 24/7) throughout the latter 1900's. As horizontal drilling became popular from 2005 to present, natural gas fired plants that were historically used as peak-load (units that would run when power demand was high) power plants were used for base-load power. Slowly, natural gas plants replaced the less efficient coal-fired power plants as units needed replacing.

Inflation Reduction Act

That all changed in 2020. The Biden Administration rolled into town with the slogan "Build Back Better." Soon solar and wind units replaced efficient/profitable coal and natural gas power plants. The Inflation Reduction Act contained considerable benefits to renewable investments. Decisions driven by tax credits and government subsidies replaced common sense investing and decision making.

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2026 Interns

Welcome to Hurley & Associates!



Scan for Intern Info

At Hurley & Associates, we take pride in offering a challenging and rewarding internship program within a collaborative work environment. Our interns will have the opportunity to engage in a variety of meaningful experiences from May through August, working closely with our consultants and teams. Key internship highlights include:

- Participating in on-farm client and prospect visits alongside office consultants, gaining a deeper understanding of the value of relationships in agriculture.
- Collaborating with a dedicated mentor to analyze individual operations, develop proactive market strategies, and execute strategic plans.
- Networking within the agricultural community, including with banks, local elevators, and associations, to help enhance the Hurley brand.
- Studying licensing materials, attending workshops, and creating and delivering presentations.

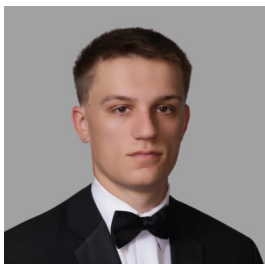
We look forward to the contributions and growth of our 2025 interns, as they gain valuable hands-on experience in the agriculture industry.

BROOKINGS, SD



MATT WEBER

MENTOR: SCOTT CONNOT
KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY



SAM ROCKEY

MENTOR: CLAY SCHOEN
UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA



KELLI STOECKER

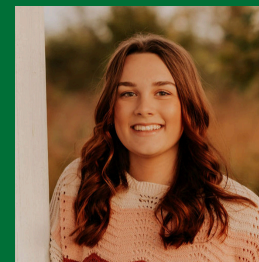
MENTOR: JHARETT BLOOMENRADER
LAKE AREA TECHNICAL COLLEGE

GLENWOOD, MN



JORGEN SWENSON

MENTOR: LUKE GRAVUNDER
NORTH DAKOTA STATE UNIVERSITY



MADISON MILLER

MENTOR: HALEY VAN NURDEN
IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY

GRUNDY CENTER, IA



CLAY SAAK

MENTOR: LANCE IBELING
CENTRAL COLLEGE

CHARLESTON, MO



LINDSEY LANCASTER

MENTOR: JACOB TRIPP
ARKANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY

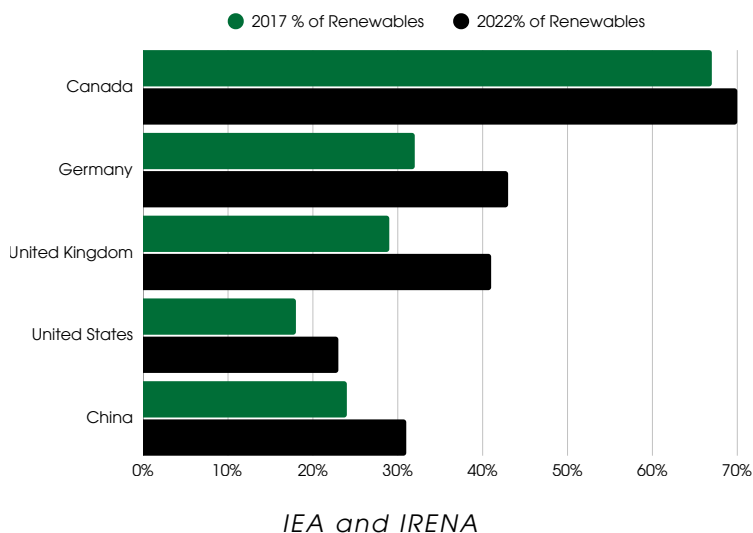


They say the opposite of “pro” is “con,” therefore, the opposite of “progress” must be “congress.” This is true when one considers the entirety of our law-making system is to change behavior so that people no longer do what they may do otherwise. Often, Congress is better known for its unintended consequences than for its desired behavior. For example, lawmakers in California decided that Californians should drive using biodiesel, they envisioned food trucks and restaurants delivering their used cooking oil to refineries to convert into diesel. Instead, refineries went straight to the soybean farmer, causing increased demand and increased prices for soybean. Good for farmers: yes. Intended: doubtful.

IRA, BBB and Batteries, Oh My!

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By 2022, renewables established a presence on every power grid in most countries. The following is a brief list of the renewables increase between 2017 - 2022:



A couple footnotes to the table:

- Canada has incredible hydropower based in Quebec; thus, their renewable power has always been high through dam-based generation.
- China added slightly over one million megawatts (MW) (slightly more than the size of the Texas grid capacity) of renewables between 2017 - 2023. China is expected to add 3,200,000 MW of renewables between 2024-2030.
- The United States added approximately 200,000 MW of renewables between 2017 - 2023 and prior to the Big Beautiful Bill (BBB) was on track to add an additional 500,000 MW of wind and solar power.

Duck Curve

These changes in power supply spurred by congressional oversight had similar unintended consequences. Most notably, the “duck curve” behavior of power. The following chart illustrates the daily demand for electricity and how the demand for natural gas generated power has altered after introducing renewables (most notably solar) to the grid.

One way to think about this graph is the solar-generated electricity has significantly less variable costs than gas-fired generation. Thus, when solar generation is available, it is the lower cost generation. The difference is the power supplied by renewables as the sun rises and begins to provide solar energy. Therefore, if one reviews Figure 1, one can see that the top line in the graph represents overall power in a region in May of 2021. One can see that generation is fairly smooth throughout the day, but demand increases between 2:00 PM and 10:00 PM. This coincides with household use increasing starting with kids getting home from school, through the evening until everyone goes to sleep.

The lower line is the demand for natural gas fired power at the same time in the same region. Demand for natural gas fired generation is fairly high during the night. Natural gas generation demand falls sharply in the morning starting around 8:00 AM. It hits a minimum around 2:00 PM. This coincides with solar power being more effective as the sun rises into the sky. That efficiency starts to dwindle as the sun starts to fall in the afternoon sky. Thus, the dramatic increase in natural gas generation starting around 5:00 PM and into the evening.

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IRA, BBB and Batteries, Oh My!

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Somewhere along the line an intrepid power or gas trader looked at the two lines and argued they resembled the shape of a duck. Hence, the term “duck curve” has been synonymous with explaining the relationship between power generation and natural gas fired generation ever since.

Figure 1: The Duck Curve



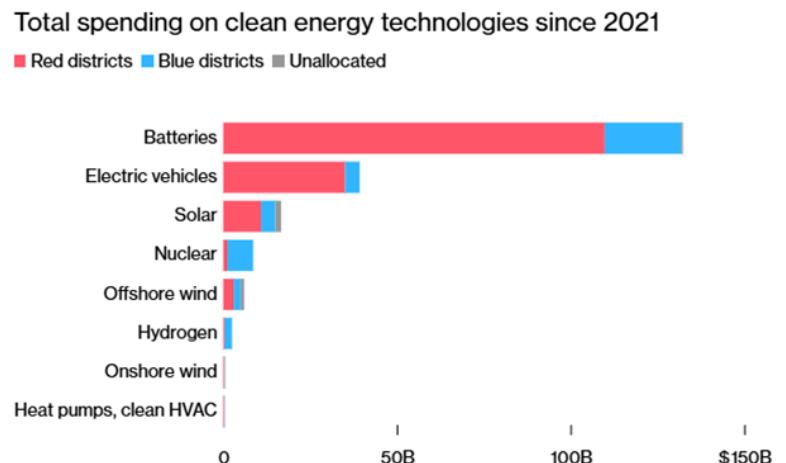
So, what is the net effect of the duck curve? When solar power is available, it pushes the need for gas-fired generation out of the picture. Although solar and wind generation have higher capital costs, these costs in the early 2020’s were offset by tax credits and benefits. Solar and wind are very effective when available. However, in those early morning and evening time periods when solar transitioned from not available, to available and vice versa, natural gas fired plants were transitioned from running to shut down in the mornings and back to running in the evenings. If the independent service operator (ISO) did not schedule the transition perfectly, there were often undersupplies of power that would happen as gas-fired generation was late to the party in the evenings. Something as simple as a cloudy day could affect this transition (and prices) tremendously.

The net effect was frequently erratic prices in the wholesale market. The market needed a hero. Enter industrial batteries. Our superhero took the shape of five-foot-wide and ten-foot-tall metal boxes that extended as far as engineers wanted to design the units. Inside, were the precious and rare earth metals we hear about on the news in the form of industrial size batteries. These batteries were designed to be charged mid-day for excess renewable generation at low prices and then dispatched in the evening when prices increased.

Imagine the wholesale market prices of \$40-\$50 per mega-watt (MW) in the middle of the day. Assume the batteries are charged at this price. In the 5:00 PM to 8:00 PM period, as solar power dwindles, the wholesale price rises to \$150 per MW (or more). Our superhero batteries are discharged into the market to offset the increasing price, slowing price increases until the gas-fire generation can get up to speed and take over. Imagine this happening on a daily basis. Soon, wholesale operators figured out batteries and managing the transition of intermittent power was much more profitable than solar fields or wind turbines. Especially, because batteries qualified for the same tax benefits as wind and solar did under the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA). The net result is that from 2021 to 2023, investors spent more money installing batteries into our grid than on electric vehicles (sorry Elon), solar and wind combined (figure 2).

Figure 2:

Comparative Spending for Renewables including Batteries, 2021 - 2023



Source: White Paper

continued on page 6



Visit our website to apply



NOW HIRING

Join our Growing Team!

Hurley & Associates is seeking talented individuals to join us in our mission to support farm families and promote economic stability in the agricultural industry. Look at our current full-time job openings below and discover how you can contribute to our value-driven organization. We offer competitive benefits and opportunities for professional growth.



Group Leader

Location: Britton, SD

- The Group Leader provides leadership, mentorship, and strategic direction to Farm Marketing Consultants and office staff while promoting Hurley & Associates' farm marketing services. This role is responsible for driving office growth, strengthening client relationships, expanding market presence, and ensuring the delivery of disciplined risk management services to agricultural producers.



Farm Marketing Consultant

Locations: Brookings, SD, Sioux Falls, SD & Grundy Center, IA

- Farm Marketing Consultants provide tailored marketing and risk management services to farmers, helping them achieve economic stability and profitability. Responsibilities include client relationship management, market analysis, and business development.



Hog Sales Manager

Locations: Glenwood, MN

- The Hog Sales Manager drives networking, business development, and strategic efforts to grow the Hurley Hog Program. This role promotes the program, manages and distributes sales leads, and supports team development. Overall, the position plays a key part in ensuring the program's success and continued expansion.



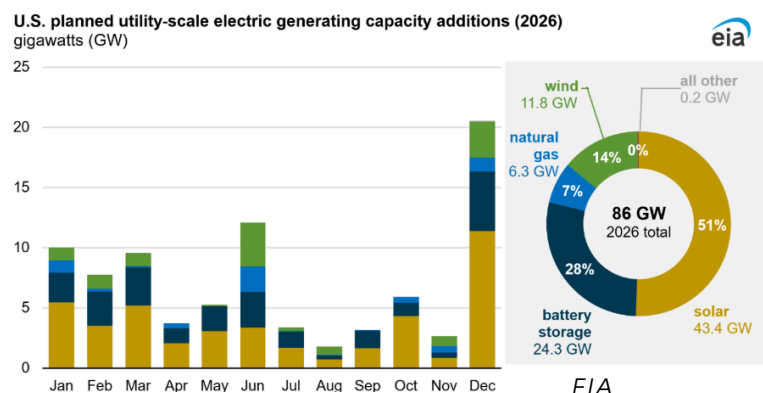
IRA, BBB and Batteries, Oh My!

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Big Beautiful Bill

Fast forward to 2025. We now have a new administration who has termed the phrase “pragmatic energy”. Government subsidies and tax benefits are disappearing with the One Big Beautiful Bill (BBB), passed by the House and Senate in mid-2025. Politics aside, the major effect of the BBB in terms of power was the reversal of the tax credit and benefits renewables received. Thus, as of 2027 wind and solar will stand on the same footing as coal fired and gas fired generation. One can expect renewable investment to surge through 2025 and 2026 (Figure 3) as investors accelerate their investments before the 2027 change in tax benefits. Thus, it is not a surprise that in 2026 the EIA expects solar additions to be a little more than 50% of the new generation additions in the United States.

Figure 3:



Data Centers

However, there are changing events happening in the power markets in addition to the IRA/BBB. Data centers are growing throughout the United States, primarily in Texas and Virginia, near natural gas sources. These data centers require non-interruptible power. Therefore, the data centers cannot use wind or solar powered electricity. To satisfy this demand, expect natural gas generation to become the favored child for new power generation additions.

Here is why:

- Assume a medium sized gas-fired power plant generates 300 MW of generation per hour. This should satisfy the demand for approximately 300,000 homes.
- Assume data centers cannot shut-down or start-up easily. They need continuous power that does not vary with the sun or wind.
- The cost of power is approximately 4% of the overall operating cost to a data center.

As a data center, what price would you pay for electricity? Would you pay twice the market price? The answer is an emphatic yes, as long as the supply of power is guaranteed. Currently there is an undisclosed amount of gas fired power plants that are being built that are not being connected to the grid. They are being sole-sourced to satisfy the demand for power hungry data centers.

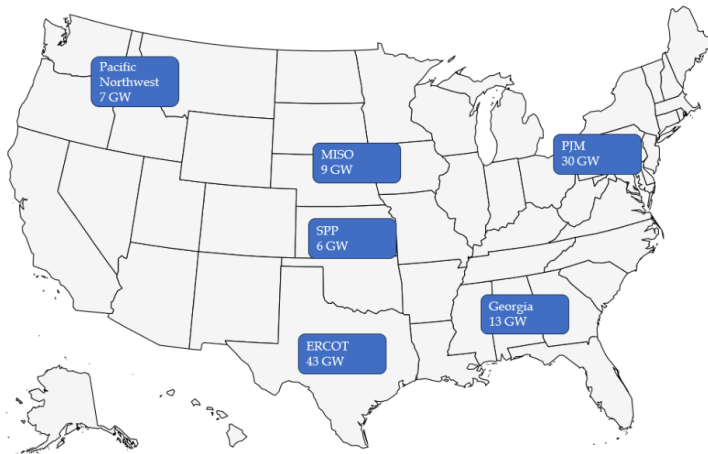
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IRA, BBB and Batteries, Oh My!

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Figure 4 shows electricity demand increases by region between now and 2030 primarily because of data centers. One giga-watt (GW) is 1,000 MW. Thus, the demand increase for power in ERCOT (Texas) alone is approximately 150 new power plants, all gas-fired generation. Much of this growth in gas fired generation is not captured in Figure 3 because it is not being connected to the grid. It is considered by many to be “shadow demand” for plant construction.

Figure 4:



In summary, the markets are continuously changing. In four years, government policy changed the composition of power capacity by 30% in the United States. A new President and changing market forces and we could easily see a full reversal in power addition strategy by 2028. What will the effects be? Is one right and the other wrong? I only know (to paraphrase an old Chinese saying) that “we live in interesting times”. So, we will see. Until then, I wish you good moisture and high yields.

DR. DETLEF HALLERMANN Texas A&M, Clinical Professor and Director of the Finance Department Dr. Detlef Hallermann is a Clinical Professor and Director of the Finance Department and runs the Reliant Energy Trade Center, at Texas A&M University. He has created and directs the Trading, Risk and investments Program and the Petroleum Ventures Program for Texas A&M. Dr. Hallermann has over a decade of practical experience in the energy industry. To say Dr. Hallermann is well versed in the energy and petroleum industry is an understatement. He has focused most of his career on derivatives, contingent claims analysis, trading and risk management and market behavior in the commodity sector. As part of his doctoral work, Dr Hallermann created the only true quantitative approach to valuing political/expropriation risk in the mining sector. He has quite literally wrote the book to become certified in Energy Risk Management and has and currently sits on numerous boards both nationally and internationally advising multiple facets of the Energy industry.



Early Diagnosis - A Key to Success

By Bobby Reifenrath
Farm Marketing Consultant | Wayne, NE



You know someone in the heat of a battle right now. What started as a simple cough soon turned into a much more serious concern. After many trips to the doctor's office, you finally get the news. Your palms are sweaty, heart is racing, and as you hear the words your ears begin to ring, you feel a pit in your stomach and your body temperature rises – a cancer diagnosis.

What comes next is a series of emotions, followed by the desire for immediate action. How do we fix this? What are the next steps? Did we catch it early? Should we have noticed the symptoms sooner? What if...? You know that the next days, weeks, months, and years to come will not be the same as the previous.

Unfortunately, this scenario is far too common in the American family, and while a serious matter, it also lends itself to lessons that we can take back to the farm.

1. The quicker we recognize the symptoms and work toward diagnosis, the better our outcome will be.
2. While you may be experiencing the symptoms it will likely take a team of experts to help get a true diagnosis and treatment plan.
3. Following through on the treatment plan is absolutely crucial to overcoming your diagnosis.

These steps are commonplace in many areas of the farm. This is the philosophy you utilize to develop health protocols in your livestock. It is how we approach our crop protection plans. It is how we prevent untimely equipment breakdowns in-season. But what about the financial side of the farm? Do you take the same approach?

Diagnosing the problem

Often times the symptoms of a financial problem on the farm show up at year end. For example, you may notice a bigger balance on your Operating line of credit, your lender may present concerns about Working Capital, or your accountant says there is no need to prepay any expenses this year. Dig in.

It is time to get serious and diagnose a potential problem. Put simply – what areas of your cash flow are causing issues and what areas are creating opportunities. I would encourage you to start by breaking your cash flow into 4 buckets – Agronomy Costs, Equipment Costs, Land Costs, and Family Living Costs. Is one of these 'buckets' causing that pit in your stomach? Has the bucket grown to a size that is a financial burden to the farm?

Utilizing your team

Who around you is key to a proper financial diagnosis and treatment plan? There are a few obvious players – your lender, your Hurley Consultant, and your accountant. But what about other key players – your agronomist, your spouse, your hired help on the farm, an extension agent. Lean into identifying your team and be transparent about what financial symptoms you are feeling on the farm. The potential treatments are vast – increasing custom work, finding off-farm income, selling extra equipment, utilizing a new agronomy approach, adjusting your crop insurance, changing cash flow timing, or restructuring debt. You and your team should be able to work together to diagnose AND propose solutions.

Following through on the plan

The most crucial piece of any plan is the follow through. This generally starts with a realistic set of expectations as well as accountability from all the teammates. What was the treatment plan? As you work on the plan, is there anything that begins to feel unachievable? If so, remember, early diagnosis is a key to success.

Like a cancer diagnosis, working to do a financial diagnosis on the farm can seem daunting. However, also like a cancer diagnosis, a financial diagnosis, when caught early, is often treatable. If you are feeling financial 'symptoms' on the farm, act soon! Reach out to your team and ask them to help you with diagnosis, treatment planning, and follow through.



Scan for
Bobby's Bio



Thank you for being part of **ELEVATE Brookings and Fargo**. Your engagement made this year's events impactful and inspiring. We're grateful for the opportunity to learn and connect — and we look forward to seeing you at upcoming educational events.

Scan for
Upcoming Events



ELEVATE

by HURLEY & ASSOCIATES



Western Wildfires, Northeastern Winter Storms, and Tariff Troubles for Trump Dominate Domestic Headlines

By John A. Johnson

The Texas and Oklahoma panhandles were besieged by prairie fires fueled by high winds, sometimes reaching gusts of 50-70mph. By the 2nd and 3rd days, the fires had reached into SW Kansas wreaking havoc over parts of three states, consuming more than three hundred thousand acres of grass, stored hay, livestock, farmsteads with homes, and thousands of miles of fencing that will have to be rebuilt in order to maintain the integrity of individual ranches and cattle herds. Many of the ranches in the three states have lost cattle to the smoke and flames, while others have seen cattle simply stamped off the property and are scattered to who knows where.

The situation is dire, but the recent strength of cattle markets has helped ranchers to be in the best financial position for most of the victims' lives. Hopefully their present opportunity to sell cattle at all-time highs, coupled with whatever government disaster aid will be made available, will allow these rancher families to regroup and survive this calamity. Already volunteer groups are bringing trailer truck loads of donated hay into the worst fire damaged areas to be distributed to needy cattlemen. We are a little too early to tell which organizations to contact, and how much has been done and how much more is needed at press time.

Seven of our northeastern states are struggling with their second set of winter storms in less than a month. Cold winter weather is bearing down on that area, bringing high winds, cold temperatures and snow that is being measured in feet in many areas. City officials in the affected states were taking preventative measures for snow management and traffic control in order to avoid as much loss of life and property as possible in this onslaught.

These two events are dominating our domestic ag-related news casts and will affect our U.S. economy to some extent. As one of our former columnists used to say "time only will tell" as to how much and for how long.

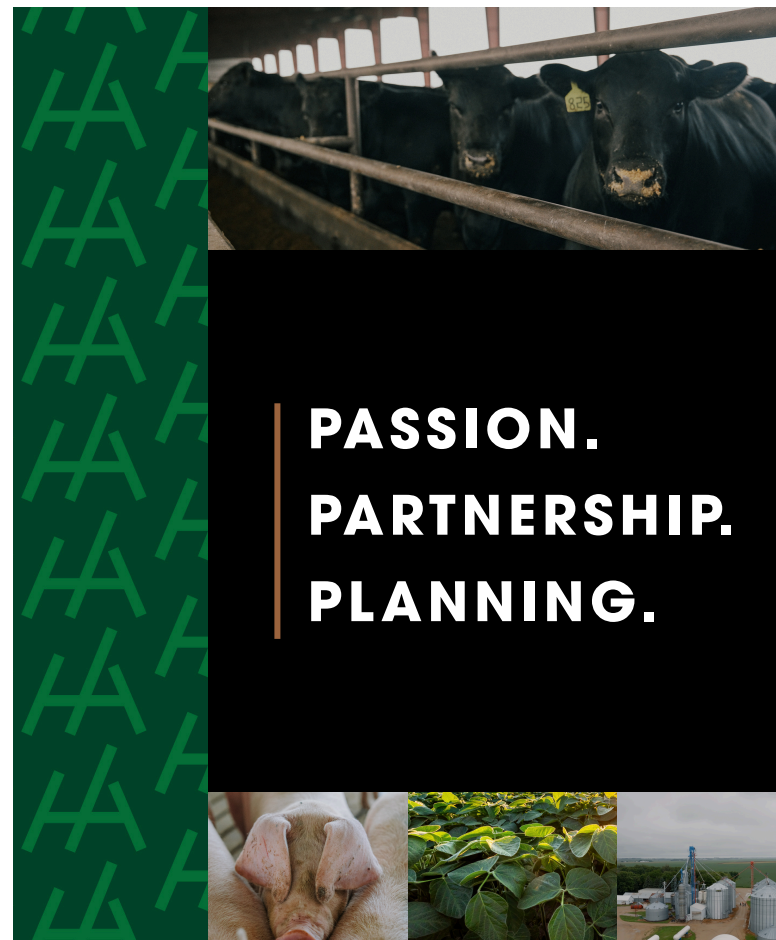
The U.S. Supreme Court has ruled that the tariffs imposed on several nations around the world in recent months by President Trump were unconstitutional.

Meanwhile, administration officials have been burning the midnight oil to find ways to accomplish the same effect on foreign trade, but under different statutes than the one used in the former assessments.

At the same time the same officials are scouring the records to ascertain which, if any, of those tariffs might still be legal and enforceable. President Trump has already floated the idea of a 15% tariff across the board for all imports, to replace any that will be lost when the present confusion is finally sorted out.

Internationally, the dispute between Russia and Ukraine is continuing, as the war is about to enter its fifth year. Over the past year, Russian forces have narrowly expanded the amount of territory they control, mostly in the east of Ukraine, and have continued their barrage of air strikes on Kyiv and other cities. Some 55,000 Ukrainian soldiers have been killed, according to Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, while the BBC has confirmed the names of almost 160,000 people killed while fighting on Russia's side.

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**PASSION.
PARTNERSHIP.
PLANNING.**

Western Wildfires, Northeastern Winter Storms, and Tariff Troubles for Trump Dominate Domestic Headlines

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President Trump has reportedly given the Iranians 15 days to forge an agreement, or “face the consequences”. Iran has replied that any show of force would be met “ferociously”. The rhetoric from both sides is very tension inspiring. Makes the region look much like the proverbial powder-keg.

This present administration is very active and has negotiations going on in several places in the world simultaneously. Staying abreast of today’s news is somewhat akin to drinking from a firehose.

Many things, including but not limited to; the negotiations for the new Farm Bill, unrest and turmoil in Venezuela, and the attempt to gain a stronger foothold in Greenland all scream for our attention. This is not to mention the situations with Mexican cattle, and their import restriction, and our apparent cooling of relations with our nearest Northern neighbor, Canada.

We have tried to apply our limited space and time to the few that were simply the most pressing today. We will strive to catch up on as many as possible of the other issues facing Americans, especially the Ag community, as time, space and ink will allow.

John A. Johnson has worked for Hurley & Associates since 2000. John is semi-retired now living the life of chasing grandkids. John is based in Sikeston, MO.



CONSULTANT SPOTLIGHT MCKENZIE SMITH

Farm Marketing Consultant | Britton, SD

What is your favorite part about working at the company?

I grew up on a small cattle operation in Colorado, which started my love for the ag industry. This job lets me be part of many operations and helps keep family farms alive. I have a wonderful team behind me not only with the Britton ladies but Hurley in general that are all working towards a common goal.

What is a recent accomplishment you are proud of?

In the past two years, I completed a significant mid-life career transition to Hurley and Associates following 13 years in the feed business. During this time, my husband and I purchased a home, and we expanded our family with the arrival of our second son. It has been a whirlwind and I have loved every minute of it.

What are your hobbies or interests outside of work?

My husband (Ryan) and I run a cattle operation outside of Britton, where we enjoy chasing Simmental influenced cattle along with our 2 small boys (Riggin 3 and Waylon 1).

Growing up in 4H myself, not only helped deepen my love of agriculture, but also taught me many life skills which I want my boys to be able to experience as well, so I also volunteer as a 4H leader with one of the local 4H clubs.



Scan for McKenzie's Bio

2025 **SCHOLARSHIP** Recipients

We are proud to announce the Hurley & Associates Scholarship recipients. These outstanding students embody the purpose of the scholarship—giving back to the families and communities we are built from by investing in the next generation of agricultural leaders.

Recipients are full-time students pursuing two or four year degrees in agriculture, business, or related fields at South Dakota State University, North Dakota State University, Murray State University, and Iowa State University. Each applicant demonstrated a strong commitment to advancing the agricultural industry and took time to understand Hurley’s Mission Statement and the values that guide our work.



Scan for
Scholarship
Info

SOUTH DAKOTA STATE UNIVERSITY



DAKOTA MARKS

Agricultural Business



SAM JOHNSON

Architecture



OLIVIA HADRICK

Animal Science

MURRAY STATE UNIVERSITY



EMORY GLENN

Business Administration



BRADY HEINS

Agricultural Business



BRADY KAIL

Agricultural Business

NORTH DAKOTA STATE UNIVERSITY



AIDEN ANDERSON

Agricultural Economics



ANDREW MEYER

Economics



NICKOLAS KINGZETT

Agricultural Economics



IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY



CHELSEA HOLLAND

Agricultural Business
International
Agriculture



LAINY DEVIRES

Agricultural Business



KIERRA DODD

Agricultural Business



RYLEE WELLS

Agricultural Business

The Power of Showing Up: Personal Growth, Strong Networks, and the Future of Beef



By Kali Flower
Farm Marketing Consultant | Glenwood, MN

What Top of Class Taught Me About Intentional Investment—In Ourselves, Our Networks, and Our Industry

Earlier this year, I had the opportunity to be part of Minnesota Top of Class—a program designed to develop the skills of Minnesota’s beef industry leaders so they can maximize their impact and effectiveness at the local, state, national, and international levels. Several people in both my personal and professional circles had encouraged me to apply, insisting it would be a great fit. And like many of us tend to do, I immediately told myself a familiar story: “I’m too busy.” “Maybe later, when life feels less chaotic.” Excuses.

Eventually, I took a step back and genuinely reflected. “What if the education and perspectives this program offers are exactly what I need now not someday when life magically slows down?” That thought nudged me past my excuses, and I submitted my application.

As I reflect on our most recent session in Denver; the conversations, the tours, and the people we met, I realize a larger theme has emerged. One that applies to every farmer, every rancher, and anyone working in agriculture: Investing intentionally is one of the most powerful decisions we can make. And not just financially. Investing in ourselves. Investing in our networks. And investing in the industries and communities we care about.

What I Learned About the Beef Checkoff—and Why It Matters

Before this trip, I knew the basics of the Beef Checkoff: producers contribute \$1 per head, and those dollars go toward research, promotion, and education. What I didn’t fully appreciate was just how strategic and disciplined that investment truly is.

During our three days in the National Cattlemen’s Beef Association (NCBA) office, we dug deep into the Beef Checkoff, the Cattlemen’s Beef Board, and NCBA itself, and how each operates separately, yet all remain aligned in their commitment to promoting beef. I was struck by the many checks and balances in place to ensure that the \$1 producers contribute is used appropriately. Those decisions are made by the Cattlemen’s Beef Board, a group of 101 dedicated cattlemen, cattlegirls, and importers who take that responsibility seriously. Every project is reviewed, audited, measured, debated, and required to show value. Funds are never used for lobbying; instead, they go directly toward protecting demand, educating consumers, and supporting the longterm health of the beef industry.

Sitting in those meetings felt especially meaningful given the environment we’re in today. Cattle numbers are incredibly low yet demand for beef remains remarkably strong. That doesn’t happen by accident. Even though we as producers may feel a step removed from the final product, our commitment to raising a safe, highquality protein is what keeps beef competitive. From cowcalf operators to finishers to a 4Her showing cattle for the first time at the county fair, we are all beef producers, and we all contribute to the story consumers experience.

As we talked with the leaders who evaluate where each dollar goes, a thought kept circling in my mind: This is what intentional investment looks like. Just like the time I chose to invest in Top of Class. It’s not spending for spending’s sake. It’s identifying what matters and funneling resources toward it with purpose. And that mindset extends far beyond the Beef Checkoff.

Investing in Yourself & Building your Network

If I’m honest, it took effort to step away from my daytoday work and commit to this program. There’s always more to do - another email, another meeting, another farm visit. Taking three days away from home to be fully present almost felt indulgent. But once I arrived, I realized just how important that investment truly was.

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The Power of Showing Up: Personal Growth, Strong Networks, and the Future of Beef

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On this trip, I found myself surrounded by people who were willing to do the same. They were people eager to learn, to grow, and to challenge their own thinking. When you take time to learn, your mindset shifts. Your confidence grows. Your opportunities expand. And ultimately, you show up better for the people you serve. But personal growth doesn't happen alone. It's fueled by the people you surround yourself with. You know the saying; Iron sharpens Iron.

Something so powerful comes from surrounding yourself with people that want to learn, and people that want to share. I met producers and leaders from across the country with different operations, different backgrounds, and different ways of solving problems. Those moments reminded me that so much of agriculture is built on relationships. The people you know can open doors, offer hard-earned advice, share new ideas, or give you the push you need to rethink a challenge.

Building that kind of network doesn't happen by accident. It's intentional investment. It takes showing up, engaging, asking questions, offering support, and being willing to learn from anyone. And as I looked around that room in Denver, I realized that investing in myself and investing in my network weren't two separate things—they were deeply connected. Both require stepping out of routine, entering new spaces, and being open to growth.

Both investments make us better. Both investments strengthen our industry. And both investments start with a simple choice: show up.

Investing in the Things You Believe In

Whether it's the Beef Checkoff, local boards, advocacy groups, or community organizations, staying involved is an investment in the future of agriculture. Being an advocate for agriculture isn't just about you, it's also about the next generation.

When we participate, we help shape decisions that affect our operations, our communities, and the next generation. Being engaged ensures that the programs representing us are strong, effective, and aligned with producer values. And just like with the Beef Checkoff, the return on these investments often shows up quietly but meaningfully in the form of stronger markets, better understanding from consumers, and more resilient rural communities.

The Top of Class experience reaffirmed something that I see every day working with farmers: Success doesn't just happen. It's built through intentional choices. Tiny investments of time, dollars, energy, or curiosity compounding into something powerful and meaningful.

As we head into another season, I hope each of us can pause and ask: Where am I investing intentionally? Where could I invest more? And what might those small choices grow into over time?

Because just like the Beef Checkoff, the investments we make today support the future we want for tomorrow.



Top of Class is a program put on by the Minnesota Beef Council. If you have interest in learning more about Top of Class reach out to Kelly Schmidt with the Minnesota Beef Council. If you are interested to learn if your state offers a similar program reach out to your local Beef Council.



Scan to see what the Beef Checkoff is up to!



"TO PLANT SOMETHING IS TO BELIEVE IN TOMORROW."



CONSULTANT SPOTLIGHT
JHARETT BLOOMENRADER

Farm Marketing Consultant | Brookings, SD

What is your favorite part about working at the company?

My favorite part about working at Hurley is the strong team atmosphere we foster both internally and alongside our clients. With my background in collegiate athletics, I have developed a deep appreciation for team culture, structure, and shared accountability. I value the opportunity to carry that same culture into my work with producers — building a collaborative approach where we operate with a common purpose. There is great fulfillment in knowing we are all aligned and striving toward the same long-term goals.

What is a recent accomplishment you are proud of?

A recent accomplishment I am proud of is having the opportunity to speak at several events, where I was able to share knowledge and help educate producers in the communities that played a significant role in my upbringing. It has been especially meaningful to give back in this way and contribute to the development of the next generation of leaders within those communities.

What are your hobbies or interests outside of work?

Outside of work, I enjoy staying engaged with South Dakota State University athletics. I also value spending time with friends and family and remaining actively involved in my family's farming operation back home whenever possible.



Scan for Jharett's Bio



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