



February 2024

Newsline

BOARD MEETINGS February 27 ■ March 26 (9:30 am at Cohasset Service Center. Members welcome)



Energy that Powers Our Lives

IN THIS ISSUE

- Efficient living in extreme weather
- Space heater safety
- Expanding the grid
- 2024 Legislative outlook

Keeping the lights on, by keeping danger trees off

Every year, Lake Country Power invests significant time and resources into proactively maintaining the reliability of our electrical system through clearing trees and brush from cooperative power lines.

The integrated vegetation management (IVM) program helps create a clean right-of-way corridor throughout the LCP system and provides resilience during extreme weather events during all seasons.

For 2024, the IVM investment is budgeted at \$6.1 million to clear more than 917 miles of line, said Syver Kolden, manager of forestry services. Right-of-way clearing will focus on areas near Iron, Cedar Valley, Grand Lake, Gowan, Knife Falls and Sturgeon Lake.

This is the third year of LCP's seven-year cycle that works its way through LCP's 10,800 miles of service area, including mid-cycle work, contracted through



Zielie's Tree Service. Kolden said the goal of the seven-year cycle plan is that when crews return to an area the next time around, there is a wider right-of-way and less to clear, making for fewer threats to the electrical system's reliability and safety.

"That's our goal, to be smart about trimming," Kolden said. "We want to maintain a healthy edge by removing danger trees and be really proactive in our right-of-way management."

Right-of-way clearing in the northern portions of the service area last year revealed a lot of trees infested with spruce budworm that targets spruce and balsam fir. The species eats new growth and effectively kills the trees within three years of infestation.

"They really hammered the balsams this year," Kolden said. In some areas, 20-30 trees in a span needed to be topped, thousands in total, to keep them from potentially breaking lines and disrupting service. "Dry, dead trees falling onto power lines are not a good combination."

The budworm will be less prevalent in the right-of-way clearing areas this year, but he said crews — which all feature certified arborists through the International Society of Arboriculture to help identify dead trees and infestations — will be monitoring the Emerald Ash Borer that has shown up near Duluth.

Recognizing and working with the local habitats is another goal of Kolden's, especially when herbicides are used to spray brush, as opposed to mowing it down. The spraying process in IVM is meant to eliminate or significantly slow the regrowth of brush around the lines and equipment, and the type of herbicide used isn't harmful to the local bee population.

Kolden stressed that the spraying process will produce less aesthetic results at first, but it's only temporary. As the brush dies within the first year, it helps create the habitat for milkweed and other growth like blueberries and wildflowers. ■



What can we expect from the legislature in 2024?

The 2024 legislative session starts on February 12. With a two-year budget enacted last session, no bills need to be passed this year to keep the state government operating. However, there is a projected budget surplus of \$2.4 billion, which will be used by Governor Tim Walz and the legislature to develop a supplemental budget for the 2024 legislative session. Minnesota Management and Budget will release an updated budget forecast in late February, at which time the governor and the legislature will adjust their budget proposals to match the updated amount.

With a smaller surplus than last year and the agencies buried under the work of implementing the extensive new programs and spending passed last session, we expect the focus of this session to be on a large funding package for public infrastructure needs across the state. Both legislative leadership and the governor have emphasized working on a capital investment bill as their main priority this session.

Other contributing factors to consider this session are the beginning of a \$730 million renovation and expansion of the State Office Building which houses all house members and staff. House members need to be out of their offices once session concludes in May for the project to proceed on schedule. It is also an election



year which means legislators running for reelection will be especially attuned to campaign politics.

With the carbon free by 2040 bill passed last session, the energy committees will be focused on proposals to better align the permitting process with the demands of the clean energy transition mandated by the legislature. A stakeholder group was convened over interim that resulted in a report offering 35 total recommendations for making the permitting process more efficient.

We also expect the moratorium on building new nuclear facilities in Minnesota to be a discussion item. As utilities work out how to comply with the 2040 carbon free mandate, all clean energy generation sources should be on the table, including nuclear. We take the stand that we need all available tools in our toolbox when working to provide reliable power to Minnesotans.

MREA is also working with the Department of Revenue and legislators on a clarification to how electric cooperative property taxes are assessed that will result in savings for members.

More broadly, we will be focused on preventing any new mandates from being imposed. While some legislators would like to enact more prescriptive requirements for how utilities decarbonize the electrical grid, we firmly believe they need to let the experts at utilities decide how we will reach 2040 carbon free compliance. ■

Via *Minnesota Rural Electric Association*

Win an electric leaf blower at your 2024 district meeting

Members are invited to join Lake Country Power and your elected directors at the 2024 district meetings in the coming months, where the popular prize drawings will feature a new grand prize: A Milwaukee M18 Cordless Blower Kit (pictured). Meetings start at 5 p.m. with a light supper, followed by staff updates and time for member questions. If you cannot make your district meeting, you are welcome to attend another date. Please RSVP according to the letter of invitation you will receive in the mail before your district meeting.



District 7: Craig Olson
Time/Date: 5 p.m.
Tuesday, Feb. 27
Location: South Ridge School (cafeteria)
Address: 8162 Swan Lake Rd. Culver, MN 55779

District 1: Jason Long
Time/Date: 5 p.m.
Monday, April 8
Location: North Woods School
Address: 10248 Olson Road, Cook, MN 55723

District 3: Steve Raukar
Time/Date: 5 p.m.
Tuesday, April 2
Location: Minnesota Discovery Center, Taconite Room
Address: 1005 Discovery Dr. Chisholm, MN, 55719

District 5: Bob Bruckbauer
Time/Date: 5 p.m.
Monday, March 11
Location: Northland High School, Remer
Address: 316 E. Main St. Remer, MN 56672

District 8: Brian Napstad
Time/Date: 5 p.m.
Thursday, April 4
Location: Cromwell Pavilion
Address: 1272 MN-73 Cromwell, MN 55726

District 2: Mike Forsman
Time/Date: 5 p.m.
Tuesday, March 12
Location: Grand Ely Lodge, Ridgeview Room
Address: 400 N. Pioneer Rd. Ely, MN 55731

District 4: Jeff Sheldon
Time/Date: 5 p.m.
Tuesday, April 9
Location: Balsam Community Center
Address: 41388 Scenic Hwy. Bovey, MN, 55709

District 6: Dan Kingsley
Time/Date: 5 p.m.
Thursday, Feb. 29
Location: Blackberry Town Hall
Address: 25349 Dove Lane Grand Rapids, MN, 55744

District 9: Larry Anderson
Time/Date: 5 p.m.
Thursday, Feb. 22
Location: Hope Lutheran Church
Address: 204 Elm Ave. Moose Lake, MN 55767

If using a space heater to take the chill off, do so safely

Electric space heaters can help quickly warm a room. However, they can be as dangerous as convenient if used improperly.

Safe Electricity urges everyone in the home to understand the importance of using space heaters safely:

- Purchase only space heaters that have been safety tested and UL approved. Make sure the unit is equipped with an emergency tip-over shut-off feature and heating element guards. Read and follow all of the manufacturer's instructions for operation and care.
- Before using a space heater, make sure your smoke and carbon monoxide detectors are in good working condition.
- Place the heater out of high-traffic areas and on a level, hard, non-flammable floor surface — NOT on carpets, furniture or countertops.
- Space heaters have one purpose —to provide supplemental heating. Never use them to thaw pipes, cook food, or dry clothing or towels.
- Remember to keep space heaters at least three feet from combustible liquids like fuel, spray cans and paint, as



well as flammable items such as draperies, blankets and sofas.

- Do not overload circuits. Never use extension cords or multiple plugs with a space heater, and make sure the unit is not plugged into the same circuit as other electric appliances.
- Never leave space heaters unattended. Turn off your space heater and unplug it before leaving the room or going to bed.
- Replace older space heaters with newer, safer models. ■

Co-op calendar contest opens

The 2025 co-op calendar contest is officially open for members to begin submitting their beautiful scenic entries. The deadline to submit is Thursday, August 1.

The calendar will showcase the photography talents of LCP's membership. Your photography should be scenic, capturing the beauty of northern Minnesota's four seasons. The photos are not required to include power lines but may if you choose.

A panel of judges will select the winning photos in "round one" of the judging process. During "round two," members will select the finalists through a contest on LCP's Facebook page.

Winners will receive a \$25 credit on their electric bill and will be notified in October.



Photo Contest Guidelines

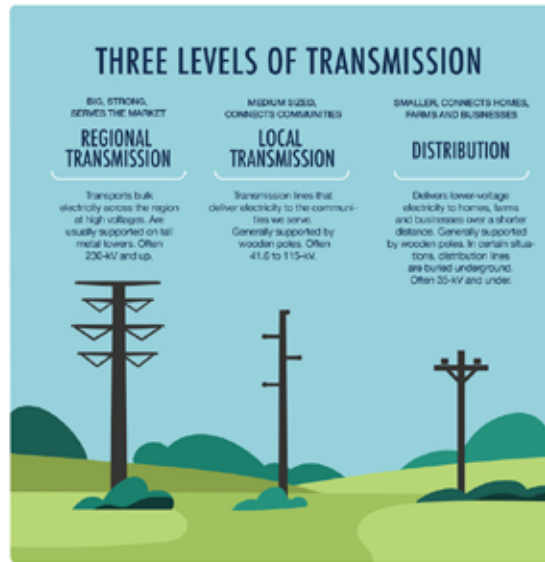
1. Dimensions must be 3600 x 2400 = 12" x 8" high-res print photo, or 5400 x 3600 = 18" x 12" high-res photo. Adjust your camera settings to ensure these high-quality dimensions. Cell phone photos are often not acceptable quality for print. A quality digital camera is best for good photography.
2. Photos must be 300dpi (dots per inch). Photos under 1 MB will be labeled as KB, and are too small for print application and should not be entered.
3. Separate emails are required per entry. Attach the photo file to your email, include a photo description for the entry, and remember to include your name and the phone number on your account as well.
4. Horizontal/landscape photos only; no vertical shots for design reasons.
5. Only Lake Country Power members may enter the contest. (LCP employees and their immediate families and spouses are not eligible to enter the contest.)
6. Hard copy photos cannot be accepted; only electronic files please.
7. Photos should capture the beauty of northern Minnesota. You may submit photos taken in spring, summer, fall and/or winter. All photos must be taken by you, not someone else.
8. One membership (household) may submit up to 10 photos and will be limited to one winning entry per membership.
9. Please do not submit close-ups of people.
10. Winning photographers automatically give Lake Country Power permission to use winning photos in the calendar, in other publications, member presentations or electronically online.
11. Photos must be e-mailed to tzaun@lcp.coop. All entries must be received by August 1, 2024.

Expanding the grid

The way electricity is produced is undergoing a dramatic transformation to include much more renewable energy resources. Because the energy resources used to serve our members are changing, the regional power grid that delivers electricity needs to change, too.

Great River Energy, wholesale power supplier to Lake Country Power, is investing in new transmission infrastructure to ensure we maintain a reliable, resilient and flexible grid, and enhance its stability long term.

Regional transmission lines transport bulk electricity across the region at high voltages. One of these new regional projects is the Northland Reliability Project, which is being jointly developed by Great River Energy and Minnesota Power. It will run from Minnesota Power's Iron Range Substation near Grand Rapids to a new substation near Becker. The two utilities submitted their application for a Certificate of Need and Route Permit from the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission in August. If approved, construction is expected to begin in 2027 with an in-service date of 2030.



This project, and others like it, will support continued reliable electric service in northern and central Minnesota, as well as the greater Upper Midwest region. It is being developed with two significant technology additions: more resilient structures to better withstand wind, and twisted pair conductors, which are more resilient to icing from winter weather.

One of the biggest weather-related threats to the transmission system in Minnesota is an ice storm with wind during the winter. Great River Energy's new standard design includes structures that are strong enough to withstand the highest wind speeds recorded in the previous 300 years.

Great River Energy's transmission employees have specific, organized efforts underway to continually address resilience and ensure reliable electric service to its member-owner cooperatives, including Lake Country Power. New transmission projects,

like the Northland Reliability Project, will allow the power that comes to Lake Country Power and is passed on to our members to be cleaner and more reliable than ever before. ■

EQUIPMENT QUIZ

Q How much does one regulator cost?

A) \$500 **C) \$24,250**
B) \$2,200 **D) \$12,000**

LCP has 173 regulators on its system. Regulators maintain the proper voltage at your home so the lights don't dim and power quality isn't reduced if you live a long distance from the substation. **Answer: C**

RECIPE CORNER
GERI'S TOMATO SOUP CAKE

From the Kitchen of: **John Wagner, Maplewood**

- 2 Cups Sugar
- 3 Cups Flour
- 2 tsp Baking Soda
- 1 tsp Baking Powder
- 2 tsp Cinnamon
- 1 tsp Allspice
- 1 tsp Nutmeg
- 1 tsp Ground Cloves
- 1/2 tsp Ginger
- 4 tbsp Shortening/ Butter/Margarine
- 3 Eggs
- 1 Can Condensed Tomato Soup
- 1 Cup Water

Combine/blend all dry ingredients together and mix with shortening. Combine/blend Tomato soup, water & eggs and mix into above ingredients. Pour the entire batch into a 9x13 pan and bake at 350 degrees until done.

Submit your favorite recipe to Lake Country Power, Attn. Editor, 8535 Park Ridge Drive, Mountain Iron, MN 55768, or e-mail jbumes@lcp.coop. If your entry is printed in Newsline, you'll receive a \$5 credit on your electric bill. Entries must include name, address and phone number on account.

Living efficiently during extreme weather

When outdoor temperatures drop, our electricity use increases. That's because we're doing more activities inside, and our heating systems are running longer and more often to counteract colder outdoor temperatures, which puts a lot of strain on our electric grid.

In northeastern Minnesota, we know the winters can get frigid and the impact that has on our daily lives. That's why it's important for members to take proactive steps to efficiently use energy in their homes, both to reduce strain on the grid, but also save money along the way.



By Steve RAUKAR
District 3 Director

To help keep the heat on for you, your family and neighbors, here are a few things you can do:

- Select the lowest comfortable thermostat setting and turn it down several degrees whenever possible. Your heating system must run longer to make up the difference between the thermostat temp and the outdoor temp. **Smart tip:** Seal air leaks around windows and exterior doors with caulk and weatherstripping. Air leaks and drafts force your heating system to work harder than necessary.
- Stagger your use of major appliances

such as dishwashers, ovens and dryers. **Smart tip:** Start the dishwasher before you go to bed and use smaller countertop appliances like slow cookers and air fryers to save energy.

- Ensure that your heating system is optimized for efficiency with regular maintenance and proper insulation. **Smart tip:** Make sure your furnace filter isn't clogged and dirty. Replace it as needed.
- When possible, use cold water to reduce water heating costs. **Smart tip:** Setting your water heater thermostat to 120 degrees can help you save energy and reduce mineral buildup and corrosion in your water heater and pipes.
- Unplug devices when not in use to eliminate unnecessary energy use. Even when turned off, electronics in standby mode consume energy. **Smart tip:** Plug devices into a power strip so you can turn them all off at once with the push of a button.

In closing, we have a collective responsibility to conserve the energy we

have by making thoughtful choices, while also being mindful of the lessons from our youth. For those who remember our parents telling us to turn off the light, by following that advice now, you can save money on your electric bills, but also contribute to the resilience of the power grid, keeping our membership warm and connected. ■

Steve Raukar was elected by members in Lake Country Power District 3. He can be reached at 218-966-0298 or sraukar@lcp.coop.

BEST BETS FOR WINTER SAVINGS

Energy consumption spikes during winter months as we spend more time indoors and heating systems work overtime. You can help reduce demand and strain on the electric grid by conserving during peak energy times. Reducing energy use will also help lower your energy bills.

- UNPLUG WHEN POSSIBLE**
Turn off unnecessary lights and electronics when you aren't using them.
- ELIMINATE DRAFTS AND AIR LEAKS**
Seal air leaks and drafts around windows and exterior doors.
- USE APPLIANCES WHEN ENERGY DEMAND IS LOWER**
Run large appliances like clothes washers, dryers and dishwashers early in the morning or before you go to bed.
- MAINTAIN HEATING EQUIPMENT**
Maintain your heating system by replacing dirty, clogged filters and scheduling an annual inspection for necessary maintenance.
- LOWER THE THERMOSTAT**
Home heating accounts for a large portion of energy consumption. Adjust your thermostat to the lowest comfortable setting (68 degrees or lower).

Avoid deadly backfeed and help keep lineworkers safe

Backfeed happens when a person connects their portable generator to a wall outlet, which allows power to flow in reverse — that is, the alternate power source feeds energy back through their home's electrical system, their meter and back into the power lines.

Potentially deadly backfeed can also

happen with permanently installed generators that are not used or installed correctly. They should be wired into your home by a qualified electrician, who will install either an automatic or manual transfer switch, depending on the generator. The job of this switch is to transfer a power source safely from its primary source to a backup source.

To keep utility crews safe, never plug a portable generator directly into a wall outlet or electrical system, and ensure transfer switches are professionally installed and working properly. Electric lineworkers thank you in advance.

Via www.safeelectricity.org

Board meeting date correction

The Lake Country Power board meeting dates published in the December 2023 Newsline listed two incorrect dates. The

correct dates for the October and November meetings are October 29 and November 26, respectively. The full meeting schedule is available at www.lakecountrypower.coop.

NOVEMBER 28, 2023 • Regular Monthly Meeting

THE FOLLOWING REPORTS WERE GIVEN:

President Olson reported on member calls and several communications with General Manager Mark Bakk.

Directors Bruckbauer and Olson, serving as LCP's representatives on the Great River Energy board, reported on the November GRE board meeting. The board approved the 2024 budget and a three-year rate forecast, among other items.

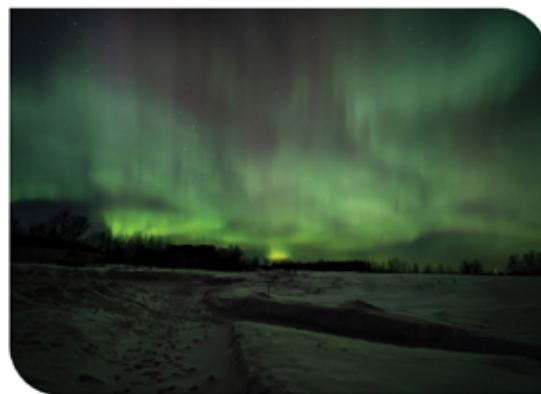
General Manager Bakk reported that GRE's request to add dual fuel capability to its Cambridge Station was approved by the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission. He added that LCP is working on two separate economic development projects.

THE FOLLOWING ACTIONS WERE TAKEN:

Approved a revenue deferral plan resolution to defer a portion of 2023 excess margin to 2024 and the future. The excess margin of about \$3 million was due to several non-budget items including lower than expected wholesale power costs and credit power adjustments from GRE.

Approved changes to GRE's articles and bylaws prior to a December 6, 2023, special meeting of the GRE board meeting to finalize the amendments.

Approved General Manager Bakk and President Olson to remain the Minnesota Rural Electric Association (MREA) voting delegate and alternative.



▶ Greg Drexler of Tamarack captured the Northern Lights dancing beautifully in the north sky.

Editor's Note: These board minutes have been condensed. A full copy of the board minutes can be read at www.lakecountrypower.coop under "My Cooperative." You'll need to sign up for access if you haven't already. Or call 800-421-9959 for a printed copy.

Co-op Contacts

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Brian Napstad, District 8	218-485-1528 bnapstad@lcp.coop
Larry Anderson, District 9	218-428-2722 landerson@lcp.coop

ENERGY EFFICIENCY TIP OF THE MONTH

Area rugs are an easy, cost-effective solution to cold floors. Adding area rugs to hard-surface flooring can add warmth to any room and keep your feet cozy on cold winter days. Choose rugs made from wool or other natural fibers and plush or high-pile textures for the most insulation. Place rugs in areas where you need additional warmth, like the foot of a bed or under a coffee table. Area rugs can enhance the aesthetic of your home and keep you cozier. Source: energy.gov

BY THE NUMBERS | NOVEMBER 2023

Lake Country Power is committed to responsibly managing resources to ensure financial stability of the cooperative. Below is a snapshot of the year-to-date unaudited financial report. A complete set of financial statements can be viewed at www.lakecountrypower.coop under "My Cooperative."



	2023	2022
Cost of Purchased Power	\$48,214,725	\$52,403,117
Other Operating Expenses	\$41,938,885	\$41,388,279
Total Cost of Electric Service	\$90,153,610	\$93,791,396



	2023	2022
Operating Margins	\$10,818,016	\$4,002,479
Non-Operating Margins	\$910,547	\$1,004,224



Directors are members of the cooperative and are elected to act in the best interests of the co-op with the same care that an ordinarily prudent person in a like position would exercise under similar circumstances.

Directors set policy, approve strategy and are charged with fiduciary responsibility of the cooperative. Directors do not oversee day-to-day LCP operations. Administration of maintenance, electric service and operations are the responsibility of employees and staff.

Members with questions or concerns about service, billing, outages or other service-related matters should call 1-800-421-9959.

Newsline

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