



March 2023

# Newsline

**BOARD MEETINGS**

March 28 ■ April 25 (9:30 am at Cohasset Service Center. Members welcome)



## IN THIS ISSUE

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## Keeping the grid reliable and resilient

The winter season is a busy one for electric cooperatives as the state of Minnesota often sees waves of heavy snowfall, sub-zero temperatures and strong winds which all pose a threat to infrastructure.

Many cooperatives across the state, including Lake Country Power, faced these storms head-on in mid-December as a major snowstorm hit the region, impacting more than 12,000 members locally.

LCP takes strategic steps every year to prepare for the winter and summer storm seasons by clearing trees and brush from cooperative power lines, equipment to create a clean right-of-way corridor through its integrated vegetation management (IVM) program.

"We prepare well in advance for extreme weather events and are increasing our efforts to build resilience into our

system," said Syver Kolden, manager of forestry services.

IVM is a big investment for the co-op, with a \$5.7 million budget for 2023 to clear 973 miles of right-of-way in the 10,800 miles service area. Lake Country Power operates its IVM program on a seven-year rotating cycle to ensure the co-op can manage rights-of-way throughout its service area and maintain reliability of its system during storms.

This year is the third year of a seven-year cycle and LCP is focusing on rights-of-way near Tower, Ely, Winton, south of Eveleth and Cotton. Its mid-cycle work, which typically applies herbicides on areas cleared two years ago, will include Cook, Orr, Side Lake, Keewatin and Meadowbrook. Other mid-cycle work will clear areas for capital projects or insect and disease infested trees that need immediate attention.

"Every time we go through an area we

get more yard trees, we get the right-of-way wider and much more maintained, because the first segment was just basically hammering out some of the big trees, a lot of dead trees, a lot of brush," Kolden said. "Once you get into the second cycle, going into our third site, it should be in pretty decent shape."

Tackling the 973 miles this year involves several strategies. Zielies Tree Service, one of the co-op's contractors that assist in right-of-way management, utilizes an all-terrain tree trimmer from Jarraff (pronounced like giraffe) that has similar features to its animal namesake. A tree crew member operates the machine from its cab and uses a rotating saw blade connected to a book-like neck that can extend out to 80 feet to trim branches and trees.

A brush cleaner — essentially a lawn mower — follows and makes sawdust out of the cut trees, and in the end, Kolden said, the idea is that the cleared right-of-way looks a natural tree line.

Other methods include tree crew members in bucket trucks, or in more rural locations cutting by hand, and using a portable woodchipper to finish the removal process.

Overall, Kolden said, managing the rights-of-way is a three-step process that involves a lot of coordination between the co-op and the crews.

"You go through and do the Jarraff work, the mower work — then June, July and August you get all the spraying



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done,” he added, “and then you come in with the ariel buckets. They do all the yard trees and the follow-up work to make sure it’s all done. There’s nothing left when they go through. It’s all complete.”

The trees targeted by the IVM program are dead, dying or considered “danger trees” that pose a threat to the power line and where removal would significantly reduce the chance of an outage down the road.

“My whole goal is to establish a



healthy edge,” Kolden said. “You start taking the edge trees and the trees behind them, they don’t have that solid anchor anymore, so they’ll start coming down.”

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, for one, and helps promote the growth of blueberries and wildflowers.

Crews will sometimes trim trees low



enough where if they fall, they won’t land on the cooperative’s lines, leaving a stump suitable for bats, owls or other animals to make their home.

“What we’re doing is providing habitat for the woodpeckers, the bats and the owls,” Kolden said. “They don’t have to come down. They can sit there for years — they’re short enough so they’re not going to hit the wires if they do fall, so we’re providing some sort of a habitat for wildlife.” ■

## Remaining 2023 District Meeting Schedule

All meetings 5 – 7 p.m.

### District 1: Jason Long

Time/Date: 5 p.m., Wednesday, March 29  
Location: North Woods School  
Address: 10248 Olson Road, Cook, MN

### District 3: Steve Raukar

Time/Date: 5 p.m., Tuesday, March 28  
Location: Minnesota Discovery Center, Taconite Room  
Address: 1005 Discovery Dr., Chisholm, MN, 55719

### District 4: Vacant

Time/Date: 5 p.m., Thursday, April 6  
Location: Cohasset Community Center  
Address: 305 1st Ave. NW, Cohasset, MN 55721

### District 5: Bob Bruckbauer

Time/Date: 5 p.m., Tuesday, April 4  
Location: Northland High School/Remer High School (commons and Room C113)  
Address: 316 E. Main St., Remer, MN 56672

### District 7: Craig Olson

Time/Date: 5 p.m., Tuesday, April 11  
Location: South Ridge School (cafeteria)  
Address: 8162 Swan Lake Road, Culver, MN 55779

### District 8: Vacant

Time/Date: 5 p.m., Thursday, April 13  
Location: Cromwell Pavilion  
Address: 1272 MN-73, Cromwell, MN 55726

### District 9: Larry Anderson

Time/Date: 5 p.m., Thursday, March 23  
Location: Hope Lutheran Church  
Address: 204 Elm Ave., Moose Lake, MN 55767

## Military personnel disconnection law

The 2007 Minnesota Legislature passed a law called the Military Personnel Disconnection Law. The law recognizes the value of military service and limits utility disconnections if a member of the household has been issued orders such as active duty, deployment, or for a permanent change in duty station during that period. To be eligible for disconnection protection, the member must contact the cooperative to request a “Military Personnel Disconnect Protection Form”, meet income eligibility guidelines and set up a mutually acceptable payment schedule.

Before disconnecting service to military personnel in situations as listed above, the cooperative must provide the following information: notice of proposed disconnection; statement explaining customers’ rights and responsibilities; list of energy assistance providers; disconnect protection form and a statement explaining the payment plan to secure continued service.

Please contact Lake Country Power, if you have any questions about the “Military Personnel Disconnection Law” or energy assistance programs.



# Grassroots efforts helped provide modifications to energy bill

At Minnesota's electric cooperatives, our priority is to provide sustainable, reliable and affordable electricity. With that goal in mind, I want to provide an update on a piece of significant legislation that the governor recently signed.

That legislation calls for Minnesota's electric sector to be 100% Carbon Free by 2040. While Minnesota's rural electric cooperatives had significant reservations with the original bill, we are pleased to report that the final package is better than what was first proposed, despite our continued concerns about affordability and reliability.

Our grassroots efforts were successful in getting legislators from both sides of the aisle to work with us to add amendments that addressed some of our major concerns. Thank you to everyone who reached out to your legislators and made your voice heard. It made a difference.



BY DARRICK MOE  
President and CEO  
of the Minnesota  
Rural Electric  
Association

Minnesota's electric cooperatives have long been working and planning toward a sustainable, reliable and affordable energy future. And, we want you, our members, to know that the heat will be on in the dead of winter and the AC available in the dog days of summer. Furthermore, we want the electricity we provide to always be affordable for your family while being good stewards of our planet.

The Minnesota Rural Electric Association successfully secured changes to the legislation that will provide more flexibility in implementing its mandates. As one example, we sought and obtained language providing greater flexibility in the use of renewable energy credits (RECs) as an option to comply with the carbon reduction mandates. We also received a reduction in the steep timeline, allowing co-ops to reach 60% carbon-free generation by 2030, rather than 80% at that time. All utilities still need to be 100% carbon free by 2040. However, the legislation contains "off-ramps" that allow utilities to ask the Public Utilities Commission to modify the legislation's requirements if needed to protect reliability or affordability.

There were other adjustments Minnesota's rural electric providers advocated for to improve reliability and affordability that did not make it into the final bill, but we remain hopeful that additional concerns can be addressed in the future.

In the end, we want you to know that your electric cooperatives are working to provide an environmentally friendly energy future while keeping the reliability and affordability you expect. We ask that you stay engaged as more legislation moves through the process and can sign up for alerts at <https://voicesforcooperativepower.com/minnesota/>. ■



## RECIPE CORNER BANANA FLIPS

From the  
Kitchen of:  
**Florence Ganter,  
Cloquet**



- 1 yellow cake mix
- 1 pkg 3.4 oz instant banana cream pudding
- 1 ½ cups milk
- 4 large eggs
- 1 tsp. banana extract

Spray 2 jelly roll pans (10x15) with nonstick spray. Line one of the pans with wax paper, with the paper sticking out at the ends, then spray the wax paper. Combine above ingredients at low speed then high speed for 2 minutes until light. Divide the batter between the two pans and smooth tops (about 3 cups in each). Bake each at 350 degrees for 15 minutes. Cool.

Filling: Dissolve 1 cup sugar in ½ cup milk. Add ½ cup softened butter, ½ cup vegetable shortening, 3 tsp flour and 2 tsp. banana extract. Beat at high speed for 5 minutes (or more) until light and fluffy. Spread filling over the non-wax paper cake, then flip the wax paper onto the first. Peel off wax paper and cut into squares.

Submit your favorite recipe to Lake Country Power, Attn: Editor, 8535 Park Ridge Drive, Mountain Iron, MN 55768, or e-mail [jburnes@lcp.coop](mailto:jburnes@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.

## smart hub Tip

**Q:**

Do you have an Energy Wise® meter for one of our load management programs like dual fuel or water heating?

**A:**

If you answered yes, be sure to sign up for load control notifications via e-mail and/or text alerts through your SmartHub account. For more information or to sign up for SmartHub, visit [www.lakecountrypower.coop](http://www.lakecountrypower.coop) > My Account > My Notifications.



# 7 counties receive state disaster aid from December winter storm

Seven Minnesota counties are receiving state disaster assistance funds as the result of a damaging winter storm that hit northeastern Minnesota in mid-December.

The governor's office authorized state aid in early February for the counties of St. Louis, Carlton, Aitkin, Cass, Pine, Crow Wing and Lincoln.

The St. Louis County Sheriff's Office said later in the month that the county would receive \$570,000. Aid received by other counties has not been disclosed.

Heavy snow and high winds downed many trees and branches, blocking roads and causing widespread power outages Dec. 13-16. More than 12,000 Lake Country Power members were impacted by the storms, with some out of power until Dec. 19.

The Minnesota Public Safety's Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management estimated the storm caused about \$4.5 million in damages. St. Louis County said its preliminary damage assessment was more than \$760,000, meaning state aid will cover



75% of the damage.

Those state funds, the county said, will be divided between electric co-ops, multiple snowmobile clubs that helped clear debris from trails and St. Louis County Public Works to cover road clearing costs.

At the time of press, the amount of state aid LCP will receive is unknown.

## 13 members meet filing deadline

The following LCP members met the filing requirements for nomination as a candidate for the co-op's board of directors. The nomination deadline was 4:30 p.m., February 9.

District 3: Steve Raukar, Hibbing\*

District 4\*\*: Ernie Braunschweig, Cohasset; Carter Pettersen, Grand Rapids; Jeff Sheldon, Cohasset; and Lee Thole, Cohasset

District 6: Dan Kingsley, Hill City\*; Don Simons, Grand Rapids

District 7: Craig Olson, Culver\*

District 8\*\*: Marvin Ketola, McGregor; Brian Napstad, McGregor; Daniel Reed, Kettle River; Danny Smith, Tamarack; and Paul Vernon, Tamarack

\* Denotes Incumbent

\*\*Special election to fill a two-year vacancy

Ballots will mail between March 31 and April 5. Online voting begins April 5, 2023, at 8:00 a.m. Central Standard Time, and ends April 20, 2023, at 11:00 a.m. Central. If voting online, instructions will be provided on your ballot. Otherwise, members in Districts 3, 4, 6, 7 and 8 may vote by mail with their paper ballot, or in person at the annual meeting before polls close.

## Where's Willie? Enjoying retired life!



Willie Wiredhand has been found all over Newsline for the past year, and now he's unplugging to enjoy a round of golf or a day at the lake.

It isn't a full retirement for Willie, who in 1950 was selected by National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) membership as the official mascot of electric cooperatives nationwide. You might still see him around Lake Country Power or another NRECA cooperative as he continues to be the face of rural electrification, but his time hiding in our pages has drawn to a close.

In the meantime, we hope Lake Country Power members enjoyed the game — especially the prizes from the "Where's Willie?" contest — and thank you for playing along!

Be sure to check out the May edition of Newsline for the next contest, and best of luck, Willie!



# The power behind your power

## Lineworker Appreciation Day is April 10

You've likely noticed Lake Country Power's crews out and about, working on power lines and other electrical equipment in the community. It's no secret that a lineworker's job is tough—but it's a job that's essential and must be done, often in challenging conditions. Next month, as we celebrate Lineworker Appreciation Day on April 10, I thought I'd share some interesting facts about electric lineworkers with you.

The work can be heavy, in more ways than one. Did you know the equipment and tools that a lineworker carries while climbing a utility pole can weigh up to 50 pounds? That's the same as carrying six gallons of water. Speaking of utility poles, lineworkers are required to climb poles ranging anywhere from 30 to 120 feet tall. Needless to say, if you have a fear of heights, this likely isn't the career path for you.

Lineworkers must be committed to their career—because it's not just a job, it's a lifestyle. The long hours and ever-present danger can truly take a toll. In fact, being a lineworker is listed in the top 10 most dangerous jobs in the U.S.

Lineworkers often work non-traditional hours, outdoors



in difficult conditions. While the job does not require a four-year college degree, it does require technical education, years of training and hands-on learning. Did you know that to become a journeyman lineworker can take more than 7,000 hours of training (or about four years)? That's because working with high-voltage equipment requires specialized skills, experience and an ongoing mental toughness. Shortcuts are not an option, and there is no room for error in this line of work.

Despite the many challenges, Lake Country Power's lineworkers are committed to powering our local community. During severe weather events that bring major power outages, lineworkers are among the first ones called. They must be ready to leave the comfort of their home and families unexpectedly, and they don't return until the job is done, often days later. That's why the lineworker's family is also dedicated to service. They understand the importance of the job to the community.

In addition to the highly visible tasks lineworkers perform, their job today goes far beyond climbing utility poles to repair a wire. Today's lineworkers are information experts who can pinpoint power outages from miles away. Line crews now use laptops, tablets, drones and other technologies to map outages, survey damage and troubleshoot problems.

Being a lineworker is a job that is absolutely essential to the life of our community. Without the exceptional dedication and commitment of these hardworking men and women, we simply would not have the reliable electricity that we need for everyday life.

So, the next time you see a lineworker, please thank them for the work they do to keep power flowing, regardless of the time of day or weather conditions. After all, lineworkers are the power behind your power. Please join us as we recognize them on April 10. ■

Mike Forsman was elected by members in Lake Country Power District 2. He can be reached at 218-365-5789 or [mforsman@lcp.coop](mailto:mforsman@lcp.coop).

## Raukar, Anderson earn CCD certification



► Pictured (from left): LCP Board President Craig Olson, District 3 Director Steve Raukar, District 9 Director Larry Anderson and LCP General Manager Mark Bakk. Raukar and Anderson recently received their Credentialed Cooperative Director (CCD) certification from the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association. The CCD prepares directors to fulfill their fiduciary duty as elected officials serving on behalf of their membership.

## Save the date: 2023 Annual Meeting

Be sure to save the date and attend this year's Lake Country Power annual meeting. Thursday, April 20, 2023 Cromwell-Wright School, Cromwell 4 p.m. is registration and dinner. Meeting begins at 5:30 p.m.

More information at [www.lakecountrypower.com/annual-meeting](http://www.lakecountrypower.com/annual-meeting)



**DECEMBER 30, 2022 • Regular Monthly Meeting****THE FOLLOWING REPORTS WERE GIVEN:**

President Olson reported that he received several member calls relating to outages due to the winter storm of heavy snow, wind and cold throughout LCP's service area the week of December 13. He offered a big "thanks" to members and those who assisted in the outage restoration.

General Manager Bakk reported about Great River Energy's November financials, the process to exit Northland Connect business at year-end, a legislative seminar hosted by the Minnesota Rural Electric Association and others.

**THE FOLLOWING ACTIONS WERE TAKEN:**

Approved the 2023 capital and operating budget and rate scenario 2, effective March 1, 2023.

Received 22 applications for the Education Improvement Program and directed LCP staff to contact the following schools to the January board meeting to present and discuss their applications: Northland Community Schools, Chisholm Public Schools, Hill City School District, Northern Lights Community School, Cromwell-Wright Public School, Willow River Area School, Grand Rapids/Bigfork, Hibbing Public Schools, Mesabi East, Floodwood Public School District, St. Louis County Schools and Ely Public Schools.



► Barney Chamberlin of Virginia photographed the neighbor's horse, Khan, enjoying a meal in her field and his new pasture in the Pike area. It was foggy but the sun hit the photo just right.

**Editor's Note:** These board minutes have been condensed. A full copy of the board minutes can be read at [www.lakecountrypower.coop](http://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**

**Mark Bakk,** 800-421-9959  
General Manager mbakk@lcp.coop

**Jason Long,** 218-240-9611  
District 1 jlong@lcp.coop

**Michael Forsman,** 218-365-5789  
District 2 mforsman@lcp.coop

**Steve Raukar,** 218-966-0298  
District 3 sraukar@lcp.coop

**Vacant (To be filled spring 2023),**  
District 4

**Robert Bruckbauer,** 218-290-8729  
District 5 rbruckbauer@lcp.coop

**Daniel Kingsley,** 218-259-7366  
District 6 dkingsley@lcp.coop

**Craig Olson,** 218-393-2276  
District 7 colson@lcp.coop

**Vacant (To be filled spring 2023),**  
District 8

**Larry Anderson,** 218-428-2722  
District 9 landerson@lcp.coop

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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800-421-9959 • [www.lakecountrypower.coop](http://www.lakecountrypower.coop)  
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**ENERGY EFFICIENCY TIP OF THE MONTH**

Washing windows and screens is a great way to practice energy efficiency during spring cleaning. Clean windows and screens make your home brighter by allowing more sunlight in, reducing the need for lamps and fixtures. Clean screens also allow more fresh air in the home when the windows are open to recycle indoor air. Natural light and clean air are energy savers, and they enhance overall health and productivity. Source: [energy.gov](http://energy.gov)

**Comparative Operating Statement**

Year-To-Date — December 2022

*The following figures are preliminary and unaudited year-end financials.*

	2022	2021
Electric Operating Revenue	\$ 108,745,308	\$ 95,617,761
Cost of Purchased Power	57,241,822	50,811,298
Distribution Expense - Operations & Maintenance	17,474,929	14,193,206
Consumer Accounts Expense & Informational	4,066,972	3,483,895
Administrative and General Expense	6,867,542	6,269,118
Depreciation, Interest Expense and Other Deductions	18,148,412	17,654,471
<b>TOTAL ELECTRIC OPERATING EXPENSES</b>	<b>103,799,677</b>	<b>92,411,987</b>
Net Electric Operating Margins	4,945,630	3,205,774
Non-Operating Margins	2,126,236	4,124,578
Total Margins before Subsidiaries	7,071,866	7,330,352
Net Income (Loss) from Subsidiaries	186,480	1,879,662
<b>TOTAL MARGINS</b>	<b>\$ 7,258,346</b>	<b>\$ 9,210,014</b>
<b>TOTAL KWH SOLD (YEAR-TO-DATE)</b>	<b>755,897,834</b>	<b>650,196,183</b>

*2021 operations included PPP loan forgiveness, which favorably impacted operating expenses and subsidiary operations.*

**Editor's Note:** These financials are condensed. A complete set of financials can be viewed at [www.lakecountrypower.coop](http://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 copy.