



**OCTOBER 2025**

## The Simple Bear Necessities at Vince Shute Wildlife Sanctuary

Back in the 1960s, the bears were doing more than stealing from Vince Shute's picnic basket. They were breaking into cabins and raiding the place.

So as local legend goes, Shute became their personal chef, making sourdough pancakes and leaving them on the land — away from the cabins — so the bears could fatten up for hibernation.

Soon enough people followed, hoping to catch a glance at the bears as they migrated to the spot just outside Orr, feeding on pancakes or donuts. And in 1995, the American Bear Association (ABA) formed, officially making the former logging land a sanctuary for the beloved mammals.

"They started a feeding program where it was more closely associated with what bears naturally eat," said Ryan Horner, a volunteer at the nonprofit Vince Shute Wildlife Sanctuary. The donuts are cut out of the diet in favor of more granola, nuts and fruits. "Stuff that compliments their natural diet and what they eat in the wild."

The sanctuary opens on Memorial Day weekend each year as the bears wander in from their winter nap. Labor Day weekend is the end of the public viewing season. During that summer stretch, it opens Tuesday through Saturday from 5 to 8 p.m., with admission prices going toward operational costs.

General admission observers arrive at the sanctuary and are bussed into the viewing area, where a gift shop and freestanding outlook deck await to watch the bears. The viewing area is about 2 acres, but

the entire property backs into forests of state and federal lands, and some logging operations, so the bears are completely free to roam and not in captivity.

The number of bears visiting can reach into the 100 range, Horner said, and most leave as the public season closes. Staff and volunteers from all over the nation stick around in the fall to feed the bears who stay late, often younger ones, and use the months before opening to make repairs and prepare.

He's in his 11th season at the sanctuary and his wife, Steph, is the executive director of the ABA. It didn't take long for Ryan to adjust to being on the ground with the bears after he started. Most show up to eat and go about their business, and are generally more timid than the general public think.

"The first few times it was like 'Oh, wow,'" he said. "Just treat them with respect — they're more worried about food and other bears than they are of us."

The Vince Shute Wildlife Sanctuary is located at 12541 Nett Lake Rd. in Orr. More information on how to volunteer or donate can be found at [www.americanbear.org](http://www.americanbear.org).



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# Powered By Purpose



This month, electric cooperatives across the country take time to celebrate National Co-op Month and reflect on the unique advantages of being part of a cooperative.

It's also the perfect time to thank the members who make it all possible. For us, it's not just a celebration. It's a chance to reaffirm the values that guide everything we do.

As a member-elected director of Lake Country Power, I see purpose in action every single day. Unlike investor-owned utilities, our co-op doesn't exist to make profits for distant shareholders. We exist to serve you — our members, our neighbors and our communities. That purpose is what sets us apart. It's why we were founded, and it's what continues to drive every decision we make.

At its core, being a cooperative means we are member-owned and locally controlled. That's not just a tagline; it's the very heart of our business model. Members have a voice in how our co-op

operates. You elect myself and fellow board members who live right here in our service area and understand the unique challenges and opportunities our communities face. Decisions are made here at home, by people who care about the same things you do.

This local accountability means we can stay focused on what matters most: delivering reliable, affordable electricity and providing real value to the people we serve.

Our board, staff and employees work hard to manage costs and keep rates as low as possible, because we know how much rising prices affect families and small businesses in our area. And we are always looking for ways to improve the quality of life in the places we serve. Community support isn't an afterthought — it's part of our core values.

That's the power of the cooperative difference. That's what it means to be powered by purpose.

This National Co-op Month, I encourage you to take pride in your cooperative membership. You're not just a customer—you're a member, a stakeholder, and a vital part of a larger effort to keep our community strong, connected and energized.

*Brian Napstad was elected by members in Lake Country Power District 8. He can be reached at 218-485-1528 or [bnapstad@lcp.coop](mailto:bnapstad@lcp.coop).*



**Sincerely,**  
Brian Napstad  
District 8 Director

## Board Meeting Highlights: June 24, 2025

### REGULAR MONTHLY MEETING

#### The Following Reports Were Given:

President Olson reported that he received several member calls related to storms and outages experienced between June 22-24.

General Manager Bakk reported on meetings he attended with Great River

Energy (GRE), and discussed GRE's budget and cost of power. He stated GRE is exploring a potential natural gas peaking plant in Grand Rapids.

#### The Following Actions Were Taken:

Approved land sales to members at the former Goodland, Gunn, Hill City and Sand Lake substation sites, totaling \$2,500.

Approved amendment to extend GRE transmission service contract to December 31, 2060.

Approved revisions to Policy 305 and Policy 609.

*Editor's Note: These board minutes have been condensed. To view a complete copy, visit [www.lakecountrypower.coop](http://www.lakecountrypower.coop) under "My Cooperative." A SmartHub account is required. To request a printed copy, call (800) 421-9959.*

**UPCOMING BOARD MEETINGS: OCTOBER 28 | NOVEMBER 25** (9:30 am at the Cohasset Service Center, Members Welcome)



## DID YOU KNOW?

Lake Country Power serves 8 counties across northeastern Minnesota: Aitkin, Carlton, Cass, Itasca, Koochiching, Lake, Pine and St. Louis.



## 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.

## Mission: Operation RoundUp®

Lake Country Power's Operation Round Up® program provides member supported grants to numerous local projects and programs. Those seeking funding will now be required to apply online beginning November 16, 2025, and a paper option will no longer be available. These applications will be for grants awarded in 2026 and thereafter.

### What is Operation Round Up®?

Operation Round Up® is a community support policy that the LCP Board of Directors approved in 2003 and implemented in 2004. Members can voluntarily round up their electric bill to the next dollar each month. That cumulative total is available on a quarterly basis to qualifying non-profit community projects and programs.

Each quarter, roughly \$55,000 is awarded to nonprofit organizations that meet specific giving criteria. Anywhere from 30-60 applicants seek support during each quarterly cycle.

### Why Operation Round Up®

This program has proved to be an important source of funding for a wide range of community organizations. Beneficiaries include food shelves, townships, volunteer fire departments, quilters, extracurricular school activities, basic human needs providers, community events, and others — to mention some — that meet the giving guidelines.

### What are the benefits?

The "coined" phrase for this program is that "your small change can make a BIG difference." For pennies a month members can help support community programs that are so important to us all.

### How do you get involved?

Presently, nearly 70% of Lake Country Power members participate in Operation Round Up®. To those already contributing, we extend a resounding "THANK YOU!"

Participating members give an average annual tax-deductible contribution of \$5.52 with a maximum of \$11.88/year. Since the program's inception, Lake Country Power members have contributed more than \$3.4 million to our local communities!

If you would like to participate, please call the cooperative office at 800-421-9959 and speak to a customer account representative. They would be happy to opt you into this great program. We'd love for you to join us!



**Your Small Change,  
Makes a Big Impact**



## 4 Best Ways to Stay Cyber Safe



Protecting yourself online doesn't have to be complicated or expensive. A few simple habits can dramatically reduce your risk of falling victim to cybercrime. While you can never be "hackproof," you can become resilient in the online world.

October is National Cybersecurity Awareness Month, and at the heart of online safety are four essential behaviors to help shield your personal information, protect your online accounts and keep your devices secure.

**1. Use long, unique, and complex passwords.** Your passwords are the first line of defense between a criminal and your sensitive information. Every password must be long, unique and complex, with at least 16 characters long and a random mix of letters, numbers and symbols. Also important, don't reuse passwords.

**2. Enable multifactor authentication (MFA).** Multifactor authentication (sometimes called 2FA) adds an extra security layer by requiring something more than just your password to log in. Think of it as using two locks on your digital door instead of only one.

**3. Keep software updated.** Software updates don't just bring new features. They often fix security flaws that criminals exploit. It only usually takes a few minutes, and it's best to use automatic updates on your device to help remind you.

**4. Look out for phishing and scams.** Phishing remains the most common threat. Criminals send fake emails, texts or social media messages to trick you into revealing sensitive information or clicking malicious links. These messages aim to get you to click before you think by playing your emotions. Scammers will even call you!

Here's how to look out for phishing and scams:

- Be highly skeptical of unexpected messages, especially those urging immediate action or asking for personal details.
- Phishing emails can light up positive emotions ("You've won our sweepstakes!") or negative ones ("You've been hacked!").
- Don't click suspicious links or download unexpected attachments.
- Report phishing attempts to your email provider, social media platform or IT department.
- If you're unsure if a message is legit, ask a friend, coworker or family member. A second set of eyes can be invaluable in spotting scams.

*Article provided by the National Cybersecurity Alliance*

## ENERGY EFFICIENCY

As winter approaches, now is the time to inspect your home for air leaks around windows. Leaks reduce indoor comfort and lead to higher heating costs. If you can see daylight around the edges of a window frame or if a window rattles slightly when touched, air is likely leaking. Caulking and weatherstripping are simple, effective methods for sealing windows. These materials are available in a variety of compounds and forms, each designed for different types of surfaces. Choose the right product and apply it properly to reduce heat loss, improve comfort and lower energy bills.





# LCP Members Gather for Summer Appreciation Picnics

More than 850 members attended Member Appreciation Days at the Cohasset, Mountain Iron and Kettle River Service Centers in August. The casual gathering brought the co-op community together with food, bucket truck rides, a bounce house obstacle course and booths with information on LCP programs. Can't wait to see everyone next year!





VIEW MORE PHOTOS

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## By The Numbers | July 2025

Lake Country Power is committed to responsibly managing resources to maintain the Cooperative’s financial stability. 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](http://www.lakecountrypower.coop) under “My Cooperative.”

2025

\$72,721,156

2024

\$69,096,747

YTD OPERATING REVENUE

	2025	2024
Cost of Purchased Power	\$37,088,036	\$34,136,567
Other Operating Expenses	\$30,776,489	\$27,899,918
Total Cost of Electric Service	\$67,864,525	\$62,036,485



YTD kWh's SOLD

419,914,526

2024 Comparison: 411,445,395



51,630

ACTIVE SERVICES

2024 Comparison: 51,459


	2025	2024
Operating Margins	\$4,856,630	\$7,060,263
Non-Operating Margins	\$1,313,296	\$1,013,608

YTD TOTAL MARGINS

\$6,169,926

2024 Comparison: \$8,073,871





UTILITY PLANT (NET)

\$322,738,608

2024 Comparison: \$310,077,705

## Co-op Contacts

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*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 services, billing, outages or other service-related matters should call 1-800-421-9959.*

### Newsline

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**Lake Country Power Service Centers:**  
Cohasset • Kettle River • Mountain Iron  
800-421-9959 • www.lakecountrypower.coop

# Lake Country Power

*An equal opportunity provider and employer.*

## It's Time to Change the Batteries!



Now is a good time to change the batteries in your smoke alarms and other safety devices. It's also good to change the batteries in your programmable thermostat as well.

"Several times a year, I receive service orders about someone whose electric heat isn't working or it's working but intermittently," said Ron Hardy, LCP's member service technician. "A lot of times it's because the batteries are dead in their programmable thermostat which prevents the thermostat from turning on your heating source."

Changing the batteries in your programmable thermostat is a quick and simple thing to do before the heating season.



## Easy Blueberry Cobbler

Submitted By: Gail Johnson, Virginia, MN

1 can sweet condensed milk	8 tbs melted butter
½ cup milk	2 cups blueberries
1 ¼ cups self-rising flour	¼ cup of sugar

### DIRECTIONS:

Mix the first four ingredients and pour into a greased 9x13 pan. Sprinkle blueberries and sugar on top. Bake at 350 degrees for 35 minutes.

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



# IS YOUR DUAL FUEL HEATING PROGRAM WORKING PROPERLY?

**We're asking because when demand for electricity is high during the winter months, your Dual Fuel electric heating source can be shut off for up to 12 hours at a time. During this winter's heating season, the electric heat portion of your Dual Fuel system is expected to be controlled (shut off) a minimum of 100 – 150 hours, and it could be controlled up to a maximum of 400 hours during the season.**

We're reminding you to take time this fall to check the electric and non-electric (dual) parts of your heating equipment. Here are five practical tips:

- 1.** Operate the electric heating equipment to be sure the system responds to a "call for heat" from the thermostat.
- 2.** Operate the oil or propane system also to be sure the system responds to a "call for heat" from the thermostat.
- 3.** Have your gas or oil furnace/boiler checked periodically by a professional HVAC contractor. For cold weather, there is nothing better than having peace of mind knowing your Dual Fuel heating system will work as it should. For a list of contractors, visit [lakecountrypower.coop](http://lakecountrypower.coop) > Money Saving Programs > Contractor Resources.
- 4.** If you wish to monitor the anticipated control periods of Dual Fuel through the heating season, visit [lakecountrypower.coop](http://lakecountrypower.coop), and then click on "Today's Load" on the homepage of the LCP website.
- 5.** If you'd like to be notified in advance of a Dual Fuel control event (text message and/or e-mail), sign up for load control notifications in SmartHub. Don't have SmartHub yet? Visit [lakecountrypower.coop](http://lakecountrypower.coop) to get started.

**Dual Fuel is a great value for co-op members, and saves a typical home hundreds of dollars each year.**



A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative



**800-421-9959**

**[lakecountrypower.coop](http://lakecountrypower.coop)**

*This institution is an equal opportunity provider and employer.*



# HEAT YOUR HOME

## EFFICIENTLY & COST-EFFECTIVELY THIS WINTER

Advances in electric heating technology, particularly air source heat pumps (ASHP), are helping to make electricity the go-to choice. They perform well in cold climates and have quickly become cost competitive with conventional furnaces.

### QUICK FACTS ON AIR SOURCE HEAT PUMPS:

- ASHPs are three to five times more efficient than most traditional heating systems because it takes less energy to move heat around than to produce it.
- With an ASHP, the heat energy itself is taken from the air outside (even when temperatures drop well below freezing), meaning energy is only needed to transport and distribute that heat indoors.
- While the annual expected cost of heating a home with a natural gas furnace can be slightly cheaper in some areas, ASHPs are far more affordable than propane.
- Can I get by with electric space heaters? Even though ASHPs and portable space heaters both run on electricity, their efficiency and overall cost to operate are vastly different. A space heater can cost up to \$50 per day — for only one room.