



# THE OUTLET

Monthly Publication of Mille Lacs Energy Cooperative

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

VOLUME 53  
NUMBER 4  
APRIL 2022

## THANK A LINEWORKER

### *Celebrate Lineworkers in April!*

You've likely noticed MLEC's crews out and about, working on power lines and other electrical equipment in our 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. This month, we celebrate our lineworkers. In honor of our line crews, here are some interesting facts about electric lineworkers.

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 college degree, it does require technical skills, 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, MLEC'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 homes and families unexpectedly, and they don't return until the job is done, sometimes days later. That's why the lineworker's family is also dedicated to service. They understand the importance of the job to the community.

Being a lineworker may not seem like a glamorous job, but it 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 in April!

# 2022 ANNUAL MEETING

We are excited to announce that our Annual Meeting is back to being an in-person event! Join us at the beautiful Minnesota National Golf Course for a free meal, lots of door prizes, and the most up-to-date information regarding your cooperative.

Members will hear from MLEC leadership and learn important information about the past year and what lies ahead for MLEC.

We hope to see you there!

**WHEN:** *Thursday, May 5<sup>th</sup>*

**WHERE:** *MN National Golf Course*  
23247 480th Street  
McGregor, MN 55760

## **SCHEDULE:**

**Registration** - 4:30-5:45 p.m.

**Meal Served** - 5:00-5:45 p.m.

**Business Meeting** - 5:45 p.m.

## **Submit questions for the Annual Meeting**

Have a question for the co-op? We encourage members to submit their questions ahead of time via email or mail. To be addressed at the Annual Meeting, questions must be received prior to Friday, April 29th. Questions submitted after April 29th will receive a response after the Annual Meeting by phone or email.

### **MAIL TO:**

Kassie Peterson  
Mille Lacs Energy Co-op  
P.O. Box 230  
Aitkin, MN 56431

### **OR E-MAIL:**

[annualmeeting@mlecmn.com](mailto:annualmeeting@mlecmn.com)

## **How can you vote?**

MLEC offers three different ways to cast your vote, including online, by mail, and in-person at the Annual Meeting. A sample ballot is located on the back page of this newsletter and available online at [www.mlecmn.net/annual-meeting](http://www.mlecmn.net/annual-meeting). Online and mailed ballots must be received by May 4th.

### **1. Voting Online**

Our members can now vote online! Follow the directions shown on this page to login to the DirectVote election website.

### **2. Voting By Mail**

Ballots were mailed to all members on April 5th. Simply follow the directions, fill out the ballot, enclose it in the designated envelopes, and send.

### **3. Voting In-Person**

If you prefer to vote in-person, you may do so at the Annual Meeting. Drop off your completed ballot or fill one out when you register for the meeting. All in-person ballots will be added to the electronic and mail votes when the business meeting begins.

**Questions or concerns?**  
MLEC's Board of Directors represent you!

**Barbara Welty - District 1**  
320/692-4800  
[bwelty@mlecmn.com](mailto:bwelty@mlecmn.com)  
Secretary/Treasurer

**Carol Pundt - District 2**  
218/678-3256  
[cpundt@mlecmn.com](mailto:cpundt@mlecmn.com)

**Harold Harms - District 3**  
218/232-2935  
[hharms@mlecmn.com](mailto:hharms@mlecmn.com)  
President

**Aileen DeMenge - District 4**  
218/768-4900  
[ademenge@mlecmn.com](mailto:ademenge@mlecmn.com)  
Assistant Secretary/Treasurer

**Don Appel - District 5**  
218/927-4134  
[dappel@mlecmn.com](mailto:dappel@mlecmn.com)  
Vice President

**Bruce Robinson - District 6**  
218/851-4760  
[brobinson@mlecmn.com](mailto:brobinson@mlecmn.com)

**Michael Reem - District 7**  
218/839-5697  
[mreem@mlecmn.com](mailto:mreem@mlecmn.com)

**Sarah Cron - CEO**  
218/927-8224  
[scron@mlecmn.com](mailto:scron@mlecmn.com)

Find minutes from MLEC Board meetings at:  
<http://www.mlecmn.net>  
under **My Co-op**

*This newsletter is the voice of your tax and interest paying RURAL ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE, an organization which was formed to supply you with low-cost, dependable electricity when other sources failed to do so.*

Managing Editor: Kassie Peterson,  
Communications Specialist

## **Online Voting Instructions**

*\*Do not mail your ballot if you plan to vote online.*



### **DirectVote Election Website**

To access the login page of the official 2022 MLEC election, please type [www.directvote.net/MLEC](http://www.directvote.net/MLEC) into the address bar located at the top of your Internet browser.



### **Login Information**

Use the **Member Number** and **Election Passcode** printed on the back of the return envelope included in your mail-in ballot. You will need these two numbers to login online.



### **Cast Your Ballot**

Once registered, follow the online voting instructions and vote for candidates and bylaw changes.

# SAFETY IS TOP PRIORITY

Dear Member:

I would be remiss if I did not address the recent incident of an MLEC employee making contact with an energized power line in our Vineland Substation. Of utmost importance, he is alive; however, his injuries are serious and are being monitored daily.

It can be easy to go about our lives, become numb to the world's turmoil, even forget the value of a kind word. In this darkest time of tragedy inside the MLEC family, I have been awe inspired by our comrades pulling together for their co-worker; by the faith and strength from a wife and family; by the outpouring of support from complete strangers; all to help in a time of need. It truly exemplifies the cooperative spirit, and why I am so proud to work in this industry – and for MLEC.

Safety is a core value at MLEC. Our entire company participates in annual AWAIR and Right to Know safety trainings through our safety trainer and MLEC member, Deanna Soderberg, of Powerline Safety. Our lineworkers have monthly safety trainings with Deanna, the Minnesota Rural Electric Association (MREA), the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA), Federated Rural Insurance, and more. They also perform daily job assignment overviews and tailgates (safety briefings) prior to each day's work. While this training has paid off (National annual employee electrical contact counts have dropped from 31 to 18 in the last 12 years), there is always severe danger working on and around energized power lines.

Last month, you may have read a notice in the Outlet asking our members to remove flags, signs, and other foreign objects from our power poles. We even received several complaints for making the request. Please understand that it is not for a lack of patriotism – it is to ensure our lineworkers go home to their families at the end of the day. Catching fire retardant clothing on a nail or getting a hole in a rubber glove due to a foreign object on a power pole can literally put one of our lineworkers in a life and death situation. We simply cannot and will not subject our crews to an unsafe work environment.

On behalf of our MLEC Board of Directors and employees, I would like to thank the calm and steady nature of the employees involved in the MAYDAY call. I would like to thank Monte Fronk, the First Responder to arrive at the scene. You all

saved this man's life. I would like to thank the ambulance crew and helicopter crew that got him to Minneapolis. I would like to thank the MLEC employees, directors, Powerline Safety, the electric cooperative family, and countless – selfless – strangers that are stepping up to help his family through this tragedy. For now, please go home. Hug your spouse, kids, and pets. Say "I love you" to those who matter most. Breathe and find one good thing in your day.



Sarah Cron  
CEO

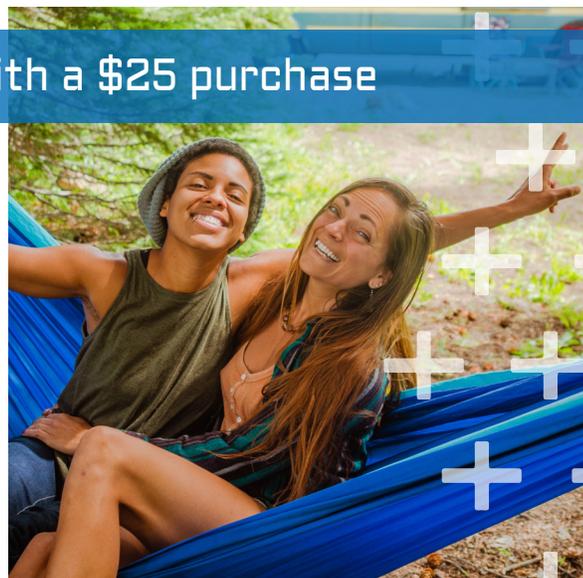
## Savings and relaxation—FREE hammock with a \$25 purchase

Just in time for Earth Day and warmer weather, members can receive a free hammock! All you have to do is spend \$25 at the Energy Wise MN online store to qualify.



ENERGY WISE  MN

\*This offer is only available for a limited time. While supplies last. Visit the online store to get yours today! [www.energywisemnstore.com/earthday](http://www.energywisemnstore.com/earthday)



# LET'S DISH

Thank you to Cecilia Anderlie of Onamia for sharing this month's recipe.

## SEND US YOUR RECIPES!

We'll credit your account **\$10.00** if it's printed in THE OUTLET

### MAIL TO:

Kassie Peterson  
Mille Lacs Energy, P.O. Box 230 Aitkin,  
MN 56431

### OR E-MAIL:

kpeterson@mlecmn.com



## GERMAN APPLE BARS

3 eggs  
1 cup oil  
2 cups sugar  
2 cups flour  
4 cups apples, chopped finely

1 tsp. salt  
1 tsp. baking soda  
1 1/4 tsp. cinnamon  
1/2 cup chopped nuts

In a heavily greased 9x13 inch pan, spread the apples evenly across the bottom. Mix all of the ingredients in a separate bowl then pour over apples. Bake at 350 degrees for 40-45 minutes or until toothpick comes out clean. Enjoy!

# TRUST BOARD GRANTS

The Mille Lacs Community Trust Board meets quarterly to distribute funds raised through Operation Round Up. This March, the board awarded \$17,000 in grants to local non-profit organizations including: Aitkin Friends of the Arts/Aitkin All Class Reunion V, Aitkin County 4-H (Shooting Sports and Wildlife), Aitkin Grad Blast, Crisis Line and Referral Service, Crosby-Ironton Grad Blast, Food Shelves (Aitkin Area, Aitkin Community, Cuyuna, Garrison Area, McGregor Area, Family Pathways @ Onamia, Palisade Area, St. James), Isle After Prom, Jaques Art Center, McGregor Area Scholarship Foundation, Northern Waters Land Trust. The total amount of grants awarded since the start of Operation Round Up has reached an astounding \$1,390,879!

Operation Round Up is a voluntary program at Mille Lacs Energy Cooperative where our generous members round-up their electric bill payment to the nearest dollar. All of the

funds raised go into the trust fund which is donated back to the community. Board members include: Lisa Anderson, Kim Waffensmith, Darlene Stigen, Bethany Sellers, Charles Schotzko, Becky Joerger, Bob Nelson, and Doyle Jelsing.

To receive a Trust application, contact Deb Chute at 218-927-8221 or 1-800-450-2191. The Trust Board meets the second Wednesday in March, June, September and December. Applications are accepted at any time. Those submitted a week before the quarterly meetings will go to the board. Anything submitted after will be seen at the next board meeting.

*Photographed L to R First Row: Carol Wiherski, Linda Cavston, Dave Cavston, Elizabeth Mbutchom, Bryan Johnson, Mary Marana. Second Row: Angie & Isabelle Harmon, Owen Chute, Reese Wendlandt, Kevin Wendlandt, Gary Tibbitts, Barb Packer, Susan Ilstrup, Linda Straight, Rita Pierce, Sharon Bruggman, Wendy Johnson.*



# NOTICE OF ANNUAL MEETING

Notice is hereby given that the Annual Meeting of the members of Mille Lacs Energy Cooperative will be held at Minnesota National Golf Course, 23247 480th Street, McGregor, Minnesota, on Thursday, May 5, 2022. Registration will begin at 4:30 P.M. and the annual business meeting will begin at 5:45 P.M. The purpose of the meeting is:

1. Election of directors from Districts 1, and 2. In accordance with Article III, Section 4 of the Cooperative's Bylaws, directors shall be elected at the annual meeting by those members who are present in person, vote online, or by mail vote.
2. Transaction of any other business that may properly come before this meeting.

By Order of the Board of Directors,  
Barbara G. Welty, Secretary.



Regular office hours are  
Mon-Fri 8:00 to 4:30  
927-2191 or  
800-450-2191 (toll free)



48 hours before you dig  
Dial 811 - Gopher State  
One Call or log on to:  
[www.gopherstateonecall.org](http://www.gopherstateonecall.org)

Then contact a licensed electrician to locate your secondary wires.

**MN Electrical Inspectors**  
Aitkin County &  
South East Crow Wing County  
Jeff Larson 320-227-3009

Northern Crow Wing County  
Nathan Readle 218-537-8419

Mille Lacs County  
Benjamin Husom 320-277-6277

Off-peak and dual fuel system consumers should call an electrician or heating contractor for service or repairs.

Find load control schedule at  
[www.mlecmm.net](http://www.mlecmm.net) under *Quick Links*.



Visit our website -  
[www.mlecmm.net](http://www.mlecmm.net)  
E-mail us - [mlec@mlecmm.net](mailto:mlec@mlecmm.net)

# RIGHT-OF-WAY PROGRAM

**Vegetation management has shown positive results at MLEC!**

An essential part of providing safe, reliable service at a reasonable cost is the establishment and maintenance of a clear power line corridor. Trees contacting power lines is a primary cause of power outages across rural America, MLEC being no exception. When tree limbs and vegetation grow too close to power lines, they can cause damage or interrupt your service.

Our right-of-way maintenance program helps prevent power interruptions by trimming or removing trees and brush which could be potential fire hazards or cause power outages. Tree trimming or clearing prevents extended outages during storms or strong winds and keeps small animals from reaching our wires and causing problems.

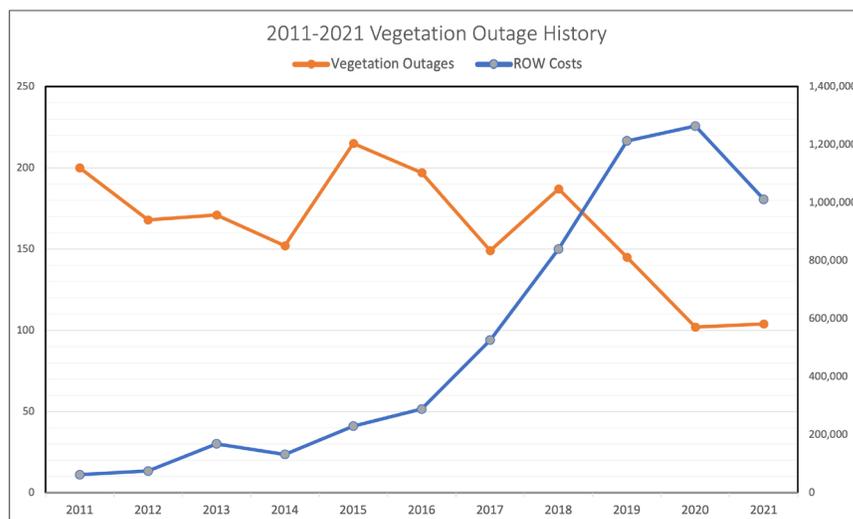
Vegetation management is an important part of MLEC's dedication to reliability. This means identifying and removing hazards to keep the lights on for our members. At times, this can be the single largest line item of Operations and Maintenance budgets.

Steps to reclaim the right-of-way on MLEC's system began in 2016. The focus was to be more effective and efficient with this program. Implementation of this included hiring an outside contractor to assess our system and the state of the current right-of-way. The results suggested that MLEC needed to make significant investments into our budget. "Our goal is to have a 5-year rotation, to maintain almost 1200 miles of overhead lines," said Bill Fillion, MLEC Operations Manager.

Procedures for crews has shifted from trimming only to removing trees that were impeding the right-of-way. Herbicide application after tree clearing has aided in limiting brush regrowth.

When there is a visual corridor, our crews can quickly identify if there are fallen trees on the line. This also allows them better access to remove the tree(s) and restore power quickly. From the chart below, you will see the point of the costs increasing, with the result of seeing the number of vegetation outages decreasing by 2019. In 2018, we had significant weather events that resulted in vegetation outages in the areas that had not yet been reclaimed.

Moving forward, steps will be taken to spray herbicide on roughly 400 line miles in 2022. Crews will continue with the 5-year right-of-way clearing cycle, which will achieve reliability goals and reduce outside contractor costs. Keeping a close eye on vegetation management and making it a priority has shown positive results! Your cooperative is taking the necessary steps to decrease power outages and cut costs at the same time.





MILLE LACS ENERGY COOPERATIVE  
2022 BOARD OF DIRECTORS ELECTION

The following members have filed to appear on the ballot for election of one (1) Director from Districts 1 and 2. In accordance with Article III, Section 4 of the Cooperative's Bylaws, directors shall be elected at the annual meeting by those members who are present in person, vote online, or by mail vote.

Instructions for Casting Your Vote

- Whether using the mail to return your ballot, voting online, or delivering the ballot to the Cooperative in person, please follow these instructions carefully.
- Voting by Mail**
- You may vote for one director candidate in each district below.
  - Place the ballot in the enclosed envelope marked "Ballot Secrecy Envelope" and seal the envelope. Place this envelope in the Business Reply envelope. Whether mailing the ballot or bringing it to the annual meeting, these directions should be followed.
  - Mailed ballots must be received in the proper envelopes by May 4, 2022.
  - As an option to mailing or voting online your ballot may be submitted in person at the annual meeting before the start of the business meeting at 5:45 PM. The Annual Meeting of the members of Mille Lacs Energy Cooperative will be held at The Minnesota National Golf Course, 23247 480th Street, McGregor, Minnesota, on Thursday, May 5, 2022. Registration will begin at 4:30 PM. The meal will be served from 5:30-5:45 PM, and the annual business meeting will begin at 5:45 PM. Ballots cast at the annual meeting will be counted and added to the mail-in and online ballots for final election results.
  - DO NOT ENCLOSE checks or any other Mille Lacs Energy Cooperative correspondence with your ballot.
- Voting Online**
- To access the login page of the official 2022 MLEC election, please type [directvote.net/MLEC](http://directvote.net/MLEC) into the address bar located at the top of your internet screen.
  - Use the Member Number and Election Passcode printed on the back of your return envelope to log in.
  - Once registered, follow the online voting instructions.
  - Online voting begins April 5, 2022 and ends at 10 AM Central, May 4, 2022.
  - Do not mail your ballot if you plan to vote online.

MARKING INSTRUCTIONS EXAMPLE

Fill in the box to the left of your choice.

District 1 Director

(No vote needed)

Mark Anderson, no vote needed, per MLEC Articles and Bylaws, Article I, Section 8, Mark Anderson shall be elected for a 3-year term by acclamation.

District 2 Director

(3-Year Term)  
Vote for one (1)

- Derik Midthun
- Carol Pundt, Incumbent

DirectVote

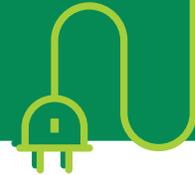
Ballot must be received no later than May 4, 2022. Ballots tabulated by Survey & Ballot Systems. 2022

## Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

When streaming content, use the smallest device that makes sense for the number of people watching. Avoid streaming on game consoles, which use 10 times more power than streaming through a tablet or laptop.

Streaming content with electronic equipment that has earned the ENERGY STAR® rating will use 25% to 30% less energy than standard equipment.

Source: Dept. of Energy



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— Scott Boyd, Owner, Farm Island Repair & Marine



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## GIFT CARD TRIVIA!

Correctly answer the question below for your chance to win a gift card from a local business within our service area. The answer can be found within this issue of The Outlet. You must be an MLEC member to participate. Be sure to include your name and service address! Entries must be received by **April 30<sup>th</sup>**.

**MAIL TO:**  
Kassie Peterson  
Mille Lacs Energy Cooperative  
P.O. Box 230  
Aitkin, MN 56431

**OR E-MAIL:**  
[kpeterson@mlecmmn.com](mailto:kpeterson@mlecmmn.com)

What are the 3 ways you can vote for MLEC board candidates?

Name:

Address:

Congrats to Marcia Rose of Deerwood, the February gift card trivia winner!



## MILLE LACS ENERGY COOPERATIVE

36559 US Highway 169, Aitkin, MN 56431 • (218) 927-2191 / (800) 450-2191 • [www.mlecmmn.net](http://www.mlecmmn.net)

Mille Lacs Energy Cooperative is an equal opportunity provider and employer.