



# THE OUTLET

Monthly Publication of Mille Lacs Energy Cooperative

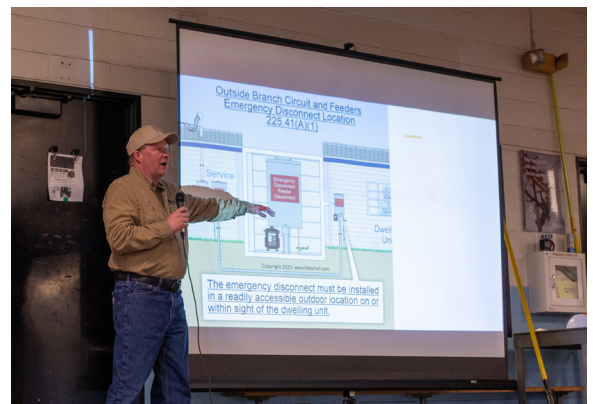
Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

VOLUME 55  
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APRIL 2024

## FIRST RESPONDER SAFETY EVENT

On Wednesday, March 20th, Mille Lacs Energy welcomed local first responders to learn more about electrical safety. MLEC staff presented various safety topics, including solar panels, electric vehicles, backup generators, powerline vehicle accidents, and more. Attendees also saw an interactive safety demonstration by STAR Energy Services. There were approximately 70 people in attendance.

MLEC's goal is to keep our community safe. By offering this important training, we hope to help our first responders mitigate the hazards involved with electrical incidents. Thank you to all who attended, and we hope to have another first responder training event next year!



# MLEC FIBER UPDATE

*Spring is here and MLEC Fiber has a busy season ahead!*

The mild winter weather has allowed for an early start to MLEC Fiber construction and installation. We have three projects in progress, making MLEC Fiber Internet available to an additional 1,250 homes and businesses!

## McGrath Area

Construction is wrapping up on the 100-mile fiber project, passing over 500 homes in the McGrath area. This project was in partnership with Aitkin County Government and was funded by the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development Community Development Block Grant (CDBG). Installations have started and soon new customers will have access to the fastest and most reliable Internet service available.

## Phase 6

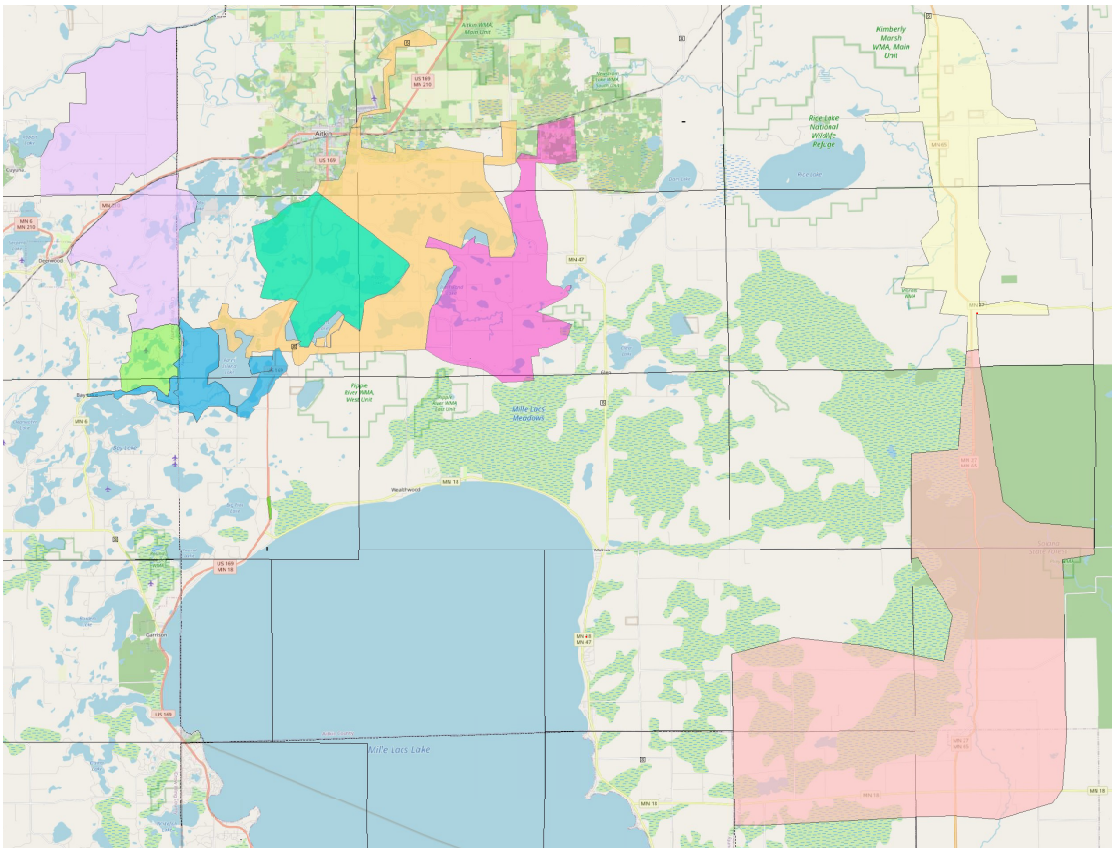
Construction is starting soon on the Phase 6 project. This 60-mile project will pass over 270 homes and businesses in Spencer, Kimberly, Nordland, and Glen townships. Funding for the project comes from the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED).

## Reconnect 3

Construction will continue on the USDA Reconnect 3 project located in Crow Wing County in the townships of Bay Lake, Deerwood and Rabbit Lake. This project is divided into two parts and will build over 77 miles of fiber passing over 480 homes.

If you are in any MLEC Fiber project area, you can still sign up for service! MLEC Fiber offers residential and business fiber Internet with speeds ranging from 250 Mbps to 1 Gbps. Our symmetrical fiber Internet is faster and more affordable than other service providers in the area! Plans start at just \$59.95 a month. MLEC Premium Wi-Fi is also available. Features include regular software upgrades, whole home Wi-Fi coverage, and call-in technical support.

**Sign up today! Contact us at (218) 429-0433 or online at [www.mlecmm.net/fiber](http://www.mlecmm.net/fiber)**



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

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Find minutes from MLEC Board meetings at:  
<http://www.mlecmm.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,  
Marketing & Communications Administrator

## McGrath Area



## Phase 6



## Reconnect 3 (Phase 1)



## Reconnect 3 (Phase 2)



# OUR ENERGY FUTURE

Dear Member:

The Farmer's Almanac tells us that when March comes in like a lion, it goes out like a lamb. In 2024, January, February, and March came in like a lamb, and while it may be leaving more like a lion, we are really hoping for a warm summer!

A warm summer means higher energy sales for an electric utility. So far, we are going into 2024 nearly 4.2 million kWh under budget. Lower sales mean less revenue, and that is hitting all electric utilities in the state of Minnesota hard.

Even though our 2023 sales were under budget, MLEC saw an unusual number of positive impacts in 2023 that caused us to have a great year-end. Deloitte Research Center for Energy and Industrials predicts that the 2023 trend will extend into 2024, and nationwide energy sales will be down 1.2% due to the effects of a warming planet.

MLEC and our power provider, Great River Energy (GRE) have been preparing for the implications of a warming planet for over a decade. GRE has been selling off carbon-producing assets and building or buying into non-carbon-producing assets. Additionally, they have been investing in regional transmission upgrades - critical infrastructure necessary to carry the growing level of non-carbon-producing assets that are entering the power-producing market.

As you can imagine, all of these upgrades have a cost associated with them. And someone has to pay for them.

You will recall that MLEC has had a run of very successful years with positive margins. While we did have a rate adjustment in 2023 to accommodate GRE's scheduled rate adjustments and increased market costs, we are looking at all the ways we can continue with stable rates for the coming years.

Please continue to read your newsletter for EnergyStar rebates, new program rates, and energy-saving tips. Our energy future will look different than it has in the past, but MLEC is prepared to adapt for the members we serve. Our mission and commitment to you remain steady—to provide reliable power at a cost local families and businesses can afford.



*Sarah Cron, CEO*

## TRUE OR FALSE?

***Appliances and electronics don't use energy when turned off.***

**FALSE.** Computers, printers, TVs, cell phone chargers and more may continue to consume electricity, when turned off, sometimes just as much as when they're turned on. Consider purchasing a smart strip (more advanced than a traditional power strip) that cuts off power to appliances that are powered off.

***Bigger heating and cooling equipment is not always better.***

**TRUE.** When buying new heating and cooling equipment, proper sizing and quality installation are critical to your home's energy efficiency and comfort. Oversized equipment can cause reduced comfort and excessive noise. Oversizing can also shorten the life of equipment by causing it to cycle on and off more frequently than a properly-sized unit.

***Leaving your computer on saves energy.***

**FALSE.** If you're going to be away from your desk for a long period of time, and particularly after hours, you should turn off your computer, monitor and peripherals using a smart strip.

***Check your heating and cooling system's filter once a month.***

**TRUE.** You should also have a pre-season checkup of your system by a licensed contractor in the spring and fall to ensure all parts are working properly, and to avoid early system failure. If your furnace is more than 15 years old, or your A/C unit is more than 12 years old, consider replacing it with a properly-sized, more efficient unit.



# LET'S DISH

Thank you to Carol Reinhardt of Palisade 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

## ITALIAN BEEF ON BUNS

2-3 pounds roast beef (sliced thin)	1/2 tsp oregano
2 cups beef broth	1/2 tsp celery salt
1/2 tsp onion powder	1/2 tsp Italian seasoning
1/2 tsp garlic powder	

Put the sliced roast in a slow cooker and cover with beef broth. Next add in the spices. Cook all day on low or half day on medium. Serve on hamburger or hoagie buns. 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 \$29,800 in grants to local non-profit organizations including: Aitkin County Fair Foundation, Aitkin Grad Blast, Aitkin County Habitat for Humanity, Aitkin County Rivers and Lakes Fair, Central Lakes College Food Pantry, Local Food Shelves (Aitkin, Aitkin Community, Cuyuna, Garrison, McGregor, Family Pathways, Palisade, St. James), Home and Away Ministries, Jaques Art Center, Lakes Area Interfaith Caregivers, Mille Lacs Lake Senior Activities, Nexus-Mille Lacs Family Healing and New Trails Group, Onamia Depot Library, Onamia Fire and Rescue Dept., Onamia High School Prom Committee, Relationship Safety Alliance-Louise Seliski Shelter, Smiles for Jake, United 4 Recovery.

The total amount of grants awarded since the start of Operation Round Up has surpassed \$1.5 million!

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

*Front Row L-R: Bob Neros, Pamela Andell, Barb Packer.  
Second Row L-R: Dave Benson, Pat Neros, Susie Ilstrup, Carol Wiherski, Sharon Bruggman, Linda Straight, Victoria Jergenson, Sarah Smith, Jill Mckenzie.  
Third Row L-R: Chuck Schotzko, Jeremy Janski, Steph Oyler, Alice Nickolay, Kirk Peysar, Allison Rian, Sharon Dotzler, Sam Seybold, Erich Heppner, Tom Felleg, Nick Dinger.*



# YOUTH TOUR WINNER

*Congrats to Jennifer Dickson!*

The Washington D.C. Youth Tour is a once-in-a-lifetime, all-expenses-paid leadership travel opportunity for high school sophomores and juniors in MLEC's service area. This trip gives young people the opportunity to watch history come alive, explore museums, memorials and monuments, make friendships that will last a lifetime, and be part of a group that has more than 50,000 alumni in every walk of life, including U.S. Senators and CEOs.

The Youth Tour program continues to foster the grassroots spirit of the rural electric cooperative by demonstrating how our government works and what the electric cooperative business model is all about.

This year, Jennifer Dickson was chosen to represent Mille Lacs Energy Cooperative and join the other students from the state of Minnesota.



*Jennifer Dickson*

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

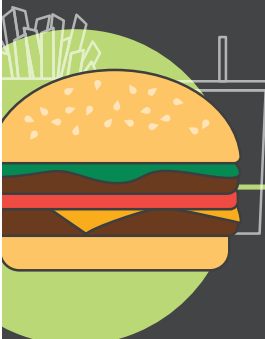
Off-peak and dual fuel system consumers should call an electrician or heating contractor for service or repairs.

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

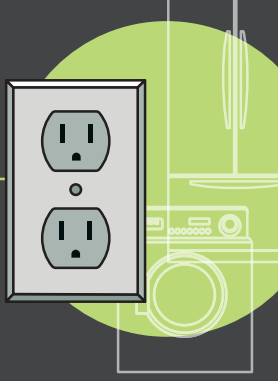


Visit our website - [www.mlecmn.net](http://www.mlecmn.net)  
E-mail us - [mlec@mlecmn.net](mailto:mlec@mlecmn.net)

## THE VALUE OF ELECTRICITY



**\$5.36**  
average cost of a Big Mac®


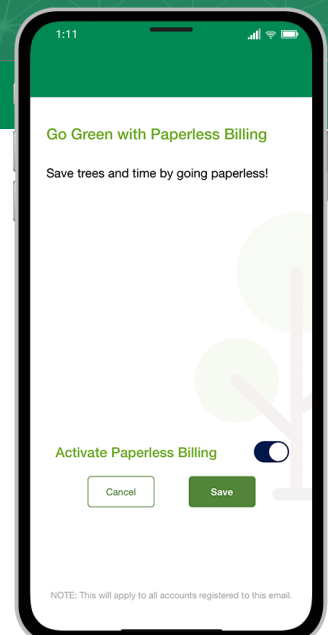


**\$4.57**  
average daily cost of power

Electricity is expressed on a daily basis using EIA 2022 Average U.S. Monthly Residential Bill of \$137. Big Mac® is a registered trademark of McDonald's Corporation. McDonald's Corporation does not endorse or sponsor this material.

Sources: Economist.com and EIA, Dec. 2022 data.

## PAPERLESS BILLING

**The eco-friendly way to instantly access your bill.**

- Reduce waste and help save the planet, one bill at a time.
- Receive your bill as soon as it's posted, no matter where you are.

**SMART MANAGEMENT. SMARTLIFE. SMARTHUB.**

Manage your account at anytime from anywhere

**Annual Meeting and Open House Event Coming in September!**



Stay tuned for more information about our Annual Meeting & Open House event! Members will be able to view our new facility and get the most up-to-date information regarding your electric cooperative!

**Internet that donates to our local schools**

Our employees donate school supplies and volunteer in our communities to support students and educators. Get fast and reliable Internet service that gives back!



**MLEC fiber**  
Powered by Mille Lacs Energy Cooperative

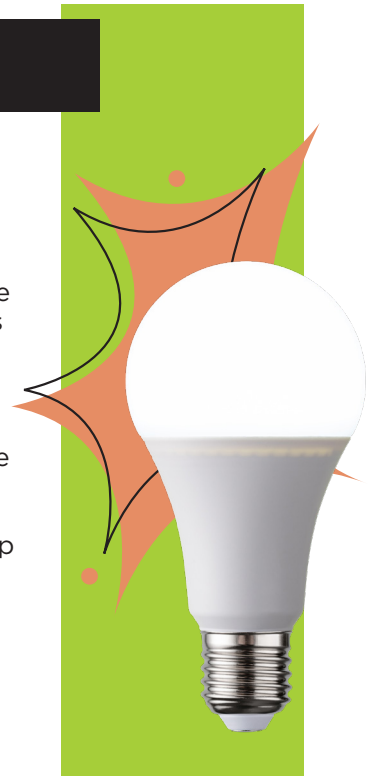
(218) 429-0433 • [www.mlecmn.net/fiber](http://www.mlecmn.net/fiber)

**ENERGY EFFICIENCY**  
TIP OF THE MONTH

A well-designed landscape can add beauty to your home and reduce home heating and cooling costs. Plant deciduous trees with high, spreading crowns to the south of your home to block sunlight in the summer and reduce the need for air conditioning. Deciduous trees lose their leaves in the winter, allowing sunlight to warm your home.

Plant evergreen trees and shrubs with low crowns to block winter winds. Dense evergreen trees and shrubs planted to the north and northwest are the most common type of windbreak and can help lower energy used for home heating.

Source: [energy.gov](http://energy.gov)



**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@mlecmn.com](mailto:kpeterson@mlecmn.com)

*Fill in the blank.*

The total amount of grants awarded since the start of Operation Round Up has surpassed \_\_\_\_\_!

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

*Congrats to Jeanne Fischer, the February gift card trivia winner!*