



# THE OUTLET

Monthly Publication of Mille Lacs Energy Cooperative

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

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## CAPITAL CREDIT REFUNDS

When dealing with a business or a service, how many times do you get part of the profit? At MLEC, you do because you're a member-owner.

In December, MLEC will distribute capital credit refunds totaling \$832,149. The refunds are based on electric accounts that were active in 2002-2004.

If your account is still active, you will see the refund on your December electric bill. If not, you will receive a check.

The 2020 payment brings the total dollars refunded by MLEC through the years to over \$18.9 million. Just another example of the cooperative difference.

### How Do Capital Credits Work?



**1** MLEC tracks how much electricity you use throughout the year.

**2** Each year, after expenses are paid, MLEC calculates margins (leftover funds).

**3** MLEC uses the margins to pay down debt, invest in facilities and improvement projects, and allocates to members as capital credits based on their usage of electricity.

**4** MLEC retires (returns) capital credits to members.

# BOARD ELECTIONS

**Candidate filing for MLEC director positions from Districts Two, Five, Six, and Seven open on December 22<sup>nd</sup>!**

One-year term to complete the remainder of a three-year position in:

**District 2** - includes members whose electric account numbers start with 35, 38, 49 and 50.

Three-year terms in:

**District 5** - includes members whose electric account numbers start with 40, 41, 45 or 46. The present director is Don Appel of Aitkin.

**District 6** - includes members whose electric account numbers start with 7, 8, 11, 12, 13, 14, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 24, 25, 26 or 27. The present director is Bruce Robinson of Palisade.

**District 7** - includes members whose electric account numbers start with 39, 47, 48 or 53. The present director is Michael Reem of Aitkin.

If you are an MLEC member receiving electricity in one of the districts listed above and are interested in filing for a director position, call Kassie Peterson at 927-8243 or 800-450-2191 or, email [kpeterson@mlecmmn.com](mailto:kpeterson@mlecmmn.com) for director election filing forms and a complete information packet.

All filings must be received at the Cooperative by February 26, 2021.

You can find additional district and annual meeting information on the MLEC website [www.mlecmmn.net](http://www.mlecmmn.net).

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Find minutes from  
MLEC Board meetings at:  
<http://www.mlecmmn.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

## MLEC FIBER RATE CHANGE

At MLEC, we take pride in our MLEC Fiber endeavors. Providing fast, local, and reliable Internet is so important for rural areas and we want to continue to expand and bring MLEC Fiber to more members. The cooperative recently completed financial forecasts for the next 10, 20, and 30 years. This included evaluating the growth, costs, and projected revenue of MLEC Fiber Internet. It was determined by the MLEC Management Team that a small rate increase is needed for some of our MLEC Fiber services.

### **Why an increase?**

Building a fiber Internet network is a large investment. Our goal is to keep MLEC Fiber rates as low and consistent as possible while continuing to expand. MLEC is always applying for grants and funding opportunities to bring fiber Internet access to more members.

### **What is changing?**

Effective on your February bill, the price for 100 Mbps service will be raised an additional \$1.95 per month. Because most of our customers have this Internet package, raising the monthly cost will help MLEC recuperate costs and keep our MLEC Fiber Internet network growing.

The current Managed Wi-Fi service is being raised \$2.00 per month because we are converting to a whole-home Wi-Fi experience under a new name. MLEC Premium Wi-Fi will help you reap all the benefits of your fiber Internet. MLEC Premium Wi-Fi provides cloud-based remote wi-fi management, which means MLEC will take care of the software updates and routine router maintenance.

This personalized service ensures that Wi-Fi will be readily available to all devices throughout your entire home and has local call-in technical support available. Exciting new products and account management technology are coming soon!

February 1, 2020	February 1, 2021
100 Mbps Plan - \$50.00 /month	100 Mbps Plan - \$51.95 /month
Managed Wi-Fi - \$7.95 /month	MLEC Premium Wi-Fi - \$9.95/month

This small change will help keep our MLEC Fiber business financially healthy. Our team has been busy installing new customers and applying for grant funding for new projects. The process takes time, but it is worth it to make great Internet service available for more MLEC members.

### **We are here to help!**

Call MLEC at 218-429-0433 if you have questions or concerns.

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

# LOOKING AHEAD TO 2021

Dear Member:

While 2020 has been a hard year in many respects, I am happy to report that, from a business perspective, your electric cooperative has had a very good year. We are financially strong and are in a solid cash position. Our October financials showed us ahead of budget, and we are projecting to end the year as such. At the November board meeting, your Board of Directors unanimously voted to retire \$832,149 in capital credits back to you, our members. This is one of the largest capital credit retirements from MLEC in recent years. Lastly, the preliminary budget was presented to the Board of Directors for review, and no rate adjustments are predicted for 2021. Now we just need the COVID – 19 vaccine!

COVID – 19. We are all seeing the numbers of new cases and deaths continue to climb in Minnesota and across the globe. As we watch those that we know and love suffer this horrible disease, we continue to stay vigilant at MLEC. Our office is still closed to the public, and we will not re-open until we feel it is safe for our employees, our members, and our community. Our employees are once again working staggered shifts to minimize employee contact – and potential disease spread – while in the office. Office sanitizing and air purification efforts are in place to help keep those healthy while in the building. As this disease forces things to change day-by-day, we are also trying to plan for our Annual Meeting to be held May 6, 2021. This proves to be a challenge as we do not know if large-scale public gatherings will even be allowed in May.

Even though it is difficult to look ahead right now, your MLEC Board and Management Team continue to plan for the future of MLEC. We are fine-tuning our Fiber-To-The-Home (FTTH) business case to determine the smartest way to expand our fiber business unit. We are moving forward with an independent feasibility study to determine if we can build a new headquarters building with minimal impact on the employees, the members, and the community. We are performing survey work and preparing the home on Highway 169 to be put on the market. We are getting ready for our next Four-Year Work Plan that will dictate our next round of planned system upgrades and system reliability projects. Additionally, as we near the completion of the automatic metering infrastructure (AMI) installation, MLEC staff will start implementing this new technology to help MLEC run more efficiently, and ultimately save us time and expenses in the Operations Department.

Safety continues to be a top priority at MLEC. Whether discussing proper spill clean-up, safe ladder usage, avoiding trips and falls, May Day procedures, chain saw safety, workplace violence, or pole top rescue, MLEC's staff is routinely attending training to help us safely perform our jobs. As we enter the holiday season, I remind you to look for patches of ice, practice social distancing, watch out for powerlines when hanging outside holiday lights, wipe up the spilled eggnog, and wear a mask. Stay safe so you and your family can have a wonderful holiday season and an even better 2021.

Until next month,




*Sarah Cron*  
CEO

## XMAS TREE RECYCLING

***Drop off your real Christmas tree at the MLEC office for chipping.***

This year, MLEC will be offering free Christmas tree recycling for members. Drop off your tree at the Aitkin office in the member parking lot. There will be signs to direct you to the drop off spot. To prep your tree for chipping, please remove all decorations and lights.



# LET'S DISH

## 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@mlecmm.com



Thank you to Lucy Swanson of Aitkin for sharing this month's recipe.

## THE EASIEST AND BEST FRENCH SILK PIE

### Whipped Cream

2 cups heavy whipping cream  
1/4 cup sugar

### Crust & Topping

9 inch graham cracker or cookie pie crust  
chocolate curls or shavings for garnish

### Chocolate Silk Filling

2 oz. German chocolate, finely chopped  
2 oz. unsweetened chocolate, finely chopped  
4 Tbsp butter, cubed  
1 (8 oz.) block cream cheese, room temp.  
2 cups powdered sugar  
3 cups prepared whipped cream

1. First, make your whipped cream. In a large bowl, whip the heavy cream and sugar together on high speed for about 5-7 min. or until stiff peaks form. You should have roughly 5 cups of whipped cream. Divide 2 cups into a pastry bag or set aside to spread onto the final pie.
2. In a large microwavable bowl, add the chopped chocolate and the butter. Microwave on high for about 30 seconds. Stir, then microwave again for another 15-20 seconds or until melted and smooth. Cool for about 5 min.
3. In a large bowl, beat the cream cheese until fluffy and smooth, about 1 min. Add in the powdered sugar and beat until combined. Lastly, add in the chocolate, whipping until combined. Next, fold in 3 cups of the fresh whipped cream.
4. Spread the chocolate silk filling into the pie crust evenly. Pipe or spread the remaining whipped cream onto the pie's surface and garnish with chocolate curls or shavings. Refrigerate for at least 3 hours before serving.

# LED HOLIDAY LIGHTS

Decking the halls doesn't have to take a toll on your energy bill! Light up your home this holiday season while saving energy.

- Switching to LED holiday lights can save up to 90% of energy use when compared to traditional incandescent string lights.
- LED bulbs always remain cool to the touch unlike older incandescent models making them safer for pets & kids.
- LED last up to 10 times longer than traditional incandescent strands and do not contain fragile filaments that break from shaking and rattling.

### Recycle your old light strands!

Mille Lacs Energy is joining with the Brainerd Sunrise Sertomas to sponsor a holiday Bites for Lights recycling program. Drop off your old strands at the Aitkin office and the Sertomas will work with Kenwood Enterprises to recycle them. Since inception, 55,768 pounds of lights and cords have been collected. This has resulted in \$10,370 being donated to various area food shelves. Consider going green and recycle to help the area food shelves.



# MLEC GIFT CERTIFICATE



Any MLEC member would welcome one less bill to pay during the holiday season. It's easy - return the completed form with the desired gift amount to:

**Mille Lacs Energy Cooperative**  
P.O. Box 230  
Aitkin, MN 56431

This gift is for: \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

This gift is from: \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Daytime Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Certificate amount \$ \_\_\_\_\_

*Recipient's gift will be applied to their MLEC account*

# NON-DISCRIMINATION STATEMENT

Mille Lacs Energy Cooperative is a recipient of federal financial assistance from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA).

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Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by:

**MAIL:**

U.S. Department of Agriculture  
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights  
1400 Independence Ave SW  
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410

**FAX:** (202) 690-7442

**EMAIL:** [program.intake@usda.gov](mailto:program.intake@usda.gov)

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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  
Mike Wenzel 218-270-2265

Northern Crow Wing County  
Bradley Rasmussen 218-543-1023

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)

## OUTAGE?

**Use SmartHub.**

It's the most efficient way to report power outages. It's quick, easy, and goes straight into MLEC's dispatch center. No more searching for your account number and phone number to call in. Using the app, you can report an outage in a snap!

**Visit [www.mlecmm.net](http://www.mlecmm.net) to sign up for SmartHub or download the app to your mobile device today!**



Third Quarter  
Mille Lacs Energy Cooperative

**Comparative Operating Statement**  
for the Quarter Ending Sept. 30, 2019 & Sept. 30, 2020

	2019	2020
OPERATING REVENUE	21,230,488	20,934,724
COST OF PURCHASED POWER	11,941,611	11,861,510
DISTRIBUTION EXPENSE-OPERATION	693,001	973,993
DISTRIBUTION EXPENSE-MAINTENANCE	2,203,532	1,896,519
CUSTOMER ACCOUNTS EXPENSE	643,508	620,103
CUSTOMER SERVICE AND INFORMATIONAL EXPENSE	397,491	446,817
ADMINISTRATIVE AND GENERAL EXPENSE	1,250,087	1,225,981
TOTAL OPERATING COSTS	5,187,619	5,163,413
TOTAL OPERATIONS EXPENSE	17,129,230	17,024,923
DEPRECIATION	1,538,364	1,702,739
TAX EXPENSE	1,330	1,330
INTEREST ON LONG TERM DEBT	1,032,829	1,090,114
INTEREST EXPENSE-OTHER	4,872	2,735
OTHER DEDUCTION	2,097	-
TOTAL COST OF ELECTRIC SERVICE	19,708,722	19,821,841
OPERATING MARGINS	<b>1,521,766</b>	<b>1,112,883</b>
NON OPERATING MARGINS-INTEREST	172,135	76,488
NON OPERATING MARGINS-OTHER	(84,590)	(124,679)
GENERATION & TRANSMISSION CAPITAL CREDITS	-	-
OTHER CAPITAL CREDITS	97,082	111,811
NET MARGINS	<b>1,706,393</b>	<b>1,176,503</b>

# HAPPY HOLIDAYS!

OUR OFFICE WILL BE CLOSED  
DEC. 24<sup>TH</sup>, DEC. 25<sup>TH</sup>, AND JAN. 1<sup>ST</sup>



## Satellite Internet available just about anywhere

**Unlimited data plans:**  
For the first time ever  
on Viasat Internet!

NOW UP TO  
**30**  
Mbps



CALL TODAY FOR MORE DETAILS!  
218-429-0433 or 800-497-5310

**Viasat**<sup>™</sup>

# 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 **December 31<sup>st</sup>**.

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

**OR E-MAIL:**  
kpeterson@mlecmn.com

In December, MLEC will distribute capital credit

refunds totaling \$ \_\_\_\_\_

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

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

Congrats to Ralph Dubiel of Garrison, the October gift card trivia winner!

## SYSTEM-WIDE METER UPGRADE

MLEC is in the process of making a substantial investment in infrastructure, building one of the most technologically advanced power control systems. MLEC plans to implement an advanced metering infrastructure (AMI) and install a meter data management system (MDMS) throughout 2020. The new meters will improve reliability and give you more tools and opportunities to manage and save energy.



**FOR MORE INFORMATION**

**(218) 927-2191 • (800) 450-2191 • [www.mlecmn.net](http://www.mlecmn.net)**



**MILLE LACS ENERGY COOPERATIVE**

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