



# THE OUTLET

Monthly Publication of Mille Lacs Energy Cooperative

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

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MARCH 2021

## MLEC AWARDED FIBER GRANT

***MLEC is bringing Fiber-to-the-Home Internet to more members!***

In January, it was announced by Governor Walz that Mille Lacs Energy Cooperative (MLEC) was awarded a Minnesota State Broadband grant for a Fiber-to-the-Home (FTTH) Internet project. The project area is located on the southeast side of Farm Island Lake.

The Phase 4 project will pass 85 homes and businesses and will provide up to 1 Gbps symmetrical Fiber-to-the-Home Internet service. FTTH is the fastest and most reliable Internet available. We are excited to, once again, partner with Consolidated Telecommunications Company (CTC) on the construction of this project and expand our MLEC Fiber Internet network.

In addition to Phase 4, MLEC Fiber is resuming construction on our Phase 3 and East Lake projects this spring. If you live in one of the project areas, there is still time to sign up! It is going to be an exciting project year and we are looking forward to providing more members with the best Internet service available.

Mille Lacs Energy Cooperative is always searching and applying for grant opportunities to bring our members fast, reliable, and local Internet service. Residents in these project areas will have expanded educational, economic and health care opportunities. Especially during these unprecedented times, we understand that having an Internet connection is more

important than ever before. Please continue to read the Outlet, Facebook, and our website for more information and updates on our upcoming fiber projects.

For more information on MLEC Fiber Internet call our office at 218-429-0433 or visit our website at [www.mlecmn.net/fiber](http://www.mlecmn.net/fiber). Project area maps, Internet plans, and service agreements can all be found online.



# SAVE THE DATE!

## All MLEC members are invited to the 2021 Drive-In Annual Meeting

The safety of our members and employees is always the highest priority at MLEC. It quickly became apparent to the MLEC Board of Directors and Management Team that there was no safe way to hold this year's Annual Meeting in the usual format. The 2020 and 2021 Annual Meetings will be held in conjunction from the safety of members' vehicles. By hosting a drive-in style Annual Meeting, MLEC will ensure that our members' democratic control of their cooperative is not jeopardized while also protecting their health and safety. We look forward to seeing all of you in May!

**WHEN:** Thursday, May 6<sup>th</sup>

**WHERE:** Grand Casino Mille Lacs

### SCHEDULE:

**Registration** - 3:30-5:00 p.m.

**Business Meeting** - 5:00 p.m.



### How can you vote?

MLEC members can vote three different ways: online via SmartHub, by mail, and in-person at the Annual Meeting. Ballots will be mailed to all MLEC members a month in advance of the Annual Meeting. A sample ballot and other Annual Meeting information will be included in next month's Outlet newsletter.

### Submit questions for the Annual Meeting

Since attendees will stay in their vehicles and listen to the business meeting over the radio broadcast, we encourage members to submit their questions ahead of time via email or mail. If a question is submitted and not addressed at the Annual Meeting, an MLEC employee will call or email a response after the Annual Meeting. All questions must be received prior to Monday, May 3rd.

#### MAIL TO:

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

#### OR E-MAIL:

annualmeeting@mlecmn.com

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

**Barbara Welty - District 1**  
320/692-4800  
bwelty@mlecmn.com  
Secretary/Treasurer

**Carol Pundt - District 2**  
218/678-3256  
cpundt@mlecmn.com

**Harold Harms - District 3**  
218/232-2935  
hharms@mlecmn.com  
President

**Aileen DeMenge - District 4**  
218/768-4900  
ademenge@mlecmn.com  
Assistant Secretary/Treasurer

**Don Appel - District 5**  
218/927-4134  
dappel@mlecmn.com  
Vice President

**Bruce Robinson - District 6**  
218/851-4760  
brobinson@mlecmn.com

**Michael Reem - District 7**  
218/839-5697  
mreem@mlecmn.com

**Sarah Cron - CEO**  
218/927-8224  
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

# COGENERATION NOTICE

In compliance with Mille Lacs Energy Cooperative's (MLEC) adopted rules relating to cogeneration and small power production, MLEC is obligated to interconnect with and purchase electricity from co-generators and small power producers who satisfy the conditions as a qualifying facility. MLEC is obligated to provide information, free of charge, to all interested members upon request regarding rates and interconnection requirements. All interconnections require an application and approval to become a qualifying facility. Any dispute over interconnections, sales, and purchases are subject to resolution by the MLEC Board of Directors. Interested members should contact MLEC at P.O. Box 230, Aitkin, MN, 56431 or call 218-927-2191 or 1-800-450-2191.



# FEASIBILITY STUDY RESULTS

Our discussion of new facilities is not a new one. The board has been aware of the facilities' inefficiencies and structural limitations for the last decade. We have had various discussions, including with several general managers, but it did not reach the top of our priority list until now.

What changed?

A primary catalyst was MNDOT's decision to redo Highway 169; a decision that will remove our two access entries and take 20 feet of property along 169. With this in mind, we began the feasibility of building new facilities at the current location or building at a new location.

To consider a new location, we needed to find a piece of property that would fit our needs. When the property near Highways 169 and 18 became available, we purchased it with the idea that if our study determined that we could feasibly build new in the current location, we could resell this property. We engaged Widseth Engineering to conduct an in-depth facility needs analysis that considered three options: remodel the existing facility, build new at our existing location, or build new at a different location. After a thorough review of their proposal and analysis, we determined it to be in the best short- and long-term interest of our members to build a new facility at the new location.

Factors that made this our preferred choice include:

1. Building new at the current location would leave zero chance for future growth or expansion. This is simply irresponsible when considering the future of energy and Internet.
2. It would require temporary relocation of employees, equipment, and inventory during construction. This would leave us vulnerable to increased outage response times in the instance of a severe weather event or multi-day system power outage.
3. Interest rates are at an all-time low resulting in significant savings to the membership over the 30-year life of the loan.
4. The current location is always under threat of annexation by the City of Aitkin. If this were to happen, the electrical needs for our facilities would be served by Aitkin Public Utilities, instead of MLEC.
5. Remodeling of current facilities would require significant expenditures just to bring the building up to MN Building Code. It would leave many discrepancies such as on-site storage and inefficient team alignment; and, still leave us with a 60-year-old building and limited ability to expand or change as needs change.



*Harold Harms*  
Board President

Our needs have evolved since this facility was built in 1964. Serving our members now requires more equipment, bigger trucks and broader offerings. And, we will continue to change and grow as the years go on. We believe the time is right to make this move for our members, for our employees, and for the future of MLEC.

Take care and stay safe.

**Take 50% off water-saving products**  
at [energywisemnstore.com](http://energywisemnstore.com)!

Water-saving products, such as showerheads and faucets aerators, are engineered to use less water without affecting your water stream or pressure. They help you use less water, save energy, and lower your utility bills.

*Offer valid March 3 through April 28, 2021.*

*No coupon code necessary. While supplies lasts.*

ENERGY WISE  MN



# LET'S DISH

Thank you to Clara Kiel 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@mlecmm.com



## CHICKEN LICKIN' PORK CHOPS

4-6 pork chops  
1/2 cup flour  
1 1/2 tsp. dry mustard  
1/2 tsp. garlic powder  
2 Tbsp. oil

3/4 cups onion (chopped)  
1 Tbsp. butter or margarine  
1 can cream of mushroom soup  
1 can cream of chicken soup  
3/4 cup milk

Dredge pork chops in flour, dry mustard, and garlic powder. Add salt and pepper to taste. Brown pork chops in 2 Tbsp. oil then place in crock pot. Saute 3/4 cups onion in butter or margarine, mix in and add to crock pot: can of cream of mushroom soup, can of cream of chicken soup, and milk. Place the lid on the crock pot and cook on low for 6-8 hours or high for 3.5 hours. Enjoy!

# KITCHEN ENERGY SAVERS

Whether your oven and stove top are powered by gas or electricity, it's no secret that they consume more energy than smaller countertop appliances, like slow cookers and toaster ovens. In addition to efficiency, smaller kitchen appliances can provide faster cooking times and less hassle with cleanup.

If you're looking for convenient cooking methods with the added bonus of energy efficiency, here are three electrifying appliances for your kitchen:

**1.** Air fryers are becoming increasingly popular, and consumers have a lot of good things to say about these handy little appliances. Air fryers use convection to circulate hot air and cook the food—this means little to no oil is required, resulting in healthier meals than those from traditional fryers. Air fryers are fairly small, so they won't take up much of your counter space, and with everything cooked in the fryer, cleanup will be a breeze.

**2.** Electric griddles have certainly been around for a while, and they offer several benefits for any home chef (beyond bacon and eggs!). Griddles are convenient because you can cook everything at once—like a “one-pan” meal, and the possibilities are endless. They consume small amounts of energy and provide quick cooking times, so your energy bill will thank you.

**3.** Pizza brings people together, so why not consider a pizza maker for your kitchen? These compact, countertop machines use less energy than your traditional oven. Choose your own fresh ingredients to whip up a faster, healthier pizza at home. Plus, most pizza makers are multifunctional and can be used to cook flatbreads, frittatas, quesadillas and more. These are just a few electrifying appliance options for your kitchen. Remember, when you're cooking a smaller meal, countertop appliances can save time and energy.

# KEEP UTILITY POLES CLEAR

## *We need your help to keep our lineworkers safe!*

Keeping utility poles and electrical equipment free of signs, flags, and other foreign objects helps keep the community powered and our line crews safe.

It may seem harmless, but nails, staples, or other fasteners in utility poles present safety hazards to workers who have to climb the poles to repair or maintain the equipment. Sharp objects in the pole can lead to lineworkers snagging or piercing holes in their protective equipment, such as the rubber gloves that are meant to insulate workers from high voltage. Hanging things from utility poles also presents dangers to the community, putting individuals at risk of making accidental contact with energized power lines.

Safety is our number one priority. This is a reminder to do your part by keeping utility poles clear.



# 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.mlecmn.net](http://www.mlecmn.net) to sign up for SmartHub or download the app to your mobile device today!



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.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)

# WATER HEATER SAVINGS

One of the biggest energy users in your home is your water heater. There are ways we can help lower that usage, thereby lowering your overall energy bill. First, consider joining our off peak water heating program. Off peak water heating means you would have a separate meter and controls installed on your home for your water heater. This would allow the water heater to only draw electricity during times of low demand, such as overnight. A storage tank would then let you use the hot water all day. In turn you would get a lower kilowatt rate of 5.35¢.

An added bonus is that right now there is a rebate of \$400 on a Marathon water heater, purchased from us, when you opt into the off peak water heating program. Marathon water heaters are already extremely efficient with 2.5 inches of Envirofoam® insulation in the tank, allowing only 5°F of heat loss in 24 hours. They are ultra-durable and backed by a lifetime warranty of no leaking, leaving you with fewer worries in the future.

Contact your Energy Service Team today at 218-429-0432 or 1-888-433-4279 to discuss our off peak water heating program & Marathon water heaters.





## 2021 photo calendars are here!

Thank you to our members for submitting so many beautiful photos. Calendars are free for MLEC members and can be picked up at our Aitkin office (Please take one per membership). Our lobby is still closed, but there is a box located to the right of the lobby door near the deposit drop box. Entries for the 2022 calendar contest are now open. Details can be found online at [www.mlecmmn.net/photo-contest](http://www.mlecmmn.net/photo-contest).

SIGN UP TODAY! Call our office at  
218-429-0433 or 800-497-5310



NOW UP TO  
**30**  
Mbps

**Unlimited data plans**  
**Satellite Internet**  
**available just**  
**about anywhere**



# 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 **March 31<sup>st</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)

How many homes and businesses will the Phase 4 MLEC Fiber project pass?

Name:

Address:

*Congrats to Allen & Delores Hagen of Isle, the January 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. In 2021, MLEC will continue to implement an advanced metering infrastructure (AMI) and install a meter data management system (MDMS). 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.mlecmmn.net](http://www.mlecmmn.net)**

 **MILLE LACS ENERGY COOPERATIVE**

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