



March 2025

# Newsline

Lake Country Power

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

Energy that Powers Our Lives

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Touchstone Energy®  
Community Award  
Helping one another is the co-op way  
Fred's Store at LCP Annual Meeting

**BOARD MEETINGS** March 25 ■ April 29 (9:30 am at Cohasset Service Center. Members welcome)

## IVM program focused on proactive tree management along LCP lines

Proactive storm proofing of edge trees along Lake Country Power lines is the ongoing mission for the co-op's integrated vegetation management (IVM) program as it heads toward the end of its second cycle.

Dead trees, the structurally defect ones and what Syver Kolden, manager of forestry services, calls the large, leaning "pole breakers" are the trees targeted during each round of clearing out the right-of-way corridors in the system. This includes trees outside the right-of-way.

The general concept is that weakened trees are more susceptible to fall over, and if not maintained, are more likely to land on power lines during all-season weather events. A healthy edge of trees, along with trimming and removing the danger

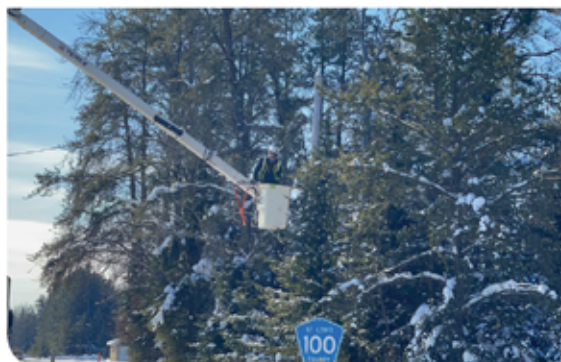
trees, creates fewer risks each storm. The practice also aids in fire prevention, as dry dead trees can act as a tinderbox.

By cycling the IVM program through LCP's 10,800-mile service area, the cooperative is able to routinely keep areas cleared and improve the right-of-way each time through.

"Danger trees are everywhere, not just in one area, so we can't just look at hot spots," Kolden said. "We do a lot of proactive herbicide and mower work under the wires to keep it clean, but danger trees along the edges cause most of the outages."

In 2025, the IVM program is focusing on areas near Bergen Lake and Solway by Duluth, around Cromwell and Brandon, lines serviced by the Gunn Substation near Grand Rapids and areas in Kettle River, Round Lake and Big Sandy. The Big Sandy area is among the most populated on LCP's map when considering members and trees, Kolden said.

It's the second turn through the seven-year cycle, which will be completed in 2027, at a budget of \$6.1 million for the year. Work was contracted through Zielies Tree Service Inc., allowing internal tree crews to focus on member requests and capital projects. Kolden said



the lump-sum bid from Zielies allows the co-op to pay the contractor for the work that's completed.

When the current cycle is done, he added, the IVM program has a goal of shortening the turnaround timeframe to return to an area.

"My goal is to go on a six-year cycle to get to those danger trees quicker," Kolden said. "We cover a lot of ground, so it would be another 150 miles of right-of-way every year."

The seven-year cycle work isn't the only thing going on for the IVM program. Mid-cycle work is also routinely performed, which includes the follow up herbicide work on brush under the wires, capital projects and removing trees as needed in areas of disease or pest infestation.

Kolden said Lake Country Power would also be returning to the Ely area to monitor the spruce budworm infestation outbreak, which caused about 10,000 trees to be cut in the region. Crews will also be on the east side of the system near Babbitt, Lakeland and Cotton for herbicide treatments. ■

# Fred's Store refuels, and will be at LCP Annual Meeting

Fred's Store in Goodland refueled more than its renown smokers this winter.

The bacon, beef sticks and jerky are still going strong, but now the 70-year staple of Itasca County features new gas pumps and an updated look. It's the latest addition for Kim Korpi after purchasing Fred's in May 2022, with her sister Kerri Eden, when the Majewski family was ready to sell the business.

They were awarded state and federal grants offered for selling higher ethanol blends of gas to replace the aging tanks, which were more than 30 years old and up against a typical 25-year lifespan.

The project involved replacing the tanks, dispensers, canopy and updating the point of sale to allow for pay-at-the-pump services 24 hours, as well as adding on-road diesel.

"It ran the whole gamut," Korpi said.

When the gas pumps were activated Dec. 23, 2024, it was the beginning of a new future for Fred's, at the end of a long and challenging year.

A roundabout project created detours around Goodland this summer, directing traffic away from the store. Most of Fred's business in the summer months comes from Twin Cities seasonal visitors and vacationers.

"We lost a lot of money, about 50



percent of a typical summer," Korpi said. "That was our first hurdle."

The second was actually getting started on the new gas pumps. Construction was supposed to start in September but was pushed back until late October. That delay pushed into Fred's other busiest time of the year — deer hunting season.

By the time it was done, the storefront had a fresh look with the Fred's Store logo and an Amoco-branded gas station. It was a good return to business as usual for Fred's, offering fuel, groceries and the famous meat department.

"We made it through and it's been nothing but positive feedback from the locals and the cabin owners," Korpi said. "The customers are all very happy, and it gives us a fresh look."

Fred's Store will be the Member Made featured business at the 2025 Lake Country Power annual meeting on Thursday, April 24, at the Reif Center in Grand Rapids. Registration begins at 5 p.m. and the business meeting at 6:30 p.m. Fred's will be located inside the Reif offering a variety of products.

Fred's Store can be found on Facebook. To learn more about the Member Made Initiative, visit <https://lakecountrypower.coop/membermade>.



## DID YOU KNOW?

Lake Country Power members have contributed more than \$3.3 million to Operation Round Up® since its inception in October 2004.

# Let's Go Fishing Itasca wins Touchstone Energy® Community Award

Lake Country Power selected Let's Go Fishing Itasca as the winner of its annual Touchstone Energy® Community Award. The co-op chose this organization for the variety of people they reach and for its 100-percent, volunteer-operated community organization impact.

As winner of the Touchstone Energy® Community Award, Let's Go Fishing Itasca was awarded a plaque and \$500 that will go toward sustaining the program.

Let's Go Fishing Itasca is a non-profit organization operated by volunteers in Itasca County. The organization was formed 18 years ago and has given pontoon rides to more than 14,000 people. During the winter, the program focuses on ice fishing making it a year-round service. All supplies are provided, including fishing rods and reels, bait and treats.

"Without the community backing us, we couldn't do what we do," said Beverly Taylor, a volunteer with Let's Go Fishing Itasca who submitted the community award application. "One-hundred percent of the grants we receive goes back into the program, so thank you!"

The primary client base of Let's Go Fishing Itasca includes youth, adults and seniors from senior residents of care facilities, support groups, assisted living, adult day cares, adult foster homes, church groups, mental health support groups, and individuals living independently. The pontoon is handicapped accessible.

"When reviewing the applications, we liked the variety of people Let's Go Fishing Itasca helps and that there is no age limit for their services," said Angie Clifton, Lake Country Power. "We also appreciate how the organization is run by volunteers, which means no one's on a payroll making this program truly grassroots at its core."

Another function of Let's Go Fishing Itasca focuses on exposing 5th grade

elementary students to the importance of clean water through the Itasca Water Summit.

"Our program's main goal is getting people back into the great outdoors, putting smiles on faces, and creating many happy memories," said Beverly Taylor.

Lake Country Power is one of several Touchstone Energy® Cooperatives in Minnesota providing a local award to encourage and recognize local community contributions. Let's Go Fishing Itasca will compete with winners from other Minnesota-based electric cooperatives in February for statewide recognition and \$2,000. For more information about Let's Go Fishing Itasca, visit <https://itasca.lgps.com/>. ■



**HOW TO  
AVOID ENERGY SCAMS**

Be cautious of fraudulent websites pretending to be an electric utility. Scammers often create look-alike sites to steal your personal or payment information. Always type your utility's official web address directly into your browser instead of clicking email or text links. Watch for signs of a secure website, such as "https://" in the address bar and a padlock icon. If you're ever unsure, call your utility company using the official phone number listed on your bill to verify payment or account details.

Source: Utilities United Against Scams

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# Helping one another: It's the cooperative way



When electric cooperatives work together, success isn't just possible — it's inevitable.

"Cooperation among cooperatives" is one of the seven guiding principles that provide the foundation for Lake Country Power's business model. This principle fosters the way we work together to address everyday challenges as well as larger issues that impact the entire energy industry.

Lake Country Power is one of 26 distribution cooperatives that collectively own Great River Energy, our wholesale power provider. These cooperatives meet regularly to share ideas and best practices, solve problems and exchange information.

LCP is also a member of the Minnesota Rural Electric Association (MREA), a statewide association that represents electric cooperatives by actively engaging legislators and policymakers to educate them about our business model and the critical role we play in the state's economy.

Similar to our relationship with MREA, we are also a member of the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) whose mission is to promote, support and protect the community and

business interests of electric cooperatives. NRECA advocates on behalf of us and our members in Washington, D.C.

## Stepping up in a crisis

The times when cooperatives shine brightest, though, is when we are helping each other through difficult situations — even from across the country.

When Hurricane Helene hit several electric cooperatives in the southeastern United States last fall, a call was made for mutual aid to help restore power after the storm left more than 1.25 million members without electricity.

Coordinated efforts between MREA and South Carolina's statewide association resulted in 80 lineworkers representing 18 Minnesota cooperatives hitting the road within a day of the initial call for help.

"As electric cooperatives, we follow seven principles, one of which is 'cooperation,'" said MREA Chief Executive Officer Darrick Moe. "Co-ops support one another. Combine that with the principle of 'concern for community,' our co-ops and lineworkers are quick to help others and the communities they serve."

## RECIPE CORNER COWBOY STEW



From the  
Kitchen of:

**Kathleen Menk,  
Grand Rapids, MN**



- 6 strips crisp fried bacon (diced)
- 1 lb. ground beef (browned, drain)
- Chopped onion
- Garlic salt sprinkle
- Salt and pepper to taste
- Green pepper (optional)
- 2 cans whole diced tomatoes
- 2 cups diced potatoes
- ½ tsp. chili powder
- 1 can whole kernel corn

Put it all in a slow cooker.  
Add crumbled bacon on top.

Submit your favorite recipe to Lake Country Power, Attn. Editor, 8535 Park Ridge Drive, Mountain Iron, MN 55768, or e-mail [journes@lcp.coop](mailto:journes@lcp.coop). If your entry is printed in Newsline, you'll receive a \$5 credit on your electric bill. Entries must include name, address and phone number on account.

## District meeting recording available



▶ Lake Country Power held its District 7 meeting at South Ridge School in Culver on February 12. A recording of the meeting, and the district meeting slideshow presentation, can be found at [www.lakecountrypower.coop](http://www.lakecountrypower.coop), along with a schedule of the remaining meetings.

# Electric cooperatives bring unique value to their communities

Electric cooperatives stand out from other types of businesses because they are built and led by the communities they serve. As independent, not-for-profit electric utilities, co-ops are owned and governed by local members — not by outside shareholders or investors.

That is a powerful differentiator.

Here are a few ways electric co-ops like Lake Country Power bring unique value to the local communities they serve:



By Robert  
**BRUCKBAUER**  
District 5 Director

- It puts people before profits. Co-ops are not-for-profit and provide at-cost electric service. Any excess revenue is returned to our consumer-members in the

form of capital credits.

- Community comes first. Lake Country Power's employees and directors live and work here too, and we care deeply about our local communities. That's why the co-op engages in development and revitalization projects, sponsors local students for scholarships and youth programs, and gives back to local organizations like the United Way and the Education Improvement Program to help our neighbors in need.
- Affordable, reliable power is a priority. Lake Country Power purchases electricity from Great River Energy, its wholesale energy partner. GRE is a generation and transmission cooperative formed by a group of electric co-ops in Minnesota. This cooperative business structure allows us to pool local resources and provide electricity at a lower cost than if it was

purchased from outside sources.

As a new year begins, Lake Country Power is focused on members' energy needs — not only for today but for the long haul. LCP leadership is advocating for smarter energy policies that prioritize reliability and affordability for all, and works closely with Great River Energy to ensure use of a diverse mix of sources to generate the electricity we provide to our members.

Lake Country Power is working to power a brighter future through innovation that meets tomorrow's energy needs. Reliable, affordable electricity is more important than ever before, and our focus will continue to be the best interest of the local communities we serve. ■

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*Bob Bruckbauer was elected to the LCP Board by members in District 5. He can be reached at 218-290-8729 or [rbruckbauer@lcp.coop](mailto:rbruckbauer@lcp.coop).*

## 3 members meet filing deadline for board seats

The following LCP members met the filing requirements for nomination as a candidate for the co-op's board of directors. The nomination deadline was 4:30 p.m., February 13.

**District 2:** Michael Forsman, Ely\*

**District 4:** Jeff Sheldon, Cohasset\*

**District 8:** Brian Napstad, McGregor\*

\* Denotes Incumbent

Ballots will mail between April 5 and April 9. Online voting begins April 9, 2025, at 8:00 a.m. Central Standard Time, and ends April 24, 2025, at 11:00 a.m. Central. If voting online, instructions will be provided on your ballot. Otherwise, members in Districts 2, 4 and 8 may vote by mail with their paper ballot, or in person at the annual meeting before polls close.

## December 19, 2024 • Regular Monthly Meeting

### THE FOLLOWING REPORTS WERE GIVEN:

President Olson reported that all directors were present for the December 17 budget meeting. The board heard from LCP management and held discussion about the proposed 2025 budget. He also noted fielding member phone calls about capital credits.

General Manager Bakk reported on his attendance at Great River Energy's (GRE) December board meeting and two meetings with the Minnesota Rural Electric Association (MREA) in Maple Grove. He also reported on a load shed drill by Midwest Independent System Operator

(MISO) in the event of a grid emergency.

### THE FOLLOWING ACTIONS WERE TAKEN:

Approved the 2025 capital and operating budgets, including a pass-through wholesale supplier rate increase.

Approved the Collective Bargaining Agreement.

Approved Bakk and Olson as voting delegate and voting alternate for CoBank, Federated, National Information Solutions Cooperative (NISC), National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) and National Rural Telecommunications Cooperative (NRTC).



► Lisa Diehl Foreman of Edina took this picture through the trees overlooking Sturgeon Lake. She titled it, "Sunset Over the Pond."

**Editor's Note:** These board minutes have been condensed. A full copy of the board minutes can be read at [www.lakecountrypower.coop](http://www.lakecountrypower.coop) under "My Cooperative." You'll need to sign up for access if you haven't already. Or call 800-421-9959 for a printed copy.

#### 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.

## Co-op Contacts

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<b>Craig Olson,</b> District 7	<b>218-393-2276</b> colson@lcp.coop
<b>Brian Napstad,</b> District 8	<b>218-485-1528</b> bnapstad@lcp.coop
<b>Larry Anderson,</b> District 9	<b>218-428-2722</b> landerson@lcp.coop

## BY THE NUMBERS | DECEMBER 2024

Lake Country Power is committed to responsibly managing resources to ensure financial stability of the cooperative. Below is a snapshot of the preliminary year-end unaudited financial report. A complete set of financial statements can be viewed at [www.lakecountrypower.coop](http://www.lakecountrypower.coop) under "My Cooperative."



	2024	2023
Cost of Purchased Power	\$55,805,687	\$53,159,972
Other Operating Expenses	\$49,075,499	\$45,475,950
Total Cost of Electric Service	\$104,881,186	\$98,635,922



	2024	2023
Operating Margins	\$6,327,079	\$7,648,403
Non-Operating Margins	\$4,023,011	\$4,449,117



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

### Newsline

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