



THE OUTLET

Monthly Publication of Mille Lacs Energy Cooperative

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

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FEBRUARY 2022

MLEC FIBER INTERNET GRANT

Our Fiber-to-the-Home Internet network is expanding!

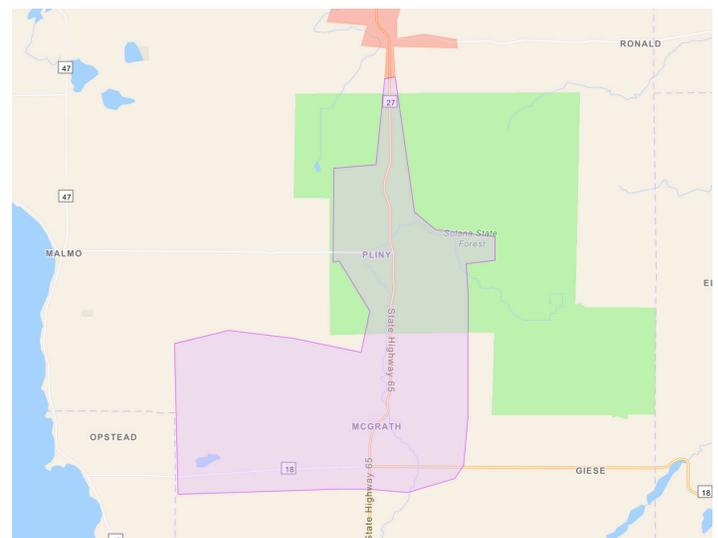
MLEC is happy to announce that MLEC Fiber Internet will become available for more customers! In partnership with Aitkin County, MLEC is bringing fast and reliable fiber Internet service to 565 homes. The project area includes the townships of Idun, Pliny, Rice River, Seavey, White Pine, Williams and the City of McGrath. We are excited to, once again, work with Consolidated Telecommunications Company (CTC) on the construction of this project and expand our MLEC Fiber Internet network.

The \$4,823,654 grant is a part of the Small Cities Coronavirus Community Development Block Grant Program (CDBG-CV). The Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED) awarded \$34,656,956 in grants to 15 Minnesota cities and counties across the state. As part of the federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act (CARES Act), Minnesota received a special allocation to address community needs to prevent, prepare for and respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. Most of the funding will be used for broadband improvement projects. Other uses will include housing assistance, food shelf assistance, retrofitting buildings and commercial rehabilitation projects.

If MLEC Fiber is available where you live, there is still time to sign up! 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. Project area maps, Internet plans, and service agreements can all be found online.

Project area shown below in purple.



SAVE THE DATE!

All MLEC members are invited to the 2022 Annual Meeting



WHEN: Thursday, May 5th

WHERE: Minnesota National Golf Course McGregor, MN

SCHEDULE:

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

Meal Served - 5:00 p.m.

Business Meeting - 5:45 p.m.

NEW YEAR, NEW REBATES

With rebates on everything from appliances to air source heat pumps, it's easy to make your home more cost-effective and energy efficient! Mille Lacs Energy Cooperative continually works to provide rebates that not only save energy, but also save our members money. It is important to note that limited funds are available, and rebates are awarded on a first-come, first-served basis. A dated copy of the sales receipt is required within 90 days of purchase.

We provide rebates on the following:

- \$25 - Energy Star® Dehumidifier
- \$25 - Energy Star® Dryer
- \$50 - Energy Star® Refrigerator and/or Freezer
- \$25 - Recycling or Haul Away of Refrigerator or Freezer
- \$25 - Smart Thermostat
- \$30 - LED Yard Light
- \$50 - HVAC Electronically Commutated Motor (ECM)
- \$500 - Ductless Air Source Heat Pump
- \$400 per ton - Ground Source Heat Pump
- \$50 per kW - Off Peak Heating
- \$100 - Peak Shave Water Heating
- \$400 - Off Peak Water Heater
- \$500 - Off Peak Electric Vehicle & ChargeWise
- \$500 - Heat Pump Water Heater
- \$25 - AC Tune Up
- \$100 - Installing Cycled Air Controls



Central Air Conditioning & Ducted Air Source Heat Pumps

Must have a registered contractor install

- \$50 - SEER 14.5 up to 16 Central A/C
- \$480 - SEER 14.5 Air Source Heat Pump Installation
- \$580 - SEER 15 Air Source Heat Pump Installation
- \$630 - SEER 16 Air Source Heat Pump Installation

Contact our Energy Services Team at 218-429-0432 or 888-433-4279 for details or go to www.mlecmm.net to get more information and rebate forms.

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

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

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

Harold Harms - District 3
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Assistant Secretary/Treasurer

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Vice President

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Sarah Cron - CEO
218/927-8224
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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,
Communications Specialist

FUTURE FINANCIAL PLANS

Dear Member:

I have been working with MLEC's Staff, Management Team, and Board of Directors to look at our three-, five-, and ten-year financial goals to set the course of MLEC's future. Setting the financial course (the engineers call it ratemaking) is a complicated, confusing, and yet intriguing puzzle. When they send you to CEO training, these same engineers tell you that ratemaking is as much an art as it is a science. I can tell you that until I spent months looking at historical data and spreadsheets, and debating priorities and philosophies with my co-workers, I did not fully understand that statement.

I can save the surprise moment and tell you that our Accounting and Finance Team has run the numbers in a multitude of ways. They have calculated the future of MLEC building a new headquarters or staying where we are. The bottom line is that regardless of what we do – or do not do – the general cost of doing business has increased, and our rates have stayed stable for three years. In fact, the general cost of everything has increased greatly over time (see chart below), but the cost of MLEC's electricity has gone up minimally. Consequently, we are going to need to account for some type of rate adjustment in the next 24 months.

When the engineers say that ratemaking is as much an art as it is a science, that is due partly to the fact that we must account for our status as a cooperative. As a not-for-profit, we essentially want to budget to \$0 net margins for the year while accounting for the return capital credits back to you, our member-owners, for your past contributions to our business operations. You may have noticed some very large capital credit retirements the last two years, and we can point to two main reasons for this. First, unforeseen circumstances of the global pandemic, namely the forgiveness of the Paycheck Protection Program Loan, put MLEC in a favorable position to be able to retire capital credits sooner than we had planned, enabling us to ease the burden on our members. Second, we wanted to get slightly ahead of our return cycle because we have some very large retirements we will be facing over the next ten years, and getting ahead of it in years when we have favorable margins helps us prepare for uncertain times in the upcoming years.

When our Accounting and Finance Team was running different financial models, they included just a few of the following scenarios:

- A) Do absolutely nothing with rates, build a new headquarters, and continue to expand our fiber business as grants are available.
- B) Reduce wholesale power rates by 13% (our original estimate from GRE in 2019), build a new headquarters, and continue to expand our fiber business as grants are available.
- C) Reduce wholesale power rates modestly, impose a slight cost of power increase, build a new headquarters, and continue to expand our fiber business as grants are available.
- D) Reduce wholesale power rates modestly, do not build a new headquarters, slowly expand our fiber business as grants are available.



Sarah Cron
CEO

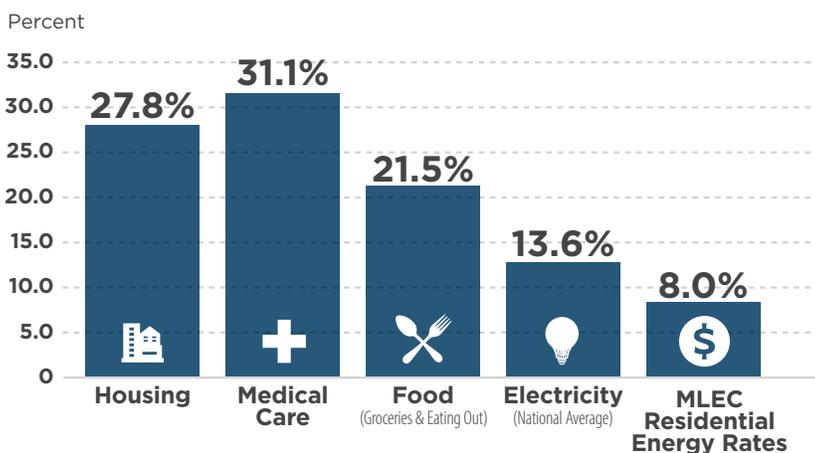
Knowing B is now not an option, what option do you think was viable for the financial future of MLEC?

The real answer is none of the above. Looking at our entire financial picture, we must continue balancing cash out of pocket versus using long-term debt; calculating capital credit allocations and retirements with our bottom line; maintaining and operating a safe and reliable system with reasonable rates; and, standing ready to provide electric service to each and every single MLEC member. That is the art of ratemaking, and that is what we are working to provide for our membership.

Please stay tuned to all your MLEC news outlets to find out about our future plans and how they will impact you.

In the meantime, stay warm. The days are getting longer and spring is right around the corner.

Average Annual Price Increase 2011-2021



Sources: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics Consumer Price Index

LET'S DISH

Thank you to Mary Poetz of Aitkin 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 Cooperative
P.O. Box 230
Aitkin, MN 56431

OR E-MAIL:

kpeterson@mlecmn.com



CHOCOLATE ÉCLAIR DESSERT

27 whole graham crackers, halved
3 cups milk
2 packages (4 oz.) vanilla instant pudding
1 tub (12 oz.) Cool Whip
1 tub (16 oz.) chocolate fudge frosting

Arrange 1/2 of crackers on bottom of 13x9 inch baking pan, breaking crackers to fit. Pour milk into a large bowl. Add pudding mixes. Beat with wire whisk for 2 minutes. Gently stir in whipped topping. Spread 1/2 of the pudding mixture over the crackers. Place 1/2 of the remaining crackers over pudding. Top with remaining pudding mixture and crackers. Remove top and foil from frosting container. Microwave for 1 minute or until pourable. Spread evenly over the entire pan. Refrigerate until ready to serve. Enjoy!

2022 YOUTH TOUR

MLEC is now accepting applications for the 2022 Youth Tour! Current sophomores or juniors in high school, whose parent or guardian is an MLEC member, are eligible to apply. This year's Washington DC Youth Tour is June 14-19.

Meet student leaders from nearly every state in the country. The tour includes visits with congressional representatives. You'll get the chance to visit some of the most famous museums in the world, and experience monuments dedicated to our country's leaders and heroes. You'll be a part of a group that has more than 50,000 alumni in every walk of life, including U.S. Senators and CEOs. You'll make memories and friendships that will last a lifetime. Don't miss this chance for an all expenses paid trip to the nation's capital!



Applications can be found on our website, www.mlecmn.net/youth-tour, or by emailing **Kassie Peterson** at kpeterson@mlecmn.com. Applications must be received by **March 1, 2022**.

MLEC FIBER RATE CHANGE

Due to supply chain issues and increasing costs of services, MLEC Fiber has adjusted our Internet plans accordingly. Beginning March 1, 2022, our Internet plans will be as shown.

This change will help keep our MLEC Fiber business financially healthy and our prices competitive. Our team has been busy signing up 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 throughout our service territory.

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

BASIC

\$59⁹⁵
per month

250 Mbps

- 250 Mbps download/upload speeds
- Recommended for homes with multiple users
- Ideal for smart TVs, streaming and browsing

PRO

\$79⁹⁵
per month

500 Mbps

- 500 Mbps download/upload speeds
- Ideal High Definition Streaming (Up to 4K)
- Recommended for homes with many simultaneous users, including streaming

ELITE

\$99⁹⁵
per month

1 Gbps

- 1 Gbps download/upload speeds
- The best of the best
- Recommended for homes with 10+ devices and heavy gaming/streaming
- Ideal for those who work from home

BOARD ELECTIONS

Candidate filing for MLEC director positions from Districts One and Two is now open!

District One includes members whose electric account numbers start with 60, 61, 63, 64, 67, 68, and 69. The present director is Barbara Welty of Garrison. Barb has served the maximum term, and therefore, is ineligible to run again at this time.

District Two includes members whose electric account numbers start with 35, 38, 49, and 50. The present director is Carol Pundt of Deerwood.

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@mlecmn.com for director election filing forms and a complete information packet.

All filings must be received at the Cooperative by February 25, 2022.

You can find additional district and annual meeting information on the MLEC website www.mlecmn.net.



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

Then contact a licensed electrician to locate your secondary wires.

MN Electrical Inspectors
Aitkin County & South East Crow Wing County
Nathan Readle 218-537-8419

Northern Crow Wing County
Jeff Overmyer 218-252-0919

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 under *Quick Links*.



Visit our website - www.mlecmn.net
E-mail us - mlec@mlecmn.net

SCHOOL DONATIONS

Each year, MLEC donates all unclaimed capital credit checks to the seven schools in our service area. This year, a total of \$22,894.70 was presented by Energy Advisors Jeff Coombs, Travis Powers, and Scott Nutting. They are shown in the photos along with school representatives. (Not pictured: Aitkin Schools and Minisinaakwaang Leadership Academy.)



Karn Dols

Onamia Schools



Travis Powers, Brad Johnson, Jeff Coombs

McGregor Schools



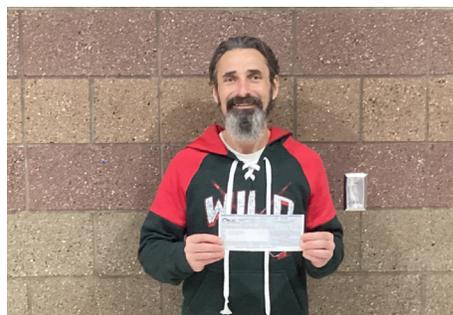
Lea St. Onge

Crosby Schools



Karen Norby

Nay Ah Shing School



Dean Kapsner

Isle Schools



2022 photo calendars now available at the MLEC office!

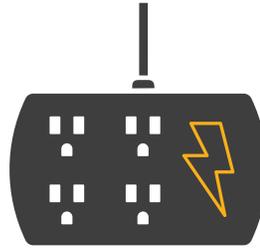
Photo calendars are free for all MLEC members. Stop by the MLEC office to get one while supplies last. Please only take one per membership. Thank you to all who submitted photos this year!

Rural lifestyle.

Big city Internet.

Just because you're not in the big city, doesn't mean you can't have access to great Internet service. Let MLEC Fiber give you the fast and reliable Internet you deserve!

218-429-0433 • www.mlecmm.net/fiber



SURGE PROTECTION

Keep your electronic equipment safe.

A power surge is typically caused by lightning, changes in electrical loads, faulty wiring, or damaged power lines.

Install power strips with surge protection to protect sensitive equipment.

- Easy to use (just plug them in)
- Protect electronics plugged into the device
- Must be replaced over time or after a major surge event



REMEMBER:

Not all power strips offer surge protection. Carefully read the packaging labels when purchasing.

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 **February 28th**.

MAIL TO:

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

OR E-MAIL:

kpeterson@mlecmm.com

What day is the 2022 Annual Meeting taking place?

Name:

Address:

Congrats to Tom Sandelands of Garrison, the December gift card trivia winner!



MILLE LACS ENERGY COOPERATIVE

36559 US Highway 169, Aitkin, MN 56431 • (218) 927-2191 / (800) 450-2191 • www.mlecmm.net

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