

Michigan

COUNTRY LINES



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Barbecue

Important
Annual Meeting
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Back Cover!

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New Manager

8 Growing Pains: Affordable,
Reliable Energy

28 Ways To Curb Your
Carbon Footprint

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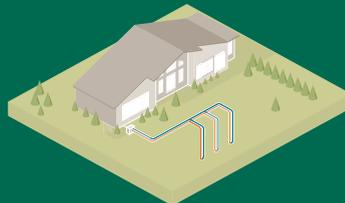
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Photo - Ohio Electric Cooperatives

Photo - Nissan

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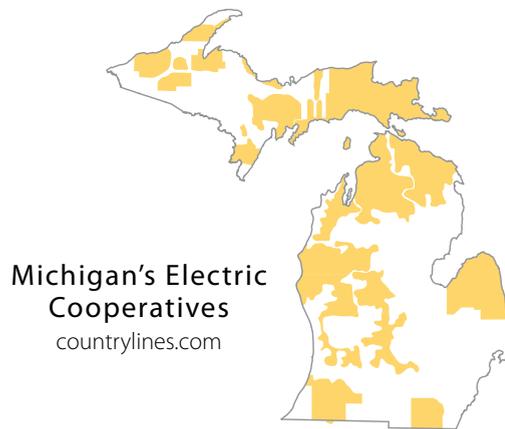
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Bob (L), Mary, Josh and Jenn Hance enter their smokin' good food in barbecue competitions.

Photo - Roger Boettcher, Leavenworth Photographics



Michigan's Electric
Cooperatives
countrylines.com



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OTHER INFORMATION

Date of Incorporation: Sept. 30, 1937
Fiscal year-end: Dec. 31
countrylines.com/coops/ontonagon



The Ontonagon County REA office will be closed on May 30 for Memorial Day, and July 4 for Independence Day. Please, only call the office on these days if you need to report a power outage.

MANAGER'S MESSAGE

Meet Your Co-op's New Manager

You've been reading a lot about change in this magazine lately—on everything from the updated cover and design to happenings in the electric industry that affect you as a co-op member-owner.



Debbie Miles
General Manager

Your co-op, Ontonagon County REA, has been going through a lot of change, too. After years of dedicated service, Tom Haarala recently retired (see p. 5), and I have been working for two months now as Ontonagon's new general manager.

While this position (and being one of Michigan's first female electric co-op managers) is new to me, I'm not new to the co-op world or our local service area. I actually started my career at Ontonagon County REA and worked here for 19 years, and then spent the last seven and one-half years as the office manager for another U.P. co-op—Alger Delta Cooperative Electric Association in Gladstone.

Now, I'm happy to be back to the Ontonagon area, where I was born and raised, and it feels like a good start on this return journey to work with the co-op's staff and board of directors. We will work hard to advance this co-op as much as possible while managing "job No. 1"—providing you with quality, reliable electric service at the most affordable price possible.

As you know, these are challenging times for both our country and as you've been reading in *Country Lines*, for the electric utility industry. We will also work hard

at sharing information with you about your co-op, but attending the next annual meeting (June 18; below and p. 32) and participating by voting for candidates running for the board of directors is the best way for you to keep updated on what's happening.

The issues we face are similar to those faced by other electric co-ops, such as keeping rates affordable in the face of rising power supply costs and growing consumer demand for electricity. And, these are some of the items that will be discussed and shared with you at the annual meeting and on the pages of this magazine.

Further, it's important to know that since we are a nonprofit business, we supply your electric service at or near cost. (Any profits or "margins" left over after the bills are paid goes back into improving the co-op or paying on debt.)

I look forward to hearing from and meeting many of you personally at the upcoming annual meeting. As I get my feet planted firmly back on Ontonagon soil, I will share with you future goals that your board of directors and I have for the co-op. In the meantime, my thanks goes to the Ontonagon board of directors for choosing me to lead this co-op.

Please help me and your board of directors lead the way to a solid co-op future by participating in your co-op's annual meeting. Join us for lunch while you hear about your co-op and visit with friends.

Co-op Principles

The cooperative principles are guidelines by which cooperatives put their values into practice.

- 1** Voluntary and Open Membership
- 2** Democratic Member Control
- 3** Member Economic Participation
- 4** Autonomy and Independence
- 5** Education, Training and Information
- 6** Cooperation among Cooperatives
- 7** Concern for Community

Haarala Retires As Ontonagon Manager



Tom Haarala

After 28 years of dedicated service to the Ontonagon County REA, Tom Haarala retired as general manager this February. Before starting work at the co-op in 1995 as an accountant (replacing Debbie Miles), he was the Ontonagon County treasurer.

Born and raised near Kenton, Tom attended school at Ewen-Trout Creek and later graduated from Northern Michigan University with a degree in history.

In retirement, Tom and his wife Sharon will enjoy more time to visit with friends and family, including the families of their two daughters, Kelly and Stephanie. The Haarala's have two grandchildren. Best wishes to Tom and his family.

Annual Meeting Notice for Members of Ontonagon County Rural Electrification Association

Notice is hereby given that the annual meeting of the Ontonagon County Rural Electrification Association will be on Saturday, June 18, 2011, at Chassell High School.

Registration will begin at 9:30 a.m. and the meeting at 10 a.m. Members attending the annual meeting will receive a \$5 credit on their July bill.

Why Do We Send You Country Lines?

We send *Michigan Country Lines* to you because it is the most economical and convenient way to share information with members. It takes the place of many mailings we would otherwise make to get information to you about our services, director elections, and member meetings, and about the staff and management decisions you should know about as an owner of the cooperative. The magazine also carries legal notices that would otherwise have to be placed in local media at a substantial cost.

And, sending *Country Lines* to you helps the cooperative fulfill one of its basic principles—to educate and communicate openly with members.

The board of directors authorizes the cooperative to subscribe to *Country Lines* on behalf of the membership at a cost ranging from \$3 to \$4 per year, paid as part of your electric bill. The current cost of the magazine is 51 cents per copy, only slightly more than a first-class stamp.

Michigan Country Lines is published for us, at cost, by the Michigan Electric Cooperative Association in Okemos. As always, we value your comments about your magazine.



Ontonagon County REA Financial Statement Balance Sheets

Dec. 31, 2010 & 2009

Assets	2010	2009
UTILITY PLANT:		
Electric plant in service	\$19,840,069	\$18,558,700
Construction work in progress	575,321	378,281
	20,415,390	18,936,981
Less - Accumulated depreciation	5,470,301	4,995,618
Net utility plant	14,945,089	13,941,363
INVESTMENTS & OTHER ASSETS:		
Investments	512,932	494,313
Total investments and other assets	512,932	494,313
CURRENT ASSETS:		
Cash and cash equivalents	74,597	399,126
Accounts receivable (less accumulated provision for uncollectibles of \$15,805 in 2010 and \$15,805 in 2009)	697,257	494,024
Materials and supplies	351,353	243,843
Prepayments	33,951	31,919
Total current assets	1,157,158	1,168,912
Deferred Charges	219,093	189,610
TOTAL ASSETS	\$ 16,834,272	\$ 15,794,198
Members' Equities and Liabilities		
EQUITIES:		
Memberships	\$ 20,695	20,450
Patronage capital	2,347,644	2,280,502
Other equities	32,497	32,302
Total equities	2,400,836	2,333,254
LONG-TERM LIABILITIES:		
RDUP and CFC mortgage notes, less current portion	11,553,262	10,233,783
Post-retirement benefit obligation	364,145	373,866
Total long-term liabilities	11,917,407	10,607,649
CURRENT LIABILITIES:		
Current maturities of long-term liabilities	370,000	360,000
Line of credit note payable	1,500,000	1,900,000
Accounts payable	257,531	233,926
Customer deposits	9,150	9,950
Other current liabilities	337,528	321,579
Total current liabilities	2,474,209	2,825,455
Deferred credits	41,820	27,840
TOTAL EQUITIES AND LIABILITIES	\$ 16,834,272	\$ 15,794,198
Statement of Revenue & Expenses Ending Dec. 31, 2010 & 2009		
OPERATING REVENUES	\$ 5,148,970	\$ 4,987,111
OPERATING EXPENSES:		
Cost of power	2,592,884	2,417,376
Distribution - Operations	173,430	134,564
Distribution - Maintenance	426,926	347,625
Consumer accounts	187,927	179,597
Customer service and informational	13,523	11,511
Administrative and general	402,367	469,339
Depreciation	595,553	551,309
Taxes	192,363	191,823
Other deductions	1,308	896
Total operating expense	4,586,281	4,304,040
Operating margins before interest expense	562,689	683,071
Interest expense	605,248	572,437
Operating margins (loss) after interest expense	(42,559)	110,634
NONOPERATING MARGINS:		
Interest and investment income	44,749	44,934
Other nonoperating income (expense)	58,034	63,113
	102,783	108,047
Capital credits	9,901	16,357
NET (LOSS) MARGINS	\$ 70,125	\$ 235,038



State Sen. Nofs Speaks to Co-op Leaders

Sen. Mike Nofs, chair of the Senate Energy and Technology Committee, spoke to a group of co-op managers, directors and staff during the April annual meetings of the Michigan Electric Cooperative Association and Wolverine Power Cooperative.

"It's an interesting time [for Michigan]—we're looking at doing things differently," Nofs said. Issues of note included deregulation of the state's telecommunications industry, renewable and energy efficiency standards for utilities, and making business and pension tax

revisions he says will make Michigan more competitive.

"We're taking on tough issues because we don't want to leave a legacy of debt for our kids," Nofs added.

MECA is the service organization for Michigan's nine distribution co-ops, and Wolverine is the state's only electric generation and transmission co-op.

The two groups also held their board of directors elections with Tony Anderson of Cherryland Electric Cooperative in Grawn as MECA's chair, and Dale Farrier of Kalkaska chosen as Wolverine's chairman.

Shocking? May is National Electrical Safety Month

Protect your home and family from fires and electrocution.

Electrical problems in older homes account for nearly 55,000 fires every year. These blazes cause more than 500 deaths, injure more than 1,400 people, and rack up \$1.4 billion in property damage.

The risk of such fires is significant since one-half of all homes in the United States were constructed and wired prior to 1973, according to the U.S. Census Bureau—before the advent of garage door openers or home computers. Even more telling, one-third of U.S. homes were built before hair dryers or electric can openers were even invented!

"As each year goes by, Americans consume more energy in their homes," says Brett Brenner, president of Electrical Safety Foundation International (ESFI). "Many homes and electrical systems are simply being overburdened, which leads to fires, injuries and deaths."

ESFI has created a checklist

that lets consumers identify electrical dangers commonly found in each room of the house. Owners of older homes can upgrade their electrical systems with newer fire prevention technology, such as arc fault circuit interrupters (AFCIs). These advanced electronic circuit breakers detect dangerous conditions in a home's wiring and cut off power before a fire develops.

Additionally, those living in older homes with children can install tamper-resistant receptacles. These devices look like normal electrical outlets, but they have a built-in shutter system that prevents children from inserting foreign objects into the slots. Using tamper-resistant receptacles would prevent most of the 2,400 burns suffered by children each year from outlets.

More resources on National Electrical Safety Month can be found at electricalsafety.org, or call (703) 841-3229.

MYSTERY PHOTO

Everyone who identifies the correct location of the photo below by **June 10** will be entered in a drawing for a **\$50 coupon redeemable for electricity from your electric cooperative.**

Call in your entry to *Country Lines* at 517-351-6322, ext. 306, email jhansen@countrylines.com, or mail it to *Country Lines*, 2859 W. Jolly Road, Okemos, 48864. Include your name, address, phone number and co-op. The winner will be announced in the July/August 2011 issue.

The March contest winner is **Connie Pritchard of Blanchard**, who correctly identified the building in Bertha Brock Park, Ionia County.



March photo

Do you know where this is? ▶



Energy Efficiency

Tip of the Month

Don't keep your refrigerator or freezer too cold. Recommended temperatures are 37° to 40° F for the main refrigerator compartment and 5° F for the freezer. If you have a stand-alone freezer, it should be kept at 0° F. Appliance settings may vary, so an easy way to check the temperature is to use a meat thermometer.

Source: U.S. Department of Energy

Tell us about your favorite Michigan-made products!

Share a few paragraphs with us about your favorite Michigan-made product and we may write about it. Be sure to share why you like it and if you have a unique story to go with it, please send that, too. Email by **March 10** to czuker@countrylines.com or send to: *Country Lines*, 2859 W. Jolly Road, Okemos, MI 48864.



Skunks

The article “Spring’s Little Stinkers” (March) was very disturbing, to say the least. Starting with a little background, my grandfather was Mark Crow, who was one of the first game wardens north of Lansing. As a child, he raised me in the woods. My father was the ad manager for the *Michigan Farmer*, a bi-monthly farm publication. Both were hunters and fishermen and taught me to never shoot (kill) any animal that I would not eat. They both considered “sportsmen” who killed for the fun of it like coyote hunters to be the lowest of the so-called outdoorsman. We hunted, we fished, and we ate what we hunted and fished for.

There is no reason to kill a skunk unless you don’t know any better and/or enjoy killing.

Skunks are inquisitive and yes, they will spray when threatened. If they are not threatened, they WILL NOT SPRAY because spraying is a defense behavior. Let me give you an example or two. Where we live we have skunks come to our front yard to clean up under our bird feeders. I go out in the yard and sit down within 20 feet of them and set quietly. They ignore until they feel safe and then they will walk right up to me. Because I’m no threat, I have never been sprayed or even threatened.

If a skunk gets into the house it’s easy to get them out without being sprayed. For a skunk to spray it must lift its tail and curl it over its back. Very quietly and slowly go into the room where it is and sit down in the middle of the floor. If you sit quietly

the skunk will in a short time come right up to you. Quickly grab the tail and quickly lift it up so it is hanging down. In this position it can’t spray. Simply walk out into the yard and swinging it by the tail let it fly. It will hit the ground running and you’re home free. And, so is the skunk.

In short, I not only question Mr. Ingle’s sportsman’s attitude, I question his methods that lead to killing. Maybe he should learn what my grandfather and father taught me regarding hunting and fishing.

— *Michael Cromley, Afton*

Carron Games

I enjoyed the article about Paul Kruska’s collection of Carron games made by the Carron Company in Ludington. I collect cribbage boards and am a member of the Cribbage Board Collector Society. My primary focus was cribbage boards made by the Druke Company, of Grand Rapids. The Carron Company purchased Druke in the early ’90s and moved it to Ludington. I have roughly 125 different Druke boards made from the ’40s through the time they were bought by Carron.

My wife Betty and I are hosting the 12th annual CBCS convention here in Grand Haven this September. My Druke collection will be on display at the Tri-Cities Historical Museum, in Grand Haven, for three months during that time.

By the way, the game of cribbage was invented by Sir. John Suckling in 1635, so cribbage is an OLD game!

— *Cecil Bradshaw, Grand Haven*

Enjoyed the article about the Carron board games. It brought back fond childhood memories as my grandparents had one. My cousins and I played Carrons until our “flicking fingers” were sore.

We also had Daisy BB guns and would play for hours in

the sand with our metal trucks and cars. I did know the Daisy factory was in Plymouth, but did not know the Carron boards were made in Ludington or that they are still being made. Guess I will get one for my grandkids.

— *Judy Heslip, Goetzville*

Experience Portland

I just finished reading your article about Portland. I wanted to take the time to tell you how awesome I thought it was! You did a great job describing our town and made me very proud to say I belong to this great community. I never really realized how blessed we were with so many fun activities and the beauty of our own little town until I saw it there in color on a two-page article. How cool!

— *Tanya Schafer*

Big-city Volume

For both economical and environmental reasons it makes sense to make our homes and

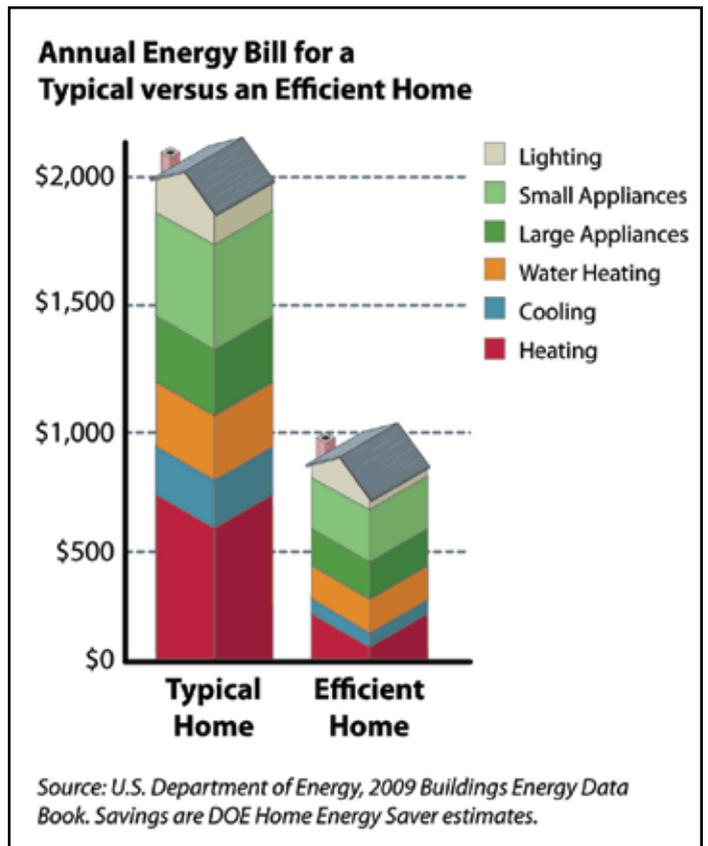
businesses “energy efficient.” The obvious steps for the homeowner may include lighting, thermostat settings, sealing cracks and ductwork, water heater, A.C., etc. Considering all the homes in town and country, the savings add up.

That brings me to wonder what’s going on in our large metropolitan areas such as New York, Los Angeles, Dallas and others. Often, while watching evening news programs on TV, an interview will show an individual with a big-city backdrop. It’s at night and most of the lights are on in the windows of the sky scrapers. Sure they are all probably fluorescent, but wow, that’s a whole lot of ’em. Are all these rooms being used at 8 p.m.?

I hope my conservation efforts and those of others are not being “cancelled” by the sheer volume of the “big-city.”

It would appear the “great white way” is still “shining thru the night.”

— *John Stewart, Gaylord*



Growing Pains

Building an affordable, reliable energy future will take time and money. **Magen Howard**

Tighter government regulations—and the high cost to comply with new rules—may signal lights-out for many of the nation’s older coal-fired power plants at a time when forecasters predict energy demand will eventually outpace supply.

“Americans could see power shortages by the end of the decade if new generation sources don’t materialize,” cautions Glenn English, CEO of the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA), an organization serving the nation’s 900-plus electric co-ops.

To meet the challenge, electric co-ops are using energy efficiency measures and innovative technology to reduce electric demand. But these actions will only go so far. Eventually, the need to build new generation to “keep the lights on” will take center stage.

An investment of time, money

The North American Electric Reliability Corporation (NERC), the bulk power grid watchdog for the United States and most of Canada, estimates the country will need to build 135,000 megawatts (MW) of new generation by 2017 to meet demand. Facilities already on the drawing board, however, will only deliver 77,000 MW—leaving an energy gap.

Planning, building and launching a baseload power plant is no small feat. Even if the permitting process is non-controversial—meaning there are no significant objections to a facility—a coal-fired generating station takes six to seven years from start to finish, a combined cycle natural gas plant three to four years, and a nuclear plant requires 10 years at minimum, notes John Holt, NRECA senior manager for generation and fuels.

Wind farms and large solar projects, in many cases, need a shorter amount of time to complete—about two years total—but they are handicapped by intermittency issues. Even with good location and plenty of breezes, wind generation is available at most 40 percent of the time and seldom operates (due to a lack of wind) during periods of peak consumption on hot, humid summer weekday afternoons or cold weather below minus 22 degrees F.

Solar power systems operate only during daylight hours and are affected by cloud cover. Wind and solar resources must have

back-up generation, such as natural gas plants, ready to come on-line when the wind stops blowing or the sun stops shining, and that adds extra expense.

Federal rules affect prices

Rulemakings by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) will impact electric bills and put affordability and reliability at risk.

A NERC-commissioned report, “Potential Resource Adequacy Impacts of U.S. Environmental Regulations,” states that four pending EPA rules would place new and costly hurdles on power generators. In fact, regulations impacting cooling water intake, coal ash disposal, interstate transport of air pollutants, and using Maximum Achievable Control Technology (MACT) to curb emissions from power plants could force electric utilities to retire or retrofit 33,000 MW to 70,000 MW of generating capacity by 2015. A fifth hurdle, reducing power plant emissions of carbon dioxide, presents an even greater challenge since no viable, commercially tested solution exists.

The Electric Power Research Institute (EPRI), a consortium that includes electric co-ops, contends if EPA designates coal ash, a residue produced by coal-fired power plants that is used as a Portland cement substitute, as hazardous, it could cost utilities—and consumer electric bills—between \$5.32 billion and \$7.62 billion annually.

“Because of these new rules, we’re expecting a number of existing coal plants will be shut down,” asserts Kirk Johnson, NRECA vice president of energy & environmental policy. “The cost of compliance will simply be too much.”

Only two alternate baseload generation options are currently available to meet America’s demand for safe, reliable and affordable electricity: natural gas, which is priced in a volatile commodities market, or nuclear power, which requires a long lead-time for construction and still bumps against ghosts of the Three Mile Island accident in 1979, as well as issues over the disposal of spent fuel.

Natural gas, at present, seems like an



attractive option to satisfy our nation’s energy appetite because the fuel is relatively cheap, power plants that use it can be brought on-line more quickly, and burning gas produces less carbon dioxide than coal.

“But right now, we’re in a natural gas price bubble,” Holt cautions. “While economics today favor natural gas, my concern is that just two or three years ago natural gas was three

times as expensive. So, it could easily and rapidly go up in cost. Over the long term, I expect nuclear power—since it only emits water vapor into the atmosphere—will make a comeback. But there are a lot of ‘ifs.’”

Working to keep bills affordable

To reduce the need for new power plants, electric co-ops are fashioning a variety of innovative solutions to reduce load during times of peak demand. This is the electric utility industry’s equivalent of rush-hour traffic—when wholesale power costs skyrocket. Reduction efforts include direct control of electric water heaters, air conditioners, electric thermal storage units, and other appliances in the homes of volunteer consumers; interruptible contracts with commercial and industrial accounts, such as irrigation pumps, large retailers and factories that can temporarily shut down or run emergency generators; calling for the start-up of consumer-owned generation.

The newest load-reducing tactic is personal energy management. These in-home displays, web portals and smart thermostats inform consumers, in real-time, when load peaks are happening, allowing them to voluntarily decide when and how to curtail electric use.

Most co-ops are also ramping up energy efficiency programs. According to NRECA Market Research Services, nearly all electric co-ops offer efficiency educational resources, and 77 percent offer residential energy audits.

To learn about Michigan energy efficiency programs, visit michigan-energy.org or the Database of State Incentives for Renewables & Efficiency at dsireusa.org.

Megan McKay-Noe contributed to this story.

It's Time to Look in the Mirror on Energy Issues

With the tragic events and loss related to the tsunami and Fukushima Daiichi nuclear plant continuing to unfold in Japan, it is clearly time that we have more, and particularly nonpartisan discussions about national energy policy.

At this point, it would clearly be easy to turn away from an energy future that involves nuclear power. However, we cannot move this country forward without nuclear being a part of our generation mix. The fact of the matter is that nuclear already generates nearly 20 percent of the power supply in this country (and a sizable portion in Michigan).

The Fukushima Daiichi nuclear incident has focused new attention on the future of nuclear power in this country—as it should. However, we cannot ignore the fact that nuclear power has served this country well for over 30 years and needs to continue. And, safety needs to continue to be the highest priority. We need to pause, reassess and ensure that public safety and dependability are overriding concerns, especially with nuclear and the far more serious safety challenges it involves. There are a number of high-quality nuclear power research initiatives that are ongoing in both this country and throughout the world.

In Michigan, Detroit Edison is exploring the potential for constructing a new nuclear reactor at its current Fermi

site near Monroe. Further, Wolverine Power Cooperative is part of a national consortium of utilities that is exploring small, modular nuclear reactors—like the type that power our country's nuclear submarine fleet.

These are important and exciting developments for Michigan and must continue if we intend to meet our state's energy needs.

What is often lost in the debate is the fact that a significant portion of this country's old, coal-fired generation plants will likely be forced to shut down as a result of new, environmental laws at the federal level. Many of these plants are old and dirty, and should be shut down.

Again, the more significant question is, "How do we replace that generation?" Under any scenario, nuclear must be an option. Renewable energy and energy efficiency are also important elements in our generation "tool box." However, at this point they remain very small-scale when compared to our energy needs—particularly with any meaningful economic recovery.

Currently, there are about 100 nuclear power plants operating in this country, and more than one-half of them are over 30 years old. Like our coal fleet, many of them are nearing the end of their original

federal operating licenses. To date, 62 of those plants have received operating license extensions and 20 more have pending applications. We will need every one of these plants to meet our country's growing energy needs and demand.

As electric cooperatives, we are proud to be leaders in renewable energy, energy efficiency and the exploration of small, modular

nuclear reactors. However, we must be careful that the unfortunate events in Japan do not place Michigan and our country in a situation of halting nuclear power as a viable generation source. We need nuclear and we will also need additional new, state-of-the-art fossil fuel plants if we have any hope of meeting our future state, regional and national energy needs.

We need a diverse mix of fuel sources. A scenario where our country only builds natural gas-fired generation, wind, solar and other types of renewables will not get us to the finish line. That would be a dangerous overreaction on our part to the tragic events unfolding in Japan. Further, it is simply not being honest with ourselves when we look in the mirror.

Craig Borr is the president and CEO of the Michigan Electric Cooperative Association. His email is cborr@countrylines.com



Let's Barbecue!

Once bitten by the BBQ bug, it's hard to let go.

The love Americans have for all things barbecue is embracing another, and her name is competition.

As highly competitive people that love to cook, the Hance family knows it's pull. It all started five years ago when Josh, an information systems technician at Midwest Energy Cooperative in Cassopolis, entered a small "backyard chef" contest.

"I did it for something to do and thought I could cook pretty good," he recalls. "But the whole day turned out to be a disaster. I scored embarrassingly low in all categories that I entered; but I had been bitten by the barbecue bug." Returning the next year with a team, including his dad, Bob (Midwest's CEO), mom Mary, and wife Jenn, they took first place in the beef and pork categories, with grand champion honors that year and the following. "At this point, I started looking for additional contests, figuring we had a real gift and we should take our talents on the road," Josh smiles.

That's when Josh discovered the largest society of barbecue enthusiasts in the world, the Kansas City Barbeque Society (KCBS). The KCBS judges and promotes barbecue as "America's cuisine" with over 4,000 teams competing in about 300 annual contests.

"Getting involved competitively happened mostly on a whim," Bob explains. "Somehow

Josh dropped the suggestion that 'we ought to do this,' we did, and the competitive fire was started."

"[To say] that we showed up to our first [KCBS] event ill-prepared is an understatement," Josh says, "I will never forget it for as long as I live." Watching two large trailer smokers pull next to his three small Brinkmann stand smokers on a blazing-hot afternoon, he realized his team had come from being a big deal at the county fair to a little fish in a very big pond.

But then, something happened.

"As I was fighting furiously with an E-Z Up Canopy...our new neighbors-for-the-weekend came over and lent a generous hand with setting up the remainder of our site," Josh recalls. (He hasn't seen the Black Pig BBQ team since, but hopes to someday repay the favor.) Other teams came by with advice, encouragement and offers to share a meal, and he soon felt surrounded by friends.

That day, his team also found that their own smokers worked great, but needed a lot of attention to maintain the temperature and were too small for all the meat. So, they began watching other teams, asking questions, and looking at manufactured smokers.

Realizing that most smokers have the same basic principles and propane-tank shape, they tracked down an old decommissioned tank. They talked over their needs with Josh's uncle, Steve Powles, and by the following spring he had built them a large trailer smoker.



Photos - Roger Beetcher/Leavenworth Photographics

Smoking at a maximum 225 degrees makes the fat melt slowly and the meat simply fall apart. The KCBS contest fees can run \$200-\$250, plus the meat and travel costs.

About their team name, "Sweet Racks & Smokin' Butts," Bob explains, "We wanted something that was funny and memorable. These have also been our two best categories, so it fits us well."

Like any relationship, barbecue teams put in lots of hard work and often arrive between 9 and 11 a.m. on the first day and don't leave (or sleep) until 5 p.m. the next day. Preparing the meat can take four to five hours, and the pork shoulders and beef briskets smoke for about 12 hours at a maximum 225 degrees.

"It's really a love-hate thing," Bob explains, "it is at the same time exhausting and exhilarating, monotonous and energizing, disappointing and rewarding. It is some of the best friendly competition that I've been exposed to."

Besides good friends, the biggest reward a champion receives is bragging rights until the next one. "But prizes make it a little sweeter," Josh says. Purses can range from \$4,000 to \$100,000 for the Sam's Club National BBQ Tour's National Championship. For most events, however, the average grand champion walks away with \$1,500 to \$2,500.

But the friendly competition that arises within the "barbecue family" are almost as coveted as the prize money itself. "We met the 'Aww Hell' [team] at our first competition," Josh says. As the two teams met at more contests, friendly wagers followed, and they now have their own little traveling trophy. "We compete at the same locations whenever we can," he adds.

Josh's final tip is, "Aprons are a must, because BBQ ain't BBQ if it ain't messy!"

A Few Smokin' Events

Smokin' On the Water

Liberty, IN, April 30-May 1

Sam's Club BBQ Series

Traverse City, June 10-11

Taste of Grand Rapids State BBQ Championship

Grand Rapids, July 22-23

Silver Lake Apple & BBQ Festival

Silver Lake, Sept 9-10

Kansas City Barbeque Society:

kcbs.us or 1-800-963-5227

► Bob (L-R), Mary, Josh and Jenn Hance are the "Sweet Racks & Smokin' Butts" BBQ team with their original (small) smoker and trailer model. "It's incredibly fun and exhausting and worth experiencing at least once," Josh says.

Crazy Grill Contest Winners

It's a tie!

The judges wouldn't back down, so we had to name two winners.

GRILLS GONE WILD



#1a Donald Korson of Gowen and a couple of his buddies made this 1979 Buick Riviera into a roaster. The trunk is fire-proofed and they keep it parked when roasting. It requires electricity for the “spicket” to go round, and they roast pigs, small beef, prime rib, pork loin and chicken. It has been a big hit at hundreds of parties and celebrations over the years!



#1b

Buzz Possehn of Saranac built this towable Jeep grill by replacing the original axle with a straight one. He enters it in parades and displays it at the Bad Azz Truck Expo to promote the Ionia Free Fair every year.



Honorable Mentions...



Jimmy (left) and Jim Scollin of Petoskey dare to claim their grill, named the “Chariot of Fire,” is the best charcoal grill in northern Michigan.



Paul Wilson (from left) built this “hot rod” grill and, with co-owners Rick Shaffer and Vic Cerchiori, they use it for pig and chicken roasts at their man-cave near Walkerville. (Note the grilling book in Vic's hand.)



Bob Greenlund's custom grill, affectionately known as “Uncle Don,” was made by his son-in-law and grandson. The unit is complete with a keg tank for heating water during the grilling process and runs to the attached sink. Bob lives in Rapid River and Uncle Don is present at every family function.

'REEP' the Perks of Renewable Energy!

The residential energy efficient property (REEP) tax credit slashes 30 percent of the cost of alternative energy-producing systems, including geothermal heating-and-cooling systems, solar energy systems and small wind turbines.

There is no lifetime cap for this tax credit, it expires in 2016, and covers equipment and professional installation.

Consumers who buy a geothermal system for a home will get a 30 percent credit with no cap as long as the system qualifies for the high-efficiency Energy Star® designation.

Energy-efficient equipment always gives the most bang for the buck when old furnaces, air conditioners or heat pumps need replacement. The tax credit makes geothermal an option worth serious consideration.

Without the tax credit or other incentive, a geothermal system for a 2,000-square-foot home typically starts around \$15,000 — well above a conventional high-efficiency heating-and-cooling system averaging about \$8,000.

Geothermal Savings, Payback

A geothermal system can save hundreds of dollars a year in electricity. Without the tax credit, it could take 10 to 14 years to recover up-front costs—longer than homeowners usually stay in a house.

But consumers can cut the payback time in half thanks to the 30 percent tax credit. If other incentives are available, the payback time is even less. A growing number of electric co-ops are exploring or already offering incentives for geothermal installation.

Heating and cooling are the largest household energy expenses, typically accounting for more than one-half of energy used. Geothermal systems quietly provide reduced-cost space conditioning and can be equipped to supply nearly-free hot water.

As the most energy-efficient heating and cooling systems available, geothermal harnesses the sun's renewable energy by using the earth as a heat exchanger. Geothermal systems go by several names, including "GeoExchange," geothermal heat pumps, and ground-source heat pumps. Visit geoexchange.org or call 888-255-4436 for more information.

Solar Water Heaters and Panels

Solar water heaters, solar panels or photovoltaic systems (solar cells that capture sunshine

and convert it directly into electricity) also qualify for the 30-percent tax credit.

The solar device must provide hot water or energy for a dwelling. Solar water heaters used to heat pools or hot tubs cannot qualify.

Solar water heaters are one of the most popular renewable energy technologies because of bang for the buck and relatively simple setup. They can save anywhere from \$400



to \$1,000 per year in water heating costs, which usually account for about 15 percent of a household's total annual energy needs.

A solar water heater supplying one-half or more of domestic hot water starts at about \$1,500 without the tax credit. Payback can be as short as five or six years. The reduction in energy bills realized over the unit's 15-20 year life means solar water heaters equal or better the long-term cost of conventional water heaters.

What's more, solar power produces no emissions. Eight tons of carbon dioxide—almost double that of a gasoline fueled car—are produced in generating enough coal-fired electricity to power the water heater for a four-person household.

Solar panels are devices that convert sunlight into electricity. The electricity is direct current (DC), not household alternating current (AC), and needs to be converted. The panels are made in various sizes and rated by the amount of electricity they produce per hour, measured in watts.

Solar panels are usually mounted on the roof of a home and need to face the sun (south) with at least six hours of sunlight (even under fog or cloud cover) daily. Panels are wired together to increase the amount of power produced. For example, five 200-watt panels generate 1,000 watts, or 1 kilowatt of maximum power.

Most systems feed into the electric grid and require an interconnection agreement

with the local electric co-op.

Solar panels supply free power, and the initial installation costs are gradually dropping. The federal tax credit, plus other incentives, makes the solar option more appealing to consumers. On average, solar panels return two to four times their cost in saved electricity bills.

The Cooperative Research Network (CRN) says the payback period for a solar panel system can range from fewer than 10 to over 20 years, depending on the system cost, available rebates and incentives, amount of electricity produced, and the retail price of electricity in your community. Your co-op can also provide a capital cost recovery analysis worksheet that you can use to figure the annual operating cost of your system. In addition, an online calculator you can use to figure the payback time can be found at solar-estimate.org.

Payback can be shorter in states with particularly good incentives, says an organization called One Block Off the Grid, which offers group-purchase programs to help people gain an extra discount through bulk purchase of solar panels. Visit 1bog.org or call 877-444-4002 for information.

Wind Power for the Home

Wind power is feasible in many areas, with professionally installed home grid-tied systems typically costing up to \$20,000 without the tax credit. As with solar panels, the payback period for wind power can vary widely according to installation costs and incentives. According to CRN, the payback period for a small wind system can range from several years to several decades, depending on the system cost and average annual wind speed at the hub height—the distance from the ground to the center of the turbine rotor. Some experts say the average speed is more critical to the payback period than the install costs.

Not all areas have enough wind to generate electricity. Wind turbines require an average of at least 6.5-mph wind speed to generate electricity. Visit windpoweringamerica.gov/wind_maps.asp for a wind speed map to help determine if your area might be suitable for harvesting wind power.

For a federal tax credit application and eligibility information, visit energystar.gov and click on "tax credits for energy efficiency." Also visit your state's energy office website.

How to 'Go Green' in the Kitchen

Making a kitchen 'green' doesn't have to equal a super-extravagant remodeling job. An earth-friendly strategy can work wonders without breaking the household budget.

An eco-friendly kitchen also means a healthier one, and eliminating or reducing invisible and odorless toxins in cabinets and countertops are giant steps forward.

A green kitchen can be an affordable and rewarding project. Re-using and renewing your kitchen cabinets delivers a fresh new appearance without adding remodeling waste to the local landfill.

Better yet, refreshing a kitchen the green way can dramatically improve indoor air quality. Indoor air can average two to five times more pollution than outdoor air, according to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

Most kitchen cabinets are made of particleboard. This material is made with urea formaldehyde resin—a known carcinogen—which can emit the toxin for the life of the cabinet. Worse, whenever formaldehyde is exposed to heat, the gas becomes more concentrated and toxic when released. Appliances such as ovens and dishwashers give off heat when they're in use near particleboard cabinets.

A cost-effective remedy is to make the particleboard airtight by applying a sealant to all surfaces of the cabinet. It's best to handle this project outdoors, if possible, or during warmer months with the windows open so the kitchen can be ventilated. Removing doors, handles and hinges is a must, and offers the opportunity to update the hardware for a fresh, new look.

Water-based polyurethane sealants are fairly nontoxic and render clear finishes, and can be applied to the particleboard in multiple coats, then primed and painted.

Paints and sealants emit chemicals called volatile organic compounds (VOCs), even years after they dry.

The VOCs in paints and sealants allow for durability and easy application, but the fumes can be harmful and are classified as greenhouse gases. However, fumes from today's paint contain fewer cancer-causing chemicals such as benzene, formaldehyde and methylene-chloride than they did in the 1990s. Measured in grams per liter (g/l), the VOC content of conventional paint

has since dropped from almost 1,000 g/l to 250 g/l today, thanks to federal regulations.

The good news is that some paints pose far fewer hazards than others, and all are safer than 20 years ago.

Even better, most major manufacturers now offer low-VOC paints that emit less than one-fifth as many harmful gases. They compare well with the pricing and performance of conventional paint. Low-VOC paint has a VOC content of less than 50 g/l, and zero-VOC paint contains five or fewer g/l. A paint's material is listed under the physical data or chemical properties section and is often available on paint manufacturer or retailer websites.

Buy only the amount of paint needed for the job, and store any leftover paint properly for future use. If paint cannot be re-used in the next few years before its quality degrades, it should be donated for re-use or taken to a hazardous waste consolidation facility.

For new wooden cabinets, look for units that are certified by the Forest Stewardship Council for responsible forest management practices. Another option is bamboo. Its fast-growing properties make it one of today's most popular and sustainable choices for kitchen cabinets.

Safe and sustainable resources also abound for new countertops. Products like granite are unsustainable. Laminates can't be recycled and emit formaldehyde or other VOCs. Green choices include recyclable stainless steel, concrete and many other commercially available eco-friendly surface materials.

Another advantage of concrete counters over marble or granite is that it can be completely customizable—it can be sculpted, molded and textured. It's a material that a do-it-yourselfer can easily use to create original counters while saving money from instructions found on numerous websites.

Concrete kitchen countertops can be sustainable as long as the aggregate is made from recycled stone, crushed glass or other recycled materials. Counters can even be made from a mixture of cement and recycled



Concrete countertops can be a do-it-yourself project.

newspaper pulp. A concrete counter should be coated with a natural oil-based sealant once it's dry.

A strikingly vast world of sustainable countertop surfaces makes for a challenging selection process. To get started, consider requesting samples of surface materials to test for staining and durability. See for yourself if a sample will hold up as a food preparation surface. Keep it in your kitchen awhile. The sample should be able to handle common ingredients such as catsup, coffee, oil and lemon juice without staining, and tough enough to withstand a sharp knife.

Some brands of renewable, commercially available countertop surfaces include:

- ALKEMI, renewedmaterials.com, made from aluminum milling scrap.
- Avonite, avonitesurfaces.com, recycled collection made from certified post-industrial scrap, equal to a recycled content value of 20 percent.
- Bioglass, coveringsetc.com, made of 100-percent recycled glass.
- EcoTop, kliptech.com/ecotop.html, made of recycled paper and renewable bamboo.
- EnviroGlas, enviroglasproducts.com, made of post-consumer and industrial glass.
- IceStone, icestone.biz, made of 100-percent recycled glass in a cement matrix.
- Lithistone, lithistone.net, made from natural mineral binder, sand, stone, recycled material, and organic mineral pigments.
- Richlite, richlite.com, made of recycled paper and sustainable forest products.
- ShetkaStone, ShetkaStone.com, made of recycled paper.
- Trinity Glass Products, made of recycled glass and low-carbon cement, trinityglass-products.com.
- Vetrazzo, vetrazzo.com, made with recycled glass with cement, additives and pigments.

Driveway Revolution

Electrification of America's automobile fleet is being hailed as a great step toward reducing pollution and curbing our nation's dependence on foreign oil. All-electric vehicle choices are currently limited to the Chevrolet Volt, the Nissan Leaf, and a growing number of specialty manufacturers or retrofit kits. Other auto makers, though, have electric car offerings in the wings.

Comparing Cars

Not all electric vehicles are alike. The Nissan Leaf, for example, boasts a driving range of roughly 100 miles. Once its 16 kilowatt-hour (kWh) lithium-ion batteries are drained, you better be at your destination and near a 110-volt power outlet for recharging, or have the phone number for roadside assistance handy.

The Chevy Volt offers a gasoline safety net for its pack of 16-kilowatt-hour (kWh) lithium-ion batteries. The car will run on a charge for 40 miles once the batteries are exhausted, and a gas-powered generator produces electricity to keep the car rolling—at least until you run out of gas.

The Volt can also be recharged by plugging it into a traditional 110-volt outlet. This differs from traditional gas-electric hybrid vehicles like the Toyota Prius, where much smaller 1.3-kWh nickel-metal hydride batteries are recharged only by the gas engine and a regenerative braking system (in hybrids, batteries essentially supplement the gas motor). Several electric co-ops are testing plug-in hybrid SUVs and bucket trucks—spin-offs of hybrid technology—that can switch between a gas or diesel engine and 9-kWh to 16-kWh lithium-ion batteries.

All-electric vehicles carry higher price tags than comparable conventional gas-fueled versions—\$10,000 to \$15,000 more, even after federal tax incentives ranging from \$2,500 to \$7,500 (depends on battery capacity) are included. (Learn more about electric vehicle tax breaks, available through Jan. 1, 2012, at irs.gov/pub/irs-drop/n-09-58.pdf). Over time, batteries should become cheaper to build, lowering electric vehicle costs.

As a quick comparison, the 2011 Ford Focus (suggested retail is \$16,640) and the Chevy Volt (\$32,780 after tax credits). Both are four-door sedans, about the same size.

Chevy estimates the average Volt driver will spend \$1.50 daily for electricity. Meanwhile,



Charging stations provide a dedicated 240-volt circuit, similar to that used for electric clothes dryers. Using this type of a station, the all-electric Nissan Leaf can be charged in four hours while the 2011 Chevy Volt, pictured, can be ready to hit the highway in as little as three hours.

the average Focus owner will spend almost \$2.90 on gas daily. At \$3 per gallon for gas, the average Volt driver would save \$550 annually—but would need to rack up that amount for 32 years to equal the difference in sticker price.

However, if gas rises to \$5 per gallon, a Volt driver would save over \$1,200 annually, lowering the payback window to 13 years. Of course, actual savings depends on the number of miles driven and car options.

Charge!

Electric cars can be recharged using a traditional 110-volt outlet found in homes. Called Level 1 charging, this takes at least eight hours to charge a Volt and over 20 hours for a Leaf.

Since those are long standby times, consumers may decide to buy a charging station to speed things along. A charging station enables Level 2 charging by way of a dedicated 240-volt circuit, similar to that used for electric clothes dryers. The “Edmunds Car Buying Guide” (edmunds.com) says Level 2 charging for the all-electric Leaf takes four hours while the Volt can be ready to hit the highway in as little as three hours.

Today's charging standards allow for power delivery of up to 16.8 kilowatts delivered at 240 volts and up to 70 amperes. The Volt's Level 1 charging at 1.4 kilowatts is roughly equivalent to the load of a toaster; its Level 2 charging, estimated at 3.5 kilowatts, is similar

to the load of a heating and air conditioning system. Heavier-duty charging stations, like the ChargePoint® from Coulomb Technologies, draw about 7 kilowatts.

Charging stations must be installed by a licensed technician, and in many areas the work requires review by a local building inspector. Chevy estimates putting in a charging station costs between \$1,200 and \$1,500. But the tab can go much higher if a household's electric system needs upgrading to handle the increased load.

Impact

Studies by the Electric Power Research Institute, a nonprofit research group of electric utilities, including co-ops, show electric vehicles will reduce overall emissions of various air pollutants, even when accounting for the emissions from power plants needed to produce the energy for recharging. In fact, plugging cars in at night when power costs and demand are lowest helps an electric system run more efficiently by trimming line losses. Down the road, some co-ops may offer special rates to encourage electric vehicle owners to recharge during these “off-peak” hours.

Electric vehicles are currently being released on a limited basis. Chevy plans to roll out only 50,000 Volts in this, the first model year. It won't be until 2012, at the earliest, that individuals can buy an all-electric vehicle at a dealership without first getting

Firing Up With 'Real' Michigan Products

on a waiting list.

Whether an electric vehicle fits your life depends on how many miles you drive each day, whether you can afford the cost difference between an electric and gas-burning car, and how many amenities you want.

Only time will tell if the peace and quiet ignition of an electric car will replace the traditional engine's roar.

In Michigan

Michigan is at the forefront of preparing for plug-in electric vehicles (PEVs).

Crystal Mountain Resort (Thompsonville), served by Cherryland Electric Co-op, plans to install two PEV charging stations. CEO Jim MacInnes, who started driving a Chevy Volt in March, says they hope to have the units in by mid-May for guests and resort security staff.

MacInnes believes momentum is starting to build on electric vehicles. "Oil is going to be getting more dear, and the Saudis are already retooling and investing towards renewables and nuclear while we continue spending money on oil." The former power engineer adds, "When we run out, we won't have the money to retool."

WMU and GVSU are working with area economic development groups to install free public charging units. WMU has four in the campus' front lot, and stations are also ready at Meijer stores in Holland and Grand Rapids.

GM, DTE Energy and Consumers Energy are teaming to install over 5,300 home and workplace charging units. GM says it will install 350 for staff, and the Lansing Board of Water and Light plans to add 25 stations in 2011. Over 1,500 Chevy dealers nationwide are also slated to install charging units for customers.

The Michigan Public Service Commission has a unit in front of its building, and a website (pluginmichigan.org/) dedicated to PEVs—what to know before you buy and to ensure a positive experience.

The LG Chem company is building a plant in Holland that is expected to produce PEV batteries by next summer. With 17 Michigan companies that already help to make such batteries, it's expected to create 63,000 jobs in the next decade.

The folks at Murray Products Inc., in Rapid City, are "real" Michiganders.

Not only are their fire-starting products made here, they use only Michigan-made materials and resources.

"On our boxes we even feature 'Made in Michigan,'" says Ken Murray, a former builder who started the company in 2009 with his wife, Mary.

Murray became interested in starting the business after a job offer from a friend who was manufacturing similar products. "It got me thinking about making a fire kit to be used in state parks and campgrounds for recreational fires," he says. Since there's more awareness and concern now about transporting firewood (especially across state lines) because of bugs and things contained in firewood, he wanted to come up with a solution to that problem. After a lot of research, his idea was to manufacture an eco-friendly fire kit.

"We set out to manufacture the best fire starter on the market, using all-natural recycled products to be as earth friendly as possible," explains Ken. Today, they offer three products – fire logs, fire starting cones, and an Eco Fire Kit (for a three-hour fire), and there are plans for more related products in the near future.

The recycled materials used to make the fire starters are free of bugs, bacteria, chemicals and wax, which makes them safe for cooking (mild hardwood flavor) and transport. They can also be used just like cord wood in a fireplace, and Murray believes they burn cleaner and hotter.

The logs and cones are made from natural kiln-dried hardwood, wood shavings and sawdust that is transported in semi trailers, unloaded to a feed hopper, and then processed through a hammer mill to insure a proper mix. Next, it goes through a mechanical "briquetter" that creates 36,000 pounds per-square-inch of compression, which makes heat,



Photo Courtesy—Ken Murray

Mary and Ken Murray started a niche business that makes eco-friendly fire-starting logs and kits for fireplaces, tailgate parties, backyard burners, campfires, and other recreation.

Ken explains. This squeezes out what little wood-sap is left and bonds it all together. Then, the briquettes travel a long cooling line and are cut to length and packaged.

The company's wood shavings come from Alpena, boxes are made in Traverse City (box material from Manistee), and manufacturing happens in Rapid City. Products are sold at the Village Market (Elk Rapids/Rapid City), Ace Hardware (Traverse City, and Ken says they were recently approved for 300 Spartan-affiliated stores.

The company has three employees, but he says, "we have support suppliers that provide up to 20 Michigan jobs."

"Even our box is earth friendly," Ken adds. "We use recycled cardboard, natural glues, and soy ink for print, therefore our box is safe to deposit in landfills." Visit them at murrayproducts.net or call 231-735-5098.

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Look Up for Overhead Power Lines

A tragic farm accident provides valuable safety lessons.

An Illinois farmer, Jim Flach, was operating a crop sprayer in a neighbor's field when one of its arms contacted an overhead power line. In climbing from the cab, Flach was severely burned when he jumped down into the field (creating an electrical path to the ground), and eventually died of his injuries.

Thousands of accidents like this happen every year when large equipment touches overhead power lines. Folks on the ground who touch or even approach energized equipment can also be killed.

Jim Flach's family is working with Safe Electricity's "Teach Learn Care TLC" campaign, sharing the story of their tragic loss in hopes of preventing future accidents. A video of their story can be seen at SafeElectricity.org.

Over 400 electrical fatalities occur every year, and electrocutions on farms are the fourth highest of any job, according to the National Institute of Occupational Health and Safety (NIOSH). Most of the electrical deaths investigated in a NIOSH survey could have been prevented.

"You need to double check, triple check, to see what's above you," cautions Flach's widow, Marilyn. Son Brett adds, "Be conscious of your surroundings. You need to keep your eyes open and beware of overhead lines."

Safe Electricity urges everyone to keep at least 10 feet away from overhead power lines when operating large equipment, and notes that new standards for some construction equipment require a 20-foot clearance.

Combines and grain wagons with extended augers can reach well into the 10-foot radius around a power line. Farm vehicles with wireless communication system antennas can also make contact and energize the vehicle with deadly current. On farmsteads, grain augers often tower over power lines when extended to reach the top of grain bins.

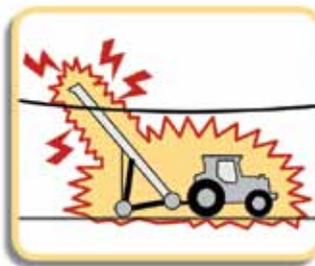
All farm workers should know to stay clear of overhead power lines—as well as what to do if equipment does become

entangled with a line.

"The best action is to stay on the equipment and warn others to stay away until the local electric utility arrives to ensure the line is de-energized," says Bob Aherin, University of Illinois Agriculture Safety Specialist. "Unless you have that assurance, don't get off except if there's fire, which happens only rarely."

In the event of fire, an operator should jump clear from the equipment, without touching the equipment and ground at the same time. Land with feet together, and hop away to avoid deadly current flow.

One of the more frequent mishaps



reported by NIOSH involves electrocutions and electrical burns suffered by individuals around truck beds raised high enough to contact overhead lines. Trucks must be able to unload their contents, and when raised, the top front of the

bed can easily reach overhead power lines.

"Again, we encourage farmers and all operators of large equipment to use a spotter when necessary, take steps to keep equipment away from power lines, and make sure everyone knows how to survive if there is an accident," Hall concludes.

Learn more about electrical safety and see the Flach video at SafeElectricity.org.

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Photo - Michael Koole

Summer's almost here, so let's **Barbecue!!**

Any time is a good time for barbecue. And the variety of sauces and grilling styles is endless. Learn about grilling competition on page 10, and the winners of our "Crazy BBQ Grill" contest are announced on page 11. Thanks to all who sent in recipes! Find hundreds more at countrylines.com.

Slow-Cooker BBQ Pulled Pork

- 3-4 lb. pork shoulder
- salt and pepper
- 1 can root beer, not diet
- 1 10 1/2-oz. can French onion soup
- 1 16-18-oz. bottle BBQ sauce, any flavor
- 1/4 c. brown sugar
- 1 T. Worcestershire sauce
- 1 T. mustard, any flavor

Place root beer, soup, sugar, Worcestershire sauce, mustard and half of the BBQ sauce in a slow-cooker. Season pork with salt and pepper; place in slow cooker. Cook on high for 4-5 hours until tender. Remove meat; shred with a fork and return meat to cooker. Stir in remaining BBQ sauce. Cook on low for 1-2 hours. Serve on bun or bread of choice.

Mary Waterbury, Fenton

Grandma's Barbecue Sauce

- 2 T. cider vinegar
- 1/2 t. Worcestershire sauce
- 1 t. salt
- 2 T. molasses
- 1 t. paprika
- 1/2 t. cayenne pepper
- 1/2 t. black pepper
- 1 t. chili powder
- 3/4 c. ketchup
- 3/4 c. water

Combine all ingredients in a saucepan. Simmer until flavors are well blended. Use on anything you want to barbecue.

Kathy Spalding, Thompsonville

Spicy Korean Pork BBQ (Daeji Bulgogi)

- 1 lb. pork tenderloin, trimmed
- 2 T. brown sugar
- 2 T. soy sauce
- 1 1/2 T. chili paste or chili sauce
- 1 t. minced peeled fresh ginger
- 1 t. sesame oil
- 1/2 t. crushed red pepper
- 3 garlic cloves, minced
- cooking spray

Wrap pork in plastic wrap; freeze 1 1/2 hours

or until firm. Remove plastic wrap; cut pork diagonally across grain into 1/16-inch thick slices. Combine pork and all ingredients into a Ziploc® bag. Seal and marinate in refrigerator 1 hour, turning bag occasionally. Place a wire grilling basket on grill rack. Remove pork from bag; discard marinade. Place pork on grilling basket coated with cooking spray. Grill 5 minutes or until desired degree of doneness, turning frequently.

Doreen Lawrence, St. Clair Shores

Mom's BBQ

- 3 lbs. ground chuck
- 2 cans Campbell's® light chicken gumbo soup
- 1 c. ketchup
- 1/2 c. mustard
- 1/8 c. brown sugar
- 1 T. dill pickle juice

Brown ground chuck; drain. Add soup; simmer 15-20 minutes. Blend in ketchup, mustard, brown sugar and pickle juice; simmer 1 hour. Serve with cooked spaghetti noodles or cooked rice.

Karen Richards, Wayland

BBQ Dutch-Oven Pot Roast

BBQ Sauce

- 1 c. strong black coffee
- 1 c. Worcestershire sauce
- 1 c. ketchup
- 1/2 c. cider vinegar
- 3 T. chili powder
- 2 t. salt
- 2 c. chopped onion
- 6 garlic cloves, minced
- 1/4 c. minced hot peppers, Serrano or jalapeño

Pot Roast

- 3 onions, thickly sliced
- 2 T. vegetable oil
- 1 4-5 lb. rolled beef rump, round bone or blade pot roast
- 1 t. salt
- 1/4 t. pepper
- 1-2 c. beer or red wine
- 1-2 c. BBQ sauce

boiled carrots, turnips & potatoes

Combine all sauce ingredients in a large saucepan; simmer for 30 minutes. For a thicker sauce, simmer another 20 minutes. Purée in blender or food processor. Makes 1 quart sauce. Refrigerate between uses.

To prepare roast, sauté onions in oil in a large Dutch oven until golden; remove and set aside. Season meat with salt and pepper; brown meat on all sides in Dutch oven, adding more oil if needed. Pour 1 cup BBQ sauce and 1 cup beer over meat. Cover tightly and simmer over low heat for 2 hours, adding more BBQ sauce and beer as needed. Add onions; cover and cook 30-60 minutes, until meat is tender. Serve with cooked carrots, turnips and potatoes.

Bonnie Bourn, Constantine

Tasty Sloppy Joes

- 1 lb. ground beef
- 1 lg. onion, finely diced
- 1 gr. pepper, finely diced
- 1/2 c. finely diced celery
- 1/8 c. brown sugar
- 1/2 c. ketchup
- 2 T. cider vinegar
- 2 T. lemon juice
- 1/2 of a 10-oz. can tomato soup
- 1 T. Worcestershire sauce
- 1/4 c. water
- 1 t. horseradish
- 1 t. prepared mustard

In a saucepan, brown ground beef, onion, green pepper and celery; drain. Stir in remaining ingredients; simmer 1-2 hours, stirring occasionally. Serve on bun of choice.

Virginia Rubingh, Ellsworth

► **Send in your recipes!** You'll receive a kitchen gadget, if published. Send in: **CASSEROLE & POT PIE recipes by May 15**, **EGGPLANT recipes by June 15**, and **FRESH HERB recipes by July 15**. Mail to: Country Lines Recipes, 2859 W. Jolly Rd., Okemos, MI 48864; or email jhansen@countrylines.com.

Each year the Chippewa County Fair, in Kinross, displays a 3,400-pound pumpkin grown by the men at the Kinross Correctional Facility. I was privy to the methods used to obtain such a large pumpkin, having taught horticulture classes there for the past 12 years. I'll share some of these tips with you, but bear in mind that they can be used to grow any type of pumpkin, or other member of the squash family.

Seed Selection

The type of seed you select will, of course, determine the size of your pumpkin. Consider selecting short-season types, such as hybrid bush spirit or autumn gold. These types require about 80 good growing days and reach maturity with minimal tinkering, assuming you have good soil that's rich in organic matter, and plenty of sun.

To try and grow the "big one," try the Atlantic dill or big Max pumpkin. These are the competition-size pumpkins you see in the newspapers and will require more good growing days, often over 100. They will also require some special tinkering on your part.

Starting From Seed

Seeds can be started as early as mid-April. Take the potting mix and moisten it by adding 1 part water to three parts mix before you fill the pots (it's hard to get the mix moist after it's in the pots). Don't get it dripping wet, and firmly pack the mix in the pots.

Plant the seeds about 1/2-inch deep, pointed side down. Place in a warm location that receives direct sunlight and is free of drafts—or preferably, under a fluorescent shop light, suspended about 3 inches above the plants. Keep the mix moist by spraying daily with a fine mist. Covering the pots with a makeshift plastic tent or one of those domes sold in the garden section of a hardware store

Materials Needed

- Three-inch peat pots
- Soil-less seed starting mix
- A type of heat cap or plastic "pup tent"
- Well-rotted compost or livestock manure
- A granular or organic fertilizer
- A "secret potion" (optional) of about a dozen crushed egg shells, 1 cup of powdered milk, one complete vitamin, and several used tea bags.



Growing BIG Pumpkins

...and other squash.

will help to keep the medium moist, which is crucial during the germination stage.

After the seedling emerges and forms true leaves (the ones that don't fall off), provide a light feeding of a high-phosphorous organic or inorganic fertilizer. This will help support a strong root system. Water well at this stage, then don't water again until the medium has nearly dried out, which will also encourage good root development. Prevent the plants from becoming spindly at the seedling stage by providing plenty of light.

If the weather is favorable, plant the seedlings outside in the garden. To encourage rapid growth and protection from possible frost, cover them with a plastic material that allows good air flow. The inmate gardeners constructed little pup tent-like enclosures over the fledgling seedlings, using a clear poly plastic and sticks and twigs tied together. The additional heat and wind protection really spurred growth. Plant one plant per hill, spaced 6 feet apart.

Soil Preparation

The secret to a big, ripe pumpkin or a nice ripe squash—besides getting an early start—is to give them good soil to grow in. Dig a hole about 18 inches deep under where you're going to plant the squash. Fill the hole with well-rotted manure and/or compost. At this time, you could mix in the above potion or a slow-release all-purpose fertilizer, such as Osmocote.

Mound about 4 inches of soil over the fortified planting hole. Place one plant (peat pot and all so you don't disturb the roots)

into the center of the mound. Water the plant well and provide a nice layer of mulch (leaves, grass clippings or straw) around the base of the plant. This will keep the weeds down and conserve moisture.

Pumpkins and squash are heavy feeders, so feed about every two weeks during the summer with an all-purpose fertilizer. Be careful not to apply too much nitrogen, which will result in a lot of vine growth and little fruit.

To grow that really big pumpkin, watch for fruit to form from the female flowers. Select the one that looks most promising, pinch off the others and pinch off any vines that aren't supporting a fruit. Pinch the end of the remaining vine, which will cause growth of the vine to stop and the pumpkin to get larger.

All these tips are legal, so you won't end up in the joint if you try them. Happy gardening!

Neil has a garden blog at northcountrygardening.blogspot.com.

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High-flying Eagles Share Steelheading, Too

Steelhead trout have been making their annual spring spawning runs and northern Michigan's coastal streams get a large share of the big rainbows.

Fresh-run steelheads are met by the arrival of eager anglers, wading or floating these streams in hopes that one of these large trout will notice their lure or bait.

Humans, though, are not the only fishermen keeping watch. High-flying bald eagles are also on the hunt, as eager for a rainbow dinner as any human angler. From their high-soaring positions, eagles can spot a fish, swoop to grab it with their sharp, stabbing talons, and carry it off to their towering nests.

At other times, the eagles may be observed in their aerial courtship, locking talons in flight and spiraling down in an avian dance of love.

As a result, steelheaders are often given these visual treats when they cast their lines.

Michigan came close to losing this American symbol as a number of factors conspired to put the large raptor near extirpation. Before European settlement, bald eagles probably nested in all regions of Michigan, wherever food was available. In the early 1900s, they were described as being "generally distributed," but "nowhere abundant."

A decline through the early and mid-1900s was linked to slow but consistent loss of suitable habitat, available food, and "predator control by humans," a DNRE report noted. "These eagles are so disturbed by the presence of humans near their nest that they may be induced to abandon the nest, or even chicks that have already hatched."

The decline in eagles increased through the 1950s until bald eagle numbers were poised on the brink of extirpation—not just in Michigan, but in the lower 48 states. By 1959, the species was considered, "largely restricted to the northern half of the state."

Causes of this population crash were several other factors impacting the reduced reproductive success of nesting pairs. A major cause was increased use of pesticides with chemicals such as PCB and DDT. These chemicals caused them to delay their breeding until it was too late in the season, or even to not



Bald eagles are mating at this time, and their high-flying courtship is often seen by anglers fishing steelhead in the waters of our region. To catch both, keep your lines tight and your eyes on-high.

breed at all, and eggs were laid with thin shells, causing them to break in the nest by the brooding parent's weight.

Eagle decline peaked in 1967. In that year, studies showed that only 38 percent of the Michigan bald eagle population was able to raise at least a single chick. (Productivity, scientists note, must be at least 70 percent for a bald eagle population to remain stable.) Extirpation was near, but positive changes also arrived to stave off this threat.

By the 1970s, DDT had been banned in the U.S. "Earlier, intensive monitoring of eagles in Michigan had begun in 1961, and while bald eagles had been protected at federal and state levels since 1940 and 1954, respectively, they gained greater protection under the Endangered Species Act in 1973 and the Michigan endangered species act in 1974," the report stated.

Reproductive success began to improve until 1975, when the 70 percent productivity mark was reached, although it soon dropped again. The population remained at around 86 nesting pairs through the 1970s.

A big change began in 1981 as the population began to rebound at a faster pace. In 1999, eagle surveyors found 343 nests that

produced 321 young. The productivity was calculated as 96 percent (young per nests with known outcomes).

Some problems do still exist. Eagles nesting along the Great Lakes coasts have higher contaminant levels in their blood than inland nesting pairs.

The image of the bald eagle has long held great significance for our country (though Founding Father Benjamin Franklin had a low opinion of the eagle as a national symbol. He nominated the wild turkey.)

Thanks to stewardship efforts to protect and manage this magnificent raptor, the bald eagle still remains a part of the living history of the United States of America, and a symbol of Michigan's outdoors wilds.

Now, as courting eagles perform their aerial flirting, the best way to observe this annual show of high-flying romance is simple...

Go steelheading—and keep your eyes on the sky when you do.

Don Ingle is an avid outdoorsman and award-winning outdoors writer that submits regularly for Michigan Country Lines.



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Ventilation Cuts Cooling Costs

Properly ventilating your home can reduce the need to use air conditioning.

Air conditioning can account for a significant proportion of a family's utility bills even in some so-called "cool" regions of the country. Not every region has below-zero temperatures dur-

ing winter, but most areas easily reach above 90 degrees for many days during the summer.



Photo - Phifer

SunScreen® solar control screening can block more than half of the heat coming in through windows.

ing winter, but most areas easily reach above 90 degrees for many days during the summer.

No matter how much heat you can block from your windows and doors and how effective the ventilation is in a house without air conditioning, an air-conditioned house with a reasonable humidity level will be more comfortable. With proper ventilation, you will have to use your air-conditioning very little to stay reasonably comfortable during hot, humid summers.

Direct and indirect heat coming in windows and doors does increase the temperature inside your house significantly. Even the most energy-efficient windows and doors have an insulation R-value much less than the typical

house wall. There are also gaps around doors and windows which, even though sealed with weatherstripping and caulk, allow in some hot, humid outdoor air.

Because you can't stop all the energy gain at the windows and doors, you might as well make maximum use of ventilation through them. This can be cross-ventilation from window to window on the same floor or through-ventilation from a window to an upper vent. The air coming in will be warm and perhaps humid, but it will make you feel cooler as it flows over your skin.

The wind blowing over your house creates higher pressure on the upwind side and lower pressure on the downwind side. Open your windows completely on the downwind side. Open them only half-way or less on the upwind side. This combination may reduce the total air flow somewhat, but it increases the speed of the air coming in. In the summer, the higher speed of the breeze over your skin creates more cooling effect. If you have casement windows, crank them out at just a partial angle to catch more breezes.

For through-ventilation, open windows on the upwind side of your house. This also works reasonably well on a calm day. Lift the attic access opening cover, often in a bedroom closet ceiling, and rotate it over the opening to create gaps. The less-dense warm air will naturally exhaust out the opening. Don't totally remove the cover because that would allow a direct route down for the radiant heat from the roof into the room. If a room has a vaulted ceiling, consider installing a venting skylight (velux.com).

If security is not an issue, open your doors and allow air in through a screen door. For added security, drill a hole in the floor slightly inside the primary door, and directly over a joist. Slip a short steel rod in the hole so the primary door can be opened

only a couple of inches.

If you do not like the appearance of screen doors or cannot afford to install them, consider a retractable screen (dreamscreens.com). This is a spring-loaded screen that pulls horizontally across the door to the magnetic strip on the other side. The vertical housing that holds the screen is only a couple of inches wide so it is barely noticeable. The spring holds the screening taut over the door.

Adding awnings is a good way to reduce heat coming in through windows. The proper size of the awning depends upon the latitude angle of your area and its orientation to the sun. An awning contractor can help you determine the proper size.

Installing an awning over a door also helps reduce heat gain in several ways. First, the awning blocks the sun's direct rays from heating the door or shining in an open screened door. Secondly, the sun's heat on the outside of an insulated composite door may cause it to bow. When this happens, the weatherstripping may not seal well when you are using air conditioning.

If your windows are exposed to the sun, install SunScreen (phifer.com) sun-control window screening. This is often made from strong polymers and has a dense weave to block more than half of the sun's heat. You can still see through the screening.

If you have venetian blinds, rotate the slats so they slope to the outdoors from bottom to top. As the air between the window and blind slats gets hot, it tends to flow upward. With the slats rotated properly, this hot air tends to stay between the window and the slats. During the winter, reverse the slat angle so the cold air stays against the window.

Have a question for Jim? Send inquiries to James Dulley, Michigan Country Lines, 6906 Royalgreen Dr., Cincinnati, OH 45244 or visit dulley.com.

James Dulley is a nationally recognized mechanical engineer writing about home energy issues for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.



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The Big Green Box

They're big. They're often green. They generally sit on concrete, often within housing developments. Some folks don't like these "electrical boxes" (a common nickname for pad-mount transformers) and try to hide them with bushes, fences or flower beds. But stay clear: even small additions around pad-mount transformers can create hazards.

To improve the aesthetics of new neighborhoods, developers often put in underground power lines. While this eliminates utility poles and overhead wires, it requires installing pad-mounted transformers in some front yards. Unfortunately, some homeowners that are concerned about curb appeal attempt to screen pad-mount transformers from view—creating an unsafe situation for all concerned, including lineworkers.

Landscaping represents an investment of time and money, however, landscaping around electrical equipment interferes with our ability to deliver reliable power.

It is recommended to leave at least 10 feet of clear space in front of pad-mount trans-

formers. Lineworkers repair units while they are energized so homeowners don't experience an interruption in service. To ensure safety, they use an 8-foot fiberglass "hot stick" that requires about 10 feet of "elbow room" in

Pad-mounted transformers surrounded by vegetation or a structure may overheat and cause service interruptions when the air circulation around them is restricted.

front of the access panel. [Routine maintenance on the units is generally performed at least once a year.]

In some cases, consumers may leave plenty of space in front of the transformer, but grow vegetation on the other three sides. This may invite other problems. Pad-mounted transformers surrounded by vegetation or

a structure may overheat and cause service interruptions when the air circulation around them is restricted. Allow at least 3 to 4 feet of space on both sides and behind the transformer.

You should also be aware that plantings along rights-of-way—strips of land owned by a member on which the co-op places poles, wires and other equipment such as pad-mount transformers—could be damaged by co-op vehicles.

Occasionally, there may be a need to repair a transformer, and eventually they must be upgraded and replaced. To perform this work, line trucks must be driven into the right-of-way and the transformer lifted out. Although workers try to minimize the impact, plants may be damaged if they're in the way.

Call Before You Dig!

Because underground service continues from the transformer to your home, you should never dig anywhere in your yard without first calling 811 to find out where cables are buried.

Transformers need to be left alone

NEVER let anything grow closer than 10 feet from a pad-mount transformer. (The access panel is marked by a handle, lock and sticker on the front.)

NEVER enclose a pad-mount transformer with fencing, shrubs, or anything else with less than a 10-foot-wide gate or opening.

NEVER allow children to play near pad-mount transformers.

NEVER pour waste oils, chemicals, or other liquids on or near a pad-mount transformer. These liquids can seep into the ground and damage underground cables.



Never let anything grow closer than 10 feet from the access panel of your home's pad-mount transformer. How do you know where the access panel is located? Look for the handle, lock, and sticker. This distance keeps roots away and air flowing around your home's unit.

STATE OF MICHIGAN

BEFORE THE MICHIGAN PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

NOTICE OF HEARING FOR THE CUSTOMERS OF ONTONAGON COUNTY RURAL ELECTRIFICATION ASSOCIATION CASE NO. U-16595

- Ontonagon County Rural Electrification Association plans to file a Renewable Energy Plan in compliance with Public Acts 286 and 295 of 2008 and the Michigan Public Service Commission's December 4, 2008, Commission Order in Case No. U-15800 and the February 22, 2011, Commission Order in Case No. U-16595.
- The information below describes how a person may participate in this case.
- You may call or write Ontonagon County Rural Electrification Association, 500 J.K. Paul Street, Ontonagon, Michigan 49953, (906) 884-4151 for a free copy of its application. Any person may review the application at the offices of Ontonagon County Rural Electrification Association.
- The first public hearing in this matter will be held:

- DATE/TIME:** May 23, 2011, at 9:00 a.m. This hearing will be a prehearing conference to set future hearing dates and decide other procedural matters.
- BEFORE:** Administrative Law Judge Dennis W. Mack
- LOCATION:** Michigan Public Service Commission, 6545 Mercantile Way, Suite 7, Lansing, Michigan
- PARTICIPATION:** Any interested person may attend and participate. The hearing site is accessible, including handicapped parking. Persons needing any accommodation to participate should contact the Commission's Executive Secretary at (517) 241-6160 in advance to request mobility, visual, hearing or other assistance.

The Michigan Public Service Commission (Commission) will hold a public hearing to consider Ontonagon County Rural Electrification Association's (Ontonagon) application for a Renewable Energy Plan (REP) to be filed by May 12, 2011, which will seek approval of its REP in accordance with 2008 PA 295, MCL 460.1001 and the December 4, 2008, and February 22, 2011, Commission Orders in Cases Numbers U-15800 and U-16595, respectively.

All documents filed in this case shall be submitted electronically through the Commission's E-Dockets website at: michigan.gov/mpscedockets. Requirements and instructions for filing can be found in the User Manual on the E-Dockets help page. Documents may also be submitted, in Word or PDF format, as an attachment to an email sent to: mpscedockets@michigan.gov. If you require assistance prior to e-filing, contact Commission staff at (517) 241-6180 or by email at: mpscedockets@michigan.gov.

Any person wishing to intervene and become a party to the case shall electronically file a petition to intervene with this Commission by May 19, 2011. (Interested persons may elect to file using the traditional paper format.) The proof of service shall indicate service upon Ontonagon's attorney, Shaun M. Johnson, Dykema Gossett PLLC, Capitol View, 201 Townsend Street, Suite 900, Lansing, Michigan 48933.

Any person wishing to make a statement of position without becoming a party to the case may participate by filing an appearance. To file an appearance, the individual must attend the hearing and advise the presiding administrative law judge of his or her wish to make a statement of position. All information submitted to the Commission in this matter will become public information: available on the Michigan Public Service Commission's website, and subject to disclosure.

Requests for adjournment must be made pursuant to the Commission's Rules of Practice and Procedure R 460.17315 and R 460.17335. Requests for further information on adjournment should be directed to (517) 241-6060.

A copy of Ontonagon's request may be reviewed on the Commission's website at: michigan.gov/mpscedockets, and at the office of Ontonagon County Rural Electrification Association, 500 J.K. Paul Street, Ontonagon, MI. For more information on how to participate in a case, you may contact the Commission at the above address or by telephone at (517) 241-6180.

Jurisdiction is pursuant to 1909 PA 106, as amended, MCL 460.551 et seq.; 1919 PA 419, as amended, MCL 460.54 et seq.; 1939 PA 3, as amended, MCL 460.1 et seq.; 1982 PA 304, as amended, MCL 460.6h et seq.; 1969 PA 306, as amended, MCL 24.201 et seq.; 2008 PA 295, MCL 460.1001 et seq.; and the Commission's Rules of Practice and Procedure, as amended, 1999 AC, R 460.17101 et seq.

April 22, 2011

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FOR SALE, LAKE HOUSE – In White Pigeon, MI. 4-bedroom, 3-bath, 2-car garage. Built in 1993 on private lake. 269-483-7147.

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U.P. HUNTING CAMP – For sale by owner. 345 wooded acres, Schoolcraft County, 80 miles west of Mackinac Bridge, 18x24 ft. cabin and barn, 1/4 mile frontage on 150 acre private lake. Hunting, deer, bear, grouse, snowshoe hare, geese, ducks. Trapping, muskrat, mink, beaver, otter, bobcat. 300 acres in reduced property tax program. Property borders state land and groomed snowmobile trail. Improved roads and gates, 5 food plots, one elevated blind, property borders county road. \$295,000. Call 989-731-4750.

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10 Ways to Curb Your Backyard Carbon Footprint

Just how “green” are your lawn and garden? Are you concerned about curbing your carbon footprint when doing outdoor chores? If you answered yes, you are not alone. The National Gardening Association (NGA) finds that nine in 10 Americans believe it’s important to maintain their landscapes in a way that benefits the environment.

It’s true that smart landscaping can save energy, save you money, and reduce your household’s greenhouse gas emissions. But most folks are almost clueless when it comes to caring for their lawns and gardens in an environmentally friendly manner.

The NGA’s recent Environmental Lawn and Garden Survey asked a representative sample of U.S. households, “How environmentally friendly do you think are the practices currently used to maintain residential, commercial and municipal lawns and landscapes?”

Only one of five respondents in the NGA survey give current lawn and landscape maintenance practices a passing “green” grade.

Homeowners can’t control how commercial and public lawns are maintained, but they do have control over their own backyards. To measure how “green” homeowners are in caring for their lawns and landscapes, NGA asked respondents with a yard or garden which environmentally friendly lawn, garden and landscape practices they follow.

The result? Most homeowners follow only one-sixth of these NGA practices.

While most homeowners answered that they water their lawn and plants only when needed and keep yards well-maintained to add beauty to their homes and neighborhoods, only about one-half say they follow pesticide and fertilizer labels carefully. Fewer than one-half follow the recommended practices of leaving grass clippings on their lawns and keeping fertilizer, pesticide, yard and pet waste out of water sources and off pavement.

Similarly, fewer than one-half surveyed said they apply mulches; go to the trouble of choosing the right plants for their climate, sun/shade, soil and rainfall; or cut their lawns at the highest recommended mower setting.

Less than one-third answered that they recycle yard waste by composting or check



Photo – The Scotts Company

Do the Right Thing. Only about one-half of surveyed homeowners say they follow pesticide and fertilizer labels carefully.

to ensure they are using the most appropriate method before applying insect or weed control products. Only about one-quarter use only well-adapted or native plants in their landscaping and remove poorly adapted, exotic or invasive plants. Fewer—just a fifth of survey respondents—said they take time to learn about ways to care for their lawn, specific plants, soil or wildlife at home.

Most troubling, the survey findings suggest the majority of households with a yard or garden follow only a small fraction of the environmentally friendly lawn, garden and landscape practices the NGA recommends.

“There’s a real need for improvement in people’s appreciation for the impact each of us can have on the environment in our own backyards. Most homeowners have a lot to learn about ‘green’ lawn and landscape practices,” says Mike Metallo, NGA president.

The NGA survey also asked respondents, “How knowledgeable would you say you are about how to maintain your home lawn, garden and landscape in an environmentally friendly way?” Most homeowners replied that they aren’t very knowledgeable.

Keep America Beautiful is a nonprofit group that has partnered with garden product producers, such as the Scotts Miracle-Gro

Company, to educate homeowners across the country about how watering, feeding, and lawns and gardens can work together to maximize the environmental benefits of green spaces. They’re learning easy ways to maintain a healthy lawn and beautiful garden, but still conserve water.

Following are 10 ways homeowners can be environmentally friendly when caring for their lawns and gardens.

1. Feed regularly.

Maintaining a healthy lawn or beautiful garden involves regular feedings. A healthy lawn is able to absorb and use water more efficiently and recover from drought quickly once water becomes available. Plants must receive nutrients to produce foliage, flowers and fruit.

2. Water wisely.

Remember, pumping water requires power. Rely on rainfall for watering lawns and gardens as much as possible. Before watering, watch for signs of lack of water such as dry soil or wilting. For your lawn, the time between needed irrigation is up to 20 days for heavy, clay soils and about five days for light, sandy soils.

3. Mow high.

Set your mower to its highest appropriate setting. Longer grass blades promote deeper roots that help retain moisture. Mow St. Augustine and buffalo grass at 3 inches, 1 inch for Bermuda grass, and 2 inches for centipede and Zoysia grass.

4. Leave grass clippings on lawn.

Recycled grass clippings return organic matter and nutrients to the soil. It's an easy way to save clean-up time and improve your soil quality. Leaving clippings on the lawn doesn't cause thatch build up, but it does make it healthier. Soil organisms recycle the clippings into free fertilizer.

5. Keep fertilizer on the lawn.

Sweep fertilizer and grass clippings off driveways, sidewalks and curbs and back onto your lawn. Making it a habit protects rivers, lakes and streams by keeping nutrients on the lawn.

6. Choose the right plants.

Pick easy-to-grow plants and lawn types that are well adapted or native to your region.

Avoid plants with known pest problems.

Also, the Pew Center for Global Climate Change (pewclimate.org) provides a number of ideas on how to reduce your lawn and garden greenhouse gas emissions, including:

7. Be green in your yard.

Consider using a push mower, which, unlike a gas or electric mower, consumes no fossil fuels and emits no greenhouse gases. If you use a power mower, a mulching mower helps further reduce grass clippings.

8. Compost food and yard waste.

Doing so reduces the amount of garbage sent to landfills and reduces greenhouse gas emissions. Lawn and garden improvement tips that benefit the environment are available from the Environmental Protection Agency's GreenScapes program (epa.gov/greenscapes).

9. Apply mulch.

Use mulch to help moderate soil temperature and retain moisture during dry weather, reducing the need for watering. Learn all about mulch, plus free sources of mulch, from

the U.S. Department of Agriculture at nrcs.usda.gov/feature/backyard/mulching.html.

10. Plan your landscape wisely.

Choose low-maintenance plants that require less water and fewer pesticides. In areas of the country, lawns use between two and three times as much water as other plants and can result in 50 percent more water waste from evaporation, runoff, over-spray and over-watering. Learn more from the Regional Water Providers Consortium at conserveh2o.org/outdoors/landscapes/plants or call 503-823-7528.

Midwestern and Northeastern lawns typically do not require supplemental irrigation, using less supplemental irrigation than ornamental plantings. The statistic is more the result of practice than an agronomic requirement.

The NGA is a national nonprofit leader in plant-based education, grants and curricula for youth gardens and research for the lawn and garden industry. To learn more, visit garden.org.

— John Bruce



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Two Jocks and a Widow

The morning of July 4, 1967, was cold in Ironwood. A sheet of fragile ice skinned puddles in the streets. (The high in Chicago that day was only 64 degrees.)

I remember because it was the day I entered the bigger world. I had to catch an early bus to Minneapolis, where I would pass through the Air Force induction center before catching my first-ever plane to San Antonio, TX, for basic training. Just out of college, I opted for Air Force officer training rather than a two-year stint as an Army draftee. Barbara, who was kind enough to marry me the following summer, saw me off. The rest of my family was camping.

The bus stopped in Duluth, MN, where an elderly woman became my seat-mate. (Now I think: She was only about as old as I am now.) We had a fascinating discussion about Vietnam, college, and her home and family. Mostly, she talked and I listened. (What did I have to offer at 23?) Following the death of her husband, she had recently learned to drive a car, and then, as if to say “nothing is stopping me now,” learned how to fly a plane. She was learning to paint. She was full of life and excited about her possibilities. Her joy was infectious.

Any joy she imparted to me was quickly dampened by the dark and seedy hotel where the Air Force put me up in downtown Minneapolis. Noisy city traffic and a sputtering neon sign made sure I wouldn't sleep all night.

The next day, after passing a physical exam and being sworn in, several recruits flew to Dallas, where we were to change planes for San Antonio. It was late night and the terminal was empty. In a cavernous open space, one other recruit and I walked to our next gate. Our path intersected with that of the only other person, a powerful

man who seemed to glide over the floor.

We stopped there, alone in the middle of that vast terminal, and said hello to Muhammad Ali, the most recognizable person in the world. He was a skilled boxer, bigger than his sport, controversial and brash. Here he was, alone, without the entourage he surely would have today.

That April, at the height of his power as a boxer, he was stripped of his heavyweight titles for refusing induction into the U. S.

*Our path intersected
with that of the only other
person, a powerful man
who seemed to glide
over the floor.*

military because of his religious beliefs. He was found guilty on draft evasion charges and his boxing license was suspended. He was not imprisoned, but did not fight again for nearly four years while his appeal worked its way up to the U. S. Supreme Court.

When we met him, he was in Dallas to attend a hearing in federal court on his appeal. And here we were, on our way to boot camp.

We asked him for an autograph.

Because I didn't have anything else to write on, he signed the back of my induction papers. He was kind and gracious, displaying none of the braggadocio and swagger of his public persona.

When we got to Lackland Air Force Base in the wee morning hours morning, I turned in my induction papers. I didn't realize until much later they were

the copies bearing Ali's autograph. So Muhammed Ali's signature is on military induction papers somewhere in the vast files of a military warehouse.

Later that day, I met Bill Bradley, the former Princeton basketball star who was drafted by the New York Knicks and had just returned from England, where he was a Rhodes Scholar. He was given a commission in the Air Force Reserves so he could fulfill his military obligation and play pro ball at the same time. Bradley was smart, rich, and one of the best basketball players in the world. The rest of us were secretly gratified that he was lousy at marching.

These two athletes didn't serve two or four years, and weren't remotely in danger of being injured or killed like so many young men their age. They went on to bigger things. After the U. S. Supreme Court unanimously reversed Ali's conviction in 1971, he went on to regain the championship and became revered over most of the world. Bradley later became a U. S. Senator from New Jersey and sought the Democratic nomination for president.

We have all experienced moments that put us in contact with people who are, have been, or will be famous—or infamous. These chance encounters enhance our conversations, create memories, and link us forever to events greater than ourselves.

But they don't touch our lives as deeply as regular people like the woman from Duluth, who found joy in the adventure of new things. She's the one I'd want to meet again.

Mike Buda is editor emeritus of Country Lines. Email Mike at mbuda@countrylines.com or comment on his columns at countrylines.com/column/ramblings



Share your chance encounters with famous or infamous people you've met or almost met. Send your story, in 100 words or less, to mbuda@countrylines.com.



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(231) 796-3717

Caro

All-Temp Heating
(989) 673-5557

Charlevoix

Ballard's and Great Lakes
Plumbing & Heating
(231) 547-1035

Cheboygan

Jim's Handyman
(231) 627-7533

Carsonville

Certified Temperature Innovations
(810) 300-7748

DeWitt

S & J Htg & Clg
(517) 669-3705

Gaylord

Family Htg & Clg
(989) 732-8099

Grand Rapids

Montgomery Htg & Clg
(616) 459-0261

Hart

Adams Htg & Clg
(231) 873-2665

Harbor Springs

Ballard's and Great Lakes
Plumbing & Heating
(231) 526-6859

Ionia

Home Experts
(800) 457-4554

Kalamazoo

E M Sergeant
(800) 530-1363

Lapeer

Porter & Heckman
(810) 664-8576

Michigan Center

Comfort 1 Heating /
Lenawee Heating
(517) 764-1500

Mount Pleasant

Walton's Htg & Clg
(989) 772-4822

Muskegon

Geofurnace Htg & Clg
(800) 922-3045

Petoskey

Ballard's and Great Lakes
Plumbing & Heating
(231) 347-3900

Palms

Lakeshore Improvements
(989) 864-3833

Traverse City

Geofurnace Htg & Clg
(231) 943-1000

D&W Mechanical

(231) 941-1215

Webberville

Applegate Home Comfort
(800) 377-2272



waterfurnace.com
(800) GEO-SAVE





**Ontonagon County Rural
Electrification Association**

countrylines.com/coops/ontonagon

Ontonagon County REA 2011 Annual Meeting June 18

Free Meal ~ Cash Prize Drawings ~ Bill Credit

The board of directors and employees of your electric co-op invite you to join them at the 2011 annual meeting (see notice, page 5, and right for details).

This is a chance to visit with your neighbors and friends from throughout our five-county service area and participate in your co-op's affairs. You will hear about the state of the co-op over the past year, as well as our vision for the future.

Newly-elected directors from District 3—Ewen/Trout Creek and District 7—Boston/Lake Linden will also be seated at the meeting.

Meeting Highlights:

- ▶ 9:30 a.m., Chassell High School
- ▶ Updates on co-op affairs by co-op president & general manager
- ▶ Guest Speaker: Craig Borr, President & CEO, Michigan Electric Cooperative Association
- ▶ Director election results:
 - Ewen/Trout Creek, • Boston/Lake Linden districts
- ▶ Update on your co-op's financial health
- ▶ Drawing for cash prizes
- ▶ Lunch

ONTONAGON COUNTY REA
906-884-4151