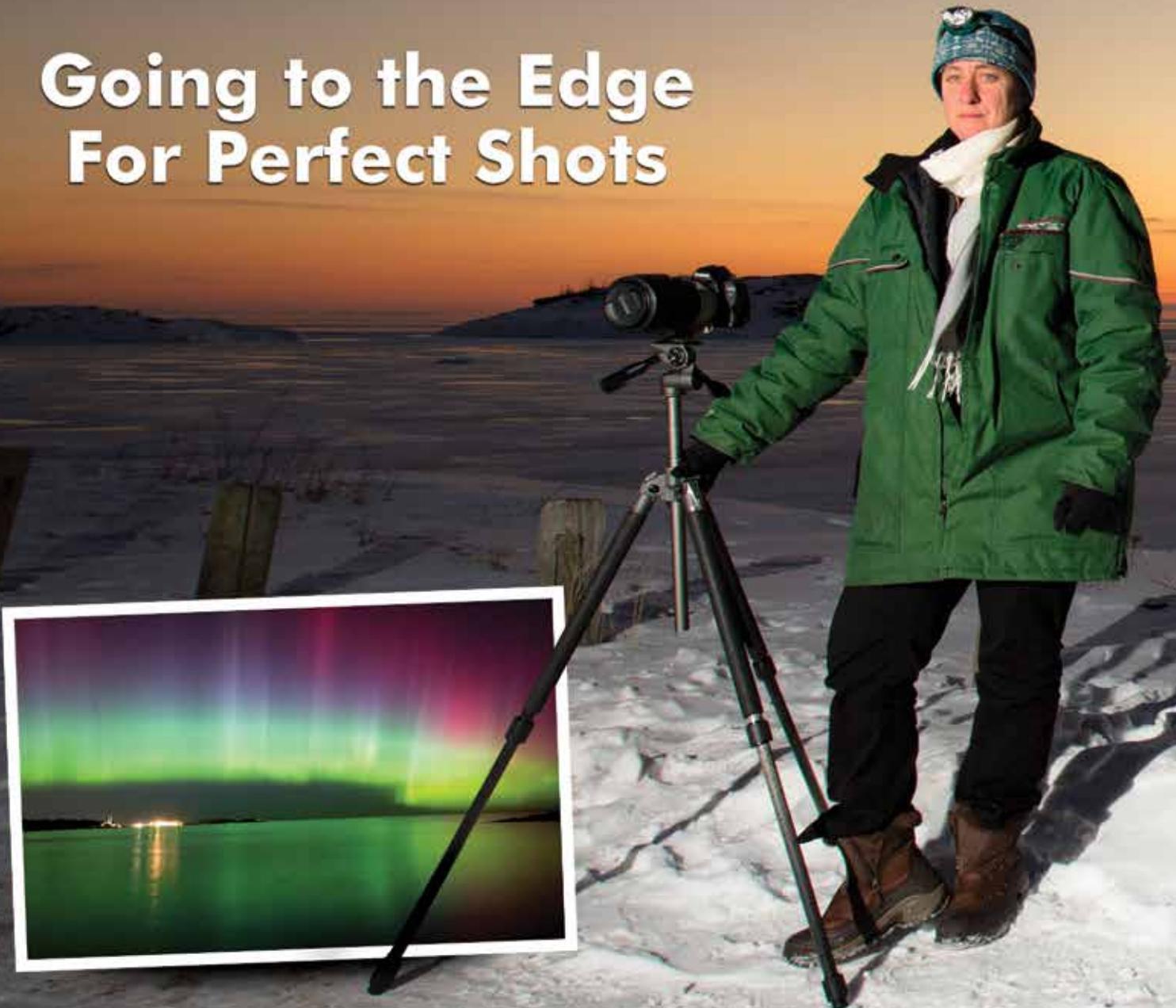


Michigan

COUNTRY LINES

**Going to the Edge
For Perfect Shots**



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Director Election

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A New Winter Ride

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Generation Projects

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March 2014
Vol. 34, No. 3

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Michigan Electric
Cooperative
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Michigan

COUNTRY LINES

IN THIS ISSUE

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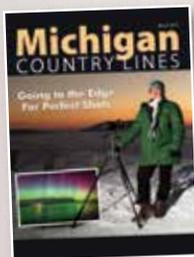
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Association officers are Ken Swope, Midwest Energy, chairman; Robert Schallip, Cloverland, 1st vice chairman; Jon Zickert, Cherryland, 2nd vice chairman; Eric Baker, Wolverine Power, secretary-treasurer; and Tony Anderson, Cherryland, past chairman. Craig Borr is president and CEO.

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The appearance of advertising does not constitute an endorsement of the products or services advertised.

Change of Address: Please notify your electric cooperative. See page 4 for contact information.



ON THE COVER

Photographer Shawn Malone, who recently opened a studio and gallery in Marquette, literally goes to the edge of cliffs and makes nighttime forays into the wilderness to capture the glory of the Upper Peninsula's land, water and sky.

Photo Courtesy – Shawn Malone/lakesuperiorphoto.com



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George Rajala, Director
 Chassell District

David Anderson, Director
 Boston/Lake Linden District

PERSONNEL

Debbie Miles, General Manager

Donna Siren, Billing Clerk

OTHER INFORMATION

Date of Incorporation: Sept. 30, 1937

Fiscal year-end: Dec. 31

countrylines.com/coops/ontonagon

MANAGER'S MESSAGE

Between the Lines

Spring cleaning delivers safe, reliable power.

Spring gives us a chance to thaw out after a chilly winter. I take advantage of longer daylight hours by doing a little spring cleaning and yard work. But the seasonal shift isn't all good news. The rapid change from harsh, cold air to warmer temperatures can trigger severe weather. To protect our lines and keep power flowing safely to your home, Ontonagon Country REA maintains its rights-of-way. Think of it as spring cleaning for power lines.

Right-of-way (ROW) maintenance keeps tree limbs and other obstacles away from high-voltage power lines. It's an important part of the service we provide to you, our members, for three reasons: safety, reliability, and cost.

Our primary concern is the safety of our workers and members. Properly maintained rights-of-way keep our crews safe when they are restoring service and maintaining our system.

Keeping trees clear of power lines also keeps your family safe. From making sure a child's tree house doesn't hit power lines to creating a safe environment while doing yard work, a well-maintained ROW helps avoid tragedy.

Power lines are a constant part of our

landscape, so it's easy to forget they are around. We work hard to keep the area around our lines clear, but we need your help. Be alert this spring. Don't plant trees or tall vegetation under power lines, and keep an eye out for power lines when working in your yard.

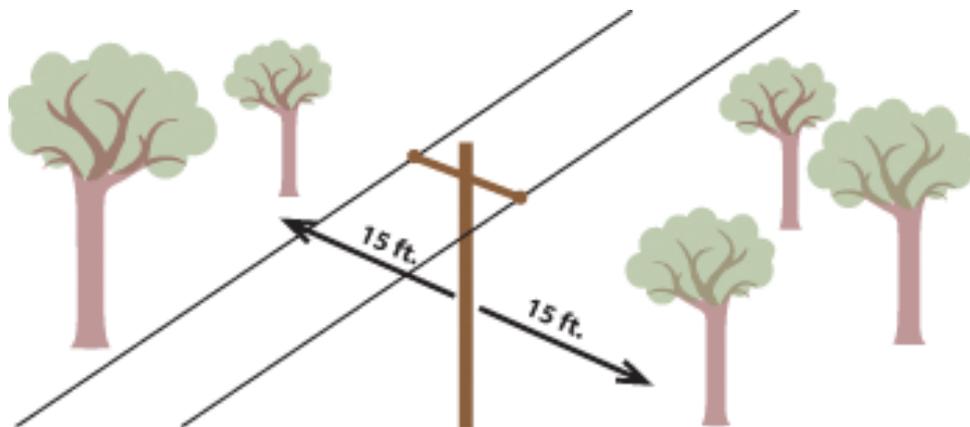
If severe spring weather blows through, a well-maintained ROW leads to fewer outages and faster response time. Trees are less of a threat. When trees *do* fall, crews are able to restore service more quickly than they could with poorly maintained areas.

As a not-for-profit company, Ontonagon County REA, strives to keep costs affordable for you. Maintaining our ROW is an important part of controlling costs. Fewer and shorter outages save money for everyone. When crews work in well-maintained areas, we can reduce risks for employees and equipment too—another way to keep costs low.

Safety, reliability, and cost: this is why we believe in ROW 'spring cleaning.' If we compromise on one of these areas, it impacts the others. At Ontonagon County REA, we aren't willing to compromise. Maintaining our ROW is a priority for your safety, comfort, and pocketbook.



Debbie Miles
 General Manager



Two Districts Will Elect Directors To Your Co-op's Board

The Ontonagon County Rural Electrification Association is comprised of seven districts, with directors elected for three-year terms. This year, terms will expire for directors representing District 3 – Ewen/Trout Creek and District 7 – Boston/Lake Linden. Incumbents are Paul Koski and David Anderson, respectively.

If you are interested in running for these open positions on the board of directors, you must call or stop by the co-op's office to request a nominating petition. A petition must be returned to Ontonagon's office by May 2, 2014. Due to a change in co-op bylaws enacted at the 2002 annual meeting, nominating petitions will no longer be sent to each member residing in these districts.

In order to be valid, a nominating petition requires the signature of five active members of the co-op that receive electric service in that district (husband and wife are considered one member so either may sign, but not both). The member who is being nominated must also sign the petition.

Ballots will be mailed to each member of the district 30 days before the annual meeting, which is scheduled for June 21. All ballots must be returned to the co-op office no later than noon on Monday, June 16, (ballots will be counted and results shared at that meeting).



Notice to Members of Ontonagon County Rural Electric Cooperative

Case No. U-15819
2012 Renewable Energy Plan Annual Report Summary

The Michigan Public Service Commission (MPSC) requires all Michigan electric utilities to get approximately 2 percent of their power supply from renewable sources by 2012 and increasing to 10 percent by 2015.

Under this requirement, Ontonagon County Rural Electric Cooperative submits an annual report to the MPSC regarding its Renewable Energy Plan. In 2012, Ontonagon acquired 9,686 actual and incentive Renewable Energy Credits (RECs) as a slice of system from its wholesale power supplier Upper Peninsula Power Company (UPPCO), which generated them via an UPPCO-owned hydro facility or acquired them from its wholesale power provider, Wisconsin Public Service Corporation.

A full copy of the cooperative's Renewable Energy Plan annual report that was filed with the MPSC is available on the co-op's website at ontonagon.coop or by request at the cooperative's office.

STATEMENT OF NON-DISCRIMINATION

The Ontonagon County Rural Electrification Association is the recipient of federal financial assistance from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

If you wish to file a Civil Rights program complaint of discrimination, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, found online at http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_cust.html, or at any USDA office, or call (866) 632-9992 to request the form. You may also write a letter containing all of the information requested in the form. Send your completed complaint form or letter by mail to: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Director, Office of Adjudication, 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20250-9410, by fax (202) 690-7442 or email to program.intake@usda.gov.

Fuel Mix Report

The fuel mix characteristics of Ontonagon County REA as required by Public Act 141 of 2000 for the 12-month period ended 12/31/13.

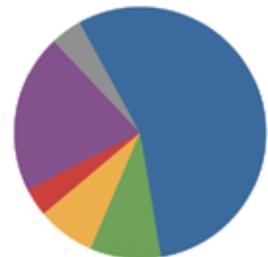
COMPARISON OF FUEL SOURCES USED

Regional average fuel mix used

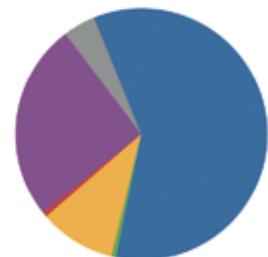
Your co-op's fuel mix		
FUEL SOURCE	Regional Average	Your Co-op
Coal	60.8%	59.4%
Oil	10.0%	0.6%
Gas	8.2%	9.8%
Hydroelectric	4.0%	0.6%
Nuclear	22.4%	25.4%
Renewable Fuels	4.5%	4.2%
Biofuel	0.1%	0.5%
Biomass	0.9%	0.5%
Solar	0.0%	0.0%
Solid Waste Incineration	0.9%	0.0%
Wind	2.6%	2.7%
Wood	0.1%	0.5%

NOTE: Biomass above excludes wood; solid waste incineration includes landfill gas.

Your Co-op's Fuel Mix



Regional Avg. Fuel Mix



EMISSIONS AND WASTE COMPARISON

TYPE OF EMISSION/WASTE	lbs/MWh	
	Your Co-op	Regional Average*
Sulfur Dioxide	1.92	7.6
Carbon Dioxide	1,585	2,170
Oxides of Nitrogen	1.06	2.0
High-level nuclear waste	0.0000	0.0083

*Regional average information was obtained from MPSC website and is for the twelve-month period ending 12/31/13. Figures for Ontonagon County REA are based on those of its principle power suppliers, WPS and We Energies.

Shakes & Smoothies

Shakes and smoothies are a refreshing treat any time of day. With so many different ingredients and combinations, you'll never get bored. They are also unbelievably easy to make. All you need is a blender.



Photography by: 831 Creative

Coconut Granola Berry Smoothie

- 1/2 c. granola
- 6 fresh strawberries
- 1 T. flax seed oil
- 3/4 c. unsweetened coconut milk
- 3 T. vanilla yogurt
- 7-8 ice cubes

Blend until smooth and enjoy. Makes 1-2 servings.

Christin McKamey, Royal Oak

Kate's Green Smoothie

- 1 c. ice
- 1 c. apple juice
- 2 ripe bananas
- 1 1/2 c. kale
- 3/4 c. chopped celery

Place all ingredients in blender and process until smooth. So simple and so good for you. Enjoy! Rinse out your blender and glasses as soon as you can - this mixture sticks to everything.

Becky Schlatter, Chippewa Lake

Peanut Butter Banana Flip Smoothie

- 1 c. milk of choice
- 2 T. natural peanut butter, creamy or chunky
- 1 t. pure vanilla
- 1 frozen banana, cut into chunks
- 6 ice cubes

Pour milk into blender and add peanut butter, vanilla, banana and ice. Blend on high speed until smooth and serve.

Lorraine Green, South Boardman

Nutty Monkey Shake

- 1/4 c. milk
- 1 banana, cut into chunks
- 1/4 c. malted milk powder
- 2 T. creamy peanut butter
- 2 c. fat-free frozen yogurt

In a blender, combine milk, banana, malted milk powder and peanut butter. Cover and process for 10-15 seconds or until smooth. Add frozen yogurt, cover and process until blended. 5 servings.

Janice L. Thompson, Martin

Blueberry Cherry Cheesecake Smoothie

- 2 c. fresh or frozen blueberries
- 1/2 c. fresh or frozen cherries
- 1 1/4 c. milk
- 1/4 c. (2-oz.) cream cheese
- 1 to 3 ice cubes

Combine blueberries, milk, cherries and cream cheese in blender. Process until mixture is smooth. Add 3 ice cubes if using fresh fruit and 1 to 2 cubes if using frozen fruit. Process until smooth and pour into 2 glasses. Makes 2 (12-oz.) servings.

Tina Bates, East Jordan

Adult Peach Smoothie (Fresh Peach Martini)

- 2 peaches, peeled, pitted and quartered
- 4 oz. vodka
- 1 oz. peach schnapps
- 1-2 oz. simple syrup
- 1 1/2 c. ice

Place all ingredients in blender and process until smooth. Makes 2 drinks.

Becky Schlatter, Chippewa Lake

Coffee Bananas Foster Smoothie

- 1 1/2 c. strong coffee, chilled
- 1/2 t. cinnamon
- 2 T. brown sugar
- 2 small ripe bananas
- 6 oz. vanilla yogurt
- 1/2 c. fat-free half & half
- 1 c. ice cubes

In a blender, combine all ingredients and blend well.

Pat Sullivan, Bozeman

Submit your recipe! Thanks to all who send in recipes. Please send in your favorite "All About Snacks" recipes by **June 10** and "Best Original Recipes" by **July 10**.

Mail (handwritten or typed on one side, please) to: Country Lines Recipes, 2859 W. Jolly Rd., Okemos, MI 48864; or email recipes@countrylines.com.

Contributors whose recipes we print in 2014 will be entered in a drawing and Country Lines will pay the winner's January 2015 electric bill (up to \$200)!



Visit recipe editor Christin McKamey's website, veggiechick.com, for healthy, vegetarian recipes and info!

Help Your Electric Co-op Keep Rates Affordable

A message for all Michigan electric co-op member-owners...
The fight to maintain affordable, reliable electricity continues—and you can help!

Co-op members are needed to step up and let their voices be heard. Electric co-ops across the country are fighting to maintain a balanced energy policy that protects affordable, reliable and environmentally responsible electricity generation.

Co-op members are being asked to join the fight to instill common sense into the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) rule-making process by commenting online at Action.coop. It only takes a few minutes to complete.

Proposed regulations threaten to end the use of coal at new power plants. This is a concern because the regulations, along with the ones EPA has in store for existing plants, have the potential to drive up everyone's electric bills.

Nationwide, coal is responsible for about 40 percent of all electricity generated.

"As not-for-profit, consumer-owned utilities, electric co-ops rely on a diverse fuel mix to provide affordable, reliable electricity to 42 million Americans," explains Jo Ann Emerson, CEO of the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the trade

association for America's electric co-ops. "We believe strongly in our responsibility both to our environment and to members, who often serve some of the most economically vulner-

COOPERATIVE ACTION NETWORK

able populations in this country.

"That's why NRECA continues to urge the administration to reconsider this proposal and the potentially damaging effects it could have on communities and the economy," she adds.

Electric rates are something consumer-owned electric co-ops take personally because they know the tough choices many of us face in trying to live on a budget. That's what sets co-ops apart from other utilities and that's why we must stick together.

Thousands have already answered the call and sent comments through Action.coop, but more are needed. About 609 Michigan co-op members have started sharing their

thoughts with the EPA. "This is a start, but we can do better, as it's critically important that the voice of co-op members is heard on this issue," says Craig Borr, president/CEO of the Michigan Electric Cooperative Association.

Bringing common sense to the rule-making process is also important as the EPA develops rules for existing plants, which are scheduled for release in June.

In just the last decade, power supply co-ops have invested over \$3.4 billion to reduce emissions and boost efficiency. And, *co-ops are only asking that environmental regulation be balanced with realistic costs and benefits.*

By stepping up to comment, you will be asking the EPA to recognize the unique circumstances of your nonprofit, member-owned electric co-op and to work with co-ops to forge a fair solution that allows them to continue providing you with affordable, reliable power.

Electric co-ops serve over 42 million people nationwide. By joining together, co-op members can make a difference in shaping responsible energy policy.



RENEWABLE ENERGY



NUCLEAR POWER



NATURAL GAS



CLEAN COAL

America needs an
ALL OF THE ABOVE STRATEGY
to keep electric bills affordable

**TELL THE EPA TO RECONSIDER
ITS "ALL-BUT-ONE" APPROACH**

ACTION.COOP

Fat Tire Biking is a New Winter Ride

Get used to seeing more of something unusual this winter – people biking through the snow.

Whether you dub them “fat tire bikes” or “snow bikes,” the popularity of this new winter sport is gaining across Michigan for commuting, racing or just ridin’.

Fat tire bikes first became popular in Alaska for commuting and recreational use on their many trails and ski pathways. They started showing up in the Lower 48 about three years ago, and have blossomed in popularity over the last few winters.

These bikes sell new from around \$1,700 to \$3,000 and typically run on fat tires that are 4 inches wide. The tires use about 8 PSI or less of air pressure for on-snow use, leaving little print on a hard, groomed surface.

Crystal Mountain (Thompsonville), Timber Ridge Nordic Center (Traverse City), and Boyne Highlands (Harbor Springs) are all offering rentals and groomed trails this winter.

Crystal has about 10 groomed miles of both cross-country and single-track trails for fat tire bikes. Renting for about \$10 an hour, you can ride them on portions of the cross-country trail until 10 p.m. nightly since it is lit for night skiing.

At Timber Ridge, Einstein Cycles is handling rentals (about \$25, including a trail pass), and there’s about 10 kilometers of groomed trail.

The Highlands offers a five-mile groomed loop. A daily trail pass is \$5, and rentals start at \$30 for two hours.

“We found them to be very popular last year at Crystal Mountain, our first winter,” says Chris Remy, who oversees the resort’s program. “We often had a waiting list and have added more bikes for this winter, and more sizes.”

Trails aren’t the only place you’ll see fat tire bikes, however. Jason Lowetz, owner of Einstein Cycles, sees a market for those dedicated commuters who prefer a bike over a vehicle. “I’m seeing a lot more people using them to commute around town and work during winter,” he explains. “It’s the safest bike you can ride this time of year and allows cyclists to commute year-round. The stability of the bike makes it a good choice.”

Traverse City resident Jason Whittaker agrees. “We’re



Photo - Einstein Cycles



Photo - Marquette Photo



Photo - Crystal Mountain Resort

Among others, Crystal Mountain (above), Boyne Highlands, and Timber Ridge offer fat tire biking this winter. These resorts also get electric service from member-owned co-ops. Boyne is served by Great Lakes Energy and Crystal and Timber Ridge by Cherryland Electric.

Places To Ride On Fat Tires

Timber Ridge Campground & Nordic Center

Traverse City • 877-978-3866
timberridgeresort.net

Crystal Mountain Resort

Thompsonville • 800-968-4676
crystalmountain.com

Noquemanon Trail Network

Marquette • 906-235-6861
noquetrails.org

Boyne Highlands

Harbor Springs • 231.526.3000
boyne.com

a one car family with a 20-month-old son. My wife needs the car at home, and the fat-tired bike allows me to safely ride through the snow and slush on the TART (Traverse Area Recreational Trail) to get to work,” Whittaker says. “Before they came along I couldn’t ride the trail, which isn’t cleared in the winter. I had to ride my mountain bike on roadways, which weren’t that safe. I also ride on the VASA Pathway on Fridays for fun.”

TART Trails, which spearheads VASA Pathway grooming, is asking riders to buy a \$25 grooming badge. Fridays are set aside as “Fat Tire Friday,” when cyclists and skiers mix on the 25-kilometer trail, and bikes are allowed on TART’s Leelanau Peninsula, from Traverse City up to Suttons Bay, anytime.

There’s a similar trend in the U.P., around Marquette. “We’re seeing more commuter and trail use in our area over the last few years,” notes Nicole Dewald, Noquemanon Trail Network director. “We plan to groom over 20 miles of single track this winter, and ask riders to support the project by purchasing a ‘Support the Groom’ card.”

Other U.P. places to ride include the Keweenaw Peninsula, and Michigan Tech has 15 kilometers of groomed ski

trail and ungroomed single-track where bikes are permitted, and Swedetown Trails permits them after 6 p.m. on Tuesdays. Ishpeming’s Al Qual Recreation Area ski trails also permit them anytime. A day pass is required for all three locations.

For racing, Einstein Cycle has organized a Northern Michigan Fat Bike Series with three races. Fat Chance was at Crystal Mountain in January; King VASA is at Timber Ridge, Feb. 8; and Fat Camp, Timber Ridge, March 1. Fun Promotions

in Grand Rapids has also organized races, with the next at Addison Oaks, Feb. 8; Shore Acres in Saugatuck, Feb. 16; and Pando Winter Sports Park, March 2. Pando also offers Fat Tuesday, a race every Tuesday night through February.

Another Traverse area fat tire rider, Eric Polard, says, “Riding on snow has been a great alternative to my other winter love, Nordic skiing. Being able to hop on a snow bike is a great way to mix up winter activities and keep it interesting.” Give it a try?



Photo - Marquette Photo

For competition, practical use, or just for fun, fat tire biking can be found around Michigan.

GOING TO THE EDGE



She's dangled over an icy wall and rappelled its glassy facade, come dangerously close to the edge of several cliffs, and inched along narrow paths in the pitch-black night of the Upper Peninsula's wilderness to capture stunning images. Photographer Shawn Malone actually studied music in college, but a decade or so after leaving the Chicago skyline behind, she's developed a worldwide following for her impressions of the natural wonders surrounding her adopted hometown of Marquette.

"I was doing a lot of auditions in major cities and grew weary of all the concrete, traffic, and smog. I realized I couldn't possibly be happy in that environment," Malone says of her past life. So, she and husband Brian took a jaunt to the U.P.

and, she recalls, "We fell in love with the area after seeing Lake Superior for the first time in Grand Marais, and were struck by the quality of the water. I always remember that. We just moved up here, with no jobs, for the quality of life."

Looking to earn a living, Malone picked up a camera and began seasonally capturing the woods, waterfalls, Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore, Lake Superior, and the Mackinac Bridge and lighthouses.

With Brian, also a photographer, she then traveled and sold their work on the art fair circuit for many years, including the Ann Arbor show. Burned out by the traveling grind, however, the couple missed the land they loved. "I moved to the U.P. to be in the U.P.," she says. "The next step was to figure out how to stay in the U.P."

One year ago, they cut all but a few art fairs from their schedule and opened Lake Superior Photo, a gallery and studio in Marquette, where they exhibit and sell prints of all sizes.

Besides landscapes, Malone has pointed her lens to the night sky and captured spectacular Northern Lights images, which have catapulted her into the national and international limelight—especially with the release of her time-lapse video, "North Country Dreamland." She edited 10,000 still images taken throughout 2012 into the 7-minute program, which was the "People's Choice" winner in a 2013 Smithsonian online competition (see lakesuperiorphoto.com).

"The Northern Lights have really caught on with the media," Malone says of her extensive portfolio of sky shots. She believes it's because most people will never see the lights in person. While it's possible to catch the colorful, dancing flares most of the year, conditions must be just right. Even in the best viewing spots, including the U.P., there's no guarantee that clouds won't obscure them. "You might go years without seeing a strong display," she says, citing the spans between activity she witnessed in 2004, 2011, and those in her second video, "Radiance" (Oct. 2013). "Those kinds of displays you remember the rest of your life."

Monitoring space weather websites helps her decide whether to venture out and attempt a photo shoot, but she adds, "A lot has yet to be learned on how the aurora works, but you have a good opportunity to see it with a strong solar flare off the sun that is Earthward-directed." Once she sees some activity, her experience helps to



Lake Superior sea caves—This is one of the photographer's favorites because of the arch portals' composition and reflection in the foreground. The sun only sets through the left portal a few days in the year.

FOR PERFECT SHOTS



▲ **Northern Lights, Crisp Point Lighthouse**—One of Malone's most difficult shots, this 10-frame panoramic shows a 180-degree view, and received an Epson International Panorama Competition Silver Award. Lake Superior had to be flat-calm for the composite to mesh, and aurora borealis made an appearance!

▼ **Mackinac Moonrise**—This shot only happens once a year due to where the moon rises, and the weather.



▲ **Milky Way Road**—A unique shot of the Milky Way on a moonless night, creatively lit by the car's headlights.

Photos by Shawn Malone

judge how much time to invest and whether it will pay off.

Patience and luck are given credit for some of her success, too, especially as she ventures into the wilds where there are no danger warning signs. Recalling a trip to Isle Royale after shooting the Northern Lights at Tobin Harbor, she headed back to her lean-to. "I had a two-mile hike at two in the morning along basically a deer path...a cobblestone, trippy kind of thing." It was so dark that she couldn't see what was around her, but could hear moose sparring nearby. "That sound puts the fear of God in you because you could just feel the power of the animals," she says, shuddering while remembering that

too-close call.

"Getting the shot" also involves experimenting with manual settings and using a tripod to keep the camera steady for long exposures, Malone tells shutterbugs in her teaching workshops.

Her imagery also appears in magazines, websites and books, and she freelances as a managing photographer at *Upper Peninsula Second Wave*, an online magazine. Her artwork is also viewable and for purchase at <http://www.lakesuperiorphoto.com>, and this year she'll ponder a book project.

Meanwhile, her camera will be kept ever-ready to record impressions of the land, water and sky she loves.



Photographer Shawn Malone says the difficulty of a shot is related to logistics and understanding what happens at certain times with light and subject matter. Follow her on Facebook at [fb.com/LakeSuperiorPhoto](https://www.facebook.com/LakeSuperiorPhoto)

Wolverine Ends Generation Projects

Presque Isle Power Plant

Wolverine Power Cooperative recently announced that it is ending the development of two generation projects in northern Michigan.

Construction of a 600-megawatt (MW) power plant and a wind turbine farm near Rogers City was proposed by Wolverine in 2006. An air quality permit was approved in June 2011 for the proposed Wolverine Clean Energy Venture power plant, but the co-op significantly scaled back development of the project in late 2011 with the passing of new emissions rules for new plant construction.

"I am very proud of our efforts on the Wolverine Clean Energy Venture," said Eric Baker, Wolverine's president/CEO. "The

project team worked diligently to develop a proposed state-of-the-art power plant to serve co-op members efficiently and cost-effectively."

Wolverine has also brought its joint venture with We Energies (of Milwaukee, WI) at the Presque Isle Power Plant in Marquette to a close. The companies had proposed joint ownership of the plant in January 2012 in exchange for Wolverine's investment in an air quality control system.

"We're disappointed to end the joint venture with We Energies, yet that has become the best option for both parties," Baker explained. "We believe this joint venture would have brought economic and environ-

mental benefits for the region, along with helping to ensure energy reliability."

We Energies plans to evaluate long-term options for the plant and may solicit other potential buyers for some or all of its output.

In keeping with its mission to provide outstanding service to its members, Baker noted that Wolverine will continue to seek reliable, competitively priced power supply that encompasses a mix of fuels and business partners.

Wolverine is the power supplier for Cheryland, Great Lakes Energy, HomeWorks Tri-County, Midwest Energy, Presque Isle Electric & Gas and Wolverine Power Marketing co-ops, and Spartan Renewable Energy.



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Tired of high energy bills? Fight your frustrations and keep more money in your pocket with the help of your electric co-op's Energy Optimization program. Whether you choose to replace an energy-guzzling appliance or install a high-efficiency CFL or LED bulb, rebates are available to help you complete just about any energy-saving project at home.

ENERGY TIP: Save up to 40 percent in furnace electricity costs by changing the filter regularly.

ONLINE: michigan-energy.org PHONE: 877.296.4319



Energy Optimization programs and incentives are applicable to Michigan service locations only. Other restrictions may apply. For a complete list of participating utilities, visit michigan-energy.org.



FOLLOW THESE SAFETY TIPS FROM YOUR ELECTRIC CO-OP:

- ▼ **Assume all power lines are energized and dangerous.** Even downed lines that seem “dead” can be re-energized at any time during power restoration efforts or improper use of generators. Lines do not have to be sparking to be live!
- ▼ **Any utility wire, including sagging or downed telephone or cable lines could be in contact with an energized power line, making them very dangerous, too.**
- ▼ **Never touch a downed line – or a person or object that is touching it!** A downed line can cause things around it to become energized, traveling through the ground to chain link fences or other objects.
- ▼ **If someone is injured from electrical contact, do not try to assist. You could be injured or killed, too. Call 911.**
- ▼ **If lines fall on your vehicle, do not drive away or get out.** Stay inside until utility workers say it’s okay. Warn others to stay away. If you must leave the vehicle—only in the case of fire—jump free without touching the ground and auto at the same time, keeping both feet together, and hop to safety. A live wire touching the ground causes electricity to fan out, and walking or running allows one foot to move from one voltage zone to another. Your body then becomes the electricity’s path, and electrocution results.
- ▼ **Never drive over a downed line,** it could cause poles or other equipment to come crashing down.
- ▼ **Call 911 immediately to report a downed power line.** Then call your electric co-op or the local utility.

Visit SafeElectricity.org for other electrical safety tips.

MSU Extension Offers Help for Understanding Affordable Care Act



Michigan State University Extension wants to help individuals, families and businesses make the right health insurance decision.

Extension has a team of educators that can help residents understand the new rules and requirements, navigate the federal Health Insurance Marketplace, and make a decision that fits both health needs and financial realities.

“People need to be extremely careful when signing up for insurance,” explains Brenda Long, who spearheads MSU Extension’s education efforts. “This is one of the most important decisions a person can make, and they will be dealing with concepts they are often unfamiliar with.”

“We hope to give people the knowledge they need so they can meet with a local certified application counselor, or go to the federal health care site and make the appropriate decisions for themselves and their families.”

Part of the service offered is a series of free, weekly, unbiased educational webinars and a new website that explains changes in the insurance landscape. A list of the webinars, as well as details about the Affordable Care Act, Health Insurance Marketplace, and how both affect Michiganders can be found at Extension’s Affordable Care Act Roadmap (aca.msue.msu.edu).

Organizations that provide health or

community assistance, or employers looking to provide education for their employees can also contact MSU Extension directly at healthinsurance@anr.msu.edu and request information about setting up an in-person training session.

“We aren’t trying to push consumers to select any one specific plan,” Long adds. “We hope to teach people skills they can use so they can decide on the plan that best fits the needs for themselves, their families or their employees.”

The online educational webinars for individuals are held every Monday from 9-11 a.m., 3-5 p.m., and 6-8 p.m.; and for farmers and small-business owners every Monday from Noon-2 p.m.



◀ DO YOU KNOW WHERE THIS IS?

Every co-op member who identifies the correct location of the photo at left by **April 10** will be entered in a drawing for a \$50 credit for electricity from their electric cooperative. **We do not accept Mystery Photo guesses by phone!** Email mysteryphoto@countrylines.com; enter your guess at countrylines.com; or send by mail to *Country Lines Mystery Photo*, 2859 W. Jolly Rd., Okemos, 48864. Include your name, address, phone number and name of your co-op. Only those sending complete information will be entered in the drawing. The winner will be announced in the May 2014 issue.

The January contest winners are Gary and Elaine Pohl of Westphalia, who are members of both Home Works Tri-County Electric Cooperative and Cloverland Electric Cooperative. The Pohls correctly identified the photo as a mural at the R. E. Olds Transportation Museum near the riverwalk in downtown Lansing.



January photo



Energy Efficiency

Tip of the Month

Programmable thermostats can save up to \$160 a year in energy costs. Match thermostat settings to your schedule: cold when you’re away and warm when you’re at home. In winter, set the thermostat to 68 degrees during the day (lower at night when you’re snug in bed). By turning your thermostat down 10 to 15 degrees for at least eight hours, you can shave 5 to 15 percent from your heating costs.

Source: TogetherWeSave.com, U.S. Department of Energy

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