

Michigan

COUNTRY LINES



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*Not in all editions

On the Cover*

Bob Graves, owner of Iversons Furniture and Snowshoes, near Shingleton, shows samples of their handcrafted "webbies."

Photo – Shawn Malone/lakesuperiorphoto.com



Michigan Country Lines, USPS-591-710, is published monthly, except August and December, with periodicals postage paid at Okemos, MI, and additional offices. It is the official publication of the Michigan Electric Cooperative Association, 2859 W. Jolly Rd., Okemos, MI 48864.

Subscriptions are authorized for members of Alger Delta, Cheryland, Cloverland, Great Lakes, HomeWorks Tri-County, Midwest Energy, Ontonagon, Presque Isle, and Thumb electric cooperatives by their boards of directors. Subscriptions are \$6 per year.

Postmaster: send address changes to Country Lines, 2859 W. Jolly Rd., Okemos, MI 48864.

Letters to the editor should be sent to the same address. Phone 517-351-6322. **Email:** knudtson@countrylines.com.

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Craig Borr is president and CEO.

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Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative



Back to Our Co-op Roots

Great Lakes Energy is a member-owned cooperative, yet for more than 25 years we've been regulated by the Michigan Public Service Commission (MPSC), a government agency.

Your cooperative's board of directors consists of members whom you elect to serve your best interests, but decisions on rates, billing charges and other things are controlled by the MPSC. In September your board decided to move towards member regulation, or back to where we started in the 1930s when rural electric cooperatives began.

Your board of directors will meet Dec. 21 to consider a proposal (see page 5) that would make Great Lakes Energy a member-regulated electric cooperative, effective next spring. If the proposal is approved, we would become the fourth Michigan electric cooperative to take advantage of state legislation, passed unanimously in 2008 as Public Act 167, which gives electric cooperatives the option to become member regulated. The meeting will be open to all co-op members wishing to provide input about member regulation.

Why would we want to reduce MPSC oversight? One reason is to save money. By becoming member regulated, we

would save \$135,000 per year in assessments that we currently pay to the MPSC. That's one-half of the annual amount we pay to be regulated by the MPSC. During the years when we seek rate changes we would also reduce our legal and consulting fees, adding up to tens of thousands more in savings.

Under member regulation, the MPSC would no longer regulate our rates and charges. The authority to make changes in these areas would rest solely with the directors you elect—who are GLE members like yourself—rather than state regulators whose rate approval process is costly and time-consuming.

Member regulation is not total deregula-

tion. The MPSC would continue regulating business matters related to safety, interconnection, code of conduct, customer choice, territorial issues with other utilities, distribution performance standards, and quality of service.

If the Great Lakes Energy board decides in the future that they wish to return to full MPSC regulation, P.A. 167 also provides steps for that process.

How did we become regulated? For the first 25-plus years that electric cooperatives existed in Michigan, they were not regulated. It was not until 1965 that co-ops sought "protection" from

the state from a marauding investor-owned utility attempting to get co-op members to switch to their electric company. In order to gain territorial protection of their service areas, the co-ops agreed to allow the state to regulate other areas of their business, as well.

We are facing a difficult economic time in our industry. Costs are going up, and it's affecting other utilities besides electric cooperatives. Returning the rate approval process to the local board level will help us reduce costs, including expensive delays. With



Steve Boeckman
Great Lakes Energy
President/CEO

By becoming member regulated, we would save \$135,000 per year ...

member regulation, the board will be able to make decisions regarding rate structures in an efficient manner.

A member-regulated electric cooperative planning a rate increase must meet these P.A. 167 requirements:

- Rates and charges shall reasonably reflect the cost of providing service.
- Rates shall be uniform within the classes of service provided by the cooperative.
- Members must be notified before any rate or rule changes take effect.
- Members must be notified 30 days prior to the effective date of any rate or rule changes.
- In addition, members must receive a

Notice to Members of Great Lakes Energy Electric Cooperative

The Great Lakes Energy board will take action on the proposal to become member-regulated in accordance with P.A. 167 of 2008, at its meeting on Dec. 21, 2011, to be held at the Fox Hill Event Center, 7640 Mackinaw Trail, Cadillac MI 49601. The meeting will start at 1 p.m. Members will have an opportunity to address the board on the proposal prior to board action.

The following is the proposal to be considered:

Proposal to Become a Member-Regulated Cooperative in Accordance with Public Act 167 of 2008

On June 26, 2008, Public Act 167 of 2008 (P.A. 167) became law.

P.A. 167 states that an electric cooperative, owned by the members it serves, is regulated by its members acting through its democratically elected board of directors.

P.A. 167 further states that member regulation by a cooperative in the areas of rates, charges, accounting standards, billing practices, and terms and conditions of service may be more efficient and cost-effective than regulation by the Michigan Public Service Commission.

P.A. 167 allows the board of directors of an electric cooperative to adopt member-regulation for rates, charges, accounting standards, billing practices, and terms and conditions of service by following the process set forth in the act.

That process requires the following:

- (a) A proposal by a director of the cooperative to become member-regulated, when such proposal is made at a properly convened board meeting.
- (b) Action on the proposal taken no earlier than 90 days have passed from the date the proposal was made.
- (c) Action on the proposal taken at a meeting of the board for which written notice is given and the meeting is open to all members of the cooperative.
- (d) At the meeting, members of the cooperative shall have reasonable time to address the board prior to its acting upon the proposal.
- (e) Following member comments, a roll call vote of the board of directors shall be taken.
- (f) For the proposal to be adopted, 2/3 of the members of the board must vote in favor of becoming member-regulated.

This proposal seeks that Great Lakes Energy become member-regulated in accordance with P.A. 167. Notice of the Dec. 21, 2011, board meeting shall be sent to all members, as required by P.A. 167, by publication in *Michigan Country Lines*.

PARTICIPATION: Any interested member may attend and participate. The location of the board meeting site is accessible, including handicapped parking. Persons needing any accommodation to participate should contact Great Lakes Energy at 888-485-2537, ext. 1331, a week in advance to request mobility, visual, hearing or other assistance.

Back to Our Roots, *continued*

10-day notice of the time and place of a board meeting where a rate increase that will affect at least 5 percent of the members or “substantive” changes in billing rules or terms of service are to be discussed and acted upon. Notices would appear in *Michigan Country Lines*.

If the board approves member regulation by the required two-thirds vote, the next step

would be to notify the MPSC. Member regulation would go into effect 90 days following the date the MPSC receives our written notification, or sometime in March 2012.

Electric co-ops in most parts of the U.S. are already member regulated. There are now only 14 states with co-ops regulated by a government agency.

The self-governing nature of our business has worked well for many years by giving

electric co-ops the freedom to operate as efficiently and effectively as possible for their members. Your board is elected to run a not-for-profit co-op and not motivated to generate profits for stockholders. With member regulation, decisions will be made locally by your elected representatives, who are co-op members themselves. It's part of the cooperative difference and another way we're looking out for you, our members.



Road Trippin'

I read with interest your "Road Trippin'" article (Mike Buda, Ramblings/Sept.) in *Country Lines*. My husband Mike and I just got back from a motorcycle trip through the same territory. I am amazed you are going to do it in three weeks, it took us nearly seven.

One tip, there is a great bakery breakfast place on main street in Custer, SD, on the north side of the street. Big, huge sticky buns/cinnamon buns and good breakfast. If you and your wife are over 62 then at the first national park, get a senior pass for \$10 and then all national parks are forever free. But not parking at Mt. Rushmore!!

Have a great time and there will be plenty of smaller parks, etc., to catch you on the way.

— Ivy Richmond, Baldwin

You asked for road trip suggestions in your September

column, and I have one. Since you said you are going to Mt. Rushmore and Yellowstone, might I suggest Devil's Tower National Monument, WY, which is between those other two? You might recall that it was featured in the movie "Close Encounters of the Third Kind." It's an amazing thing to see, and it's right on your way. Not too crowded, as well. You can even climb it if you're so inclined. No pun intended.

May I also tell you how much I enjoy your columns in *Country Lines*? It's the first place I turn to when I get the magazine. May you never fully retire and keep those monthly columns coming. You have a gift.

I am very much looking forward to your "Great American Road Trip" column.

— Tim Stockdale, Harbor Springs

Editor's Note: See page 30.

Just finished your great article in *Michigan Country Lines*.

My wife and I were in Utah the latter part of April and we found that the Arches National Park just north of Moab, UT, is a "MUST SEE"—easy drive and beautiful scenery. Moab

is about a half-hour south of I-70. While in Moab there is a very nice place called "Peace Tree Juice Cafe" and is located at 20 S. Main St. Phone is (435) 259-0101. Good atmosphere and great wait-staff. Reminds me of some of the great eateries in Ann Arbor.

Either way, have a great trip and be safe!

— Bill & Mary Lampe, Morenci

Three years ago our family stayed with relatives in Santa Clara, CA. We rented a vehicle and drove to Yosemite. In brief, when you come out of the south end of Yosemite and plan to stay in Fresno, it is a way longer drive (due to the mountains—not flat, like Michigan!) than you ever anticipated—and there is no place for gas or food for a very long way! Let's just say mom, dad, and the three kids were all tired, hungry and crabby by the time we got to Fresno! Yosemite itself, AMAZING!

From Fresno, we made our way to Salinas—via King City—and we saw some amazing farming! You will have a new respect for every green pepper, celery stalk and bunch of broccoli in the future! You will see things in the distance that look like a bunch of squares and as it comes into view realize that it is large, square bales stacked longer than you can imagine. Not 40 calf huts like a dairy farmer in Michigan, but thousands! Or a feedlot that goes on for miles! You should really check out that area, as we found it very fascinating! (We are farmers in the E.U.P.!)
— Joanne Galloway

Thanks for the offer to "ride along" on your CA sojourn!! It was in 1948 that I made the trip with my parents. Looking at all those gadgets you're taking is like comparing our trip to going by covered

wagon. What a difference 63 years makes. I spent my army time at Fort Ord which is no longer an operating military base. It was a short ride to Monterey and Carmel, and I suggest both for "must" stops as you head down the coast. The other "must" should be the Giant Redwoods in Sequoia National Park.

Spent a lot of time on the beach at Carmel and remember a house to the south that looked like the bow of a boat jutting from the shore. Folks said it was a Frank Lloyd Wright design.

As with those gadgets you're taking.....lots of change!

— Tom Hanna
(former manager of Top O'Michigan, before it became Great Lakes Energy)

Your plans are mighty ambitious—and you left out the Grand Canyon! Unless you are a wine aficionado, I'd leave out the wine country and plan on the Grand Canyon. I've done versions of this trip about a dozen times in recent years, in a motorhome. I did, in fact, visit the Grand Canyon—for about the 12th time—five years ago, and hiked to Phantom Ranch on a three-day camping trip (at age 78). Southern Utah is the most beautiful part of the lower 48, and a "must see." But you have six national parks there to visit.

Oh, and I've done the bike thing—Seattle to Bar Harbor, ME—at age 60! Enjoy!

— Herbert Mayer, Rapid City

Hunting the Timberdoodle (woodcock)

Regarding your article about woodcocks (Don Ingle, Sept.), "The 'Quirky' Timberdoodle," the author (a hunter) states that hunting these inoffensive animals is not the main reason for the decline in their numbers. Even if that is true, why

MYSTERY PHOTO

Every co-op member who identifies the correct location of the photo below by **Dec. 10** will be entered in a drawing for a \$50 credit for electricity from your electric cooperative.

Please note that we do not accept Mystery Photo guesses by phone!

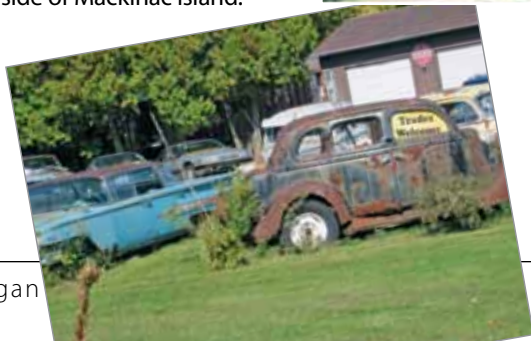
Email mysteryphoto@countrylines.com, or send by mail to *Country Lines*, 2859 W. Jolly Road, Okemos, 48864. Include your name, address, phone number and name of your co-op. Only those sending complete information will be entered in the drawing. The winner will be announced in the January 2012 issue.

The September contest winner is Marlene Purdy of Caledonia, who correctly identified "Devil's Kitchen" rock formation on the west side of Mackinac Island.



Sept. photo

Do you know where this is? ►



does he advocate the continuation of hunting them when he admits that their numbers are falling? Wouldn't it be wise scientific management to refrain from hunting them at all rather than just reducing the number killed? Does the author really care about protecting them or just keeping enough alive to keep hunting them the following year? Just asking.

P.S. How about publishing articles about the great outdoors written by an unbiased person?

— Susan DeGross

Don Ingle responds: Studies by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, as well as state DNR studies using scientific sampling show that hunting has no overall effect on woodcock populations—they would be basically the same whether they were hunted or not.

The major reason for the decline remains loss of habitat in the northern breeding range. Human land use practices, developmental removal of habitat, or failing to interrupt natural forest succession that overtakes the younger (shade) intolerant forest stages remain the major reasons for the woodcock's decline. Yet, when a clear-cut to maintain suitable habitat is performed, there are often more letters of complaint written than this writer's on woodcock hunting.

Managing suitable habitat is costly, and most monies available to agencies who perform this work is derived from hunters though license sales and taxes on their hunting gear. Without these funds, more than woodcock would be endangered since good woodcock habitat also serves many other species, including non-game that use the same stages of early forest succession.

Hunters pay to help preserve the habitats for many species of wildlife.

Eating Cheap

Nice job (Lisa Marie Metzler, "Eating on the Cheap"/Oct.) and thanks! I got some good ideas, especially the whole grains and bananas frozen together, and dicing fresh and freezing. I CRAVE fruit in the winter and it is so much more expensive and not always fresh.

— Sharon, Traverse City

Thank you so much for these quick, short and simple realistic tips. I feel nourished just reading about it! Looking forward to healthier shopping and more balanced, nutritional eating habits with my family this week, and more. Please keep the tips coming. I'll be looking for more articles from you!

— Tina Schaub, Traverse City

Great ideas... healthy eating has always been more expensive. I like the idea of shopping the outer aisle of the store. I take a lap around the store before I shop—its exercise and you can check out the sales.

— Laura, Traverse City

Correction (Sept. issue) — Cole Smith is the only soldier mentioned in the "Where Soldiers Come From" story not affected by TBI (traumatic brain injury), and film director Heather Courtney is not an NPR reporter, as noted from an online film review. Visit wheresoldierscomefrom.com to see updated viewing dates.

Could Fuel Cells Be The Future?

Most homes, vehicles and businesses are powered using electricity or a fossil fuel such as natural gas, gasoline, diesel, propane or fuel oil. Now, a new option is beginning to emerge: fuel cells.

Electric cooperatives have a long history of exploring the potential of fuel cell technology. Through the Arlington, VA-based Cooperative Research Network (CRN), co-ops have been investigating different types of fuel cells for more than a decade. While the technology is evolving, the cost is still hefty. Studies recently conducted by CRN at seven co-ops sites and military bases around the country found that while fuel cells (using polymer electrolyte membrane technology) designed for residential use do work, they carry a huge price tag—producing electricity for a whopping 85 cents per kilowatt-hour (kWh). Comparatively, the average price of electricity in the U.S. is 11.5 cents per kWh.

A fuel cell works like a battery that is constantly charged by putting a fuel into its negative terminal. It creates a chemical reaction, most often involving hydrogen forming with oxygen, but another common fuel is natural gas. One of the main byproducts of the chemical reaction is water, making the process generally pollution-free. Normally, fuel cells generate only a small amount of electricity and must be combined into larger stacks to produce enough power for homes, cars and workplaces.

Currently, five main types of fuel cells exist: polymer electrolyte membrane (PEM), alkaline, phosphoric acid, molten carbonate, and solid oxide. Each uses a different electrolyte and comes with advantages and disadvantages.

One solid oxide-based fuel cell, called the "Bloom Box," received a significant amount of media attention early in 2010. The device burst onto the scene with endorsements by luminaries like as Gen. Colin Powell, then-California Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger, and New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg. The product was even featured on "60 Minutes" and has been installed at major internet-based firms such as Google and eBay.

Analysis of the Bloom Box shows that those costs can be lowered—the unit can generate electricity for 8 cents to 10 cents per kWh, but only with hefty federal and state renewable energy subsidies tossed in. And, the Bloom Box can't maintain consistent output day-in and day-out for years like a typical baseload power plant. In fact, a 100-kilowatt solid oxide fuel cell like the Bloom Box, running on natural gas at a 48 percent efficiency rate, carries a unit price of about \$7,000 to \$8,000 per kilowatt—about the same as a nuclear power plant.

To be successful over the long term, fuel cell efficiency will need to increase from the 40 percent to 60 percent typically found. And given pressures on federal and state budgets, fuel cells will need to operate economically without relying on government incentives to stay competitive with more traditional generation sources.

Electric cooperatives continue to explore new and innovative options to reduce costs and provide reliable energy choices. If fuel cells come of age, co-ops will be at the forefront of educating members on the advantages and disadvantages of the technology.

— Brian Sloboda, Cooperative Research Network

Tell us about your favorite, or a unique, Michigan-made product. Email czuker@meca.coop or send to: Country Lines, 2859 W. Jolly Rd., Okemos, MI 48864. Be sure to share why you like it, or a unique story to go with it.



GLE Members Will Receive Refunds

Your capital credit refund will be applied to your bill.

Many Great Lakes Energy members will see a capital credit refund on their bills next month.

A financially-healthy electric co-op shares its margins with member-owners by issuing capital credit refunds to them. Great Lakes Energy will again apply refunds to many members' electric bills in December.

Refund amounts will be based on electricity purchases made by members during 2010 and 1986. Members who purchased more electricity in these years will receive larger refunds. For example, a \$6.62 refund will be issued to the average residential-use member whose electricity purchases totaled about

\$1,080 in 2010. The refund will be more if the member also purchased electricity from the co-op in 1986.

This is the ninth consecutive year that Great Lakes Energy has returned part of its margins to members. In September 2011, the co-op's board of directors approved a total capital credit retirement package of over \$3.92 million. A portion of the total, which equals nearly \$948,000, is 2010 capital credit earnings and the remainder is from 1986.

Members with refunds over \$1,000 will receive a check.

"Sharing our margins with our members is another example of the cooperative differ-

ence and the unique value that a consumer-owned electric company provides," explains President/CEO Steve Boeckman.

The co-op plans to continue issuing capital credit refunds each year provided financial conditions allow it. Future refunds would include electricity purchases made by members during other years, as well.

Former co-op members entitled to a refund will receive a check.

Since 2003, Great Lakes Energy has issued \$25.2 million in capital credit refunds to its members.

Most members will see the refund applied to their December bill, while some seasonal members will see it on their January 2012 bill.

Capital Credits Questions?

Here are some typical questions we receive about capital credits.

Q. *What are capital credits?*

A. Capital credits are a key reason why you're more than just a customer. You're a "member" of Great Lakes Energy! They represent your share of profits, called margins in the co-op world, that are generated when revenues received from our members exceed operating costs. Since we are a cooperative, we do not keep these margins, but rather allocate them back to the members who provide the revenue through the electric rates they paid during the year. Unlike investor-owned utilities, co-ops do not have shareholder investors/owners. Our members are our investor/owners. Every time you pay your bill, you're making an investment in a business you co-own.

Q. *Why is the refund on my bill smaller than my neighbor's?*

A. Your share of the profits is based on the amount of electricity you purchased from your co-op during certain years. If your neighbors purchased more electricity in these years than you, they will receive a larger refund.

Q. *Why are the refunds based on the years 2010 and 1986?*

A. We want to make sure that both newer and long-time members benefit from this

program and receive their entitled amounts. You can help us, too. If you assumed the electric account from a relative who is now deceased, we will provide you with instructions on how to claim any future capital credit refunds that may be issued in the deceased's name. Anyone who plans to move off our lines should provide us with their new address for our records. Your assistance will help limit the amount of unclaimed capital credit refunds.

Q. *What about profits earned in other years? Will they be returned, too?*

A. Yes, we plan to continue retiring capital credits annually provided financial conditions allow us to do so. Including the current retirement, all capital credits earned by members prior to 1987 and for 2010 have now been returned.

Q. *What do you do with the capital credits that you haven't returned yet?*

A. They remain part of the capital invested in the cooperative so we can continue to build and improve our power line distribution system and provide the other services that you expect from your electric cooperative.

Q. *Can I expect another refund next year?*

A. It is too early at this time to predict how

well your cooperative fared financially in 2011. However, based on our past history, we expect to continue this program next year.

We have been retiring capital credits annually since 2003. In that time, \$25.2 million in capital credit refunds have been returned to our members.

Most importantly, we have remained financially strong despite the poor economy, skyrocketing energy prices, and other issues that challenge all electric utilities today.

Co-op Principles

The cooperative principles are guidelines by which cooperatives put their values into practice. Your co-op returns profits to members because of principle #3:

1 Voluntary and Open Membership

2 Democratic Member Control

3 Member Economic Participation
Members contribute equitably to, and democratically control, the capital of their cooperative.

4 Autonomy and Independence

5 Education, Training and Information

6 Cooperation Among Cooperatives

7 Concern for Community

Is a Job With an Electric Co-op in Your Future?

It may be a biased opinion, but electric co-ops are great places to work for and with. And at a time when retirements are rising, it's a good time to talk about the advantages of working for them.

Co-ops exist to serve their members not only with safe, affordable and reliable electric power, but with community support and programs that help you save energy and money, and therefore make a difference in people's lives.

Even as nonprofit, consumer-owned businesses, co-ops generally offer competitive salaries and benefits in a time when many companies are scaling back. And, they offer a stable work environment by hiring within their communities and promoting within. Many employees start at a co-op and stay there throughout their careers.

While you may hear more about lineworkers, it takes many more employees and departments to run a co-op (see related story, "Careers on the LINE," p. 12). Staff members include everyone from accountants, technicians and engineers to public relations professionals who cultivate relationships with local, state and national opinion leaders and keep them updated on issues important to co-ops and the communities they serve.

And, if you've ever wondered how electric co-ops compare to other businesses in terms of employment, the latest statistics from the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) provide some insights.

The average electric co-op has 48 employees, with 17 serving as lineworkers, nine as administrative and clerical, six handling engineering and operations, and five employed as meter readers and/or equipment operators. A typical co-op also has two each of finance and accounting, member services and marketing, purchasing and inventory, and administration/

office services professionals—including human resources and district branch managers; and usually retain one communicator and one IT person.

Michigan has nine co-ops that distribute electricity to homes and businesses, one that generates and transmits electricity, and one power supply marketing cooperative. Additionally, the Michigan Electric Cooperative Association (MECA), is a service organization that provides safety training, research, assistance and support on legislative issues affecting co-op members, and publishes *Country Lines* for the co-ops. Together, we employ a total of about 782 people, but provide electricity to the homes and businesses of more than 600,000 people in rural areas covering one-half of the state.

Nationally, over 55,000 individuals work at electric distribution co-ops, and that number swells to over 70,000 when you factor in the workforce at generation and transmission cooperatives, statewide associations like MECA, and service affiliates. There are over 900 consumer-owned, not-for-profit electric co-ops nationwide.

So, electric co-ops continue to shine as some of the best places to work in a community, and I strongly encourage young people to scout career opportunities within the co-op family. Working for electric co-ops is a pleasure, and they are looking out for you by recruiting the best and brightest employees to serve you.



Michigan's Electric Co-ops

- 1 Alger Delta Cooperative Electric Association
- 2 Cherryland Electric Cooperative
- 3 Cloverland Electric Cooperative
- 4 Great Lakes Energy Cooperative
- 5 HomeWorks Tri-County Electric Cooperative
- 6 Midwest Energy Cooperative
- 7 Ontonagon Co. Rural Electrification Assn.
- 8 Presque Isle Electric & Gas Co-op
- 9 Thumb Electric Cooperative
- ★ Wolverine Power Cooperative
- ★ Wolverine Power Marketing Cooperative
- ★ Michigan Electric Cooperative Association

Gail Knudtson is editor of Country Lines for the Michigan Electric Cooperative Association. Her email is gknudtson@meca.coop





When you see people on snowshoes this winter, their “webbies” may have been made by Iverson’s.

Photo - Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore/National Park Service

A Web-footed Walk Through Winter

Up North, where winters are long and snows get deep, some people develop “webbed feet.” “Webbed” as in webbing, the rawhide lacing on a pair of snowshoes.

This invention of woodland Indians made it possible to travel atop winter’s deep snow instead of floundering through it.

When early French fur traders, missionaries and couriers saw snowshoes, they realized their value in opening up northern forests for trapping, trading and establishing alliances with the tribes.

The British, snug in their coastal towns, tended to view snowshoes as amusing toys and hence, were late in establishing their own native alliances. Because of that, the French and their tribal allies almost won the French and Indian War. Had it not been for a final British victory near Quebec City, we might be speaking French today. A look at Michigan’s many French place names shows how close it came.

A snowshoe’s value is especially appreciated by those who work in winter woods—foresters, loggers, biologists, surveyors and others who must venture away from roads.

Others discovered the recreational use of snowshoes, from hunting to hiking. Upper Peninsula-made Iverson snowshoes have become the standard.

Bob Graves, owner of Iversons Furniture and Snowshoes, Inc., acquired the company in 2008. The office is located on the site of his family’s sawmill in Shingleton (near Munising and Alger Delta Electric Co-op’s service area). With a staff of six to seven local workers, the company creates snowshoes from Michigan white ash, a hardwood that is bent by using steam and made into a variety of styles.

“We make nine styles of snowshoes, from the small bear paw style up to the long Alaskan (56-inches) and Tundra (72-inches),” Graves said. “The ‘Michigan’ snowshoe is the most popular.”

Once the snowshoe is shaped, it is laced with rawhide or materials such as neoprene or nylon (rawhide is the most preferred) and this webbing is the base support for staying on top of the snow. They also leave their telltale webbed tracks.

Iversons’ snowshoes are made to last. “That’s the trouble,” Graves laughs, “They just don’t wear out!” Still, the company turns out 2,000 new pairs annually.



Originally, the company was started by the late Clarence Iverson about 1954, when he began building snowshoes for state workers. Besides quality snowshoes, they also create fish nets and furniture from the same ash hardwood and rawhide lacing. Their cabin- or lodge-style furniture and wall hangings are very popular with those who enjoy the “Up North” theme for a vacation home or getaway cabin.

“Our snowshoes and cabin furniture are available by mail order—or direct sales at our Shingleton factory,” Graves adds. “Additionally, we have our products available at many sports shops, including PCS Sports. L.L. Bean will have Iverson snowshoes in their product offerings in their 2012 Centennial catalog.” Find more about the Iverson line and how they’re made at iversonsnowshoes.com (or 906-452-6370).

After acquiring snowshoes, you’ll have one French word to learn: “Mal d’raquette,” (“the ills of the racquet”), since a webbed snowshoe resembles a tennis racket. The “ills” are some inner thigh muscles that will let you know that, like any new exercise, there will be some soreness and twinges to overcome—best done by doing more snowshoeing.

Once you have snowshoes, where do you go to use them? Most anywhere there’s snow, but for beginners, it’s a good idea to use a developed path, and near to Iverson’s factory, at Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore, National Park Service officer Gregg Bruff recommends several places to leave web-footed tracks.

“Right near the Munising office is Winterfest Trail, offering a half-mile walk,” Bruff suggests. “The visitor needs only follow the blue triangular markers to make the trek.”

“Experienced snowshoers wanting to add winter backpack camping to their snowshoe adventure will find trails to backcountry camping sites in the Chappel area, and Beaver Lake.”

Statewide, there are many state forest pathways that are suited to snowshoes. Other places to use them may be a local park, golf course, and any area with snow and no restrictions on access.

When you see people on snowshoes this winter, many of their “webbies” may bear the imprint of the Iverson Snowshoe Company. Iverson’s figured out early-on that if you are going to get a lot of snow, you might as well use it to have some fun. Little wonder folks have been making tracks to Iverson’s for over 50 years.



Top: Bob Graves, owner of Iversons Furniture and Snowshoes, says Michigan white ash, full grain rawhides, and pure copper hardware are behind the longevity of their products, which can get passed between generations. They handcraft 11 snowshoe models in different sizes, all of which are available in kits for do-it-yourselfers, and they will custom-build for any specialized use.

Below, from left: Iverson's employee Russ Smith works at making snowshoe bindings by hand. Julie Holmes laces a snowshoe with rawhide webbing, which is the base support for staying on top of the snow. Rocking chairs, swings, love seats and tables are some of the furniture crafted by the company, and they also offer some home decorations, such as clocks, wall hangings, magazine racks, and ornaments.



Photos - Shawn Malone/Lake Superior Photo

Careers on the LINE

Cooperatives offer exciting and stable job opportunities.

In a bright spot for the nation's economy, electric co-ops are recruiting and retaining talented people for jobs of all kinds.

Some of the hiring is in response to retirements—estimates show nearly 10 percent of lineworkers and 18 percent of engineers and operations staff will retire over the next five years, says Russell Turner, principal, human capital issues, for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA).

The Center for Energy Workforce Development (CEWD), a nonprofit Washington, D.C., group that studies labor shortages in the power industry, predicts that 46 percent of existing skilled technicians and 51 percent of engineers in the electric and natural gas utilities may need to be replaced by 2015 because of retirement or attrition.

Other electric co-op workforce sectors are also impacted by turnover. Indiana co-ops have discovered that 61 percent of their CEOs and nearly one-half of all those in administration, marketing and member relations leadership roles are eligible to retire over the next five to eight years.

The scenario is different in Michigan, which has great demographics and a younger-than-normal workforce, Turner says. Only 14.3 percent of Michigan electric co-op CEOs are eligible for retirement in the next five years, and of the overall 784 employees for which data is available, only 75 (9.6 percent) are eligible in five years. The largest categories eligible over the same period are equipment operators (17.2 percent) and engineering (14.8 percent) employees.

It Takes a Village

While lineworkers are generally the most visible employees, it takes many more to effectively run a co-op. Distribution co-ops—those that directly serve you—employ over 55,000 people. If you include power supply co-ops and various support groups, like the Michigan Electric Cooperative Association (MECA), electric co-ops have over 70,000 folks on their payrolls.

Electric co-ops employ a median of 48 workers, NRECA notes, with lineworkers as the largest single group (17, on average), followed by administrative and clerical, and engineering and operations. The typical co-op also has one IT professional and one communicator.

Co-ops also need accountants, clerks, communications and marketing professionals, member and energy services employees to handle co-op member needs and concerns, and staking technicians and engineers to plot where new lines will be built. Purchasing workers track equipment inventory to keep the lights on, and negotiate contracts, and information technology (IT) professionals keep telecommunications and computer networks running smoothly.



Missy Robson (R) advises a HomeWorks Tri-County Electric Co-op member on how to save energy and money.

Women in a Male Workforce

Before becoming a customer service supervisor at HomeWorks Tri-County Electric Cooperative in Portland, Missy Robson served 10 years as a key accounts manager and was one of a handful of Michigan women trained to do energy audits. In this male-dominated field, she felt the need to be more prepared than most coming into the job.

"At the time, my first order of business was cultivating relationships," Robson recalls. "When I pulled up to the home to do the job, and they saw me—a little 5-foot-2 blond—getting out of the car, I knew some guys were gonna go, 'What the heck?!' But I took pride that I could alleviate their concerns right away."

Nationally, about 10 percent of electric co-op CEOs and energy auditors are female, but less than 1 percent of lineworkers are. "I wish I would see more women in this type of position," she adds. "I encourage them to think about it because it's a challenging job, but it's also very rewarding when you have succeeded in helping members with energy-saving techniques."

Great Lakes Energy is another Michigan co-op with females in traditionally male jobs, including two member field reps (perform meter exchanges and service disconnects), one field design tech, an AMI (automated metering infrastructure) manager, an engineering analyst, and one electrical technician.

The Future of Electric Co-ops

According to CEWD, electric co-ops fare better than other types of electric utilities when it comes to an aging workforce. Roughly 36 percent of nonprofit, consumer-owned electric co-op lineworkers are under age 37, versus just 30 percent for profit-driven investor-owned utilities (IOUs).

Still, co-ops are investing in their future workforce. Many partner with community colleges to create special lineworker training programs. Alpena Community College, for one, offers several scholarships for their lineworker training program sponsored by co-ops including Great Lakes Energy, Homeworks Tri-County Electric, Thumb Electric, and MECA. Local co-ops also assist by donating supplies and materials to ACC for use in training students.

Alpena began offering lineworker training in 1990 at the request of local utility companies and co-ops. Students get climbing training, learn electrical theory, safety, construction techniques and rigging, and can get their Michigan commercial driver's license in a one-year program. Another option is a two-year associate's degree, including general education and advanced electrical classes such as poly-phase metering and fiber optics.

Why Work at a Co-op?

"Electric co-ops continue to be some of the best places to work," Turner stresses. "Salaries and benefits remain competitive in a time when other firms are scaling back. We're very good corporate citizens."

To learn about job openings, visit your local co-op's website, or search TouchstoneEnergy.jobs for national opportunities.

Photo - Jayne Graham/HomeWorks

Love Those Trains!

This long-time American hobby is still enjoyed by many. **Nick Edson**

Ray Graham walks the walk. Actually, he rides the ride. The 72-year-old retired Elk Rapids teacher and coach is one of thousands of Michigan residents whose hobby is model railroads.

Graham, who also has a builder's background, has a locomotive for a mailbox. He and his wife Peggy take vacations across the country on Amtrak trains.

"I just enjoy trains immensely," he explains. "I have since I grew up in Saginaw in the early 1950s. I had a couple of friends who had model train layouts on 4-foot by 8-foot sheets of plywood. I was fascinated by them."

But raising a family, teaching and coaching during the school year, and building houses in the summer used up all of Graham's time. When he retired in 1993, he had time to step back and reflect on what hobbies he would pursue.

The choice was easy.

"I was watching QVC one day and they had an inexpensive model railroad set for about \$100," he adds. "The cars were made of plastic and the engine of metal."

Once they arrived at his house, the torch was lit. The first track he built was a 5x9 sheet of plywood in a downstairs room.

"Since then, I've knocked out the wall to the adjoining room downstairs and expanded into two rooms," he says. "The layout features all four seasons of the year, with over 1,000 feet of track, 40 locomotives and eight sets of controls. I have diesel locomotives and steam locomotives. It's quite a setup."

And a labor of love for Graham, who enjoys the full scope of his model railroad hobby—planning the layout, working on the track, doing the wiring, painting the scenery, and building the life-like details, such as trees, buildings and even hot air balloons.



Above: Model train buff Ray Graham has been "workin' on the railroad" since buying his first set in 1999. He and his wife regularly host school kids to see the three-season display, which fans the whole lower level of their home. The trains go through mountain tunnels, up into Canada's snow-covered terrain, to the Soo Locks (with an awesome freighter replica), and city stations nationwide. Chicago has a lighted underground passenger station. **Left:** A beautiful Hiawatha locomotive with orange trim pulls several passenger cars through a wooded area.

Then there's the choice of trains—from longtime favorite Lionel® to the first line of model trains—Märklin™, which was launched in 1891 in Germany. Märklin introduced locomotives, tracks and accessories to match. Once the model train industry took off, it went worldwide. By the early 1900s, kids in the U.S. were waking up to new train sets on Christmas morning.

And when those kids grew into adulthood, they didn't forget their early trains. Soon, those adults helped turn model railroading into a lifelong hobby.

A turning point in the model railroad hobby was World War II. Of the leading toy train players, only the U.S. avoided major physical damage in the war and its economy was in good shape, too. So, not surprisingly, the U.S. went forward with model train production much sooner than Europe.

Model railroading blossomed in the U.S. Toy trains were a major item during the 1950s, when Graham was growing up in Saginaw. In the 1960s, their popularity declined and manufacturers struggled to survive.

The survivors adopted various strategies, but agreed on two main themes: 1) that a key

part of the market was adults, and 2) that the cost of production had to be addressed.

Manufacturers responded with larger-scale trains of different gauges. They marketed the enjoyment of home-based model railroading which sped across the U.S. and Europe. Today in Michigan, there are dozens of model railroad clubs that meet regularly.

"Model railroading can be enjoyed by everyone—from 4-year-olds to 84-year-olds," Graham says. "My biggest enjoyment is having school groups over to my house. I enjoy watching the faces of the kids light up when they watch the model railroad in action."

Graham estimates he spends eight to 10 hours a week on his hobby in the winter, and less during the summer.

"We've taken some great vacations all across the country by Amtrak train," he adds. "It's a beautiful way to see our country."

And when they return home from vacation, he gets back to his model railroading hobby.

"I don't know how much extra electricity I use," he says. "But I know it doesn't cost very much. I just enjoy this so much as a hobby because the model trains are so realistic. It's unbelievable."



Make Your Own Holiday Centerpiece

With the rutabagas and onions safely stored under the house, and several jars of tomatoes in the pantry, my thoughts naturally turn to doing something related to plants. The best activity I can think of after the gardening season is over is to start working on holiday centerpieces. My heated greenhouse works well for this because the mess is contained, and I can still feel close to my gardening.

Holiday centerpieces are easy to make, provide a fresh aroma of cedar and pine around a holiday table, and they also make great gifts. Every centerpiece I've ever given away garnered some "oohs" and "aahs" and appreciation from the recipient. Below is a list of what you'll need to get started.

The evergreen pieces can be obtained by selectively pruning cedar and pine trees in your yard, or you can sometimes catch a neighbor doing hedge work and get the greenery you need that way.

Cedar is the best choice for centerpieces, but of course this is also

a personal choice. Cedar works well because there are no messy needles and they stay fresh longer indoors. Balsam is a good second choice, as it's easy to work with and will fill in a centerpiece rather quickly. A mix of green foliage (white pine, balsam and cedar) also makes an attractive centerpiece and is probably best for a special occasion where it won't be staying inside for an extended period of time.

The foliage will stay fresh indefinitely in a cold garage or outdoors. Decorative shrubs, such as arborvitae, don't take too kindly to a late fall pruning, so you may wish to get your greenery from a cedar tree or other plant from the wild, if you have access.

Cones, of course, can be collected from the trees or purchased with the other supplies at a craft store.

A nice selection of bowls and containers (often with the foam inside) can also be purchased at a large department store or florist shop.

Enjoy your centerpiece!

Steps to making a centerpiece:

- Clip pieces of greenery to about 6 or 7 inches in length.
- Take the foam oasis (dry at this point) and insert it into the bowl. You will probably have to cut the foam to fit into the bowl (giving you one extra piece for your next centerpiece).
- Carefully work a taper or other thin candle about 2.5 inches into the center of the dry oasis. Pull the candle back out and insert a little glob of the hot glue into the hole and push the candle immediately back into the warm glue. (Be careful not to let your skin touch the hot tip of the glue gun.)
- Begin inserting the short branches of greenery into the oasis, starting carefully from the bottom to avoid splitting the foam.
- Insert the branches all around the oasis until it looks pretty full.
- Begin your next row of greenery, pretty much covering the lower branches.
- Continue with the previous step until you've got a full-looking centerpiece.
- Take short pieces of greenery and insert into the top until the foam is completely covered.
- With the hot glue gun in one hand and a cone in the other, put a dab of glue on each cone, then simply press it into the foliage. Use as many cones as you want, but four groups of three pine cones works well.
- Put a dab of glue on the tips of the berry stems and insert them in between the cones.
- Use the craft snow any way you want to mimic snow on the cones or foliage.



What you need to make your centerpiece:

- Fresh cedar, pine, spruce or balsam fir
- A florist bowl
- Floral foam oasis
- Sharp scissors
- Glue gun and glue sticks
- A candle of your choice (a taper or candle no more than 2 inches in diameter works best)
- 12 red pine cones (white spruce also works)
- Artificial red berries (or sprigs of holly and berries)
- "Snow in a can" craft spray



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Losing Your Cool?

Families can learn positive ways to deal with anger.

One of the surprises we parents and grandparents face is a child's startling capacity to irritate us. Who would expect someone so precious and beloved to evoke feelings of frustration, anger, and—in some cases—rage?

Even the most patient parents confess to sometimes losing their tempers and yelling at their children. One study published in *The Journal of Marriage and Family* found that 88 percent of nearly 1,000 families interviewed admitted to shouting, yelling or screaming at their children in the previous year. This is bad news, considering another study showed that constant yelling and other forms of emotional abuse was a more significant predictor of mental illness than sexual or physical abuse.

On the flip side, from the very start children also seem prone to frustration and anger. That's not so surprising when you consider that anger, by at least one definition, is distress brought about by feelings of helplessness or powerlessness.

Anger doesn't have to be destructive. It's an emotion we all have, and for good reason. Anger helps us defend ourselves and our loved ones, and it can motivate positive change. Anger becomes a negative force only when we use it to hurt ourselves or another person. And unresolved anger can lead to resentment and bitterness that damages relationships, health and future success and happiness.

Parents play a key role in helping children

learn to manage powerful emotions, such as anger. Instead of placating, ignoring, or punishing angry outbursts, experts at EffectiveParenting.org encourage families to have a plan to deal with anger.

Family Plan for Managing Anger

Understand the purpose of anger. Teach children that anger is good for identifying problems, but not good for solving them. It's a natural emotion that reveals that something is wrong. It might be something inside us, such as an unrealistic expectation or demand. Or it might be something outside of us, but we need help addressing it in a positive way.

Identify early warning signs of anger. Children (and even some adults) act out before they realize they are angry. Identifying early warning signs helps children become more aware of their feelings and helps them gain control over their responses. Learn to recognize the cues that signal frustration and anger: Body tension, clenched teeth, unkind words or tone of voice, pouting, eye rolling, and more. Once you know signs, help your child notice them also. They can't learn to manage anger if they can't recognize or name it.

Step back. Teach your child to take a break from a difficult situation, and get alone to rethink, calm down, and figure out what to do next. The size of the break depends on the intensity of the emotion. Frustration might take only a deep breath. A child who is enraged probably needs to leave the room to settle down.

Choose a better response. Too many adults make the mistake of pointing out what's wrong about our children's anger without suggesting healthy alternatives. There are three positive choices: talk about it, ask for help, or slow down and persevere. Take time to teach your children these skills and practice them.

Never try to reason with a child who is enraged. When children can no longer think rationally, their anger is now controlling them. The child who is enraged has lost control. Whether it's a two-year-old temper tantrum or a 14-year-old ranting and raving, don't get sucked into dialog. It only escalates the problem. Talking



Photo - © iStockphoto.com/Mark Bowden

about it is important, but wait until after the child has settled down.

Be proactive. Model, discuss, read and teach your children about anger. Children learn by watching the adults around them, so it is important for parents to learn to control their own anger. Plus, according to the experts at Act Against Violence, children need to hear some basic messages as they grow up:

- It's okay to be angry.
- There are "okay" ways and "not okay" ways to show your anger.
- It's not okay to hurt people or pets or to break things when you are angry.
- It's okay to tell someone that you are angry.
- There are ways to calm yourself when you are angry.

Get help when anger seems to be out of control. Sometimes a third party can suggest ways your family can deal with anger in a more helpful way. Plus, children can begin to develop bitterness and resentment in their lives and may need professional help to deal with it. Children do not grow out of bitterness, they grow into it.

RETHINK

when you're angry:

- R**ecognize what makes you angry.
- E**mpathize with the other person's feelings.
- T**hink of positive things about the situation.
- H**ear what the other person is saying to you.
- I**nclude "I" messages to tell how you feel.
- N**otice what happens to your body.
- K**eep your attention on the present situation.

Linda Wacyk is a regular Country Lines freelance writer, educator, grandmother and content empty-nester.



Teachers Find Recycling Fun

Three Mackinac Island teachers are making recycling fun, profitable and fashionable by making mittens from wool sweaters.

Their Mackinac Mittens business started by accident in 2009, when Karen Allen, Laura Eiseler and Liz Burt saw a lady wearing a pair of mismatched mittens and loved them so much they all wanted a pair.

Liz, being the crafty one, said, “We can make those!” Luckily, Karen had all her daughter’s old clothes in the attic, Laura had fleece pajamas destined for Goodwill, and Liz inherited her grandmother’s button box.

After “felting” the sweaters (shrinking to bind the wool more tightly) they borrowed a pattern book and held a mitten-making party.

“There were eight of us that evening, and we all went home with a new pair of mittens,” Liz recalls. “They looked awful—like great big oven mitts, and the three of us agreed we could do better.” So, Liz altered the pattern over and over until they had their own.

After a second attempt, they were thrilled. “We all went home sporting our new ‘Mackinac Mittens,’ she says.

That’s when the “orders” also started coming in...every few days one of the women was

asked at the Post Office or bank, “Do you think you could make a pair for my grandmother?”

Next, an Island shop-owner offered to sell them in his store. “We were really surprised and flattered—we just wanted cute mittens, and here a store owner wanted to sell them!” Liz says. The owner asked for 60 pairs, but soon needed more, and another shop was interested, so it was hard for the women to keep up. They have since sold over 1,500 pairs and added hats, scarves and pins.

They also get wool from thrift shops, eBay, and friends in other cities, and labored last winter to build a supply of their creations.

“Mackinac Mittens is exactly what our logo says,” Liz adds: “3 Island teachers + 1 long, cold winter = Mackinac Mittens.”

They would love to make purses too, but time is scarce, as each mitten is made on the Island by Karen, Laura or Liz. “Making a pair of mittens is like solving a giant puzzle,” Liz



Photo—Diana Dupre

Karen Allen, Laura Eiseler and Liz Burt show their one-of-a-kind mittens. Mackinac Island is serviced by Cloverland Electric Co-op, and you can find the mittens at The Jaunting Cart and Little Luxuries of Mackinac; The Mole Hole in Sault Ste. Marie (800-709-1679); Grosse Ile Historical Society Holiday Gift Boutique (info@gihistory.org or 734-675-1250); or at mackinacmittens.com. Island shops are open mid-May through October, but some have other weekend and holiday dates.

says. “It’s all about finding sweaters that ‘go’ together.” Plus, each mitten takes between 1½ and 2½ hours to make, is machine-sewn to a fleece lining, and then hand-finished.

The result is a nice, thick fabric that is warm enough to get through even a Mackinac Island winter.

Rockhounds Make ‘Michigan Gemstone’ Jewelry

Don Reed is a lifelong rockhound who gladly admits his collection is becoming “out of hand.” With his wife Bonnie, he acquires stones worldwide by digging, bartering, buying old collections, and going to rock shows.

Using his collected pieces and skills honed by studying gem-cutting, silversmithing and wire wrapping, he creates jewelry from non-traditional gemstones. Many are from Michigan, like the Lake Superior agate, Michigan greenstone (state gem), and Petoskey stones (state stone) found on the Keweenaw Peninsula. “We find most of our Petoskey stones in private gravel pits, dirt roads (in washouts), road cuts, or old rock piles,” Bonnie shares.

From a rough rock, Don cuts and forms a slab into an appealing shape with diamond saws, grinders and polishers. “It is an exciting and time-consuming process to go from finding the stone to cutting it, then wire-wrapping and/or beading it,” she says.

“...I can look at a stone, sometimes when



Photo—Baldt Photography

it is still a rock, and visualize how it should be cut and what it will look like when it is done,” Don adds. He matches and wraps the stone with fine wire, and may add precious gemstones. He also makes custom jewelry for people who find their own stones.

The Reeds, Great Lakes Energy Co-op members from South Boardman, also enjoy combining their work—she makes beaded



Top: A Lake Superior tube agate crafted into a pendant. **Bottom:** A set made from turquoise and Petoskey stones.



necklaces, earrings to match his pieces, and manages their business, Snob Appeal Jewelry.

For folks interested in rockhounding, Don says, “First, look down once in a while!” since many are found in unexpected places; “pick up what you think is pretty”; and “join a rock club.” He also hosts a rockhound blog.

Find a blog link and more of their artistry at snobappealjewelry.com (231-369-2294), art shows, Copper World in Calumet, and Nature Connection in Elk Rapids.

See page 6 to tell us about your favorite, or a unique, Michigan-made product.





Lamb & Veal Recipes

If you've never cooked lamb before, chops may be the place to start. Properly grilled, they will melt in your mouth. And, you'll find veal is compatible with a variety of seasonings. Or try any of these wonderful recipes from our readers, just in time for the holidays. Always find hundreds of recipes at countrylines.com.

Veal With Wine & Herbs

1½ lbs. veal cutlets
2 T. flour
¾ t. garlic salt or powder
¼ t. basil
3 T. oil

¾ c. rosé wine
⅓ c. sour cream

⅓ c. grated parmesan cheese

Bone cutlets and cut into serving-size pieces. Coat them with a mixture of flour, garlic salt and basil. Brown on both sides in oil; add wine. Cover and cook on low 40 minutes, or until tender. Mix sour cream and cheese; spoon onto meat. Cook 5 to 10 minutes more. Remove meat to platter. Stir pan juices to blend, pour over meat. Makes 4 to 6 servings.

Emmajean Bowerman, Lake Isabella

Lamb Shanks

2 lbs. lamb shanks
1 c. orange juice
2 medium onions, sliced
2 large Anaheim peppers, sliced
1 clove garlic, minced
½ t. nutmeg
salt and pepper to taste

Brown lamb shanks in olive oil over medium-high heat. Add onions, garlic, nutmeg, salt

and pepper, if desired; cover and simmer for about 2 hours. Add peppers and cook an additional 15 minutes. Green beans or snow peas may be substituted for peppers.

Edith Warling Heezen, Fowler

Butterflied Leg of Lamb

1 6-7-lb. leg of lamb, butterflied
1 c. dry red wine
¾ c. beef broth
3 T. orange marmalade
2 T. red wine vinegar
1 T. minced dried onion
1 T. dried marjoram
1 T. dried rosemary
1 large bay leaf, crumbled
1 t. seasoned salt
¼ t. powdered ginger
1 clove garlic, crushed

Place lamb in a shallow roasting pan, fat-side down. Combine remaining ingredients in a 2-quart saucepan and simmer uncovered 20 minutes. Pour the hot mixture over the lamb and marinate at room temperature for 6 to 8 hours, turning frequently.

Barbeque method: Place meat over medium-hot coals fat-side up for 30 to 45 minutes, turning several times and being careful not to pierce meat. Periodically brush with marinade while cooking.

Oven method: Preheat oven to 425°. Place meat, fat-side up, under broiler approximately 4 inches from heat. Broil 10 minutes per side. Transfer meat to preheated oven for 15 minutes.

Carve meat on a slight diagonal in fairly thin slices. Serve with wild rice mix.

Cleo Elve, Montague

Lamb Pizza

1 pkg. crescent rolls
1 lb. ground lamb
¼ t. garlic powder
1 8-oz. pkg. cream cheese
½ c. mayonnaise
¼ c. margarine
⅓ pkg. dry Hidden Valley Ranch® dressing mix
4 ozs. shredded cheese, your choice
assorted fresh vegetables, chopped or sliced,
(i.e., carrots, green onions, broccoli,
cauliflower)

Lightly grease a pizza or jelly roll pan. Unroll crescent rolls and press to cover pan, forming a slight ridge around edges. Prick with a fork (to prevent bubbling up). Bake as directed, until slightly browned. Meanwhile, brown the ground lamb with garlic powder until done. Drain and cool. Cream the cream cheese and mayonnaise until smooth; add dry dressing mix. Mix well. Add cooled ground lamb and mix well. Spread over crust; top with vegetables and then shredded cheese. Cover and refrigerate until set. Cut into squares or slices and serve.

Debbie Vineyard, Morley, GLE

Lamb & Eggplant Casserole

1 large eggplant, about 1½ lbs.
¼ c. olive oil
½ c. coarsely chopped onion
1 t. finely minced garlic
1½ lbs. ground lamb
½-1 t. cinnamon
1 bay leaf
1 dried hot red pepper, crumbled
4 c. canned tomatoes with tomato paste
(28-oz. can)
salt and pepper
1 c. fine, soft bread crumbs
½ c. grated Parmesan or Gruyere cheese

▶ **Send in your recipes!** If published, you'll receive a kitchen gadget. Send in: **UNDER \$10 MEALS recipes by Nov. 10** and **SLOW COOKER recipes by Dec. 10**. Mail to: *CountryLines Recipes*, 2859 W. Jolly Rd., Okemos, MI 48864; or email recipes@countrylines.com.

If eggplant is not young and tender, peel it; otherwise, leave skin intact and just trim ends. Cut eggplant lengthwise into 1-inch thick slices. Cut slices into strips 1-inch wide. Cut strips into 1-inch cubes. You should have about 6 cups. Heat oil in a flame-proof casserole; add onion and garlic. Cook, stirring constantly until onion is wilted. Add lamb, breaking up any lumps. Stir in eggplant; cook, stirring often for about 5 minutes. Stir in cinnamon, bay leaf, hot pepper, tomatoes, salt and pepper; cook, stirring occasionally about 5 minutes. Transfer mixture to a casserole or baking dish. Combine bread crumbs and cheese; sprinkle over casserole. Bake at 425° for 15 minutes.

Douglas Cameron, Spruce

Chop Suey

1 lb. veal, cubed
 1½ lbs. pork, cubed
 2-3 T. oil
 3 medium onions, sliced
 4 stalks celery, chunked
 1 15-oz. can bean sprouts, drained
 1 8-oz. can sliced mushrooms, or use fresh
 1/4-1/2 jar brown gravy sauce or bead molasses
 1/2 c. water or beef broth
 Brown meat in oil; gradually add brown

sauce/molasses and simmer 20 minutes. Add water or broth and bring back to a simmer; add onions and celery and cook 15 minutes; add bean sprouts and mushrooms. Cook until vegetables are tender. Serve over cooked rice or noodles.

Carole Sutton, Stockbridge

Drunken Lamb Shanks

8 lamb shanks
 1 c. strong coffee
 1 c. bourbon
 1 envelope dry onion soup mix
 1 large cooking bag
 Place all ingredients in the cooking bag in a shallow baking dish. Punch holes on top of bag. Cook at 225° for 4 hours. Remove and enjoy.

Beverly Crosthwaite, Southfield

Veal Marsala

1 lb. veal, sliced thin for scallopini
 1/4 c. all-purpose flour
 1/2 t. seasoned salt
 1/2 c. butter
 2 T. olive oil
 3/4-1 lb. fresh mushrooms, quartered or sliced
 1/3 c. marsala wine
 In a shallow dish, combine the flour and

seasoned salt. Dredge veal slices in mixture and let rest 15 minutes on a wire rack. In a large skillet over medium-high heat, melt butter with olive oil. Cook veal on both sides until light, golden brown. Add mushrooms; cover and reduce heat to low and cook 10 minutes. Pour in wine and simmer 5 minutes more until veal is tender and sauce is hot. Serve immediately.

Sheila Ashcroft, Millersburg

Three-Meat Meatloaf

1 lb. ground beef
 1/2 lb. ground veal
 1/2 lb. sausage
 1 c. cracker crumbs
 1 onion, chopped
 2 eggs, beaten
 1 t. salt
 1/2 t. pepper
Topping:
 1/2 c. ketchup
 1 t. dry mustard
 2/3 c. brown sugar
 1/2 t. nutmeg
 Combine all meatloaf ingredients and shape into loaf; place in shallow baking pan. Combine topping ingredients and spread over top of loaf. Bake at 350° for 1 hour.
Janice Harvey, Charlevoix

Healthy Holiday Eating

By Jennifer Nelson, M.S., R.D. and Katherine Zeratsky, R.D.

Are dreams of sugarplums dancing in your head? What about other decadent holiday favorites? You know the ones that are loaded with sugar, salt and fat—cheese platters, bacon-wrapped appetizers, creamy eggnogs, spiked punches, cookies and rich desserts.

It can be a challenging time of year to make healthy choices. But healthy holiday eating is possible. Here are some tips for making favorite recipes healthier:

▶ **Cut the sweetness.** When making pumpkin pie or eggnog, reduce the amount of sugar by half and enhance “sweetness” by adding a bit more vanilla, nutmeg or cinnamon. If recipes call for sugary toppings like frosting, jams and syrup, use fresh fruit instead.

▶ **Shake the salt out.** You can reduce salt by half in most recipes, too. Also go easy on salty condiments, such as pickles, catsup, mustard and soy sauce. Instead offer cucumber slices and fresh tomato or fruit salsas. Or, try lower-sodium versions of mustard and soy sauce. In recipes, substitute fresh herbs and flavored vinegars for salt.

▶ **Trim the fat.** In baked goods you can cut the fat by about half and replace it with unsweetened applesauce, prune puree or mashed banana. Instead of full-fat condensed milk, use condensed skim in pumpkin pie and eggnog. For gravy, heat fat-free, low-sodium broth (or drippings with the fat removed); mix flour into cold skim milk and pour slowly into broth, stir until thickened and season to your liking.

Do you have suggestions for healthy hors d'oeuvres, sides and entrees? Share your ideas with friends and family.

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Home Heating Assistance Programs • 2011–2012 Season

Be Winter Wise

The Michigan Public Service Commission and the state's regulated gas and electric companies, including rural electric co-ops, are encouraging senior citizens, low income, and unemployed utility customers to **"Be Winter Wise"** if faced with high bills they cannot pay this winter. "Winter Wise" customers will be protected against loss of their utility service. Following are the provisions of home weatherization and house heating assistance programs, and special provisions for customers with medical emergencies.

Program: Winter Protection Plan

Contact: Your Local Utility Company

Income Guidelines 2011–2012

# in Household	150% Poverty Guide Maximum Income
1	\$16,335
2	22,065
3	27,795
4	33,525
5	39,255
6	44,985
7	50,715
8	56,445

Add \$5,730 for each additional member.

Note: All customers 65+ are eligible regardless of income. Customers are responsible for all electricity and natural gas used. At the end of the protection period, participants in the plan must make arrangements with their utility company to pay off any money owed before the next heating season.

The **Winter Protection Plan** protects eligible senior and low-income customers from service shut-offs and high utility bill payments during the winter months (Nov. 1–Mar. 31). You may enroll between Nov. 1 and March 31. If you are an eligible low-income customer, your utility service will remain on from Nov. 1 through Mar. 31, if you:

- pay at least 7% of your estimated annual bill each month, **and**
- make equal monthly payments of 1/12 of any past due bills.

When the protection period ends (Mar. 31), from April 1 through Oct. 31, you must begin to pay the full monthly bill, plus part of the amount you owe from the winter months when you did not pay the full bill. **Participation does not relieve customers from the responsibility of paying for electricity and natural gas usage, but does prevent shut-off during winter months.** You qualify for the plan if you meet at least one of the following requirements:

- you are age 65 or older,
- you receive Department of Human Services cash assistance, including SSI,
- you receive Food Stamps,
- you receive Medicaid, or
- your household income is at or below the 150% of poverty level shown in the Income Guidelines chart (see chart at left).

Senior citizen customers (65 or older) who participate in the Winter Protection Plan are not required to make specific payments to ensure that their service will not be shut-off between Nov. 1 and March 31. However, seniors are encouraged to pay whatever they can during the winter so they will not have large, unmanageable bills when the protection ends.

Program: Home Heating Credit

Contact: Mich. Dept. of Treasury

# Exemp.	Max. Income	# Exemp.	Max. Income
1	\$11,986	4	24,587
2	16,186	5	28,815
3	20,387	6	33,014

Add \$4,200 for each additional member.

You can apply for a **Home Heating Credit** for the 2011 tax year if you:

- meet the income guidelines listed at left,
- you own or rent the home in Michigan where you maintain a permanent residence, or
- you qualify based on alternate guidelines including household income, exemptions, and heating costs.

If you qualify, you may receive assistance to help pay for your winter heating bills. Forms are available mid- to late-January wherever tax forms are provided, or from the Michigan Dept. of Treasury (800-367-6263, or michigan.gov/treasury). The Home Heating Credit claim form must be filed with the Michigan Dept. of Treasury **before Sept. 30, 2012**.

Program: Earned Income Credit

Contact: U.S. Treasury Dept.,
Internal Revenue Service
Michigan Dept. of Treasury

The **Earned Income Credit (EIC)** is a refundable federal income tax credit for low-income working individuals and families who meet certain requirements and file a tax return. Those who qualify will owe less in taxes and may get a refund. Even a person who does not generally owe income tax may qualify for the EIC, but must file a tax return to do so. If married, you must file jointly to qualify. File Form 1040 or 1040A and attach the EIC.

You may claim a **Michigan earned income tax credit** for tax year 2011 equal to a percentage of the federal earned income tax credit for which you are eligible. See the 2011 MI tax booklet for additional information.

Program: Crisis Assistance Program

Contact: Local Michigan Department of
Human Services (DHS)

State Emergency Relief Program (SER): You do not have to be a client of the DHS to apply. This program is available year-round, subject to the availability of funds, to assist low-income households that have a heat or electric shut-off notice or a need for deliverable fuel. However, if you receive a DHS cash grant, you may vendor part of that grant towards heat and electric bills. Contact your local DHS or call the Home Heating Hotline, 800-292-5650.

Program: Low-Income Home Weatherization

Contact: Local Community Action Agency

You may be able to receive help with weatherizing your home to reduce energy use if you meet low-income eligibility guidelines (see income guidelines above) and funding is available. **Weatherization** may include caulking, weatherstripping, and insulating. Contact your local Community Action Agency for more information.

Program: Medical Emergency Protection

Contact: Local Utility Company

You are protected from service shut-off for nonpayment of your natural gas and/or electric bill for up to 21 days, possibly extended to 63 days, if you have a proven **medical emergency**. You must provide written proof from a doctor, public health or social services official that a medical emergency exists. Contact your gas or electric utility for more information.

Program: Shut-off Protection for Military Active Duty

Contact: Local Utility Company

If you or your spouse has been called into **active military duty** you may apply for shut-off protection from your electric or natural gas service for up to 90 days. You may request extensions. You will still be required to pay, but your utility company will help you set up a payment plan. Contact your utility service provider.

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How Low Can You Go?

Setting your thermostat back in the winter can save energy and money, but the key is finding the temperature at which you and your family are comfortable. And, selecting the proper temperatures throughout the day and night can be a bit confusing. You want to balance comfort with energy—and dollar—savings. It is surprising how comfortable you can be at a lower indoor temperature once you become accustomed to it. Thereafter, you find yourself uncomfortable at higher indoor temperatures that used to seem normal.

It actually does save energy overall if you lower the temperature setting on your central furnace or heat pump thermostat. The actual amount of dollar savings depend primarily upon how low you set the thermostat, how long you have it set back, and, to a lesser degree, your climate.

There are also other advantages to lowering the thermostat setting during winter. If your house temperature is lower, it requires less moisture indoors to keep the air at a given relative humidity level. The fact that your furnace or heat pump runs less at a lower indoor temperature means the equipment will last longer and need fewer repairs.

If you look at setback savings charts, don't be confused by the fact that the percentage savings are actually higher in milder climates than in colder climates. This is because the total amount of energy used to keep a house comfortably warm in a cold climate is much greater than in warm climates. This makes the base number larger in cold climates, so the percentage savings are less even though

the dollar savings are greater.

It is a common myth that it takes as much energy to reheat a house, in the morning for example, as was saved during the temperature setback period overnight. The amount of heat a house loses through its walls, ceilings and floors is directly proportional to the difference between the indoor and the outdoor temperatures. Air leakage into and out of your house also increases with larger temperature differences.

When the indoor temperature is set lower, the indoor-to-outdoor temperature difference is smaller, so less heat is lost from your house. During the summer, the same is true in reverse. If less heat is lost from your house, your furnace has to use less gas, oil or electricity to create the heat to replace it. The amount of heat used to reheat the house, therefore, is less than the amount saved over the temperature setback period.

The only time a temperature setback may not be wise is if you have a heat pump with backup electric resistance heat and an old thermostat. When it is time to reheat the house and you set the thermostat higher again, the expensive backup electric resistance heater may come on. For a long eight-hour setback, you will probably still save overall, but not for just a short setback of a couple of hours.

If you have a heat pump, install a special setback thermostat, designed for heat pumps. These thermostats have electronic circuitry to keep the backup resistance heating elements off after the setback period. My own heat pump thermostat works this way, and

it also allows me to block out the resistance heating when the outdoor temperature is above a certain temperature. I have mine set at 20 degrees.

There is not a “best” thermostat setting for all homes and climates. The lower you set it, the greater the overall savings will be. The amount of savings per degree for each nighttime eight-hour setback period ranges from 1 percent to 3 percent. Because many people are also gone during the daytime, the temperature can be set lower for about 16 hours per day. Unless there are some health problems in your family, 62 degrees is comfortable if you are wearing long sleeves or a sweater.

In moderate climates, let your comfort dictate how low you initially set the furnace or heat pump thermostat. As you get used to the lower temperatures and wear a sweater, you will be able to gradually lower it more. In colder climates, excessive window condensation often limits how low the indoor temperature can be set. In order to set the temperature lower, you will have to reduce the indoor humidity level.

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.



Giving Efficiency

By Kelly Trapnell

With the holiday rush starting earlier and earlier every year, get a jump-start on your shopping wish list with some great “green” gifts. Using the tips below, you can have everything wrapped up before the ho, ho, ho turns into go, go, go!

Why give efficiency?

Green giving is thoughtful on many levels. The person receiving the gift has a new gadget to use that keeps long-term electric costs low year-round.

“Choosing a green gift can be easy,” says Brian Sloboda, senior program manager for the Cooperative Research Network (CRN). “Be aware of energy use. Look for any mention of energy ratings on large appliances and TVs, or select “unplugged” gifts—think solar, reusable and recyclable. Even something as small as the packaging and wrapping can make a difference.”

Look for items with lightweight packaging. And, think about wrapping your gift in something like a fabric bag that can be reused, or even accessories such as a scarf, fabric belt or hair ribbons to tie things up.

Green Gift Ideas

For Decorators: *LED Christmas lights* (\$15–\$35) These energy-efficient lights are becoming easier to find and afford. They save on high holiday electric bills and stay cool to the touch. For a festive, complete package, wrap them in a decorative stocking.

For Gardeners: *Solar garden lights* (\$15–\$50) Available in endless colors, styles and sizes, solar garden lights can be a lovely addition to your favorite green thumb’s garden. To up the green quotient, wrap in a burlap bag.

For Cooks: *Toaster oven* (\$60–\$140) Especially great for the empty nester or those only cooking for one or two, toaster ovens are a good choice to save energy as an alternative to heating a large standard oven.

For Movie Buffs or Sports Fans: *ENERGY STAR-rated TV* (price based on size) Televisions are getting bigger and better. But before you give something that uses as much electricity as a refrigerator, look for the ENERGY STAR® label. It will offer the smallest impact on your electric bills possible.

For Techies: *Smart strip* (\$20–\$40) This new cutting-edge technology is great for plugging in electronic gadgets. Not your average power strip, smart strips sport designated outlets that make it easy to power down certain devices to save energy while not affecting others plugged into the same strip.

Solar cell phone charger (\$55–\$100+) Help unplug energy-sucking chargers from the wall; solar chargers can be placed in a window to charge a cell phone or other devices such as a GPS unit or even MP3 players anywhere the sun shines, even in a car on-the-go!

There are many options when you start looking for green gifts. Get creative (see “Make Your Own Holiday Centerpiece,” p. 14), and remember that what you give impacts future electric bills, so give the green light for energy-smart gifts this year!

Kelly Trapnell writes on safety and energy efficiency issues for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.



Give an energy-smart gift like LED Christmas lights this year.



Another energy-smart gift is a toaster oven (set inside an oven for comparison), since it requires less energy to heat than a standard oven.



Think “green” by wrapping gifts with reusable or recyclable wrap, such as a newspaper sports page and twine.



Innovative Co-op Marks Decade of Service to Members

Wolverine Power Cooperative and its members saw an opportunity 10 years ago—an opportunity to introduce

Michigan companies served by investor-owned utilities to the cooperative way of doing business. A new state law passed in June 2000 allowed large consumers of electricity, such as general manufacturing facilities, to choose their electric providers.

Wolverine Power Cooperative launched Wolverine Power Marketing Cooperative (WPMC) to compete in the new electric choice market—to seek out and provide electricity to commercial and industrial loads in the state not served by electric co-ops.

“Approving WPMC as a fifth member of Wolverine Power Cooperative was a significant step for the four existing members of Wolverine Power Cooperative,” says Kimberly Molitor, president and chief executive officer of WPMC. “Fortunately, as we had anticipated, we found the business community receptive to the benefits of co-op membership and the potential savings WPMC could offer.”

Wolverine Power Marketing

Cooperative follows the same practices electric cooperatives have used for more than 70 years. The co-op is a not-for-profit company—profits it makes are returned to the membership. Additionally, the WPMC board of directors is comprised of co-op members.

Each member receives a vote in director elections and may nominate a candidate to serve on the board, which meets regularly.

One of the first companies to enter an electric sales agreement with WPMC was St. Marys Cement in Charlevoix. WPMC began serving the plant in February 2002.

“Participating in the Michigan Electric Customer Choice Program has been very positive for St. Marys Cement,” says Dirk Cox, the plant’s operations manager. “Entering into a partnership with WPMC has proven to be a win-win situation for both companies. The working relationship is second to none, and we look forward to

the partnership continuing for many years.”

“St. Marys Cement’s commitment to WPMC was key to our early success. We appreciate the solid, steady relationship we’ve had with St. Marys over the years and remain dedicated to providing economic benefit to them and

our entire membership,” Molitor says.

Today, WPMC serves 23 members, all of which are leaders in their respective areas of business and education and located in the Lower Peninsula. Members include large industrial facilities, such as St. Marys Cement, as well as universities and hotel properties.

“It’s important to point out that not only have members of WPMC realized savings over the last 10 years, but Wolverine Power Cooperative’s entire membership has benefitted from the growth and economies of scale WPMC has created,” Molitor explains.



Photo: St. Marys Cement in Charlevoix has been a member of Wolverine Power Marketing Cooperative for nearly 10 years, receiving service from the co-op under Michigan’s Electric Customer Choice Program.

Helping Wildlife in Barry County

A side benefit of removing trees and brush near power lines for improved safety and reliability is that it sometimes offers Great Lakes Energy an opportunity to help nature, too.

The co-op's vegetation management staff recently worked with a state agency and private groups to transform a bushy section of power line right-of-way (ROW) in the Barry State Game Area into an open space that next year will be carpeted with clover. The four clover varieties planted will be food for deer, rabbits, turkeys and other wildlife.

"The one-acre food plot would not have been possible without the assistance of our contractors, the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR), and the National Wild Turkey Federation (NWTf)," says Rob Nielsen, a vegetation management field rep from GLE's Newaygo office who spearheaded the Energy For Wildlife project. "Their (NWTf & DNR) knowledge of the land and expertise in soil conditions and seed types proved indispensable in finding the best location and seed mixture for this food plot.

"It will be a great asset to the wildlife in the area for years to come," adds Nielsen.

The Energy for Wildlife project also involved lineworkers from GLE's Wayland office who placed over 50 utility pole stubs



Above: Great Lakes Energy's vegetation management staff spread clover seed along a re-cleared right of way in the Barry State Game Area. From left are Rob Nielsen and Kevin Lockman. **Right:** Rob Nielsen fills Jeff Matelski's handheld spreader with clover seed. Four varieties of clover were used to create a food plot for wildlife within the right of way area.

in areas that the DNR wanted blocked off to vehicles.

The vegetation management department annually sponsors these projects throughout the co-op's service territory. Energy for Wildlife is a NWTf program that assists utilities in incorporating wildlife management in their power line ROW maintenance practices.

Vegetation along the right-of-way where the food plot is located was re-cleared this year as part of a bigger power line reconstruction project. After the line work was finished, Thunder Bay Tree Service, a GLE private



contractor, applied herbicides to control unwanted vegetation growth that could later threaten the clover and overhead power lines. Trees, Inc., GLE's tree-trimming contractor, later removed the brush and prepared the soil for the clover planting.

2011 Reliability Goal Wasn't Met

A pattern of unusually stormy weather this year, particularly in the spring, contributed to Great Lakes Energy's inability to meet its 2011 reliability goal.

The goal was to not exceed 175 average outage minutes in 2011. The cooperative entered the fourth quarter of this year with nearly 177 average outage minutes on Oct. 1. This is only the first time in six years that GLE has not met this goal.

"Although the goal can be impacted by weather conditions we cannot control, we



SAIDI Says

remain diligent in our efforts to keep average outage minutes for our members to a minimum," says Steve Boeckman, the cooperative's CEO.

The cooperative uses SAIDI, an industry standard index, for determining average outage minutes. SAIDI (System Average Interruption Duration Index) is an indicator of the average amount of time a Great Lakes Energy member could be without power in a given year. Since it represents an average, some members actually experience no outage times while others experience more than the

SAIDI number.

Weather-related outages are factored into the SAIDI calculations, with the exception of major event days (MEDs). Storms that create MEDs are not common, and only happen once or twice a year across the co-op's entire service area.

Great Lakes Energy will continue using various design measures to limit the weather's damaging impact on our distribution system. Investments in distribution automation equipment, addition of more line protection devices, the use of new technologies, and continued intensive vegetation management activities within power line rights-of-way are all helping to get the lights back on safely and more quickly for members during storms.

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1. Publication Title: Michigan Country Lines. 2. Publication No.: 591-710. 3. Filing date: 10/1/11. 4. Issue frequency: monthly, except August and December. 5. No. of issues published annually: 10. Annual subscription price: \$6. Complete mailing address of known office of publication: Michigan Electric Cooperative Association, 2859 W. Jolly Rd., Okemos, MI 48864. 8. Complete mailing address of headquarters or general business office of publisher: 2859 W. Jolly Rd., Okemos, MI 48864. 9. Full names and complete mailing address of publisher, editor, and associate editor: Craig Borr, Gail A. Knudtson, Douglas Snitgen, 2859 W. Jolly Rd., Okemos, MI 48864. 10. Owner: Michigan Electric Cooperative Assoc., 2859 W. Jolly Rd., Okemos, MI 48864. 11. Known bondholders, mortgagees, and other security holders owning or holding 1 percent or more of total amount of bonds, mortgages, or other securities: None. 12. Tax status: Has not been changed. 14. Issue date for circulation data below: Oct. 2011 15. Extent and nature of circulation:

	Avg # of copies each issue during preceding 12 mo.	Actual # of copies of single issues pub. nearest to filing date
A) Total No. of copies	210,923	185,807
B) 1) Paid and requested circulation	207,807	183,232
C) Total paid and requested circulation	207,807	183,232
D) 1) Free distribution by mail	616	690
4) Free distribution outside mail	2,500	1,885
E) Total free distribution	3,116	3,829
F) Total distribution	210,923	185,807
G) Copies not distributed	0	0
H) Total	210,923	185,807
I) Percent paid and/or requested circ.	98.5%	98.6%
16. Publication of statement of ownership: November 2011		
17. Signature and title of editor: Gail Knudtson		

Energy Tip

When buying a new appliance, check the black and yellow EnergyGuide label.



This label provides an estimate of the product's energy consumption and efficiency. It also shows the highest and lowest energy efficiency estimates of similar models. Most major appliances—such as refrigerators, dishwashers, and clothes dryers—are required to have these labels.

Source: U.S. Department of Energy

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Increase in PSCR Charge Expected

Effective Jan. 1, 2012, the Power Supply Cost Recovery (PSCR) factor on your bill is expected to increase from 1.144 to 1.583 cents per kilowatt-hour (kWh).

The proposed increase must be approved by the Michigan Public Service Commission before it can take effect (see legal notice, p. 29).

Great Lakes Energy buys its electricity from a power supplier whose changes in costs require use of the PSCR on your bill.

The factor allows the power supplier to pass on to Great Lakes Energy any increases or decreases in the cost of purchased power, fuel to generate electricity, and transmission services. All regulated electric utilities in Michigan have a PSCR factor on their electric bills.

Great Lakes Energy does not retain any PSCR revenue since that money is passed through to its power supplier.

Power supply costs frequently fluctuate in relationship to changes in the energy market and are changes that Great Lakes Energy cannot control.

Including state sales tax, the increase amounts to \$3.43 more per month for the typical residential GLE member who uses an

average of 750 kWh per month.

Changes in power supply costs can also lower the PSCR factor, as was the case in July 2009.

GLE Awaits Rate Approval

Great Lakes Energy's request for a \$3.28 monthly increase in its fixed billing charge for residential members is expected to be approved by the Michigan Public Service Commission (MPSC) this fall.

The proposed rate settlement agreement with the MPSC includes adjustments to the residential energy use charges. The increase amount, 2.8 percent overall, is not affected by the adjustments.

The new rates also include a proposed increase in the outdoor security light rates, depending on wattage size.

The additional funding from the rate changes will:

- Allow GLE to continue making major improvements that will bring the same high level of reliable service to more members. Thousands of GLE members have benefited from reliability improvements in recent years.

- Pay for major storm expenses, including large, damaging storms late in 2010 that

resulted in \$1.6 million in power restoration costs.

- Cover general operating cost increases, such as for fuel and materials.

- Allow GLE to maintain adequate margins.

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STATE OF MICHIGAN

BEFORE THE MICHIGAN PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

NOTICE OF HEARING FOR THE CUSTOMERS OF GREAT LAKES ENERGY COOPERATIVE CASE NO. U-16889

- Great Lakes Energy Cooperative proposes to use a power supply cost recovery factor of \$0.01583 per kilowatt-hour (kWh) to compute its member-customers' bills for the 12-month period ending December 31, 2012, if the Michigan Public Service Commission approves its request.
- The information below describes how a person may participate in this case.
- You may call or write Great Lakes Energy Cooperative, 1323 Boyne Avenue, Boyne City, Michigan 49712, (888) 485-2537 for a free copy of its application. Any person may review the documents at the offices of Great Lakes Energy Cooperative.
- The first public hearing in this matter will be held:

DATE/TIME: December 6, 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 Mark E. Cummins

LOCATION: Michigan Public Service Commission, 6545 Mercantile Way, Suite 7, Lansing, Michigan
The Mercantile Way building sustained flood damage and remains closed until further notice. Please consult the Michigan Public Service Commission website at: michigan.gov/mpsc for updates on hearing locations or call 517.241.6060.

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 the September 28, 2011 application of Great Lakes Energy Cooperative (Great Lakes) to implement a power supply cost recovery (PSCR) plan and PSCR factor of \$0.01583 per kWh to compute its member-customers' bills for the 12-month period January 1, 2012 through December 31, 2012. Great Lakes' requested PSCR factor assumes a \$0.06527 per kWh allowance for cost of power supply included in base rates.

All documents filed in this case shall be submitted electronically through the Commission's E-Dockets website at: michigan.gov/mpscdockets. 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: mpscdockets@michigan.gov. If you require assistance prior to e-filing, contact Commission staff at (517) 241-6180 or by email at: mpscdockets@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 November 29, 2011. (Interested persons may elect to file using the traditional paper format.) The proof of service shall indicate service upon Great Lakes' 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 Great Lakes' request may be reviewed on the Commission's website at: michigan.gov/mpscdockets, and at the office of Great Lakes Energy Cooperative, 1323 Boyne Avenue, Boyne City, MI 49712. 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.; and the Commission's Rules of Practice and Procedure, as amended, 1999 AC, R 460.17101 et seq.

October 11, 2011

Things We Wouldn't Know If We Hadn't Taken This Trip

Our trip 'out West' was a relaxing adventure, even if that sounds like an oxymoron. We saw a grand spread of country, and got a sense of the spectacular beauty we had only witnessed secondhand in movies, TV, books and other people's slide shows. We were tourists in our own country.

Of course, we couldn't see everything, but we saw much that we wanted to see in what I'd call a 'drive-by' vacation. We covered 6,478 miles over 20 states in 22 days. It was the longest trip we've ever taken together. We also learned a few things about our country and ourselves.

It's easier to sleep on a long trip if you stay in the same room every night. You can do that if you bring your room with you (think RV) or camp. Or, you can plan to stay in one of several hotel chains that blanket the country. All the hotels and motels in a given chain are not identical, but they are similar, and we found that similarity breeds contentment. Still, we're puzzled by the half-size pillows at a Holiday Inn in Little Rock. Why?

All the trees and mountains in South Dakota are on the western end, which makes you wonder why the state doesn't tip up on the eastern side.

Beautiful Custer State Park, near Mt. Rushmore, is a mini Yellowstone, minus the geysers.

It's not necessary to eat your way across America. We thought we'd gain weight on this trip because we'd constantly snack

during all the sitting, but each of us lost a few pounds. Of course, food poisoning helps you lose weight, as it did in Cody, WY, where we dined on spaghetti and meatballs apparently left out too long or undercooked.

The grandest pleasure was Yosemite National Park, our goal. It is breathtaking. Watching the Tigers beat the Yankees on TV in a lounge in Yosemite, with the granite cliffs looming outside the window wall, was a special moment.

The eastern pass to Yosemite was closed because of snow when we intended to drive it; we found that out at the California Agricultural Border Station, where personnel confiscated our grown-in-California-but-sold-in Michigan blueberries. We had to backtrack and then take an open road around the Park to the western entrance, an extra 200 miles. But it was a beautiful drive, with the mountains covered in fresh snow.

There is another valley like Yosemite buried under water just a few miles away. It supplies water to 4.2 million people in and around San Francisco. It makes me sad to think about it. No wonder John Muir, the champion of Yosemite and the national park system, is said to have died of a broken heart after he lost the fight to save the Hetch Hetchy Valley.

You can't find baseball on the radio like you used to. Trying to pick up the Tigers' pennant-chase games in the middle of New Mexico was impossible. Even satellite

radio didn't carry all the games. We had to call our sons for updates. Ernie Harwell would be sad.

It is true that electric cooperatives serve the prettiest country in America, and some of the loneliest.

There are gas traps on our highways. High-priced gas stations prey on travelers who don't know there is a normal gas station, where gas costs almost a dollar less, a few miles down the road.

There's another Michigan scattered around the country. If you gathered all the people who have left, you could duplicate the state. You can spot them by their Michigan sports team logo clothing.

If you find yourself without the clothes you need when the temperature changes, you can find cheap, suitable clothes at a Goodwill store. We were reminded by a couple from California who found themselves freezing when the temperatures in Yosemite National Park dove into the 30s.

Except for a few patches, the roads get a '10' from us. It's amazing how fast you can travel around this vast country, even if trucks seem to outnumber cars in some places.

Truckers decorate their big rigs and have secret competitions in the middle of nowhere to determine who has the prettiest trucks. You see them going down the highway at night, lit up like a county fair.

Yellowstone is big and grand, but it doesn't have anything over Michigan, which could be a national park all by itself.

iPhone apps are invaluable for traveling, especially for finding good food, cheap gas, and a place to sleep.

Cell phones and Facebook make it easier to stay in touch, but tougher to get away.

The most unexpected pleasure was the simple ham sandwich, homemade lentil soup and coffee at the tiny Say When Casino/Cafe in McDermitt on otherwise empty U.S. 95 on the Nevada/Oregon border. We were starving, which made the food even better.


Was the trip worthwhile? Yes, especially so because of the many tips we got from readers who had done it before. I would do it again tomorrow. But there are other places to visit first, and places we saw on this trip that deserve a longer look.




Barb and Mike Buda.
"I took a picture that looks like one of Ansel Adams', but honestly, Yosemite's beauty can come out of anyone's camera."

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



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