

MICHIGAN COUNTRY LIVES

A photograph of Valerie Brader, a woman with long brown hair, smiling and standing with her arms crossed. She is wearing a dark blue jacket with white lace-like patterns over a yellow top. The background is a blurred interior setting with warm lighting.

Valerie Brader is Michigan's New
'First Lady of
Energy'

Plus!

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Food, Fun and Prizes!

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Of Monarch Butterflies

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June 2015
Vol. 35, No. 6

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Publisher
Michigan Electric
Cooperative Association

Design and Layout
Ciesa Design

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

POSTMASTER: SEND ALL UAA TO CFS.

Letters to the editor should be sent to Country Lines, 2859 W. Jolly Rd., Okemos, MI 48864. 517-913-3531. E-mail: cdorr@meca.coop

Association officers are Robert Schallip, Cloverland Electric Cooperative, chairman; Mark Kappler, HomeWorks Tri-County Electric, vice chairman; and Eric Baker, Wolverine Power Cooperative, secretary-treasurer. Craig Borr is president and CEO.

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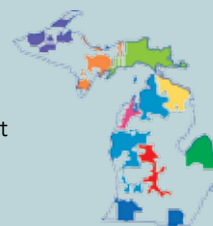
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ON THE COVER*

Chosen as the executive director of the new Michigan Agency for Energy, Valerie Brader says the state faces very serious energy issues but, "Big challenges offer the biggest opportunity to make a difference."

Photo—Matthew Mitchell

*Some co-op editions have a different cover.



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Progress Continues



Tom Harrell
General Manager

Alger Delta's annual meeting will be held **June 13**, and one watchword that can be associated with the cooperative is "progress." Over the last five-years, nearly every category of your cooperatives' finances and operations has shown progress. Sure, there have been ups and downs from month-to-month and from year-to-year, but overall the trend continues upward.

Members say that reliability has improved and we're proud of that. In some of the areas we serve, reliability is a significant accomplishment. After all, there are a lot trees in the U.P. Improvements in reliability are a reflection of routine maintenance and vegetation management.

Get the trees off power lines and away from the right-of-ways; inspect the poles, substations and equipment on a regular rotation; look for and fix problems before they occur; do these things and reliability improves.

Perhaps one of the greatest measures of progress—and one of the most difficult to describe—is how the recent developments with Cleveland Cliffs, WE Energies, UPPCO, the MPSC, MISO and all the other energy players in the U.P. failed to have a negative impact on Alger Delta. As you may recall, over the past two-years or so, the news media covered the story of Cleveland Cliffs exercising "choice" at their two iron ore mines in the U.P. and opting to take energy from another provider. This triggered a whole series of real and potential events relative to power supply in the U.P.—nearly all of which posed severe economic impacts for consumers in the U.P. Because of our power supply arrangements and other factors, Alger Delta avoided all that. Last year at this time, we told you there would be no rate increases as a result of the expected System Support Resource (SSR) payments that appeared inevitable following the announced closure of the Presque Isle Power Plant (PIPP). That's progress.

Progress is also measured by the implementation of technology that helps us do our jobs more effectively and efficiently. In the next six to 12 months, Alger Delta will upgrade and improve its mapping system to modernize operations and connect the maps to the outage management system. This will give us the ability to predict outages based on a variety of operational factors and use technology to speed response.

Alger Delta continues to make progress in member relations, communications, operations, and finance and we do it for you, our members. Thank you for supporting your co-op and its progress. ■

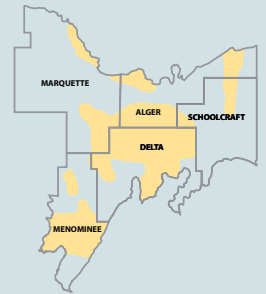
— Still Time to Register for — Alger Delta's June Annual Meeting

There is still time to register for Alger Delta's upcoming annual meeting. The meeting is June 13, 2015, at the Upper Peninsula State Fairgrounds in Escanaba. Members can enjoy a cookout, play area for kids, petting zoo, pony rides, face painting, prize drawings and a business update about their cooperative.

The business meeting is an important part of the day, when board members and staff discuss the cooperative's strategic plans and accomplishments in 2014. Newly elected directors will be seated on the board. All grand prize drawings will follow the business meeting. Members must be present to win. There are over a dozen grand prizes including appliances, tools and yard equipment, and additional valuable items that members can use around their home. Grand prizes add up to \$4,000 in value and are being underwritten by WPPI Energy, Alger Delta's power supplier.

We appreciate your loyalty and support, and this annual meeting is an opportunity to show you how much we care. So, please come out and join us at the annual meeting and enjoy an afternoon of free food and fun with your family and ours!

To ensure there are enough goodies for everyone, we're asking members to RSVP. You can do so at algerdelta.com and click on the annual meeting link. It's super simple—just fill in your phone number (to verify membership), your name, and how many family members you're bringing. You can also RSVP by calling 906-428-4141 or 800-562-0950. See you there!



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Power Line Project Improves Reliability, Reduces Cost

Alger Delta Cooperative is installing a new power line between Rapid River and Maple Ridge. The new power line is expected to improve reliability and power quality while at the same time reducing overall costs for the cooperative.

The project has been in the planning stage for at least two years. The cooperative made it a priority after consumers in the Maple Ridge and Trenary areas suffered two long outages in early 2014, both due to power supply problems beyond the cooperatives' control. Tom Harrell, Alger Delta's CEO explains that the new power line will connect two separate parts of Alger Delta's system thereby improving the cooperatives' operational flexibility and efficiency. "When this new power line is done, we will be able to feed all the members in the Trenary and Maple Ridge areas from our substation in Rapid River. That's going to improve power quality because that substation has a more robust connection to the transmission grid."

In addition to improving power quality and reliability, the project will help reduce wholesale power costs by about \$7,500 per month. "When the new line is done, we will be able to take power delivery for that whole area at a different location and at a higher voltage. That will reduce wholesale power costs and help offset the investment" Harrell adds. The cost of the new line and related work is projected to be about \$830,000 dollars. Alger Delta says about 800 cooperative members will benefit from the new line, including those who live north of Rapid River along U.S.-41; members around Trenary; and members west of U.S.-41 on or near County Road 432. ■



Tips for Building a Strong, Efficient Home

There are new home construction methods available that are much stronger and efficient than typical insulated, wood framing. Some of these methods could more than double the insulation value of typical framed walls.

For a wood-framed house, use staggered, double-stud walls on 24-inch centers. Staggering the wall studs minimizes thermal bridges (direct non-insulated heat flow paths from indoors to outdoors through the wood studs). Also, install rigid foam wall sheathing on the exterior so that all of the lumber's thermal mass is inside of the insulation envelope. This can be covered with any type of exterior finish.

The “stay-in-place” method uses concrete and rigid foam insulation. The insulation forms hold wet concrete and are not removed. They provide the insulation and substrate surface for installing the interior and exterior wall coverings.

A similar method uses hollow foam blocks made to fit your home's plans. The blocks have an open cavity throughout the inside. Concrete is pumped into the top of the walls, which creates a strong, efficient structure.

Structural insulated panel (SIP) systems have a thick foam core sandwiched between two sheets of various materials. The SIP panels are often used for the exterior walls to enclose post and beam-framed and steel-framed homes for the highest insulation levels possible.

SIP panels are made of oriented strand board (OSB), a strong, highly insulated panel. The panel is self-supporting, and once attached to the foundation and connected, the SIP panels support themselves, the floors, ceiling and roof.

Steel-framed construction is excellent if strength is the goal. Steel does not burn or change shape over time as lumber does, and each steel piece is nearly identical.

Steel allows for thinner studs and wider spacing to be used. This leaves room for additional insulation inside the walls and fewer thermal bridges.

Consider these choices when selecting construction methods that will affect the strength, efficiency and durability of the finished product. The time to learn more is before you make these decisions. ■



With “stay-in-place” construction, once the insulated forms are erected and reinforced steel installed, the concrete is pumped in from the top.

Photo – Eco-Block



CAMPFIRE COOKING

Recipes for your outdoor kitchen.

Mountain Man Breakfast

- 12" cast iron dutch oven
- ½ lb. chopped bacon or bulk pork sausage (not links)
- 1 medium onion, diced
- 1 32-oz. bag frozen, shredded hash brown potatoes
- 12 eggs, beaten in a separate bowl
- ½ lb. shredded cheddar cheese
- 8 oz. jar salsa



You will need a nice bed of coals or briquettes, NOT a roaring fire. Preheat the dutch oven bottom on the coals/briquettes. Off to the side, heat the lid on the coals. Brown the bacon/sausage, stirring often, then add the chopped onion and stir until the onion is

translucent. Remove the bacon/sausage and onion from the dutch oven and drain on paper towels. Wipe out the excess grease from the dutch oven. Stir in the shredded hash browns and cook until golden brown. Add the bacon and onion back into the oven. Pour the beaten eggs over the potatoes, stir and cover the oven with the preheated lid. Place a layer of hot coals or briquettes (about 15–18 coals) on top of the oven and bake until the eggs are soft set, not too wet, checking after 5 minutes (timing will depend on how hot your fire is). Sprinkle with the cheese and continue cooking until the eggs are set and cheese is melted.

Serve salsa on the side. Recipe serves 8 generously and can be easily converted for a smaller dutch oven.

This was a favorite for my husband's Boy Scout troop!

Peg Peppler, Empire

Campfire Chicken Package Meal *(pictured)*

- 1 roll heavy duty foil
- 5 peeled carrots, cut into ½-inch slices
- 1 can peas, drained
- 1 can whole sweet corn, drained
- 1 lb. bacon, sliced into 1-inch pieces
- 4 skinless, boneless chicken breasts, cut in ½-inch strips
- 3 large, peeled potatoes, cut into 1-inch pieces
- salt and pepper, to taste
- 1 t. garlic powder
- 1 t. onion powder
- 1 t. chicken broth, dissolved into 1 c. hot water

Cook bacon in skillet until done; drain and set aside. Tear off pieces of foil, 18 inches long (8 pieces total, you will use double layers of foil). Add vegetables, dividing between each pack. Add in the following order: potatoes on the bottom, carrots, and then peas and corn on top. Divide the chicken equally between the packs and top with bacon. Stir seasonings into cup of broth. Fold foil to make a pouch; pour ¼ c. broth into pouch and seal tightly. Place into campfire and cook for 30 minutes. Remove from fire, open and enjoy. Makes 4 servings.

Ann Brown, Niles

SUBMIT YOUR RECIPE!

Thanks to all who send in recipes. Please send in your favorite "Fresh Seafood" recipes by **July 1**.

Enter your recipe online at countrylines.com or send to (handprinted or typed on one side, please): *Country Lines* Recipes, 2859 W. Jolly Rd., Okemos, MI 48864. Please note the co-op from which you receive your electric service.

Contributors whose recipes we print in 2015 will be entered in a drawing and *Country Lines* will pay the winner's January 2016 electric bill (up to \$200)!

Photos—831 Creative



A Magical Migration

Come early fall, clouds of monarch butterflies will paint the skies of Delta County in a breathtaking natural spectacle as they suddenly take flight by the thousands. This stunning annual show draws spectators eager to observe this phenomenon. The county's Stonington Peninsula, and in particular the cedar trees and lands surrounding the Peninsula Point Lighthouse, become a stopping off point for the delicate travelers during their 1,900-mile journey to El Rosario, Mexico. The exquisite insects, with wings resembling fine stained glass, spend summers in the U.P., taking full advantage of the county's unique conditions, more specifically, of a vital and increasingly hard-to-find plant species found on the surrounding lands: the milkweed.

Photo by USFS Wildlife Biologist Janet Kudell-Ekstrum



“Never doubt that a small group of committed people can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.”

—Margaret Mead, cultural anthropologist



Volunteer Therese Fix tags a monarch by placing a small tag on the wing, while Gina Badgett records the data. The tag number, date and sex of the butterfly are recorded.



Gina Badgett applies a tag to a monarch butterfly while a youngster looks on.

Photos - USDA Forest Service

Milkweed is critical for the survival of monarchs, as it is the host plant for this iconic butterfly species. Without it, they cannot complete their life cycle and their populations decline. Continuing eradication of milkweed both in agricultural areas as well as urban and suburban landscapes is one of the primary reasons monarchs are in trouble today. Monarch butterflies need milkweed to lay their eggs, and caterpillars only eat milkweed plants. Interestingly, milkweed also provides a natural protection against one of the monarchs predators—birds—as it provides a toxin they retain as a result of dining on milkweed.

Researchers began documenting and studying the migration of the monarch in 1994, hoping to learn how to best protect this beloved and increasingly threatened species. In 1996, working with personnel from the U.S. Forest Service's Rapid River Ranger District and Wildlife Unlimited of Delta County, numerous volunteers spend the summer monitoring each stage of the monarch's life. They track from when they return to the U.P. area to lay their eggs—only on milkweed plants—to when they mature, and again migrate to follow their ancestral paths to their winter grounds in Mexico.

Can a committed group of volunteers counting larvae in upper Michigan have a true impact upon the survival of this globally renowned species? In the words of legendary American cultural anthropologist Margaret Mead, “Never

doubt that a small group of committed people can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.” The internationally recognized project efforts in Delta County have resulted in one of the longest-standing monarch butterfly data sets in North America. The numbers are the result of weekly field counts, by volunteers, of chrysalis and larvae throughout the summer. Volunteers also tag the monarchs by carefully capturing them and placing an adhesive sticker the size of a pinkie fingernail on the wing and then releasing them.

According to Sue Jamison, a retired teacher and 13-year volunteer with the program, “The tagging process has proven that monarchs on the Stonington Peninsula have actually made their way to Mexico. These butterflies won't survive to make a return trip to the U.P., but their descendants will.” It is imperative that the butterflies winter in Mexico, where they mate. The female will lay her eggs, dying shortly after. It is this next generation that instinctively begins the ancient northern trek. “In effect, we go through second and third generations from one fall to the next. The butterflies ‘kids and grandkids’ end up returning to the U.P.” As anybody with northern Michigan roots knows, this phenomenon isn't exclusive to butterflies.

The best time to see the monarchs on the Stonington Peninsula is late August. For more information, contact the Rapid River District Ranger office at 906.474.6442. ■

Meet Michigan's 'First Lady of Energy'

Often referred to as Michigan's "Energy Czar," Valerie Brader chuckles at that moniker. She appreciates the respect, but prefers the title that Gov. Rick Snyder gave her, executive director of the Michigan Agency for Energy.

Brader, 38, is the first boss of a brand-new agency—an acknowledgment by Snyder that keeping the lights on for Michiganders deserves the undivided attention of a high-powered executive. Brader will spearhead, among other things, the effort to keep the juice flowing while Michigan, facing federal mandates on emissions standards, finds cleaner energy sources than its coal-fired power plants.

"That's our first big challenge," Brader says. "That's the issue that will have the greatest impact."

Because of EPA air-quality requirements and the aging of conventional facilities, the state must close 10 coal-fired plants (nine in the Lower Peninsula and one in the Upper Peninsula) within the next few years. Combined, these plants currently supply electricity to more than 1 million customers. Snyder plans to wean Michigan's electric plants off coal and onto cleaner fuels, such as natural gas.

Meanwhile, the state's two largest energy suppliers—Consumers Energy and DTE Energy—see a looming crisis. They predict that, absent proper management of the

transition and careful attention to other energy challenges, rolling blackouts and electrical shortages could become a routine part of life in the state.

Averting that crisis, Brader says, will require a multi-pronged approach involving reducing energy waste, finding the right place for renewable energy in the mix, and balancing the pros and cons of utility regulation versus commercial customer choice.

Brader has been with the Snyder administration since 2011, most recently as a deputy legal counsel and senior policy adviser. Before that, she was the chief energy policy officer at the Michigan Economic Development Corporation. Brader also practiced environmental and corporate law, and was an adviser to former Idaho Gov. Phil Batt.

Snyder has described the new agency, which will become part of the Department of Licensing and Regulatory Affairs, as one that "responds to the energy challenges that we know are before us." Choosing Brader to head the Agency is a recognition of both her energy policy expertise and legal skills, he said.

Brader and her husband, Ted, have a 2-year-old son, Finn. She commutes to Lansing from Ann Arbor every day. The high-powered job, the family, the commute...It's no wonder that when asked what she does in her spare time, Brader offers her signature laugh and a "spare *what?*" look.

The one person, Brader says, who doesn't acknowledge that she is juggling a lot of balls in the air is Finn. "He's sure the most important thing in my life is him."

Considering the energy issues Michigan must confront in the immediate future—power plant closings, pressure to deregulate the utilities, etc.—one might wonder why Brader took the job in such a tumultuous time.

"Because it's also the most exciting time..." she says. "Big challenges offer the biggest opportunity to make a difference." ■



“Big challenges
offer the biggest
opportunity
to make a
difference.”



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CHILL OUT

How To Stay Safe During Summer Storm Season

No one knows electrical safety better than the experts who practice it every single day. Alger Delta Cooperative encourages you to practice safety with these reminders—during *and* after a summer storm:

Avoid wires and water –

When lightning strikes a home during a storm, the electric charge can surge through pipes and utility wires. That means you can get zapped if you're touching water or any device that's plugged in, whether it's a landline phone or toaster.

Skip the makeshift shelter –

During a storm, it's tempting to

take cover under a picnic gazebo or golf cart, but in open-sided structures with no conductors to channel strikes, a bolt's path of least resistance to the ground could be you. On top of that, these structures raise your risk of a lightning strike because of their height. Keep moving toward suitable shelter.

Portable generators –

Take special care with portable generators, which can provide a good source of power, but if improperly installed or operated, can become deadly. Do not connect generators directly to household wiring. Power from generators can back-feed

along power lines and electrocute anyone coming in contact with them, including co-op lineworkers making repairs. It's best to hire a qualified, licensed electrician to install your generator and ensure that it meets local electrical codes.

Flooded areas – Stay away from downed power lines and avoid walking through flooded areas. Power lines could be submerged and still be live with electricity. Report any downed lines you see to Alger Delta Cooperative by calling 906-428-4141 immediately.

For more safety tips visit algerdelta.com. ■

Plant the Right Tree in the Right Place

For safety, plant taller trees away from overhead utility lines



There's More To Cuba Than Cars, Cigars

wanted to see Cuba before corporate interests prevail, and the mysterious country 100 miles from Key West, FL, becomes South Beach South. As U.S.-Cuba hostility softens, the island nation is poised to become an American tourist mecca.

Around Christmas, I received a brochure from the Michigan State University Alumni Association. "Cuba," it said. "A People-to-People Educational Exchange." The offer: an eight-day exploration of a place few Americans have seen; 27 people, including my wife and I, accepted. Our group claimed 17 Michiganders, including Ross and Brenda Biederman. Biederman is president of the Midwestern Broadcasting Co., which includes radio station WTCM in Traverse City.

Despite the recent thaw in U.S.-Cuba relations, U.S. tourism is not yet allowed. The Alumni Association holds a federal license, which demands strict adherence to the educational mission. Reflecting that, our agenda included scholarly lectures and visits to a school, an agricultural commune, and other non-tourist places.

Yet, we found time for salsa dancing, cruising Havana in vintage convertibles and sampling local mojitos and Cuba Libres (rum, coke and lime juice).

Havana's iconic image—1940s and '50s American cars—are the most conspicuous evidence of Cuba's arrested development, a result of the 53-year-old U.S. trade embargo. Nearly everything there suggests a bygone era.

Our group stayed in Havana for five nights, then in Ciefuegos, on the southern coast, for two nights. In eight days we immersed ourselves in Havana's street life and explored Cuba's lush mountain forests and pristine Caribbean seaside.

One disappointment: mediocre cuisine. If you're traveling for the cuisine, go to France—not to a country known for rice and beans. Also, shoppers will encounter a paucity of possibilities. There's little to buy, except cigars and rum; U.S. citizens can bring back \$100 worth of each.

Those are trivial complaints. If you go to Cuba, you'll find the people welcoming, the music irresistible, street life stimulating, and the scenery breathtaking. It's a fascinating country. ■

"Nearly everything there suggests a bygone era."



At the Partagas cigar factory in Havana, each employee gets four cigars a day to smoke while he (or she) works.



Cuba is known for vintage cars. Shown is a '56 Chevy.



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Saturday, June 13, 2015

12 p.m.–4:30 p.m.

U.P. State Fairgrounds

**Something for the whole family!
Enjoy lots of prizes, a cookout, petting zoo,
pony rides, face painting and more!**

For more information, see Page 5.

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