

MICHIGAN COUNTRY LINES

Keeping Soil Healthy

Gypsum's Role In Agriculture
And Electricity

Plus!

Director Elections Coming Up

Bay Cliff Camp, A Place Apart

Co-op Members Ask
Important Questions



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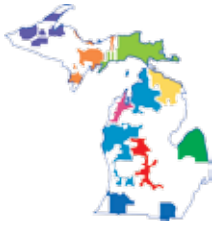
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Association officers are **Robert Kran**, Great Lakes Energy, chairman; **Mark Kappler**, HomeWorks Tri-County Electric, vice chairman; and **Eric Baker**, Wolverine Power Cooperative, secretary-treasurer. **Craig Borr** is president and CEO.

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

IN THIS ISSUE

ON THE COVER*

Healthy soil is crucial for farmers, and when key nutrients like sulfur are lacking, crops won't thrive. Electric co-op member and farmer, Brian Stratton, is adopting new agricultural fertilizer technology from coal fired power plants to feed his soil with much needed sulfur made from pelletized gypsum.

**Some co-op editions have a different cover.*

IN YOUR WORDS

Question Of The Month—We Asked, You Answered.

Last month, we asked electric co-op members a question: If you could only have one meal for the rest of your life what would it be? Thank you for all the responses. Here are some answers from our members...

"The meal I would eat for the rest of my life would be pizza because it can come in many different shapes and flavors."

"Chicken, sweet potatoes/squash, vegetable salad, strawberry shortcake (biscuit) and chocolate milk."

"Two poached eggs, two strips of crisp bacon, two slices of whole wheat toast, fresh squeezed orange juice and coffee."

Our new Question of the Month is:

What is the best compliment you have ever received?

Please submit answers to countrylines.com by March 1.

6

OUR ENERGY

Keeping Your Pets, Energy Budget Comfortable!
Patrick Keegan

7

SAFETY

Know The Formula For Outlet Overload

10

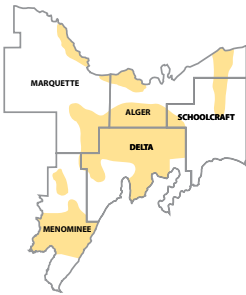
HOME COOKING

Simple, Delicious And Easy Gluten-Free Recipes
Christin McKamey & Our Readers

14

FEATURE

Keeping Soil Healthy: The Role Of Gypsum In Agriculture And Electricity
Jeannine Taylor



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algerdelta.com

Politics And Policy Impacts Members

It seems that whenever you turn on a TV, listen to the radio or pick up a newspaper, somebody is complaining about “the government.” Sometimes it feels like no matter what we do or who we vote for, we aren’t truly represented in either our state or national governments. At Alger Delta Cooperative, we understand how that feels, and we have been there ourselves. That feeling, along with a strong desire to take action, is the reason why we engage in political action and have dedicated staff—through our affiliation with the Michigan Electric Cooperative Association (MECA) that works to ensure our interests are represented, and heard, by elected officials.



U.S. Rep. Dan Benishek (R-MI) and Alger Delta CEO Tom Harrell in Washington, D.C.

Members of our government relations and policy team work tirelessly to tackle complicated regulatory and policy issues at both the state and federal level. They evaluate issues in light of the ever-changing energy market and then determine how they impact our rates, our ability to serve our members, and their communities. Our team has a deep understanding of the needs of rural communities, and they use that knowledge to ensure your needs are represented in all major legislative decision-making.

The ability to affect change is a huge part of being an Alger Delta Co-op member. We don’t lobby elected officials on behalf of investors who aim to increase their profit margins. We work with elected officials to make sure that every electric co-op member is being considered and to ensure that you will always be provided with safe, reliable and affordable electric service. That is the cooperative difference.

But it isn’t just our government relations team that helps achieve policy and legislative change. Direct involvement is also needed. That’s one of the reasons we go to Lansing and Washington, D.C., on a regular basis to meet and build relationships with our elected officials and make sure your voice is heard, too. By doing this, we show state and national officials that we are acting in your interests and that we represent communities, families and small businesses that need affordable electricity. ■

Director Elections Coming Up

Alger Delta Cooperative will be holding elections in three of its nine districts this year. Districts 1 (Big Bay); 6 (Nathan/White Rapids); and 9 (Hiawatha) will elect a representative to the board of directors at district meetings to be held in the spring. Serving on the board of directors is a rewarding pursuit and members should be aware of the qualifications and responsibilities associated with the position.

To qualify, a person must be a member of the cooperative in the district they seek to represent and must be at least 18 years old. They must not be employed by, or have a financial interest in, a competing business. Candidates must complete and submit a nomination petition.

Directors are elected for a three-year term and are charged with the responsibility of governing the cooperative, including strategic planning, fiduciary responsibility, setting policy and direction, and other duties relating to the corporation. Board members are expected to prepare for and attend board meetings, which are held on the third Wednesday of each month. Board meetings are usually held at the cooperative's office in Gladstone, but may be held in other locations. Directors are also expected to attend the annual meeting.

Board members are assigned to serve on at least one committee. The cooperatives' standing committees include the Policy Committee, Employee Relations Committee, Finance & Rates Committee, and the Executive Committee. Committees meet two or more times each year.

In addition to the regular board meetings and committees, directors may participate in state, regional and national events related to the electric



business. These meetings are usually business and training related, or political in nature. They often require advance preparations such as reading briefing materials or researching issues. These meetings range from one half-day to five days for travel and participation. Directors are encouraged to complete Credentialed Cooperative Director (CCD) training within their first three-year term on the board. Finally, directors are required to represent Alger Delta in their community and elsewhere, which may include public speaking.

Directors are paid "per diem," plus mileage and reasonable and customary expense reimbursement. Per diem rates range from \$100 to \$350 per meeting.

For more information about serving on the board of directors, you can read Article III of the cooperative's bylaws at algerdelta.com under the tab "About Us" then "Bylaws/Tariffs/Rates." You can also find more details or print out the nominating petition from our website under the "About Us" then "Board of Directors" tab. If you cannot access the website and would like to receive a copy of the bylaws or a nominating petition, call Alger Delta at 906-428-4141. ■

Attention Members In Districts 1 (Big Bay), 6 (Nathan/White Rapids), and 9 (Hiawatha)

Listed below are some important dates related to district elections. If you have any questions, please email admin@algerdelta.com or call Alger Delta

at 906-428-4141. Please watch future issues of *Country Lines* magazine for more information, including official notices.

	District 1 (Big Bay)	District 6 (Nathan/White Rapids)	District 9 (Hiawatha)
Deadline for Nominating Petitions:	March 10	March 11	March 12
District Meeting:	May 9	May 10	May 11
Annual Meeting for all Districts:		June 18	



Keeping Your Pets, Energy Budget Comfortable!

By Patrick Keegan

Pet owners often assume their indoor pets want the same level of cooling and heating as the rest of the family. However, most dogs and cats can be comfortable with a wider range of temperatures.

Those with unique pets, like birds or lizards, may need to keep them in warmer environments. Consider moving these pets to a room that can be kept warm easily, but note that this may change over the course of a year.

Pet doors are popular, but they can also be a major air leak that drives up your energy use. When purchasing a pet door, make sure it has energy-efficient features, such as thick construction, weather sealing and the ability to be closed off when not in use. Some newer models have magnet or battery locks: a small magnet or sensor on your pet's collar opens the door, and the rest of the time, the door is shut tight, keeping out other critters—as well as blowing wind and snow!

Some people also leave the TV or radio on while they're away, thinking that the voices will keep their pets from being bored (and destroying their shoes!). However, there are other ways to keep your poodles and kitties entertained. Exercising your pet when you're home and giving them a variety of toys or a nice perch to see out a window when you leave will be more entertaining and less energy

intensive than a TV. If you must leave something on when you're away, try soothing, calm music instead of a blaring TV.

We all love our furry family members, but remember, keeping them comfortable doesn't mean you have to pay more on your monthly bill. ■

Here are a few tips to keep your pet comfortable without cranking up the thermostat:

- A cozy, insulated doghouse might be all your outdoor dog needs, except on the very coldest days.
- Make sure that your indoor pet has a warm place to sleep, like a pet bed with a blanket. Consider giving him a few sleeping options throughout your home in different temperature zones, so your pet can adjust his comfort as needed.
- If you have a very drafty home or an older pet who may appreciate more warmth, a heated pet bed or bed warmer will use far less energy than running your central heating higher all day. This solution can also be good for those who keep their pets in the garage and worry about them staying warm enough. Instead of heating a large, uninsulated space, provide a nice warm bed!



DANGER! Outlet Overload

Every year, U.S. fire departments respond to an estimated **25,900 home electrical fires**. These fires cause an estimated **280 deaths, 1,125 injuries** and **\$1.1 billion in property loss**.

Thirty-nine percent of home electrical fires involve outlets and receptacles, and other electrical wiring.

To ensure safety, you should only use about 80 percent of the available current for each electrical outlet in your home.

Are you overloading outlets?
Use this formula to find out:

$$\text{WATTAGE/VOLTS}=\text{AMPS}$$

Example:

Let's say you are using 2,000 watts of power (for one outlet). Divide the watts by the volts in your home (typically 120), and you come up with 16.6 amps of current being used. With a 20 amp electrical outlet, you are using about 80 percent of the available current.

Energy Savings For Farmers, Agribusinesses

Farmers: Are you tired of high energy bills eating up your budget? Reducing the amount of electricity used to power your equipment is a smart way to eliminate energy waste and unnecessary costs. Alger Delta Cooperative's Energy Optimization program offers rebates toward a wide range of energy efficiency improvements which could add up to big savings.

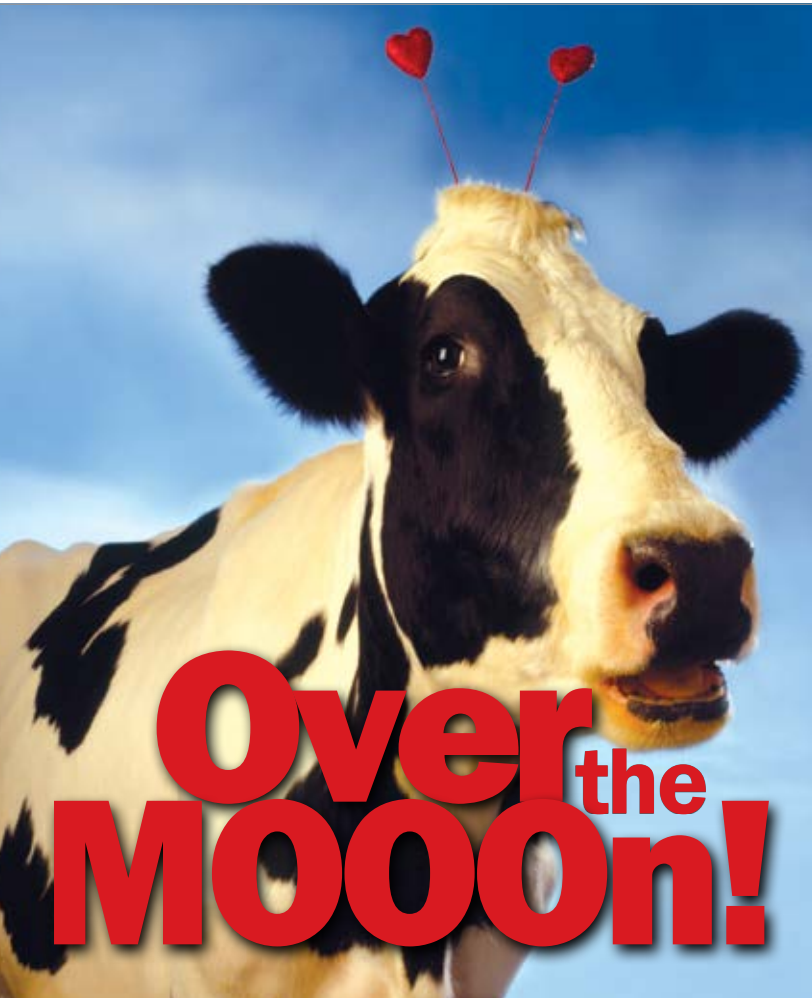
Farm Energy Audit: The Energy Optimization program has partnered with the Michigan Farm Energy Program (in conjunction with Michigan State University Extension) to offer a **\$500 rebate** toward the cost of a farm energy audit. The audit will help you identify where and how to implement practical, energy-saving alternatives to outdated, inefficient equipment.

Rebates for Energy Efficient Products and Equipment: Receive cash back when you purchase and install energy efficient measures such as low-energy livestock waterers, fans and controls, milk-handling equipment, variable speed pumps and controllers, dairy refrigeration tune-ups, lighting upgrades, variable frequency drives, and more.



Rebates for Custom Projects: Have an energy efficiency project in mind, but don't see it on our list? The Energy Optimization program provides rebates for innovative and unique energy efficiency projects designed to meet specific needs, such as long-day lighting systems, milk harvesting and cooling equipment, controlled atmosphere storage room upgrades, and more.

These are just a few of the energy-saving offers currently available for Michigan agribusinesses. View all farm service incentives at michigan-energy.org or call **877.296.4319** for details. ■



Fall In Love With Energy Efficiency

We know how hard Michigan farmers work just to keep the lights on. That's why the Energy Optimization program offers rebates for energy-saving upgrades—for everything from lighting, to pumps, compressors, irrigation, fans, and more. You'll be hooked when you see how saving energy improves your bottom line!

ENERGY TIP: Discover the most effective ways to start saving with a farm energy audit. Act now to receive a \$500 rebate!

ONLINE: michigan-energy.org

PHONE: 877.296.4319



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

Members Share 'Cute Pets' Photos



There's A Story In Every Photo

Alger Delta invites members to share their amazing photos. Selected photos will be published in *Michigan Country Lines*. Upcoming topics and deadlines are: **"Birds of Beauty,"** due **Feb. 15** for the April issue and **"Saluting Our Armed Forces,"** due **March 15** for the May issue.

Details and instructions for photo submission—including rules, topic list, publication date, and submission deadlines—can be found at <http://bit.ly/1JX5Afh>. We look forward to seeing your best photos!

1. Christine Fischer's pit bull mothers her cousin's baby bunnies.
2. Greg Roe's dog, Cooper, rocks his "doggles" on his daily bike ride.
3. Annabelle enjoys a car ride on a sunny day.
By Dan Giddis, Jr.
4. According to his family, three-year-old Sammy proves that shelter pets are the best! *By Cathy Warner.*
5. Our daughter and her horse, Cisco. Cisco had just been given his medicine, which stuck to the roof of his mouth and created a big smile. *By Brenda McCormick.*

SIMPLY...GLUTEN-FREE

These recipes show how delicious and easy a gluten-free diet can be.



Chocolate Devil's Food Cupcakes

Laura Harrand, Traverse City

- 1 c. boiling water
- 1 c. gluten-free unsweetened cocoa powder
- 1 c. brown rice flour
- ½ c. sweet sorghum flour
- ½ c. potato flour
- 2 t. baking soda
- 1 t. guar gum
- ½ t. salt
- 2 c. granulated sugar
- 8 T. (1 stick) salted butter, at room temp
- 2 eggs, at room temp
- 1 t. gluten-free vanilla extract
- 1 c. low-fat buttermilk
- icing of your choice

Preheat oven to 400°. Line a 12-cup muffin tin with cupcake liners. In a large bowl, whisk the hot water and cocoa powder together. In another large bowl, stir together the brown rice flour, sorghum flour, potato flour, baking soda, guar gum and salt. Add the sugar and butter to the cocoa mixture. With an electric mixer on high speed, beat until a smooth shiny mixture forms, about 30 seconds. Then beat in the eggs and vanilla on low speed until incorporated. Add half of the flour mixture and beat on low speed just until combined; there may be dry spots. Add ½ c. of the buttermilk, mixing on low speed just until incorporated. Repeat with the remaining flour mixture and the remaining buttermilk.

Fill each muffin cup $\frac{3}{4}$ full with the batter. Reserve the remaining batter and fill four more cupcake liners; set aside. Bake for 15–20 minutes, until the centers of the cupcakes are firm to the touch. Remove the cupcakes from the muffin tin and let cool completely on wire rack. Repeat with the remaining batter. Once the cupcakes are cooled, use a small spatula or butter knife to ice them with your choice of icing. Store in an airtight container in the refrigerator for up to five days.

Almond Butter Quinoa Blondies (pictured)

Jan Anglebrandt, Gaylord

- ¼ c. unsalted butter, softened
- ¾ c. smooth or crunchy natural almond butter
- 2 lg. eggs
- ¾ c. packed light brown sugar
- 1 t. vanilla extract
- ¾ c. quinoa flour (see tip below*)
- 1 t. baking powder
- ¼ t. salt
- 1 c. semisweet chocolate chips

Preheat oven to 350°. Line an 8-inch-square baking pan with parchment paper (or foil), allowing it to overhang the opposite ends slightly. Coat with cooking spray. *To make your own quinoa flour, grind raw quinoa into a powder in a coffee grinder or blender.

Beat butter and almond butter in a mixing bowl with an electric mixer until creamy. Beat in eggs, brown sugar and vanilla. Whisk quinoa flour, baking powder and salt in a small bowl. Mix the flour mixture into the wet ingredients until just combined. Stir in chocolate chips. Spread the batter evenly into the prepared pan. Bake until a toothpick inserted into the center comes out with just a few moist crumbs on it, 25 to 35 minutes. Do not overbake. Let cool in the pan for 45 minutes. Using the parchment (or foil), lift the whole panful out and transfer to a cutting board. Cut into 24 squares. Let cool completely before storing. Makes 24 blondies.

Red Lobster Style Cheese Biscuits

Christine Server, Afton

- ⅓ c. shortening
- ½ c. potato starch
- ¾ c. cornstarch
- 1 ¾ t. xanthan gum
- 1 T. baking powder
- ¼ t. baking soda
- ¾ c. milk
- ½ t. salt
- 1 T. sugar
- ½ c. shredded cheddar cheese
- ¼ c. softened butter
- ¼ c. melted butter
- ½ t. garlic powder

Preheat oven to 375°. In a large bowl, mix together the shortening, potato starch, cornstarch, xanthan gum, baking powder, baking soda, milk, salt and sugar. Add shredded cheddar cheese and softened butter. Pat into ½" thickness on cornstarch covered board. Cut into round shapes. Bake on lightly greased sheet for 12–15 min. As soon as baking is completed, brush with a mix of melted butter and garlic powder.



Roasted Cabbage Steaks

Barbara Olson, Middleville

- 1 head of organic green cabbage, cut into 1" thick slices
- 1½ T. olive oil
- 2–3 lg. garlic cloves, smashed
- kosher salt
- freshly ground black pepper
- spray olive oil or non-stick cooking spray

Preheat oven to 400° and spray a baking sheet with non-stick cooking spray. Pull outer leaf off cabbage, and cut cabbage from top to bottom (bottom being root) into 1" thick slices. Rub both sides of cabbage with smashed garlic. Use a pastry brush to evenly spread the olive oil over both sides of the cabbage slices. Sprinkle each side with a bit of kosher salt and freshly cracked black pepper.

Roast on the middle rack for 30 minutes. Carefully flip the cabbage steaks and roast for an additional 30 minutes until edges are brown and crispy. Serve hot and enjoy! *"I usually serve this with potatoes and carrots sautéed in vegetable broth with some caraway seed sprinkled in. This is a simple side dish worthy of a dinner party, and couldn't be easier to make."*

SUBMIT YOUR RECIPE!

Thanks to all our readers who send in recipes. Please send in your favorite "Snacks and Appetizers" recipes by **March 1** and "Quick and Easy" recipes by **April 1**.

Enter your recipe online at countrylines.com or send to (handprint or type on one side, please): *Country Lines Recipes*, 201 Townsend St., Suite 900, Lansing, MI 48933. Please note the co-op from which you receive your electric service.

A RECIPE WINNER EVERY MONTH!

Contributors whose recipes we print each month will be entered in a drawing and *Country Lines* will pay the winner's electric bill with a \$50 bill credit! A winner will be selected every month.



Bay Cliff Health Camp, A Place Apart

By Yvonne Whitman

Nestled in the north woods high above the shores of Lake Superior, approximately 28 miles outside of Marquette, is Bay Cliff Health Camp. The camp was founded in 1934, during the Great Depression, by co-founders Elba Moore and Goldie Corneliuson, a field physician for The Children's Fund of Michigan (forerunner to the Public Health Department).

Earlier, the health professionals had traveled throughout the Upper Peninsula caring for children who were malnourished and underweight due to the impoverished conditions of the times. They often talked about how ideal it would be to bring these children to an outdoor location where they would be given three meals a day, enjoy the fresh air, and be involved in camping experiences. What a difference it could make in the lives of children! As their dream began to take shape, they knew it would require a special place.

In 1934, through generous donations, they purchased an abandoned Big Bay dairy farm, a cow barn was converted into a dormitory, and the first program began with 107 children. In a summer filled with good food and camping fun, each camper gained an average of 5 pounds. They went home healthier, and the program was deemed a success.

The camp's success continued until 1940, when the polio epidemic caused U.P. hospitals to overflow with hundreds of children left paralyzed

Top: The stunning view of Lake Superior from the gazebo on the Bay Cliff campus.



Crystal Bourassa, of Dickinson County, has spent 11 summers at Bay Cliff. "Bay Cliff has taught me how to say the 'r' sound. I learned to swim, and this year I learned how to skip a rock. I learned bike riding here. A friend tried to teach me, and a man tried, too. Bay Cliff finally did," said Crystal.



Bay Cliff camper Rayna Sherbinow with her prom date.



A group of Bay Cliff campers enjoy making S'mores around the campfire.



The daily flag ceremony that is performed each morning and evening at Bay Cliff.



Physical therapist Julia King helps a Bay Cliff camper ride a bike.

by the disease and in need of rehabilitation therapy. While health and wellness in the form of good nutrition would always remain a strong concept of Bay Cliff, it would now also include an emphasis on therapy and rehabilitation for children with physical disabilities, and it has been a summer therapy camp ever since. Today, the therapy program serves children with low vision and blindness, speech and language impairments, hearing loss and deafness, and physical disabilities. The camp also provides occupational, music and physical therapy, and instructional classes for children with hearing or visual impairments.

Each year, approximately 175 children attend a seven-week summer session at Bay Cliff, which includes both typical camp fun and therapy sessions. A typical day for a camper begins with reveille, a flag ceremony, and then breakfast (all meals are eaten family style with staff). Therapy and activity sessions continue throughout the day between breaks for lunch and dinner and rest periods. Camp days conclude with an all-camp activity such as a sing-along, dance party or talent show. A dedicated staff of professionals is a huge reason for Bay Cliff's success. "Bay Cliff is truly a place apart," explains physical therapist Julia King. "A place where trying new things such as bike riding, kayaking, walking

with crutches, and driving a power wheelchair with head control is expected. A place where the phrase 'triumph is simply trying with some umph' behind it' is true. Little things in life are not so little. It often requires a place like Bay Cliff to teach us this fact."

And, what kind of impact does Bay Cliff have on a child who attends?

"Every year I'm learning new things," says Rayna Sherbinow, who lives in Schoolcraft County and has attended the camp for nine summers. "I've improved and learned things that weren't even goals. Because we work so hard here, it transfers to school and home. At school, people only see the outside. Here, there is acceptance. It's the best part."

Funding for Bay Cliff has always been through contributions from the general public, including service clubs, fraternal organizations, businesses, foundations, industry, and public spirited individuals. If you are interested in learning more about Bay Cliff Health Camp, email baycliff@baycliff.org or call 906-345-9314.

Bay Cliff receives electric service from Alger Delta Cooperative, which is proud to serve and support this camp. ■

Brian Stratton is a third generation farmer in Vestaburg, MI, and a member of HomeWorks Tri-County Electric Cooperative.



Keeping Soil Healthy

Gypsum's Role In Agriculture And Electricity

By Jeannine Taylor

We can grow more food, but we can't grow more land. So, how do we protect our planet and get the most out of every acre? It starts with healthy soil. Soil is everything to a farmer. It houses the nutrients, minerals and water for crops to grow. Essential nutrients like nitrogen, phosphorus, potassium, magnesium, calcium and sulfur are the life-blood of every plant and are crucial to their survival. When the soil is lacking any of these key nutrients, a farmer's crops will know it.

Brian Stratton knows this all too well. Stratton is a third generation farmer in Vestaburg, MI, and a member of HomeWorks Tri-County Electric Cooperative. His family began farming the area in 1909, and Stratton continues to cultivate the soil—over 800 acres of it. His crops, mainly white winter wheat, dry edible beans and corn, help feed people in the United States, but also in places like Italy, Spain, China and Pakistan.

Stratton leases 80 acres of farmland from Wolverine Power Cooperative near its Vestaburg Power Plant. He started farming this ground in 2010, planting his rotation crops as well as rye and switchgrass wildlife plots. After testing the soil, he found that it was low in calcium and sulfur. "With low calcium

and sulfur levels, you aren't going to be able to take advantage of the nutrients that are there," Stratton explains. "You've got to have all these things balanced as much as possible for the whole system to work efficiently."

So, why was the soil lacking sulfur? A big reason is because coal-fired power plants have greatly reduced sulfur emissions into the air. When the Clean Air Act Amendments were passed in 1990, coal-fired plants were required to reduce their sulfur dioxide emissions. Over time, new rules continued to decrease sulfur dioxide emission limits, ultimately requiring coal-fired plants to install environmental control equipment, such as scrubbers, to meet the new limits. An unintended result is that crops are no longer receiving sufficient sulfur from the atmosphere.

Coal-fired plant owners, such as the Ohio Valley Electric Corporation's (OVEC) Kyger Creek and Clifty Creek Plants, of which Wolverine is a partial owner, have spent over \$1 billion installing environmental controls to capture and remove sulfur dioxide emissions. A process known as flue gas desulfurization (FGD) scrubs the sulfur dioxide from the power plant exhaust by using a limestone slurry that contains calcium. The sulfur and calcium react to produce calcium sulfite, and then oxygen is added to create calcium sulfate, otherwise known as synthetic gypsum.

This high-quality gypsum is becoming a hot commodity for beneficial reuse in everything from wall board to soil amendment fertilizers. For a by-product like synthetic gypsum to be considered for reuse, it must provide a functional benefit to end users and meet or exceed the specifications of the virgin material that it is replacing.



OVEC's synthetic gypsum being loaded for transport to Charah to make SUL4R-PLUS Fertilizer.



OVEC's synthetic gypsum used to manufacture soil amendment fertilizer.

In fact, the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) is a strong supporter of beneficial reuse programs. Duane Roskoskey, with MDEQ's Office of Waste Management and Radiological Protection, said they promote the beneficial reuse of industrial by-products such as FGD, coal ash, cement/lime kiln dust, foundry sand and paper mill sludge. "Since 2009, the amount of industrial by-products reused in Michigan has more than doubled to over 900,000 tons per year," Roskoskey explains. "The MDEQ recognizes the benefits of adding FGD to agricultural soils—FGD contains both calcium and sulfur, which are needed micronutrients, for most crops." Over 36,000 tons of FGD were reused in Michigan in 2014.

Gabe Coriell, OVEC's senior environmental specialist, and a part-time farmer, did a great deal of research on synthetic gypsum and its potential for beneficial use. He contacted professors at Ohio State University, who had performed studies on synthetic gypsum and its role as a soil amendment, to learn about their findings. He also contacted professionals that were using synthetic gypsum and learned that it was successfully conditioning the soil by adding the level of sulfur and calcium needed for better plant growth. Finally, Coriell talked to several companies who market synthetic gypsum products and found an established one which had a set of specifications required for its products.

Coriell decided to work with Charah, a company based in Louisville, KY, that provides coal combustion product management and power

Continued on page 18

Co-op Members Ask...

Alger Delta co-op members are a savvy group and they ask questions about the things going on at their cooperative. If one member asks a question,

there's a good chance that many others have the same question on their minds. So, here are some questions and answers from our most recent annual meeting.

Q. We are considering investing in a hybrid solar system that can backfeed the power grid. Do you have any meters that support this?

A. Yes. If a member installs qualified renewable generation, they may interconnect their generator with the power distribution system and Alger Delta will install a meter that measures

the electricity generated and the electricity consumed. Members can get credit for their net excess generation. This arrangement is called net metering.

Q. As co-op members, we need accountability on welfare money. Why doesn't Alger Delta have this fund separate? As this is how we have a swindle of our money. Why doesn't Alger Delta say no to this welfare fraud?

A. Alger Delta does not have a welfare fund. Whenever members have trouble paying their electric bill, our member service representatives offer information about a variety of agencies that might be able to help. These typically include the Salvation Army, St. Vincent De Paul, the Department of Human Services, and others. Whenever these or any other agencies assist a member, the money is applied to that member's

account; usually to prevent disconnection or help with the member's electric bill. Members can be assured that there is no fraud because Alger Delta's board of directors gets an independent audit of all the cooperative's financial books and records each year. In part, the audit is to ensure that funds are properly accounted for and that Alger Delta follows generally accepted accounting principles.

Q. How and when do we get to use our capital credit allocation? Why do we pay a \$25 service fee when we do not use electricity in the winter?

A. At the end of each fiscal year margins are allocated, or assigned, to members and they become capital credits. After they are allocated to members they are retained by the cooperative as operating capital. This is a standard business practice among cooperatives. At some future time—which is determined by the board of directors and assuming that the cooperative is financially healthy and fiscally able to do so—the cooperative pays out, or retires, capital credits.

This means that margins allocated in 2015 will be retired in 2045, or 30 years from now. The board can set a different schedule for capital credit retirement provided the cooperative continues to meet its financial obligations to its lenders.

Alger Delta's service charge is \$25 per month. It pays part of the fixed operating costs that are incurred regardless of how much or how little electricity is consumed.

Alger Delta is retiring a backlog of capital credits in order to "catch up" and get on a 30-year rotation.

If you have a question, want more information on any of the issues mentioned in this article, or to get in touch with a member or energy services representative, call Alger Delta at 906-428-4141 or visit algerdelta.com. You can also email us at admin@algerdelta.com.

Q. If Senate Bill 282 passes, which is a new transmission line connecting the Upper and Lower peninsulas—what affect would it have on our co-op?

A. Senate Bill 282 was introduced by Sen. Tom Casperson (R) on April 21, 2015. This bill proposes to establish a process for the state to choose an electric utility power line operator that would connect the Upper and Lower peninsulas into a single electric grid. This relates to recent conflicts involving Wisconsin utilities and power plants that serve central and western U.P. consumers.

A transmission interconnection between the Upper and Lower peninsulas would create more

paths for energy to flow in and out of the U.P. This would help relieve constraints on the transmission system and provide greater access to generation facilities. This would result in more choices for utilities that are purchasing energy in the market (as opposed to owning and operating generators) and a more cost competitive environment. It is expected that Alger Delta will benefit from these developments over the long term.

Q. I have questions about geothermal furnaces. Dealers in the U.P., discounts, rebates, etc.

A. Alger Delta provides free assistance to any member installing alternative generation or undertaking an efficiency project. Our energy services representative (ESR) can provide information on Alger Delta's programs that help with the cost of installing alternative generation

or energy efficient equipment. Each project is evaluated individually and any help with the cost of purchasing or installing such systems depends on the energy savings expected or achieved. In addition, our ESR can provide information on how to apply for grants or rebates that may be available.

Q. I was told the "low income charge—\$0.97 per month" was for one year. Why is it still on my bill?

A. The Low Income Energy Assistance Fund (LIEAF) became law in July 2013, and is used to help low income families pay their winter heating bills. The fund raises money by taxing electric meters. The law says the LIEAF tax cannot exceed \$1 per electric meter. Each year, the Michigan

Public Service Commission (MPSC) evaluates the fund balance and sets the tax rate per meter. Unlike most taxes, the LIEAF tax is voluntary and each year electric utilities can choose whether to participate. The board of directors voted to continue participating in this program.

Q. What is the status of the co-ops patronage payments?

A. Patronage payments are another way of describing capital credits. Alger Delta is retiring a backlog of capital credits in order to "catch up" and get on a 30-year rotation. In 2014, we retired, or paid back, \$379,190 in capital credits. Those were for the years 1965–1976. In 2015,

we retired \$370,958 for the years 1977–1982. In 2016 and 2017, we plan to retire an additional \$416,297 and \$445,842 respectively, and this will bring us to a 30-year rotation. In 2018, the board will evaluate whether to continue on the 30-year rotation or adopt a different plan.

Keeping Soil Healthy

Continued from page 15

plant support services for the coal-fired electric utility industry. While Charah has been around since 1987, they just recently began manufacturing a product called SUL4R-PLUS® Fertilizer, a patent-pending pelletized calcium sulfate product made from synthetic gypsum. "Charah may be new to gypsum," Coriell says, "but they've been in business a long time and have an innovative product that is very attractive. They have a newer process in the market and it is working."

Stratton agrees. He has been using SUL4R-PLUS Fertilizer on his crops and is currently participating



Charah's pelletized SUL4R-PLUS Fertilizer.

in a yield study with Charah to gather data and measure its effectiveness on the property he leases from Wolverine. "I like the pelletized product because it's a much friendlier product to handle," Stratton says. "It spreads more evenly and you don't have the dust to contend with." Results from the first year's use are coming in and, despite a heavy dose of rain that caused root rot to his cranberry beans, the yield results look promising.

With the new products on the market today, like SUL4R-PLUS, Stratton says his crops are getting the same sulfur they used to from the atmosphere, but now it's through a different route. The key is to replenish the nutrient levels in the soil so plants can achieve maximum growth. "With farm crop plants, it's the same as with our own bodies," Stratton explains. "The more attention you pay to your own nutrition, the healthier you're going to be. It's no different for a plant." ■

Jeannine Taylor is communications and member relations director for Wolverine Power Cooperative.

Five Benefits Of Gypsum

1. Source of calcium and sulfur for plant nutrition.

Plants are becoming more sulfur-deficient, and the soil is not supplying enough of it. Gypsum is an excellent source of sulfur for plant nutrition and improving crop yield.

Meanwhile, calcium is essential for most nutrients to be absorbed by plant roots.

2. Improves acid soils and treats aluminum toxicity.

One of gypsum's main advantages is its ability to reduce aluminum toxicity, which often accompanies soil acidity, particularly in subsoils. Gypsum can improve some acid soils even beyond what lime can do for them, which makes it possible to have deeper rooting with resulting benefits to the crops.

3. Improves soil structure.

Soil needs a certain mass to give it a favorable structure for root growth and air and water movement. Gypsum has been used to improve this aggregation in soils.

Soluble calcium also enhances soil aggregation and porosity to improve water infiltration.

4. Improves water infiltration.

Gypsum also improves the ability of soil to drain and not become waterlogged due to a combination of high sodium, swelling clay, and excess water. Adding gypsum also allows water to move into the soil to stimulate plant growth.

5. Helps reduce runoff and erosion.

Agriculture is one of the major contributors to water quality, with phosphorus runoff the biggest concern. Gypsum helps to keep phosphorus and other nutrients from leaving farm fields.

Below: Charah's state-of-the-art manufacturing facility.



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