

# MICHIGAN COUNTRY LINES

A photograph of a smiling couple standing in front of a building with electrical equipment. The woman on the left is wearing a black jacket and a plaid scarf. The man on the right is wearing a black jacket and blue jeans. They are standing in front of a building with a blue roof and a wall of electrical equipment. The background shows some trees and a cloudy sky.

## DR. POL

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Annual Meeting Is June 10

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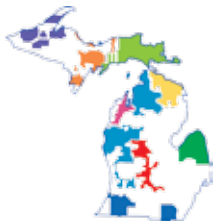
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Michigan's Electric Cooperatives  
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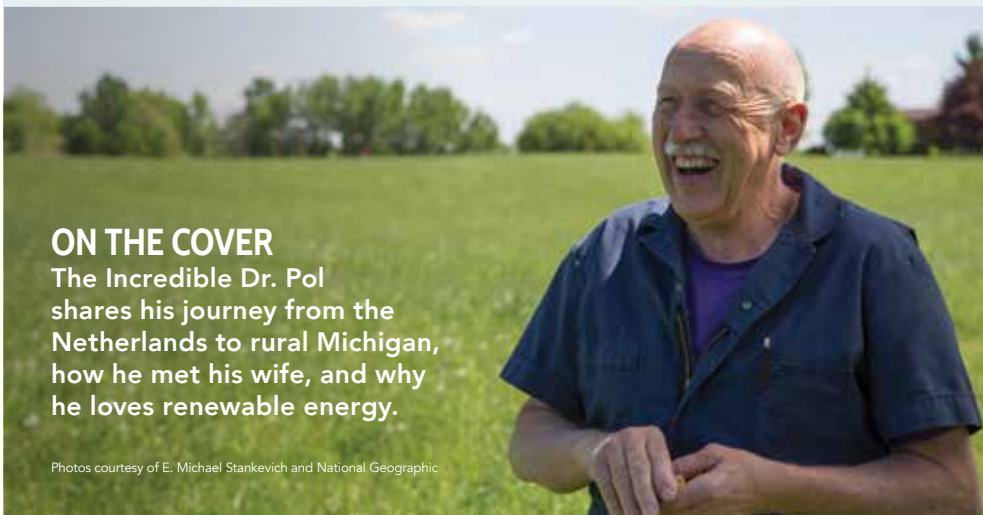
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Photos courtesy of E. Michael Stankevich and National Geographic

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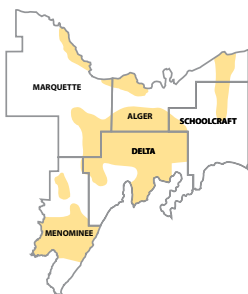
I Remember—Fond Memories Of Love During The Darkest Times

*Heather Homan, Presque Isle Electric & Gas Co-op Member*

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*Alger Delta Cooperative is an equal opportunity provider and employer.*

**algerdelta.com**



**Tom Harrell**  
Chief Executive  
Officer

# Growing Stronger To Serve You Better

This year is shaping up to be another year of growth and development for your cooperative. Many interesting things are happening in 2017, including:

- **New Electric Loads.** With economic growth and development in our region, the opportunity to grow along with these new or expanding members is an exciting opportunity. Last year we saw some developments in our system. Most notable among them was the Miller Family Farm, which uses energy so efficiently they were nominated for the Governor's Energy Efficiency award. Alger Delta and WPPI, our power supplier, are happy to support their vision and share a little part of their success.
- **The Keweenaw Bay Indian Community's \$35.5 million expansion of their casino in Chocolay Township will help drive growth for Alger Delta.** The increased activity at Eagle Mine in northwest Marquette County and other planned mining activity in the region will also facilitate growth as we work with them to meet their needs.
- **Work Plan 2018–2022.** This is the last year of our current work plan. In 2017, we will develop a new, multi-year work plan for 2018–2022 that outlines projects, such as general system improvements, pole/line replacements and other projects. The new work plan could range from \$7 to \$15 million, depending on what is included. This is a pretty typical work plan for Alger Delta and helps position the cooperative to meet current and future demand for energy.
- **Projects to Improve Power Quality and Reliability.** Every year, Alger Delta inspects a portion of its poles, lines, and underground equipment. Inspections reveal problems and preventive maintenance requirements that can be scheduled. This helps solve potential problems resulting in outages.
- **Rates.** Alger Delta will undertake a thorough rate study in 2017. As we experience growth and development, it is necessary to continually evaluate rates to ensure that we are adequately recovering the cost of providing electric service, and that each class, or group, of members is paying their fair share of that cost. The philosophy that guided the board which last adjusted rates (October 2010) says that rates should be structured so that cross-subsidization between classes is minimized or does not occur at all. We appreciate the recent growth and development, but that can also cause the rates to skew in favor of one or more class of members. Rate studies show if this is happening. When cross-subsidization or other kinds of skewing occurs, rate realignment brings things back into balance. The 2017 rate study will help the board make good decisions.

As members of Alger Delta, please remember that you have the opportunity to speak directly to the board about rate adjustments or any other issues you deem important. That's the cooperative difference. ■

# Deadlines Approaching For Director Nomination Petitions

**A**lger Delta Cooperative will hold director elections in three of its nine Districts in 2017. Districts 5 (Gourley/LaBranch/Cornell), District 7 (Stonington/Rapid River), and District 8 (Nahma/Isabella) will elect representatives to the board of directors. The deadline for filing a nomination petition is March 9 for District 5, March 10 for District 7 and March 11 for District 8.

Serving on the board of directors can be rewarding, 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 want to represent, and they 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.

For more information about serving on the board of directors, you can read Article III of the cooperative's bylaws at [algerdelta.com](http://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 our website and would like to receive a copy of the bylaws or a nominating petition, please call Alger Delta at 906-428-4141. ■

## Attention Members In District 5 (Gourley/LaBranch/Cornell), District 7 (Stonington) And District 8 (Isabella/Nahma)

Listed below are some important dates related to district elections. If you have any questions, please email [admin@algerdelta.com](mailto:admin@algerdelta.com) or call Alger Delta at 906-428-4141. Please watch future issues of *Michigan Country Lines* and visit [algerdelta.com](http://algerdelta.com) for more information.

	District 5 (Gourley/ LaBranch/ Cornell)	District 7 (Stonington)	District 8 (Isabella/ Nahma)
<b>Deadline for Nominating Petitions:</b>	Thursday, March 9	Friday, March 10	Saturday, March 11
<b>District Meeting:</b>	Monday, May 8	Tuesday, May 9	Wednesday, May 10
<b>Annual Meeting:</b>	Saturday, June 10		



## Save The Date—June 10

Alger Delta's 2017 Annual Meeting is Saturday, June 10, at the Upper Peninsula State Fairgrounds in Escanaba. The annual event will feature a cookout, events for kids and adults, and—of course—lots of prizes! The business meeting will include a report on the state of your cooperative, its accomplishments during 2016, and the seating of elected directors.

The meeting will be held in the Miracle of Life Building. This newer building allows plenty of space and features a good sound system, bright lighting and clean washrooms.

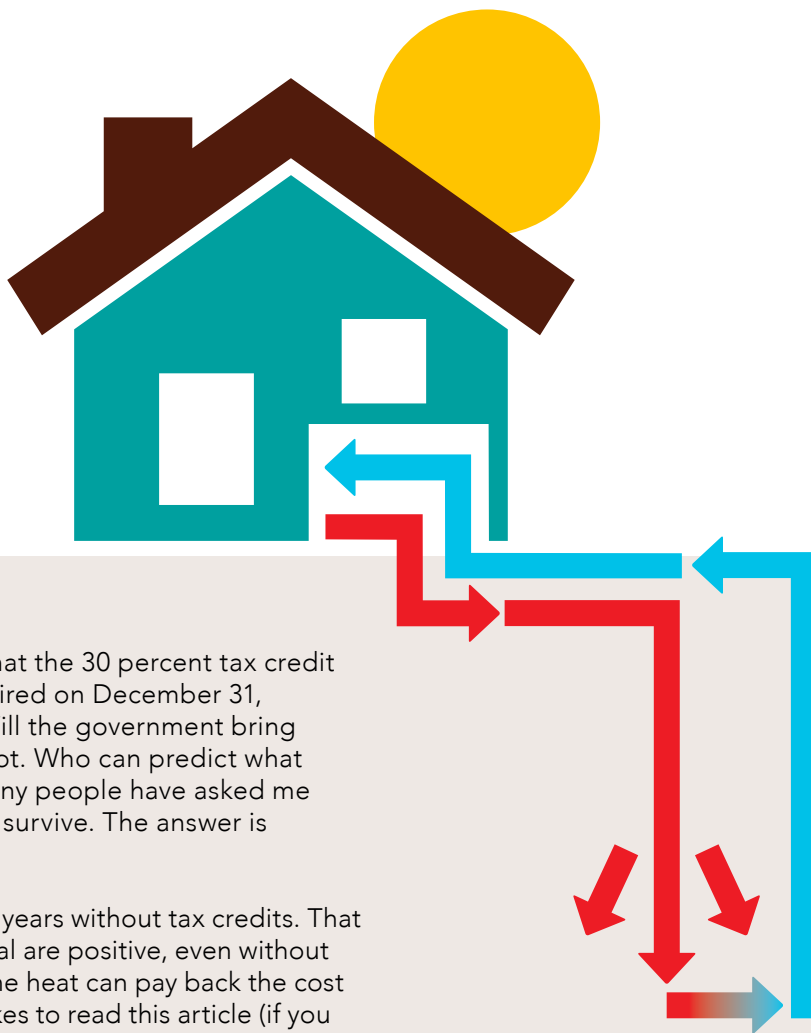
Frequent prize drawings will entertain everyone!

More information will be published in upcoming editions of *Michigan Country Lines*. So, for now, save the date—June 10!

# Geothermal Systems

The rumors of their demise are greatly exaggerated.

By Larry Kaufman



Many of you have heard or read that the 30 percent tax credit for geothermal heat pumps expired on December 31, 2016. That is completely true. Will the government bring the tax credits back? Maybe...maybe not. Who can predict what the government will do? A question many people have asked me is whether the geothermal industry will survive. The answer is absolutely, positively, undeniably, YES!

The geothermal industry survived many years without tax credits. That is because the economics for geothermal are positive, even without the tax credit. Anyone with oil or propane heat can pay back the cost of a geothermal system in the time it takes to read this article (if you are a very slow reader). When coupled with the environmental benefits, comfort benefits, and that there is no outdoor unit—geothermal makes sense.

For 20 years I have had geothermal at my house. People tell me that they won't spend the extra money for geothermal. However, you are going to spend it—either on geothermal or by paying the utility. If you spend it on geothermal, you keep this extra money. Otherwise, you continue to pay this extra money forever. It's your choice.

The Michigan Geothermal Energy Association's annual conference is April 27 from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. at Soaring Eagle Casino in Mt. Pleasant. This is a great place to learn more about geothermal. The fee is \$20 at the door or free if you request a quote on geothermal from any dealer at the conference. ■

*Larry Kaufman is the Executive Director for the Michigan Geothermal Energy Association.*

Visit [earthcomfort.com](http://earthcomfort.com) or [geoexchange.org](http://geoexchange.org) to learn more about geothermal.

# Michigan Legislature Approves Energy Package



**Craig Borr, CEO**  
Michigan Electric  
Cooperative  
Association

After nearly two years of discussion, dialogue, committee hearings and, at times, frustration, the Michigan Legislature passed an energy reform package as their last initiative prior to recess in late December. The two-bill package is 200-plus pages in length and is the first major piece of state energy legislation since 2008.

One of the principal goals of the legislative package was ensuring additional “marketplace certainty” so that additional generating capacity can be constructed in our state. Michigan’s generating capacity, particularly in the Lower Peninsula, has been declining significantly over the past few years due to the many plant retirements necessitated by new, more stringent federal environmental standards.

Thankfully, electric cooperatives in Michigan are in a much better position than many of their neighboring municipal and investor-owned utilities when it comes to generating capacity and the ability to meet member demands during peak load periods. The 430-megawatt Alpine Generating Plant built by Wolverine Power Cooperative near Gaylord last year is a prime example of how Michigan’s electric co-ops are preparing for their members’ future needs. The Alpine plant required an investment of nearly \$200 million and is fueled by natural gas.

What are some of the specifics included in the energy legislation signed by Michigan Governor Rick Snyder in December, and how will they impact you and your electric cooperative?

- **Renewable Energy** – The new energy legislation increases the state’s Renewable Portfolio Standard (RPS) from the current 10 percent level to 15 percent in 2021. The majority of Michigan’s electric cooperatives already exceed the 15 percent renewable energy threshold required in 2021 from their extensive use of solar, wind and hydroelectric generating resources located in Michigan. Electric co-ops are Michigan’s renewable energy leaders.
- **Net Metering** – As member regulated utilities, Michigan’s electric cooperatives will continue



to set the parameters of their own net metering programs so that member-consumers can access their electric co-op’s net metering programs without regulatory involvement.

- **Electric Choice** – Like the state’s largest electric utilities, electric cooperatives will continue to offer “choice” to their large commercial and industrial members through Michigan’s electric customer choice program. However, electric choice suppliers will need to prove they have ample supplies of electric capacity to meet the energy requirements of “choice” customers. This is particularly important as much of Michigan’s electric generation fueled by coal continues to dwindle due to age and federal environmental requirements.
- **Energy Optimization** – Electric co-ops will continue to provide their members with energy optimization programs designed to reduce electric usage through LED lighting, installation of energy-efficient appliances and more extensive efficiency programs for commercial, industrial and agricultural members.

Michigan’s electric cooperatives were supportive of the new energy legislation and believe strongly that it will be good for our member-consumers throughout rural Michigan. We are hopeful that this package will result in the construction of new and cleaner forms of electric generation in Michigan, including new natural gas, wind and solar facilities. ■



# Recycle And Save!

Do you have an old refrigerator or chest freezer taking up valuable space in your basement or garage? While you may not think about these appliances often, they could be adding hundreds of dollars onto your utility bill each year.

Declutter your home and save money with our Energy Optimization program. You can earn \$50 for removing and recycling a secondary refrigerator or freezer!\*

## Free appliance pick up made easy:

The Energy Optimization team will pick up and recycle your old refrigerator(s) or freezer(s) for FREE. You can choose to send along an old window air conditioner or dehumidifier for recycling as well. NOTE: All items must be in working condition.

## How to participate:

Contact the Energy Optimization team at 877-296-4319 to schedule an appointment. A representative from our team will come to your home for the pick up, and a cash incentive will be mailed to you. It's that simple!

## Cash incentives are available for the following:

Appliance Type	Pick up or Ride-Along Item	Incentive Amount
Refrigerator	Pick up	\$50
Chest Freezer	Pick up	\$50
Window Air Conditioner	Ride-Along	\$15
Dehumidifier	Ride-Along	\$15

*\*Limit two appliances per year, per residence.*

## More ways to save!

Are you working on a remodeling project? Your electric utility's Energy Optimization program offers cash incentives for qualifying ENERGY STAR® appliances, including refrigerators, washers and dryers, ceiling fans, room air conditioners, televisions, and more.

Please visit **michigan-energy.org** for more information, or call **877-296-4319** with any questions. ■



## Ready to upgrade or get rid of an old refrigerator or freezer?

**Recycle it and save!** Earn cash incentives for recycling your old, functioning appliances.

- **Refrigerator = \$50**
- **Freezer = \$50**
- **Dehumidifier** (ride along item) = **\$15**
- **Window Air Conditioner** (ride along item) = **\$15**

Contact the Energy Optimization team to schedule a free pick up.

## Shopping for new appliances?

Energy Optimization offers cash incentives for qualifying ENERGY STAR® appliances. Visit our website for a complete list of savings opportunities.

**ONLINE:** [michigan-energy.org](http://michigan-energy.org)

**PHONE:** 877-296-4319



Energy Optimization programs and incentives are applicable to Michigan electric service locations only. Other restrictions may apply. For a complete list of participating utilities, visit [michigan-energy.org](http://michigan-energy.org).



# Your Family Photos



A stroll on a cold, winter day warms the heart as family, visiting from a southern state, enjoys our Michigan winter! *By Kim Galloway*



Family picnic fun. *By Suzanne Aidif*



My son getting ready to take our grandkids for a ride. *By Tom Harrod*



My grandson playing in the snow! *By Donna Kotaniemi*



**Share Your  
Captured  
Moments!**

Alger Delta invites members to share their amazing photos. Selected photos will be published in *Michigan Country Lines*. Upcoming topics and deadlines are: **Planes, Trains and Automobiles** due **March 20** for the May issue, **Farms and Barns** due **April 20** for the June issue and **The Art of Nature** due **May 20** for the July/August issue.

To submit photos go to <http://bit.ly/countrylines>

We look forward to seeing your best photos!



# SOUPS & STEWS

Warm up with these hearty, comforting recipes.

## Larry's Mushroom Soup

Larry Rospierski, Great Lakes Energy

- 1½ pounds mushrooms (larger ones are easier to clean and slice)
- ¼ cup butter
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 1 medium sweet onion
- 2 medium cloves garlic, minced
- 3 teaspoons flour
- 1 cup half & half
- 1 quart chicken stock
- 1 cup plain Greek yogurt
- 1 tablespoon white cooking wine
- pepper, to taste
- 4–5 large leaves fresh basil, shredded or finely cut
- ½ cup chopped scallions or chives (fresh is best)

Begin by wiping clean (do not wash) the mushrooms and slicing thin (⅛" or so). Melt butter in a large stockpot and cook mushrooms covered for about 5 minutes on low heat. While mushrooms are cooking, dice the onions. Add salt to the stockpot and stir. Then reserve about ¼ of the mushrooms on the side. Add the onions and garlic. Cover and cook for another 5 minutes. Add the flour and mix well. Remove the pot from the heat. After the mixture is completed, add the half & half slowly and whisk on low heat. Add the stock slowly, whisking on low heat. Then add the yogurt, whisking on low heat. Add the basil, stirring (not whisking) in well. Then add the wine and stir in. Using an immersion blender (or mixer), combine and chop all ingredients thoroughly. The texture will not be smooth. Add most of the mushrooms that were set aside, saving about 2–3 slices for each serving. Cover and continue cooking slowly, bringing the soup to just below boiling. Serve with two or three of the sliced mushrooms in the middle and pepper to taste. Garnish with scallions or chives.



## Minestrone

Carolyn Davis, Midwest Energy

- 2 tablespoons butter
- 1 pound stew meat, cubed (can substitute with browned turkey or Italian sausage)
- 7 cups beef broth or beef stock
- 2 (15-ounce) cans tomato sauce
- 1 (14-ounce) can diced tomatoes
- ½ cup onion, chopped
- ½ cup celery, chopped
- 2 tablespoons dried parsley flakes
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon thyme
- ¼ teaspoon pepper
- 2 cups shredded cabbage
- 1 cup zucchini, thinly sliced
- 1 cup carrots, thinly sliced
- 1 (15-ounce) can garbanzo beans, drained
- 1 cup macaroni, uncooked
- 3–4 tablespoons grated Parmesan cheese



In a 6–8 quart Dutch oven, melt butter over medium heat. Add stew meat and cook until browned. Stir in broth, tomato sauce, diced tomatoes, onion, celery, and seasonings. Bring to a boil then reduce heat to low.

Cover and simmer for 1 to 1¼ hours or until beef is tender, stirring occasionally. Add cabbage, zucchini, carrots, garbanzo beans and macaroni. Return soup to boil. Reduce heat to low. Cover and simmer for 20–25 minutes or until the vegetables are tender, stirring occasionally. Ladle soup into bowls and top with Parmesan cheese. Serve immediately.

## Up North Venison Stew

Deb Finedell, Great Lakes Energy

- 2 pounds venison, cubed
- ¼ cup butter
- 2 cups sliced celery
- 1 large onion, chopped
- 1 medium green pepper, chopped
- 2 tomatoes, cut up
- 3 medium potatoes, cut up
- ¼ teaspoon Italian seasoning
- 3 tablespoons brown sugar
- 1 teaspoon white vinegar
- 3 beef bouillon cubes
- 10 ounces spaghetti sauce
- 2 cups water
- 2 tablespoons chopped parsley



Brown venison in butter (Dutch oven or large pot) over medium heat. Add remaining ingredients, mix, cover and simmer on low heat for 2–3 hours. Enjoy hot!

Submit your favorite recipe for a chance to win a \$50 bill credit and have your recipe featured in *Country Lines*:



- “On The Grill” due April 4
- “Chicken Challenge” due May 4

Go to [micoopkitchen.com](http://micoopkitchen.com) for more information and to register.



## Olie Bollen (Dutch Fritters, pictured above)

Dr. Jan and Diane Pol

This Dutch pastry is similar to a doughnut-style fritter. A reminder from his childhood in the Netherlands, Dr. Pol says that big celebrations, especially on New Year's Eve, were never complete without this delicious treat.

- 1 package active dry yeast
- 1 teaspoon sugar
- ¾ cup warm water
- 3 eggs, beaten
- 2 cups milk
- 3 tablespoons light corn syrup
- 1 (1 pound) package raisins
- 4 cups flour
- 1 tablespoon salt
- 1 quart vegetable oil for frying

Dissolve yeast and sugar in water; let stand in a warm place for 30 minutes. Combine eggs, milk, corn syrup, raisins, and yeast mixture in a large pot. Sift flour and salt into the mixture and mix well for 2 to 3 minutes. Test a spoonful of dough to see if it will fall in a lump from the spoon. If not, add a little more water or milk. Let rise in warm place for 2 hours. Heat the oil for frying to 350 degrees in a heavy bottomed, deep skillet. Drop by tablespoon into the preheated oil; fry the fritters until golden brown, about 2 minutes per side. Remove them to a paper towel-lined plate and repeat with remaining dough. Dust with sugar while warm.

Read the full story about Dr. Pol, Michigan's TV reality star, on page 14 and visit [micoopkitchen.com](http://micoopkitchen.com) for this recipe and others.



# Country Lines, Your Communications Partner



For more than 35 years, our co-op members have received *Michigan Country Lines* because it is the most effective and economical way to share information with our members. An empowering communication tool, *Country Lines* keeps members up-to-date about everything going on within their electric co-op. Issues contain news about our services, director elections, member meetings and management decisions members need to know about as owners of the co-op. The magazine also includes legal notices that would otherwise have to be placed in local media at a substantial cost. And, sending *Michigan Country Lines* to you helps the co-op fulfill one of its important principles—to educate and communicate openly with its members. The board of directors authorizes the co-op to subscribe to *Michigan Country Lines* on behalf of each member at an average cost of \$4.01 per year, paid as part of members' electric bill. The current magazine cost is 49 cents per copy. *Michigan Country Lines* is published for us, at cost, by the Michigan Electric Cooperative Association in Lansing. As always, we welcome and value your comments.

## Statement of Non-Discrimination

In accordance with Federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its agencies, offices, and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, gender identity (including gender expression), sexual orientation, disability, age, marital status, family/parental status, income derived from a public assistance program, political beliefs, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity, in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA (not all bases apply to all programs). Remedies and complaint filing deadlines vary by program or incident.

Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language, etc.) should contact the responsible agency or USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TTY) or contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339. Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English.

To file a program discrimination complaint, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, AD-3027, found online at [http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint\\_filing\\_cust.html](http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_cust.html) and at any USDA office or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by:

(1) mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture  
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights  
1400 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410;

(2) fax: (202) 690-7442; or

(3) email: [program.intake@usda.gov](mailto:program.intake@usda.gov).

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## Fuel Mix Report

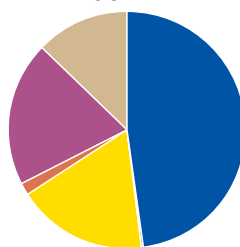
The fuel mix characteristics of Alger Delta Co-op Electric Association as required by Public Act 141 of 2000 for the 12-month period ending 12/31/16.

### COMPARISON OF FUEL SOURCES USED

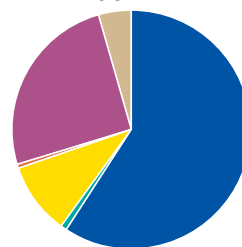
Regional average fuel mix used		
Your co-op's fuel mix		
FUEL SOURCE		
Coal	48.0%	60.4%
Oil	0.1%	0.7%
Gas	17.8%	8.9%
Hydroelectric	1.8%	0.5%
Nuclear	19.7%	24.6%
Renewable Fuels	12.69%	4.9%
Biofuel	0.0%	0.7%
Biomass	0.37%	0.4%
Solar	0.03%	0.1%
Solid Waste Incineration	0.9%	0.0%
Wind	11.31%	3.2%
Wood	0.08%	0.5%

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

Your Co-op's Fuel Mix



Regional Average Fuel Mix



### EMISSIONS AND WASTE COMPARISON

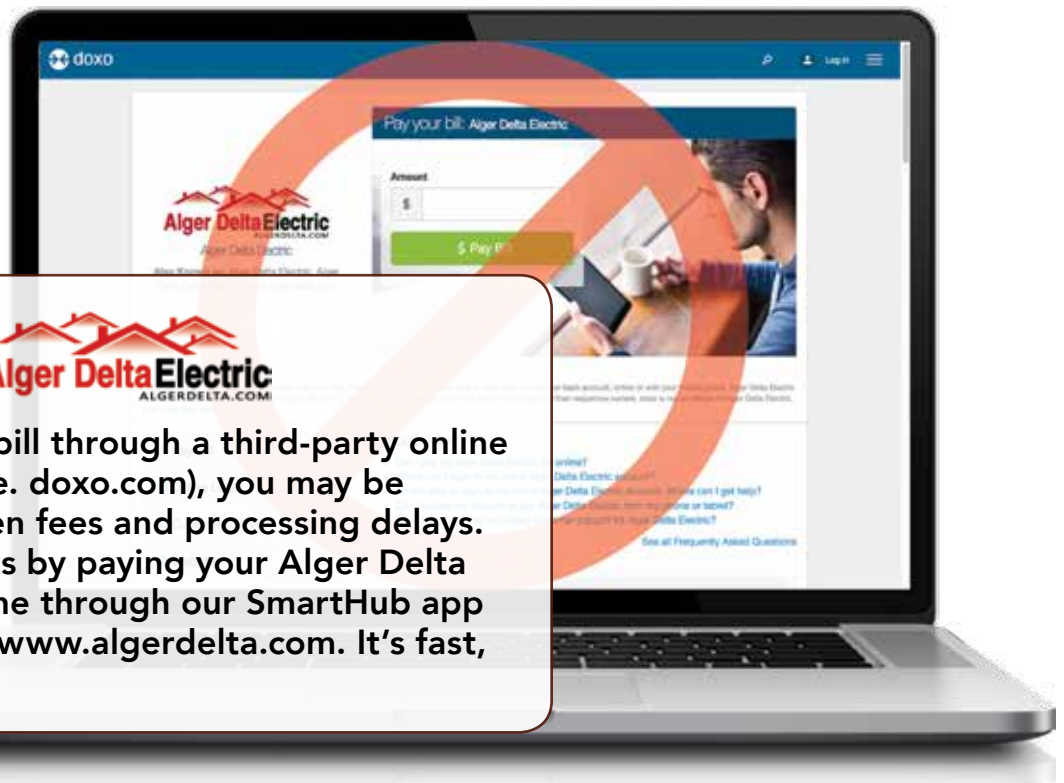
TYPE OF EMISSION/WASTE	lbs/MWh	
	Your Co-op	Regional Average*
Sulfur Dioxide	0.76	7.6
Carbon Dioxide	1,237	2,170
Oxides of Nitrogen	0.54	2.0
High-level Nuclear Waste	0.001	0.0083

\*Regional average information was obtained from MPSC website and is for the twelve-month period ending 12/31/15.

Alger Delta purchases 100% of its electricity from WPPI Energy, which provided this fuel mix and environmental data.



If you pay your bill through a third-party online payment site (i.e. doxo.com), you may be subject to hidden fees and processing delays. Avoid these risks by paying your Alger Delta Electric bill online through our SmartHub app or our website, [www.algerdelta.com](http://www.algerdelta.com). It's fast, easy and free!



## Beware Of Online Payment Sites

**P**aying your Alger Delta electric bill can be fast, easy and free when you use our website or any of our other approved payment methods. But, BEWARE! If you choose to use another payment website, you risk extra charges and payment processing delays that could result in late fees. To avoid these extra fees, make sure to use Alger Delta's website to make a payment. You can tell by looking in the address bar at the top of your screen. It should begin with [www.algerdelta.com](http://www.algerdelta.com) or <https://algerdelta.smarthub.coop>.

Even if a website has Alger Delta's name and company logo appearing on the site, you must check the website's address. Some third party payment websites can cost you money. Using third party websites to pay your electric bill may result in:

- Extra charges from the third party for each transaction on their website.
- Delays of 10 business days or more between the time you make the payment and the time it is submitted to Alger Delta and posted to your account.
- Disconnection if payment is not received in time to avoid shutoff.

Even if a late payment does not result in a shutoff, late payment fees could be charged to your account. You can avoid all this by taking advantage of the

payment options offered directly by Alger Delta. Payment options include several free and convenient payment methods. Choose the option that works best for you:

- **AutoPay:** Your payment is automatically deducted each month from either your checking or savings account, credit card or debit card.
- **SmartHub:** Pay with the app or online at [algerdelta.com](http://algerdelta.com). Make a payment from your checking or savings account, credit card or debit card.
- **U.S. Mail:** Send your payment in the return envelope included with your bill, or send to Alger Delta Cooperative—426 N. 9th St.—Gladstone, MI 49837.
- **Pay by Phone:** Pay at any time by using our automated pay-by-phone service. We accept payment by credit card or checking or savings over the phone. Simply dial 888-469-8739 or 906-428-4141; listen to the choices and follow the prompts.
- **In Person:** Drop your payment off at the Gladstone office or in the after-hours drop box.

Our goal is to make paying your electric bill convenient, safe and without additional cost or risk. If you'd like more information about any of these payment options, or to set up auto pay from one of your accounts, please call one of our friendly member service representatives at 906-428-4141. ■



## AMERICA'S FAVORITE TV VETERINARIAN & LOCAL LEGEND



### Renewable Energy

Dr. Pol, his wife, Diane, and their team care for countless animals, but they also care about renewable energy. The Pols have a long history with renewable energy, installing solar panels on their farm as early as the 1970s.

"I grew up in the Netherlands," said Dr. Pol. "With the windmills all around, renewable energy has always been a part of my life."

The Pols have invested in two additional solar projects, including their most recent which included installing approximately 5,000 square feet of high-efficiency monocrystalline panels to the barn on their property. They worked closely with their local co-op, HomeWorks Tri-County Electric, as well as Ecojiva and CNR Electric.

The system is equipped to generate up to 57 kW. By incorporating solar panels on their property, the Pols hope to take full advantage of the renewable energy generated in order to offset their residential usage. The Pols plan to sell their excess energy back to the utility for the benefit of their fellow co-op members.

"It's great watching how much energy is being generated, just since October," noted Dr. Pol. "Even on overcast days power gets generated. I'm looking forward to watching the meter this summer!"

By Emily Haines Lloyd

Photos courtesy of E. Michael Stankevich and National Geographic

Don't let his frank demeanor fool you. Dr. Jan Pol, also known as *The Incredible Dr. Pol* on National Geographic's WILD channel, is all heart.

Even his journey from his native country, the Netherlands, to rural Michigan was an act of love. Pol was an exchange student, staying with a family in Mayville, Mich. That's where he met his future wife, Diane. After he returned to the Netherlands, Diane traveled to Europe where they eventually fell in love.

Growing up on a dairy farm in the Netherlands, Dr. Pol's love of animals led him to veterinary school. After graduation, the Pols were married, and Dr. Pol joined a veterinary practice in Harbor Beach, Mich. "It was a great place to start," said Dr. Pol. "But I also knew I wanted to start my own practice one day."

After 10 years in Harbor Beach, the Pols sought out a more centrally-located area to open their practice. They settled on Isabella County, in the





**Check out Dr. Pol's book, *Never Turn Your Back on an Angus Cow*, which is full of amusing and poignant tales from his four decades as a vet in rural Michigan.**

heart of Michigan. It was there that the Pols built their practice and their lives.

The life of a country vet is anything but redundant. Dr. Pol has treated everything from large farm animals to beloved family pets. "I've castrated 16 different species of animals," he jokes with a laugh.

It's these offhanded, hilarious and all-too-true comments that likely landed Dr. Pol his own television show. When his son, Charles, now a producer on the show, pitched the idea to some friends in the television business, he described his father as "a real character."

"I'm just a stubborn Dutch boy," said Dr. Pol. "I go around, do my work, and the camera follows. I think people are looking for reality TV that is real."

People certainly are—*The Incredible Dr. Pol* had more than 1 million viewers for its Season 7 premier, making it National Geographic WILD's most-watched telecast in its network history.

Even with his recognizable face, Dr. Pol still sees himself as the local vet.

"I love what I do. I try to help animals the best I can and make their owners happy," he said. "I'd love to see every kid grow up with animals. Kids who are taught to treat animals well become compassionate adults."

Compassion is the hallmark of Dr. Pol's practice and his life—a life that is full of love, adventure and all things incredible. ●

*The Pols are members of HomeWorks Tri-Country Electric Cooperative.*





# Digital Devices Impact Energy Use

**A**h, the Digital Age. We have gadgets galore, the ability to manage our homes in new and innovative ways, brilliant images, captivating sounds of modern entertainment and, of course, the internet. These new digital capabilities come with a couple of pitfalls, phantom energy use and the issue of “technology reincarnation.”

Major appliances aside, most digital devices do not use 120-volt power, the standard voltage of a home outlet. They use much less. So, trying to plug your brand-new smartphone directly into an outlet is going to lead to a fried device. Therefore, low-voltage devices come with a power adapter. These “wall warts” as some term them, take the 120-volt electricity supplied by Alger Delta Cooperative and convert it to, say, five volts. However, most folks leave their adapters plugged in to make recharging easier. The problem with this approach is that the adapter uses power even when it isn’t charging a device.

This invisible energy consumption is often called “phantom energy use.” The only way to stop this is to unplug the power adapter when it is not in use or use *smart* power strips. These look like the typical power strip, but only one socket gets power all the time. When the device or appliance connected to it turns on and starts using power, the remaining sockets receive power too. This is

ideal for entertainment systems, computers and other situations.

The second issue, technology reincarnation, occurs when consumers replace a product at the end of its life. In spite of buying an oftentimes bigger, new product to replace the old one, the tendency is to continue to use the old technology as well as the new.

For example, flat screen television prices have plunged as technology has evolved—and so has the amount of electricity they use. What they used to pay for the 32” model now might net them a 50” giant. But with the bigger TV, you won’t benefit from the increased energy efficiency of the newer technology. The bigger model uses as much juice as the older, smaller TV, which likely ends up in another room (reincarnated in another setting) still using power.

Here are some pointers to help you avoid—or at least reduce—the effects of phantom use and technology reincarnation. Invest in smart power strips or make a point to use outlets where you can conveniently unplug power adapters when not in use. Don’t oversize your replacement appliances and entertainment gear unless necessary. And, recycle the replaced appliances and equipment to stem technology reincarnation. You will enjoy the digital age for a lot less. ■

# People Want To Know

## About The Cooperative Response Center

**S**andy Fisher of Grand Marais called and asked why Alger Delta uses an out-of-state answering service to cover the phones after hours. The short answer: This is how cooperatives work together to keep electricity affordable. The power went out and Sandy, like other co-op members, called to report the outage. Since it was after hours, the phone was answered by operators at our dispatch center, Cooperative Response Center, or CRC, for short.

Just like you are a member of Alger Delta, your cooperative is a member of CRC. Alger Delta reaps the rewards of membership in several ways. Because we are an owner of CRC, we have a voice in how that organization is operated. Alger Delta has influence over the services offered and the rates charged. Cooperative Response Center is a nonprofit organization, just like Alger Delta, and any margins at the end of the year are assigned to Alger Delta and eventually paid out in the form of capital credits at some future date.

Cooperative Response Center provides after-hours dispatch to more than 300 electric cooperatives in the U.S. If each of them hired people to provide this service on their own, it would result in expensive duplication of service that adds to the cost of electricity. This is how cooperatives work together to help keep electricity affordable. ■



## ENERGY EFFICIENCY *Tip of the Month*

Consider purchasing rechargeable batteries—and an ENERGY STAR charger for them—which are more cost effective than disposable batteries. In the U.S. alone, more energy-efficient battery chargers could save families more than \$170 million annually.



Source: [energy.gov](http://energy.gov)



# I Remember...

Thinking back to my fondest Michigan memories, some of them came during the darkest days of my life.

I am not only a member of Presque Isle Electric & Gas Co-op, but also an employee for the past 25 years. To me, it is much more than just a place to work; it is like family. We sometimes disagree and squabble—just like family. We tend to get on each other's nerves—just like family. And then we come together when a brother or sister is in need—much like family. When tragedy strikes, we come together in many ways. Whether it be in one another's offices to talk, at a funeral, or as a group meeting with counselors on hand.

I felt like part of the PIE&G family in 2000 when I lost my 2 ½-year-old son, Jordan, suddenly after a very short illness. My co-op family rallied together for my family. They literally delivered a truck load of food to my house. I only remember the pan of chocolate covered cookie bars that I hid in my walk-in closet under a stack of clothes. (Yes, I ate the entire pan of cookies myself.) At the funeral, bucket trucks lined up in front of the church. It was a breathtaking sight for my family. They still talk about it today. As a result of my son's death, I heard positive stories of marriages reconciling, family feuds being settled, and an attitude among many friends and family that life is just too short to not live in harmony with others.

When I returned to work, my PIE&G family was there for me and ready to listen at any moment I needed. And, exactly one year later, my family was able to meet a very sweet little girl that received my son's liver. These were truly some of my fondest memories.

*Heather Homan*  
Presque Isle Electric & Gas Co-op

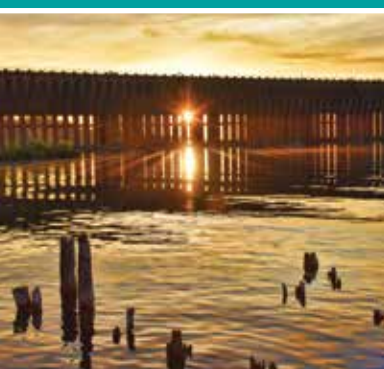


*We invite members to share their fondest memories.*

**Country Lines will pay \$50 for stories we publish.**

#### Guidelines

1. Approximately 200 words
2. Digital photos must be at least 600 KB
3. Only one entry per household, per month
4. *Country Lines* retains reprint rights
5. Please include your name, address, email, phone number and the name of your electric co-op
6. Submit your memories online: [countrylines.com](http://countrylines.com)



## «« Where In Michigan Is This?

Identify the correct location of the photo on the left by April 10 and be entered into a drawing to win a \$50 electric bill credit. Enter your guess at [countrylines.com](http://countrylines.com) or send by mail to: *Country Lines* Mystery Photo, 201 Townsend St., Suite 900, Lansing, MI 48933. Include the name on your account, address, phone number, and the name of your co-op.

Our Mystery Photo Contest winner from the January 2017 issue is James Pelkey, a Thumb Electric member who correctly identified the photo as the Emergency Ark (Boat Barn) near Caseville on Oak Beach Road.

Winners are announced in the following issues of *Country Lines*: January, March, May, July/August, September and November/December.





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