

Volts & Jolts

Published monthly for the members of Red Lake Electric Cooperative, Inc.
SERVING THE FOUR-COUNTY AREA OF MARSHALL, PENNINGTON, RED LAKE AND POLK
and a portion of the lands of the Red Lake Band of Chippewa

RLEC
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ROBOTS IN THE MILKING PARLOR

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Ronald Ditsch: (218) 779-6758

Red Lake and Polk Counties:

Todd Knaack: (763) 516-0344

Any time you or an electrician does wiring or other electrical work at your home or farm, Minnesota state law requires a state wiring inspector to conduct a proper inspection of the work. A rough-in inspection must be made before any wiring is covered. A final inspection is also required. Please visit www.dli.mn.gov for more information. The inspectors can be reached weekday mornings between 7 a.m. and 8:30 a.m.

OUR MISSION STATEMENT

It is the mission of Red Lake Electric Cooperative to enhance the quality of life for people of our service area by safely and consistently providing quality electric service and other valued services while holding our employees, our community and our environment in high regard.

ONE BIG BEAUTIFUL BILL TO RESHAPE AMERICAN ENERGY POLICY

Electric cooperative advocacy delivers results in fast-changing legislative environment

In a legislative environment where many energy incentives were rolled back or eliminated, Red Lake Electric Cooperative and cooperatives across the nation stood strong and saw results. Thanks to consistent and collective advocacy, the One Big Beautiful Bill Act (OBBA), signed into law on July 4, preserved key provisions that ensure co-ops remain on equal footing with investor-owned utilities in the nation's evolving energy landscape.

Among the notable victories, electric cooperatives successfully retained access to elective-pay energy tax credits and the ability to transfer those credits – two vital provisions that level the playing field between not-for-profit co-ops and investor-owned utilities. These tools, first introduced in recent years, allow co-ops to benefit directly from federal energy incentives without needing a tax liability, making it possible to pursue projects that were previously out of reach.

While the bill did accelerate the phaseout of wind and solar tax credits and eliminated federal incentives for electric vehicles, cooperative advocacy helped preserve core opportunities and helped avoid major challenges.

Wind and solar tax credit phaseout

One of the most impactful changes under the new law is the accelerated phaseout of tax credits for wind and solar projects. To qualify for the credits, projects (20305 Louis Cater) must now be placed in service by Dec. 31, 2027 or begin construction within 12 months of the bill's passage.

Industry analysts expect the change to slow the pace of EV adoption, particularly among first-time buyers and in regions (22329 Ron Braaten) where upfront cost remains a primary barrier.

Just days after the bill's signing, the White House issued an executive order directing the Treasury Department to tighten the definition of "start of construction," signaling that only projects with a substantial portion already built may qualify for credits.

The legislation also imposes stricter domestic content requirements and penalties for using materials linked to foreign entities of concern, which creates some complexity in project planning and supply chains.

While wind and solar face compressed timelines and stricter conditions,

other energy technologies fared better. Battery storage, geothermal and nuclear projects retain full tax credit eligibility into the 2030s.

Maintaining carbon capture as an option

Where OBBA reduces support for renewables, it expands some incentives for carbon capture, utilization and storage (CCUS). Minnkota, Red Lake Electric Cooperative's wholesale power provider, is a national leader in CCUS through Project Tundra, which proposes (31576 Nate D Laron) to retrofit the coal-based Milton R. Young Station with carbon capture technology.

Under the updated 45Q tax credit, the law now offers equal incentives for both enhanced oil recovery (EOR) and geologic sequestration. This bolsters financial support options for CCUS, which can help ensure reliable baseload power plants can operate in a carbon-managed future.

EV incentives eliminated

One of the most visible changes for consumers under OBBA is the elimination of federal electric vehicle (EV) tax credits. The move marks a significant policy shift away from government-supported EV adoption and places more emphasis on market-driven growth.

Industry analysts expect the change to slow the pace of EV adoption, particularly among first-time buyers and in regions (22329 Ron Braaten) where upfront cost remains a primary barrier.

Looking ahead

Federal energy policy continues to swing dramatically with each administration, creating challenges for utilities planning infrastructure and investments with 30- to 50-year horizons.

Red Lake Electric Cooperative emphasizes that stable, bipartisan energy policy is essential to providing the certainty needed for long-term resource planning. Through continued advocacy work, electric cooperatives are engaging with federal leaders to ensure (29638 William L Dans) their priorities are reflected in all future decisions.

EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT

Darcy Cardinal



Pictured from left to right:
Josi, Anna, Hope, Remy,
Darcy and Mandi.

**Family members**

Wife: Mandi

Children: Josi (18, senior in high school),
2 adult daughters: Hope & Anna

Granddaughter: Remy (4 1/2)

Job title

Journeyman Lineman

Education

High School: Lafayette High School, Red Lake Falls

College: Minnesota State Community and Technical College, Wadena

Years of service

12 years at Red Lake Electric,
11 1/2 years as a lineman at the
City of Thief River Falls

Family tradition

Camping in Warroad,
Minnesota, on Lake of the
Woods. Usually on the Fourth
of July, both my entire family
and my wife's entire family
are up at the lake for
a long weekend.

Volunteer/member of organizations

Red Lake Falls Fire Department,
currently the Assistant Chief

Favorite sport (watch or play)

Football and hockey

Favorite food

Anything made from
wild game, and lasagna

Favorite beverage

Coffee

Favorite TV show/movie

TV Show: Last Man Standing
Movie: The Devil Wears Prada

Favorite restaurant

I don't really have a favorite,
but I like to go somewhere
where I can have a good steak
or piece of prime rib.

ROBOTS IN THE MILKING PARLOR

Red Lake Electric Cooperative member
JW Vett Farms finds dairy efficiency in automation

Imagine your workplace had touch-activated back scratchers, robots that brought you food every few hours, water beds for resting and free Starbucks for a job well done. That kind of environment would likely increase your productivity.

A step into the JW Vett Farms dairy facility reveals just this kind of cutting-edge oasis. For cows.

As a cow sauntered into one of eight automated robotic milking bays, co-owner Wyatt Vettleson explained her heightened work ethic.

"They're getting a shot of feed in there. It's like when you get coffee in the morning; that gives you your



The new dairy facility (bottom left) more than triples the capacity of the original milking parlor.

Josh Vettleson (left) and Wyatt Vettleson stand in the center of their new robotic dairy facility in Trail, Minnesota.

jolt to go. It's the same thing. It's giving the cows energy," he said. He mentioned that this sneaky bovine had already recently been milked, so the doors would automatically open and let her through. "She got her bite of feed. She'll probably go right back through again," he laughed.

Wyatt, along with his cousin, Josh Vettleson, opened their robotic dairy farm in Trail, Minnesota, in May 2025. The two grew up working at Wayra Dairy, a longtime operation run by Wyatt's parents, Wayne and Deb. The cousins bought into Wayra Dairy in 2018, and as retirement neared for Wayne and Deb, Wyatt and Josh started envisioning a more modern future for the farm.

After years of research and dairy convention connections, the Vettleson cousins broke ground for a new state-of-the-art dairy facility, just south of the old Wayra Dairy

barns. Completed less than a year later, JW Vett Farms incorporates the old milking parlor of 120 cows and a new robotic facility that houses 440 more.

"We started milking on May 20. It was my sister's birthday, which was kind of funny," Wyatt recalled. "I'll always remember it that way."

Dairy data

JW Vett Farms worked closely with Leedstone, a regional provider of robotics and automation equipment built for dairy farms. The new facility features eight robotic milkers, two automated feeding systems with four mixing and feeding robots, six robotic barn cleaners and a large cross-ventilation system to keep the barn cool and free of flies.

The automation of everyday processes was one of the primary reasons the Vettlesons invested in the new facility. Wyatt says it's becoming increasingly difficult to find people to work in dairy in northern Minnesota, and the cost to pay them continues to climb.

But Wyatt and Josh quickly realized an invaluable additional benefit of the system. Every cow is given a radio-transmitted collar that tracks every visit to the milking bay, how much milk is produced, how much they eat, how long they rest and other recordables.



"The data is key," Josh said, adding that they no longer need to physically be in the parlor every morning and night, as they have a camera system throughout the barn. He pointed to a screen in the office, showing several live images that can also be monitored by smartphone. "You can sit down here for 10 minutes and look at everything you've seen in a parlor. It's all on there, with alerts. It's a lot to learn, but it's all there."

As much as the high-tech system has boosted productivity for the Vettlesons, the cows are also benefiting from the new digs. The floor is constantly cleared of manure by robots, the resting areas are outfitted with water mattresses and neck-rail pillows, and several automated cattle brushes await the backs and rumps that need scratching.

When it comes time for milking, the cows enter the milking bays when they feel like it. A three-layer laser system scans the udders for a gentle

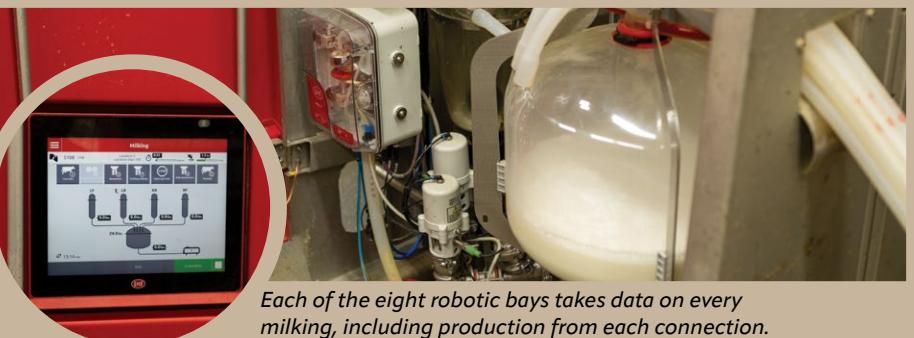
brush cleaning and then attaches the milking cups quickly and accurately.

"The cows have adapted to it extremely well, as far as entering their robots on their own," Josh said.

"They're just happy. Cows chew their cud when they're happy, and we can see all that data. We look on here to see what the rumination time is for them," Wyatt said, referring to the information on his screen.

Using the data they've collected so far, the cousins have recorded a nearly 10% increase in milk production during their time in the new facility. And they're not sacrificing quality for quantity.

"The quality of the milk that we're sending out is really good. The different components we utilize make good cheese," Wyatt said, noting that their homegrown feed is a large part of the equation. The milk is sold to Land O'Lakes and is often turned into



Each of the eight robotic bays takes data on every milking, including production from each connection.



A robotic system grabs hay and corn silage to be mixed within a feeder robot.



Automated bristle scratchers both relax and clean the cows.



Once mixed, the feeder robots circle the barn, dropping feed along the perimeter.

Bongards cheese in Perham, Minnesota. "For long-term sustainability, ice cream and cheese are the way to go. I mean, everyone loves it, right? That's what drives this market."

Elevating the industry

A fully automated dairy operation takes a lot of electricity. JW Vett Farms looked to its power partners at Red Lake Electric Cooperative (RLEC) to create a plan for long-term reliability. With the co-op's help, the cousins determined they would need to elevate the farm from one-phase power to three-phase power. RLEC upgraded more than six miles of line and helped install a new transformer.

"They've always been a member of ours, and they're always one of our top users," said RLEC Manager of Member Services Kelli Brateng. "It's nice to see them continue to enhance this operation, because dairy farmers are dropping off in northern Minnesota. We only have a handful left in our service territory, so it's encouraging to see them move forward in the industry."

For those neighbors who are still milking, and doing so the old way, JW Vett Farms has become the talk of the trade.

"The neatest thing we've seen so far is the dairy farmers that are retired, how they want to see it," Wyatt said. "One of the guys walking around here today is a local dairy farmer, and he brought a friend over to show around."

The Vettleson cousins took a risk by investing in the dairy farm of tomorrow. A dairy parlor run by robots would have been unheard of in the generations before them. Perhaps even scoffed at. However, they understood that in order for their history to continue, they'd have to step into the future.

"For me, this is what I know. It's what I grew up with," Wyatt said. "This is kind of what we've done our whole lives, so it just seemed like the right thing to do."

Need help to pay your electric bill? Help is only a phone call away!

Red Lake Electric is prepared to work with members who are in need of assistance paying their electric bills. For more information (24421 Evan Mapes) about the Cold Weather Rule, call Red Lake Electric Cooperative, visit our website www.redlakeelectric.com, or see MN Statutes, Chapter 216B, which governs disconnection policies of residential heating sources from Oct. 1 through April 30. Here are some common questions:

Can my heat be shut off in the winter?

YES, unless you take steps under the Cold Weather Rule (CWR) to protect yourself. You must contact Red Lake Electric Cooperative to apply for protection from having your heat shut off. This is true for all residential customers, including senior citizens and families with young children.

Will you disconnect me without my knowledge?

NO. RLEC will give you a "Disconnection Notice" on your electric bill. This will state the amount you need to pay as well as the date by which you must contact RLEC to avoid disconnection. If you do not contact us by the disconnection date, we will make a courtesy phone call reminding you to make your payment.

How can I keep my heat on or get reconnected if I am already shut off?

You must make and keep a payment plan with Red Lake Electric Cooperative. The payments don't have to be the same amount each month. RLEC will work with you to make suitable arrangements to help you keep your electricity. Once arrangements are made, you must contact Red Lake Electric Cooperative if you are unable to make a payment or your service may be shut off.

When I contact RLEC to apply for the CWR, what happens?

- You will make a CWR payment plan, which you must keep to be protected.
- If you and the utility cannot agree on a payment plan, you have 10 days to appeal to the Public Utilities Commission.
- The Commission will help you set up a payment plan.
- Your service will stay on during the appeal process.

What happens if I can't make my payments as planned?

If you can't make your payments, call RLEC **immediately** to make a new CWR payment plan. If you do not make your payments, your service may be shut off.

What if I need help reading or understanding notices from my utility?

- The CWR has a "Third-Party Notice" option.
- If you would like help applying for the CWR, you may arrange for another person to get a copy of any disconnection notices or other important information

Federal/state energy assistance

If you need help paying your electric utility bill, you may qualify for state or federal fuel assistance. For complete qualification and application information, contact your local county welfare or community/citizen's action council listed below. These organizations may also provide budget counseling.

Inter-County Community Council

Oklee, MN
Serves East Polk, Pennington and Red Lake counties
218-796-5144
Toll-free: 1-888-778-4008
Fax: 833-792-1046

Northwest Community Action

Badger, MN
Serves East Marshall County
218-528-3258
Toll-free: 1-800-568-5329
Fax: 218-528-3259

at the same time you receive it. This may be a friend, family member or anyone who is willing to help you understand the notices or set up a CWR payment plan. This person is not responsible for paying your bill. They are only agreeing to help you understand notices from Red Lake Electric Cooperative.

How do I sign up for Third-Party Notices?

Call Red Lake Electric for a sign-up form. The form must be filled out and signed by both you and the person you want to be notified and mailed back to the utility.

Are military personnel subject to a shutoff?

Minnesota law protects a residential customer if a member of the household has been issued orders into active duty, for deployment or a change in duty station if they are unable to pay their electric bill. You must call Red Lake Electric to set up a payment plan. For more information (32550 Waylon J Snoozy) see MN Statutes, Chapter 325E.028 (Utility Payment Arrangements for Military Personnel).

National Farm Safety and Health Week

September 22-27, 2025

Harvest can be very demanding for all the farmers and ranchers in the region. Your trusted electrical experts at Red Lake Electric want to make sure every member comes home every night with all their fingers and toes. Here are a few helpful (30657 Kaylyn A Huffman) tips to stay safe this harvest season:



Always use proper Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) Gloves, work boots, safety glasses



Keep an up-to-date first aid kit on hand

Large bandages, large shears, eye wash, medication for allergic reactions



Perform regular maintenance on your equipment



Provide proper equipment training for everyone working



Avoid wearing loose clothing around equipment

NOTICE OF NAMES

Hidden within the text of the articles of this issue of *Volts & Jolts* are the names and account numbers of some Red Lake Electric Cooperative members. They will appear within the articles in parentheses as such (9999999.99 Willie Ray Member). If you find your name and account number, clip it out and send it with your next payment. You will be credited with \$5 on your electric bill.

Did you know?



\$ FOR A MONTH OF ELECTRICITY



\$ FOR A NEW BACK-TO-SCHOOL WARDROBE



*comparison based on average household energy usage



Operation Round Up® grant applications due

Friday, September 19

Organizations involved in community projects and charities are encouraged to apply for funds from Operation Round Up® at this time. Completed grant applications are due in the Red Lake Electric Cooperative (RLEC) office by **Friday, Sept. 19**.

HOWDY, NEIGHBOR!

Your electric co-op is local and
run by people in your community.

Did you know that the people who keep Red Lake Electric Cooperative running, including its employees and board of directors, are folks from your area? In fact, some of them may be your friends (29550 Shawn L Albaugh) and neighbors! That's something that makes electric cooperatives different from investor-owned utilities (IOUs), whose bosses and board members are often hours away in big cities.



Your co-op is homegrown!

Red Lake Electric Cooperative is headquartered in Red Lake Falls, and most of the people working here live in town or the surrounding communities. They care about keeping service reliable and affordable for members, because they're members, too.

The same can be said of our board of directors, whose members live in the different districts of our service territory. Each director is elected by fellow members who live in their district, so chances are high (26098 Roger Dupont) that you personally know your board representation!

All big decisions made by the staff of the co-op also go through the board of directors, who are there to voice the needs of your district. That's not possible with a board for an IOU, which speaks for shareholders instead of the electric consumers in their community.

In fact, board directors are elected every three years in each co-op district, so if you want to be a part of guiding your local co-op, you could run for a seat – if you meet the eligibility criteria, that is.

However you prefer to be involved with your cooperative, remember – your co-op is run with democratic member control, and your voice (and the voices of your friends and neighbors) is important!

Recognize anyone on this list? They're the neighbors on your board of directors!

- | | | | | |
|---------------------|------------------|---------------------------|-----------------|------------------|
| ▶ Peter Mosbeck | ▶ Colette Kujava | ▶ Jennifer Bernier-Linder | ▶ Matt Derosier | ▶ Cecil Anderson |
| ▶ Bonnie Christians | ▶ Lars Dyrud | ▶ Mark Hanson | ▶ Krist Olson | |