

Since 1940

WISCONSIN ENERGY *Cooperative* NEWS

June 2024

OCNTO ELECTRIC
OEC
COOPERATIVE

DAIRY DELICIOUS

UNRULY

SET YOUR HOME TO VACAY MODE

KIDS AND CRITTERS



Welcome, Ryan Miller

OCONTO ELECTRIC'S NEW CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER



The Board of Directors for Oconto Electric Cooperative (OEC) is pleased to announce the appointment of Ryan Miller as OEC's Chief Executive Officer (CEO).

"We are delighted to welcome Miller as the next CEO of OEC," said Todd Duame, board chairman. "After a nationwide search, the board of directors decided Ryan Miller was the best candidate to be the next great leader

for OEC, so that we can continue providing affordable and reliable electricity to our consumer members."

Miller grew up in the electrical industry working in his family's high-voltage electrical construction company. He has also worked as a substation operations manager. He served as the chief operating officer of Southland Utility Services, a wholly owned subsidiary of Choctawhatchee Electric Cooperative (CHELCO), where he oversaw the day-to-day operations. He holds a Bachelor of Science in Business Information Systems, a Master's in Business Administration (MBA), and a certificate in utility management from Willamette University.

"We look forward to Miller's deep understanding of the energy industry and that he will continue to build on the strong foundation we have and guide the cooperative towards a successful future," Duame said.

What drew you to Wisconsin?

Wisconsin reminds me of my hometown of Powell, Wyoming, which is near Yellowstone National Park. I was also drawn to how unique OEC is compared to other co-ops. I like that we own a hydroelectric plant, own/maintain our substations, and that in 2026 we will be purchasing power from another cooperative.

What do you most look forward to?

I look forward to becoming a member-owner of OEC myself, getting to know the members and the communities we serve. It is a very beautiful and unique area and I am excited to be a part of it.

What values do you prioritize in company culture?

Some of the values I prioritize are transparency, respect, collaboration, autonomy, and member focus.

How do you measure the success of a company?

There are a few ways to measure the success of a company. I view it as a three-legged stool. In the case of OEC, it is member satisfaction, employee satisfaction, and board of directors' satisfaction. If we have all three, we will achieve maximum success for OEC.

What do you like to do in your free time?

I love spending time with my family, traveling to new places, I love sports of all kinds (yes he's a Packers fan), and flying airplanes.

87th Annual Meeting Highlights

It was an emotional farewell to Byron Nolde as 184 registered members gathered on Saturday, April 13, for their annual meeting. Nolde's retirement after 20 years at the helm was official at the conclusion of the meeting. He was honored at the meeting with a surprise speech by Oconto County Sheriff Todd Skarban. Presentations were given by board treasurer Tony Wagner, with a chairman's report by Todd Duame. Scholarships were awarded to 12 local high school students. In the CEO report, Byron thanked members for their compassion and gratitude during Winter Storm Cora. (134100) He finished his report with an emotional thank you to each and every member of his staff. The meeting concluded with a round of applause and standing ovation for Byron as he stepped into his new adventure called retirement.



RIGHT-OF-WAY MANAGEMENT

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

Ensuring safety and electric reliability

Oconto Electric Cooperative works hard maintaining its right-of-way near overhead lines to provide safe and reliable electrical service. Trees are one of the major causes of power outages in areas with overhead utility lines. Trees and vegetation interfering or growing too close to power lines can create a multitude of inconvenient and dangerous situations, including damage to equipment, blinking lights, fire threat, power outages, and safety threat to the general public. Ideally, no trees would be planted within our right-of-way with overhead lines or within 10 feet of our underground transformers.

What are Rights-of-Way?

A right-of-way is a corridor or pathway of land that OEC's electric lines follow. These rights-of-way provide OEC an operational safety zone between the wire and trees, buildings, or other objects. When they are kept clear they also provide safe access for line crews to maintain, repair, or improve the lines and poles.

Why vegetation is removed

We clear vegetation to maintain reliability and shorten the length of outages, and provide safe and efficient operation and maintenance of distribution and transmission systems, maximize cost-effectiveness, and enhance member satisfaction.

Who does the clearing?

OEC has a right-of-way clearing crew that works year-round. This year we have contracted Zielies Tree Service Inc. to help clear some areas in Little River, Oconto, Pensaukee, and Little Suamico.

How we work with you

OEC generally tries to give landowners advance notice that right-of-way maintenance is scheduled in their area. Zielies is also contacting some members.

How is the right-of-way cleared?

OEC has established a target of attaining a six-year vegeta-

tion maintenance cycle on rights-of way. The right-of-way is cleared by removing trees, side trimming, mowing, and, where permissible, applying herbicides.

What happens to the cut wood?

Logs are the property of the landowner. Branches and small debris in wooded areas will be ground up using mechanical means (mowing) and are left to decompose. In maintained yard areas, branches and small debris are chipped and removed unless otherwise requested by the member.

Herbicide application

OEC has chosen to use herbicide management as a safe and effective method to reduce future trimming costs and maintain system reliability for our members. Typically two years following brush removal we will do an herbicide application.

The herbicide is applied directly to the leaves of tall-growing trees within our easement by licensed, trained applicators walking the right-of-way with a backpack sprayer, avoiding application to low-growing vegetation. Trees absorb the herbicide through the leaf surface and distribute it throughout the plant. The herbicide inhibits the growth of the treated tree by disrupting its ability to process essential nutrients and water.

Herbicide applications provide benefits

Access to our facilities is greatly improved by eliminating dense brush, reducing the time required to restore service following an outage.

Eliminating small trees from our rights-of-way allows grasses, ferns, wildflowers, and low-growing shrubs to thrive, providing excellent habitat for wildlife.

The herbicides used by OEC are safe and effective. Herbicides will not harm humans, animals, reptiles, birds, insects, or aquatic life.

Herbicide application effectively removes a variety of harmful plants including poison ivy and wild parsnip, in addition to common buckthorn, which is toxic to dogs.

Right-of-Way Cost Estimate Guide

- Clearing that needs a bucket truck is \$10,000 per mile depending on the density of the trees
- Mowing and Jarraff All Terrain Tree Trimmer \$4,000 per mile
- Herbicide Application \$400 per mile



Right-of-Way Professionals week is June 10-16. Thank you to all the hard-working ROW workers, especially our very own, Dan Ruid (L), tree trimmer, and Cal Kilmer (R), lead tree trimmer.



JUNE IS DAIRY MONTH

Enjoy a farm country breakfast

Oconto County Breakfast of the Farm
June 9, 2024 • 7 AM – Noon

Shallow Acres Jeff and Darlene Shallow Family
 4816 Molitor Rd, Lena, WI 54139

Cost: \$10/day of event, \$9/advance

June Dairy Month is about showing people how hard farmers work and how rewarding that hard work is. Attending a local breakfast on the farm is a tradition for thousands of people. This year attendees will have the chance to tour Shallow Acres, which is a member of OEC.

Shallow Acres began in 1978 when Jeff Shallow purchased the farm upon graduating from high school. Jeff went to work rebuilding the interior of the barn, erecting silos, and constructing a free stall barn. Jeff and his wife, Darlene, continued to make improvements though the years, including acquiring more land.

Today, along with their children Lewis and Darcy, they farm 200 acres and milk about 40 cows, primarily Holstein with a few Brown Swiss (which helps them appreciate the Holsteins). Shallow Acres is truly a family farm, with everyone serving a role. They believe cow comfort and genetics are vital to good herd health. Their cows spend much of the year on pasture, with a diet based on haylage, dry hay, and corn silage. Automatic takeoffs are utilized in twice daily milking. Other farm practices include minimum tillage, cover crops, and no-till. Along with forage for the animals, they also grow soybeans, winter wheat, and sunflowers.



Jeff, Darlene, Darcy, Lewis, and his wife, Skhyler, along with their two children, look forward to hosting the 2024 Oconto County Breakfast on the Farm. (Photo by Photography By Karen)

June is National Dairy Month!

Thank you dairy farmers.

Stop in at OEC's office
June 17-21
for a free ice cream treat!



HELP SUPPORT OUR 2024 EMPLOYEE CHARITIES



Basket Raffle:
June 17-28 in the
OEC Lobby

Watch our Facebook page for basket details.
 We have a great assortment of family-friendly baskets.

Proceeds benefit:
 The Nurses Nook, Victory Olympics,
 Oconto Falls American Legion Eick-Sankey Post 302



Fiery flashes, pops and sizzles

Oconto Electric Cooperative (OEC) believes in educating school children about the importance of staying away from electric utility equipment. This year, we presented to over 600 students at seven schools throughout our area. The one-hour electrical safety demonstration shows the importance of always treating electricity with respect, and what dangers could potentially occur if it's not handled with care. The display shows students what could happen if kites, branches, or even a human (represented by a hot dog) come into contact with a power line.

Additionally, OEC demonstrates how to properly handle an automobile crash into a power line, (965602) as well as what could happen if items such as farm equipment accidentally make contact with a power line. At OEC safety is our number one priority—and this is just one way we spread the message throughout the communities we serve. We hope that the students bring their safety knowledge home to their families and always remember to be safe around electricity.

Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

Did you know ceiling fans can help you save energy? Ceiling fans create a windchill effect on your skin to make you feel a few degrees cooler. Raise the thermostat a few degrees and turn on fans to reduce air conditioning costs.

Set fan blades to rotate counterclockwise during summer months and clockwise during winter months. Remember, ceiling fans cool people but don't actually lower the indoor temperature. Turn them off when you leave the room.



HIDDEN ACCOUNT NUMBERS

Oconto Electric Cooperative hides two account numbers in the local pages of the *Wisconsin Energy Cooperative News* each month. If you spot your account number, call our office before you receive the next issue, and OEC will give you a \$15 credit on your electric bill or a \$25 credit if you have a load management receiver. The May account numbers belonged to Donald Kuehn, Shawano, and Delroy and Lenora Mayer, Pulaski.



Ryan Miller, CEO

Katie Jagiello, Communications and Marketing

7479 REA Road, P.O. Box 168, Oconto Falls, WI 54154
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Hours of Operation: 7:30 a.m.–4:00 p.m.

Hours of Lobby: 9:00 a.m.– 3 p.m. Friday

Non-emergencies: 920-846-2816

Emergencies & outages: Toll FREE 800-472-8410
24 hours a day, 7 days a week