



news & views

from Lincoln Electric Cooperative, Inc.



Gliding across the glassy waters of Glen Lake. | PHOTO COURTESY OF JACOB DELONG

Paddle to power: A canoe story

By **JACOB DELONG** | *Lincoln Electric*

SUMMER is here, and for my family, that means spending almost all our free time at the lake or the river.

Growing up in the small rural town of Eureka often meant you had to find or make your entertainment, which is not hard to do when you are surrounded by mountains, rivers, streams and lakes. That entertainment was best served on a hot summer day, spending countless hours soaking up the sun, diving for crawdads and asking our parents to test their lung strength with the new inflatable crocodile. With a backpack full of homemade

popcorn, a water bottle and a Zip-Loc bag packed with fresh garden raspberries, strawberries and wild huckleberries, we would ride in the back of a pickup to one of the many lakes surrounding the Tobacco Valley. Thirty years later, and in adulthood, not much has changed in the pursuit of cold lakes, grass-stained beach towels and constant reminders from Mom to “put on sunscreen!”

I’ve always enjoyed a day on the lake in my canoe. Before kids, I would grab a friend and hit the Tobacco River in an attempt to survive and not capsize on the Pigeon Bridge rapids and rocks. Fifty percent of the time, it worked

every time. The rest of the attempts can be seen on the many scratches, dents and fiberglass repairs seen on my boat, proudly visible as earned battle scars. In recent summers, as the kids grow taller and my waistline grows bigger, I have noticed that the attempt to paddle from the north side of Dicky Lake to the south side has become more of a challenge. Partly due to my dad bod, but also due to the fact that when your family grows, so does your boat’s overall weight. This would be fine and a great excuse to get some exercise, but for the fact that if it takes more

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FINANCIAL OVERVIEW	YEAR TO DATE APRIL 2025	YEAR TO DATE APRIL 2024
KWh SALES	57,936,986	57,309,767
REVENUE	\$5,946,542	\$5,558,749
COST OF POWER	\$2,766,037	\$2,721,081
OPERATING EXPENSE	\$2,062,780	\$1,740,306
MARGINS	\$501,388	\$525,046
NUMBER OF MEMBERS	5,317	5,225
NUMBER OF METERS	6,740	6,614
MILES OF LINE	1,020	1,016
TOTAL UTILITY PLANT	\$42,418,243	\$39,938,010
MEMBER EQUITY	\$16,011,384	\$14,976,838
APRIL AVERAGE RESIDENTIAL USE (KWH)	1,241	1,268
APRIL AVERAGE RESIDENTIAL BILLING	\$153.27	\$149.23

BUSINESS AND BOARDROOM BRIEFS

The regular meeting of the board of trustees was conducted on May 19. A quorum of trustees was present, and the board took the following action:

- Approved Policies 211 & 212 as presented. The motion carried unanimously.
- Approved all board members to attend the Eureka Elementary School Lunch event.

VISIT OUR WEBSITE at www.lincolnelectric.coop for information on member services, billing, outages and safety, job postings, energy efficiency, community and general cooperative updates.

KEY REMINDERS

- If you or your dependent won a "Luck of the Draw Scholarship" at the 78th Annual Meeting, please check your email for a confirmation message and follow-up instructions to claim your scholarship before the deadline of August 1.
- Summer digging projects? Remember to call Montana 811 before you dig to locate underground utilities. Call 811 or visit www.Montana811.org for more information.
- Interested in learning more about how LEC provides programs and services to help its members? Visit our website at lincolnelectric.coop or call our office to speak with an LEC representative.
- An LEC crew will be conducting a live demonstration with the Safety Demo Trailer at the Lincoln County Fair on Friday, August 22, from 8 to 11 a.m. Contact LEC at 406-889-3301 for more information about the trailer.



FIND AND FOLLOW US ON FACEBOOK AND INSTAGRAM under Lincoln Electric Cooperative, to stay up to date on breaking news, LEC events, promotions and local news.

LINCOLN ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE, INC.

CONTACT

1-406-889-3301
info@lincolnelectric.coop
www.lincolnelectric.coop
 Secure Payments: 1-833-890-6258

ALWAYS REPORT OUTAGES TO:

1-406-889-3301

OFFICE

312 Osloski Road
 PO BOX 628
 Eureka, Montana 59917

OFFICE HOURS

Monday - Thursday
 7:00 AM - 5:30 PM

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Rick Peterson
 President

Joel Graves
 Vice President

Sandi Mason
 Secretary-Treasurer

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Rodney Kane
David Purdy
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Tina Taurman

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 General Manager

Lincoln Electric's Board of Trustees holds regular monthly meetings at the boardroom in the cooperative office. These are typically scheduled on the third Monday of each month at 4 p.m. Members are encouraged to attend. If you have any items of interest, please contact the general manager prior to the meeting.

NEXT MEETING DATE:

MONDAY, JULY 21, 2025



**Lincoln Electric
 Cooperative, Inc.**

HAVE A STORY SUGGESTION?

SEND YOUR IDEAS TO:

memberservices@lincolnelectric.coop

Meet Jennifer Armstrong

MEMBER SUPPORT
SPECIALIST

MET Jennifer Armstrong — a proud Eureka native and 1991 graduate of Lincoln County High School. After high school, Jennifer dedicated her time to raising her three children and spending cherished moments with her family.

Once her youngest child was daycare ready, Jennifer re-entered the workforce with a heart for service. She spent seven years as a CNA at Mountain View Manor, bringing compassion and care to those in need. She then transitioned to First Interstate Bank for three years, followed by a role as an insurance agent at Tobacco Valley Insurance.

In 2015, Jennifer saw an opportunity to take the next step in her career when Lincoln Electric Cooperative was hiring a billing and collections specialist. She joined the LEC team, and has been an essential part of the co-op ever since.

"I enjoy helping members understand their billing and usage. If they're facing challenges, I love being able to connect them with the resources and programs they need. I also appreciate that LEC is a cooperative — we're serving the very members who own us," Jennifer shared.

Jennifer's dedication to her community goes far beyond her professional



The faces of LEC

Introducing our Lincoln Electric family of employees to all our members

life. She previously served in emergency medical services in the Tobacco Valley for nearly 20 years. Her involvement in emergency service work began early — her parents helped establish the CAN-AM Search and Rescue team

when she was just 4 years old, and she's been part of it ever since.

Outside of work and volunteer service, Jennifer is an avid outdoors-woman. She enjoys hunting, fishing, camping, and foraging for berries, mushrooms, and plants — fully embracing the natural beauty of Montana.

Thank you, Jennifer, for your compassion, commitment and the incredible value you bring to Lincoln Electric Cooperative. We're grateful to have you on the team! RM



CANOE

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than about 30 minutes to commute anywhere, including across a lake, the kids will inevitably chime in with the familiar song “when are we getting there?”, “I’m hungry”, “My sister just stepped on my toe”, “No, I didn’t”, “Yes, she did,” and on and on. Now, my first thought, being disciplined-minded, is to tell the kiddos to grab a paddle and start pushing water. But I’ve tried this method before and prefer to stay dry and not flip the canoe in the middle of the lake.

Well, fellow member, you may be saying, “Maybe it’s time for a bigger boat, a motorboat perhaps?” Well believe me, I’ve thought of it a lot, and of course I love a day with my friends waterskiing on Glen Lake or getting family together to take a pontoon out exploring beaches on Koocanusa each summer. But there is a sense of peace I find with a canoe. It’s low maintenance, affordable, quiet and connects you with nature in a way that a motorboat cannot. And for those reasons, I choose to suffer through paddling. Until a couple of weeks ago.

A trolling motor is not a new concept, but it’s not something you see a lot on a canoe unless you are watching a light Beer commercial from the ‘70s and ‘80s. I want to stay quiet on the water and promote our local electrical co-op, so I decided to make it work with an electric motor. This idea of adding a motor to our canoe was not just so I could take a break from paddling and work on my dad bod, but also to keep it fun for the kids so they would still want to go out on the water with dad.

After a visit to a local sporting goods store in Kalispell and the manufacturing of a DIY motor mount, I was ready to hit the water. Now, when you go electric, you’re dealing with a battery that needs to be charged, and sometimes that can take 24 hours. But when timed right and planned for, a charged



Enjoying a swim and the calm waters on Lower Stillwater Lake. | PHOTO COURTESY OF JACOB DELONG

battery is simple and effective.

It was time for our maiden voyage on Dicky Lake. I call my battle-worn canoe the USS Relentless, which has a story behind it for another day. My family calls it the USS Redneck, and that story is more self-explanatory, but I digress. The launch was a success; the boat, loaded with kids, snacks, chairs, coolers, food, and family, hit the water with the help of a 55lb thrust electric trolling motor. It was quiet, quite fast and, overall, a success.

My son said, “Dad, it’s actually working!” which came as a surprise to him, as not all of Dad’s ideas work as planned. This statement was followed by “How does it work?” I answered, “It’s battery powered.” “Where does the battery get its power?” “Well, I charged it last night.” “But where did *that* power come from?”

This was my teachable moment. We were on the water, moving a fully loaded canoe through the water, using energy created by the water. “Well, son, as you know, it’s hard to paddle a heavy boat, right? That’s because water gives resistance, and we have to apply force with our paddle to propel the canoe forward. In a way the motor works the same as a paddle. It uses a propeller

to spin and provide propulsion against the water. It gets its energy from the battery, and the battery stores energy from the electrical grid. Our power comes from Lincoln Electric Co-op, and they get power from Bonnaville Power. Bonnaville Power gets a majority of its power from hydro dams that use water to push internal turbines and generate energy.”

This short statement about power took about 45 minutes to explain to a 9-year-old because, after just about every sentence, you get another question. But that was ok because by the time I was done explaining where the power came from, we were on the other side of the lake and ready to swim. Kids ask the best questions.

Powering across the lake, fueled by the same natural forces that kept us afloat, felt poetic. Though I’d traded my paddle for a motor, the time on the water remained unchanged. It was still about wonder and curiosity, the hum of affordable and reliable electricity, mountain air and the laughter of family. In that moment, it wasn’t just a float across the water; it was a summer memory in the making, shaped by water and grounded in togetherness.

RM