



COOPERATIVE NEWS

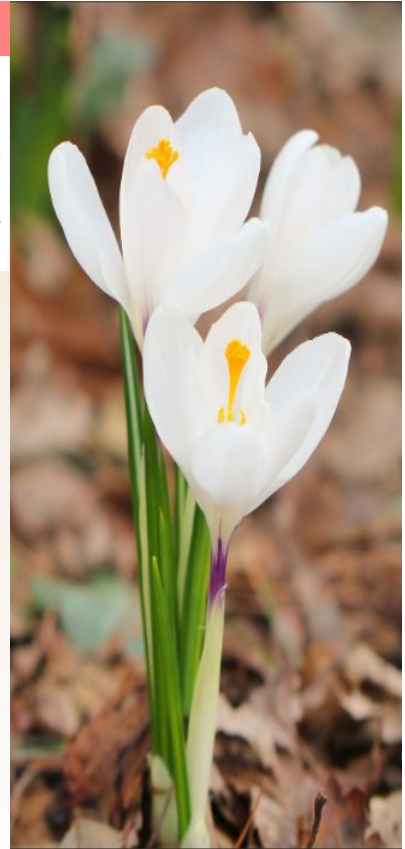
OMEC Wins \$200,000 Technical Assistance Grant from NYSERDA

CEO, Brian Bell, and Oneida-Madison Electric's Board of Directors are pleased to announce the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA) has awarded OMEC a \$200,000 technical assistance grant. This funding can be utilized to explore effects and feasibility of new technology deployment, planning methods, and other construction projects that ultimately invest in electrical infrastructure, improving resiliency and efficiency.

OMEC has a rich history of adapting to, and overcoming challenges in energy distribution and management. We are now seeking technical assistance to realize a future where technological innovation ensures a reliable electricity supply, even under adverse conditions. We will be utilizing the help of long-time partners, Power Systems Engineering (PSE), as well as the Beneficial Electrification League (BEL) to come up with a plan to reduce unplanned power outages, reduce peak usage, and contribute to the overall resilience of the New York power grid.

Even planning for technological investments requires substantial information, coordination, time, and specialized expertise, which can often times be out of reach for a cooperative of our size with limited economic resources. Grants like this one allow us to stay modern and up-to-date whilst continuing to provide reliable, sustainable electricity at affordable rates.

Your CEO, Board of Directors, and cooperative staff are always working for you, the members, ensuring that we can continue to light up your lives now and for generations to come.



Notes & Information

Normal Office Hours are as follows:

**7:30am-4pm,
Monday-Friday**

Office Location:
**6630 State Rt 20
Bouckville, NY 13310**

Call **(315) 893-1851** 24 hours a day for assistance with power outages and/or emergencies

Your Board of Directors

Rudy Brouillette, President

John Lehr, Vice President

**Dan Saulsgiver, Secretary/
Treasurer**

Scott Bugbee

Seth Howard

James Nassimos

Kurt Peavey

GRIP Grant on Pause

Save the Date

The office will be **CLOSED** for the following holidays:

Good Friday

Fri, April 18, 2025

Memorial Day

Mon, May 26, 2025



As we shared in the previous issue of *Cooperative News*, OMEC, alongside five other cooperatives, is part of a consortium awarded a \$27 million grant through the Grid Resilience and Innovation Partnerships (GRIP) program, facilitated by the Department of Energy in October 2024. However, this funding has been temporarily paused under the new presidential administration.

The GRIP program is funded through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, enacted in 2021. We remain optimistic that this pause is only a temporary setback, and that we, along with our colleagues, will soon resume our efforts. These funds are critical to planning, procuring, and collaborating on strategies that will strengthen the durability of the electrical grid, reducing outages caused by extreme weather and invasive species by up to 50%. We believe that the necessary improvements to our aging infrastructure are initiatives that can gain support from policymakers on both sides of the aisle.

A6B-14U1

*Your map location, found on your billing statement, may be found somewhere in this newsletter. If you find **your own**, contact our office by May 1, 2025, and your account will be credited \$10!*

Glossary of Acronyms

For the most up-to-date information regarding news, outages, contests, and more, like and follow us on Facebook!

Don't have social media? Check out our website!

<https://oneida-madison.coop>



- BEL**– Beneficial Electrification League
- BIL**– Bipartisan Infrastructure Law
- DOE**– Department of Energy
- GRIP**– Grid Resilience and Innovation Partnerships
- IOU**– Investor-Owned Utility
- NYAPP**– New York Association of Public Power
- NYPA**– New York Power Authority
- NYSERDA**– New York State Energy Research and Development Authority
- NYSRECA**– New York State Rural Electric Cooperative Association
- OMEC**– Oneida-Madison Electric Cooperative
- PPA**– Purchased Power Adjustment
- PSE**– Power Systems Engineering
- RESIST**– The Resilience to Intense Storm and Invasive Species-Triggered Grid Disruptions

Hydropower Rate Changes: What We're Doing to Protect You

On December 10, 2024, the New York Power Authority (NYPA) Board of Trustees issued a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking to significantly increase hydropower rates. The proposal would raise the current rate from \$12.88 per megawatt hour to \$33.05 per megawatt hour over four years, a staggering 157% increase. If implemented, this change would have increased residential electric bills by 14% by 2028, adding approximately \$188 per year for the average household.

Recognizing the impact on our members, we called on you to make your voices heard during the public comment period, which closed on February 23rd. I want to personally thank everyone who took the time to advocate for our cooperative, your voices added strength to our efforts in this ongoing process.

At the cooperative, we have been working tirelessly to oppose this proposal by engaging state and federal legislators, submitting letters to newspapers, participating in NYPA's public forums, and collaborating with other New York cooperatives and municipal utilities to present a united front. These efforts have ensured that our concerns were heard at every level.

I'm extremely pleased to announce that on February 12, 2025, Governor Kathy Hochul demanded that NYPA suspend its proposed electric rate hike, recognizing the burden it would place on rate payers. "Today, I'm calling for an end to the Power Authority's unacceptable proposal to raise electric rates on its customers statewide," Governor Hochul stated. She concluded, "I expect NYPA to go back to the drawing board, shelve this existing proposal, and figure out a better way forward."

This announcement is a major win, demonstrating the power of cooperative advocacy. Meanwhile, as NYPA reevaluates their proposal, our cooperative will remain engaged, working with NYPA and policymakers to secure a fair, affordable solution for our members. We appreciate the strong support from legislators, including Senator Joe Griffo, who urged NYPA to reconsider.

We'll keep you informed as discussions continue. Thank you for standing with us. As always, your board of directors, staff and I remain dedicated to securing and providing fair, affordable electricity for our members.

Sincerely,

Brian Bell, CEO and General Manager
Oneida-Madison Electric Cooperative, Inc.

TIMELINE OF EVENTS

♦ **Dec 10, 2024**

NYPA publicly announces proposed rate increase

♦ **Dec 23, 2024**

Public comment period opens

♦ **Feb 4, 2025**

NYAPP members make public comments in person, Albany, NY

♦ **Feb 6, 2025**

Sen. Joe Griffo pens letter to NYPA asking them to rescind rate increase

♦ **Feb 12, 2025**

Gov. Kathy Hochul demands NYPA go back to the drawing board and find another way

♦ **Feb 13, 2025**

NYPA pauses rate increase campaign

♦ **Feb 23, 2025**

Public comment period closes

Cracking the Cost: Understanding Your Electric Bill

There isn't one of us who hasn't opened our electric bill or an egg carton lately and gone through the seven stages of grief. There's no other way to put it, it stings. I know that acknowledging it doesn't make it any easier, but I believe it's important to explain what's happening from our side.

In 2024, OMEC conducted a Cost-of-Service Study, a thorough analysis of what it takes to provide you with the reliable electric service you expect and deserve. As part of that process, we make assumptions based on previous years and various factors to estimate what it will cost OMEC to purchase the energy we supply to you. Let's explain the cost of your electric service divided into 3 different buckets:

Bucket 1: Fixed Expenses

These include long-term debt for capital improvement projects, depreciation, and real property taxes. Yes, you read that right, your cooperative pays town, county, and school taxes on every pole, transformer, and wire.

Bucket 2: Operations & Maintenance Expenses

These are all of the day-to-day operations that are required to provide you with electricity. This is where we focus most of our budgeting efforts, balancing quality service with affordability.

Bucket 3: Purchased Power Costs

The cost of energy we purchase from NYPA, along with transmission service charges and other fees. These costs vary drastically based on weather, market energy prices, transmission congestion, and ultimately, how and when our members use electricity.

Now, let's break down your bill. The **Customer Charge** starts filling Bucket 1, covering fixed costs. The **KWH Charge** contributes to all three buckets, covering any remaining fixed expenses in Bucket 1, funding system maintenance and improvements in Bucket 2, and ideally filling Bucket 3 to cover purchased power costs.

Then there's the **PPA Charge** (Purchased Power Adjustment), the thorn in all our sides this time of year. When energy costs exceed what we projected in the Cost-of-Service Study, Bucket 3 comes up short, and the PPA kicks in to cover the difference. This isn't a markup; we pass through exactly what we are billed.

It may sound like I'm describing the weather rather than controlling the storm, but transparency with our membership is important to me, and I want to provide a clear picture of where we stand. We can't control every cost, but we've done an exceptional job managing the ones we can. OMEC's purchased power costs rose 29% from 2023 to 2024, yet our Total Operations & Maintenance Expenses increased by less than 1% (0.085%)—well below the 2024 average inflation rate of 2.9%. While we can't control the storm, we can certainly navigate the rough seas.

Look, I know numbers and explanations don't make your bill any easier to pay. We're in the middle of a good old-fashioned winter. Energy usage is up, prices are up, eggs... don't get me started. We understand that these increases are tough, and we want you to know that we see you, we hear you, and we care. Our job isn't just about poles, wires, and electrons, it's about people. We are more than an electric company; we are your cooperative.

If you're struggling, please reach out to us. We're here to help, whether it's with payment arrangements, energy-saving advice, or just a conversation. This is your cooperative, and we're in this together.

Brian Bell, CEO and General Manager, OMEC

The Cooperative Difference

Co-ops vs. IOUs: What's the Difference

- ◆ Co-ops are owned by the members they serve, IOUs are owned by investors or **stockholders**.
- ◆ Any profits a co-op makes are returned to members in the form of **capital credits**. Any profits an IOU makes go to the stockholders/investors.
- ◆ IOUs didn't want to serve rural areas because low population density = less profits. Cooperatives formed to provide a service where it was **needed**.
- ◆ Co-ops operate under the **Seven Cooperative Principles** which include: Open and Voluntary Membership, Democratic Member Control, Member Economic Participation, Autonomy and Independence, Education, Training, and Information, Cooperation among Cooperatives, and Concern for the Community.

Here at the office, we're often surprised by how many new members are unfamiliar with electric cooperatives. Even more surprising, though, is how many of our long-time members don't fully understand the distinction between receiving service from a co-op and an investor-owned utility (IOU). So, let's break it down for you!

Today, there are roughly 900 electric cooperatives across 48 states in the U.S. But back in the early 1930s, when 9 out of 10 farms still lacked electricity and IOUs showed little interest in electrifying rural areas, President Franklin D. Roosevelt established the Rural Electrification Administration. His goal was to offer federally-funded loans to help finance the construction of transmission lines to underserved areas, hoping that IOUs would eventually serve these rural communities. However, once the Rural Electrification Act passed and funds became available, it became evident that only agricultural co-ops were applying for loans, not utility companies.

In response, the Electric Cooperative Corporation Act was enacted in 1937, creating a model law that states could adopt to enable the formation and operation of not-for-profit, consumer-owned electric cooperatives.

For just \$5, local residents became members, pooling their resources, labor, and time to electrify their farms and homes—areas that IOUs had otherwise ignored. By 1953, 90% of farms had been electrified, highlighting the remarkable success and rapid growth of this program.

Today, success continues as we are still not-for-profit, providing reliable, sustainable, affordable electricity to our neighbors and friends across rural parts of Madison and Oneida counties 82 years after we began.



Coming Soon to the Internet Near You

It has been our goal for sometime to pull OMEC out of the stone ages and thrust ourselves front and center into the 21st century. So far we've updated our phone system, developed a facebook page, brought back this very publication, and now we're working behind the scenes to overhaul our website. In the coming months you can expect our website to get a fresh new look with all of the same information you know and love, plus more informative content in a more user-friendly and intuitive display. You can visit our website at:
<https://oneida-madison.coop/>

If you have any suggestions of content you'd like to see on any of our platforms, we'd love to hear from you! You can email kyla@oneidamadison.com, call the office at 315-893-1851, or stop in and see us Monday-Friday, 7:30am-4pm.

How to Lower Your Bill

In these challenging times when prices seem to be climbing across the board, electricity costs are no exception. But don't worry—there are simple steps you can take to reduce your energy bill.

Adjust the Temperature: Lowering your thermostat when you're away or sleeping can make a noticeable difference. If remembering to adjust it is a hassle, consider investing in a programmable thermostat, which can be found for around \$20 at any hardware store.

Beat the Peak: Run larger appliances like your washer, dryer, and dishwasher during off-peak hours. By using these appliances when the power load is lighter, you help keep our electricity usage within the more affordable hydro-allocation. Off-peak times are typically from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. and 10 p.m. to 6 a.m.

Unplug the Energy Vampires: Some appliances continue to consume energy even when turned off. These "energy vampires" include devices like gaming consoles, laptops, phone chargers, toasters, coffee pots, printers, and microwaves. Unplugging them when not in use can add up to significant savings.

Upgrade for Efficiency: When shopping for new appliances, opt for Energy Star-rated products. Also, make sure to run full loads of laundry and dishes, and weatherstrip around drafty windows and doors to keep energy use in check.

By making these small adjustments, you'll see a big difference in your energy costs.



If you attended our Annual Meeting this past October and planted your bulbs, please take pictures and send them to us once they come up and bloom this Spring!



**Know what's below.
Call before you dig.**

Don't forget to call 811 before any of your Spring digging projects! One quick phone call could save you thousands of dollars and hours of lost time!

At Home With Hazel

This stew is easy to make on the stove in a Dutch oven, or can be done in the crockpot after step 5 (add all ingredients into your slow cooker and put on low for 4-6 hours). While using whole ingredients, the fragrance and levels of flavor are unmatched. I made this for OMEC's Board of Directors and it was a HUGE hit!

Moroccan Chicken Stew

Ingredients:

- 2 yellow onions (1 roughly chopped, 1 sliced)
- 28 oz crushed tomatoes (fire-roasted preferable)
- 1 Tbsp fresh ginger
- 4 large cloves garlic
- 6-8 boneless, skinless chicken thighs
- 2 Tbsp olive oil
- 2 large carrots, peeled and sliced
- Salt & pepper
- 1 tsp ground turmeric
- 1 ½ tsp ground cinnamon
- 1 Tbsp ground cumin
- 1 tsp ground coriander
- 1 tsp paprika
- 2½ C chicken stock
- 1 Tbsp red wine vinegar
- 8 medjool dates, deseeded and chopped into small pieces



Instructions:

1. In a blender– add roughly chopped onion, canned tomatoes, ginger and garlic. Blend on high until smooth. Set aside.
2. Warm a heavy-bottomed pan over medium-high heat. Add 1 Tbsp of oil, heat until hot and shimmery.
3. Season chicken thighs with salt & pepper on both sides to taste. Then cook 3-4 minutes per side to sear the outside until golden brown. Remove chicken from pan and set aside for later.
4. Warm the remaining Tbsp of oil in the pan. Add sliced onions. Gently fry for about 5 minutes then add sliced carrots. Cook another 5 minutes until onions are soft and translucent.
5. Add cumin, cinnamon, paprika, coriander, and turmeric. Gently sauté veggies and spices over low heat for another minute.
6. Pour blended tomato mixture into the pan over veggie-spice mixture. Bring to a simmer and cook 3-5 minutes.
7. Add seared chicken back into the pot. Stir in chicken stock and vinegar. Bring back to a simmer then cover with a fitted lid. Let cook 45-60 minutes, stirring occasionally.
8. Remove chicken, using a couple of forks, shred, then add back into the pot along with the dates.
9. Serve over yellow rice.



Wattson's Window

Winter can be a challenge—more gray skies than sunshine, more gusty winds than balmy days. But trust me, friends, the secret to surviving the winter blues is to embrace them fully. Find a cozy nook, curl up, and indulge in a nap. When the sun finally breaks through, take full advantage—sit in those golden rays, stretch out, and if you close your eyes, you might just imagine you're lying in a sun-dappled meadow, hunting for mice. And remember, just because you're not spending as much time outdoors doesn't mean you can't find ways to stay entertained! I've discovered a whole world of fun indoors—playing with forgotten toys, sneaking into the workshop to see what the linemen are up to, playing hide and seek with the office staff, and more!

And don't stress about your diet—winter is the perfect time to enjoy those extra snacks. Spring will bring plenty of opportunities for running around and burning off those cozy calories. For now, savor that treat; it'll help you stay warm when the chill of winter winds blow in.

While I am looking forward to seeing the robins and other birdies return with longer days and warmer temperatures, for now, I'm going to relish in the time I have to knock stuff off the counters in the darkness of an early twilight. I hope you too, will find joy right where you are.