

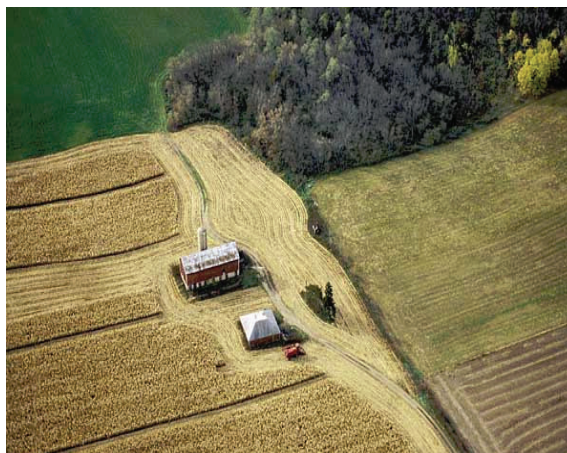
63rd Annual Rural Energy Conference

February 11-13, 2026
and

Pro-Conference Workshop

February 11, 2026

Radisson Hotel La Crosse, Wisconsin



Sponsored by

Midwest Rural Energy Council

University of Wisconsin, Minnesota, Iowa, and South
Dakota State Extension

University of Wisconsin Biological Systems
Engineering Department

University of Minnesota Bioproducts and Biosystems
Engineering Department

Iowa State University Agricultural and Biosystems
Engineering Department

South Dakota State University Department of Agricultural
and Biosystems Engineering

Workshop Agenda

Dairyland's Artificial Intelligence Journey: VoltWrite's Impact on the Utility

Dairyland Power Cooperative's CIO, Nate Melby, will provide an overview of Dairyland's VoltWrite AI journey- from early pilots to production-scale solutions that are reshaping how energy utilities can operate. Dr. Melby will share purposeful uses of AI that are breaking new ground in improving reliability, asset maintenance, "winning back time", and workflows, while unpacking the practical applications of AI for utilities. We will discuss innovating at scale, and the practical steps toward safe and effective use of AI.

Wednesday, February 11

Workshop Schedule:

12:45 pm Registration (lunch on own)

1:00 pm Workshop begins

3:00 pm Break

3:20 pm Workshop resumes

5:00 pm Workshop ends (dinner on your own)

Please note: The conference and workshop are two different events. You can register for either one or both. Please see the registration panel for more information.

MREC Officers, Executive Committee and Board of Directors

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- President - Nick Smith, Souix Valley Energy
- Vice President - Patrick Soukup, Central Electric Cooperative, Inc.
- Treasurer - Corey Kuchta, WI Public Service
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- Jason Kollwelter, We Energies
- James Turner, Stearns Electric Association
- James Pachan, Kandiyohi Power Cooperative
- Milt Schmidt, Eau Claire Energy Cooperative
- Brian Schultz, Jackson Electric Cooperative
- Mark Weber, Whetstone Valley Electric Coop.

Conference Agenda

This year's annual conference will focus on energy issues in agriculture. All of the breakouts will be presented twice so that you can choose from both tracks to design your own conference agenda. Note that conference speakers and presentations are still being finalized and changes may occur. Please check the website of the Midwest Rural Energy Council for updated information at: <https://mrec.org/>.

Thursday, February 12, 2026

7:00 AM	Registration & Breakfast
8:30	Welcome and Introductions
8:45	New Frontiers in the World of Stray Voltage: “Discovering” Lightning 100 Years Too Late - John Loud and Ben Cotts, Exponent
9:45	Break
10:00	Data Center Electric Demand - Jeremy Woeste, Basin Electric Power Cooperative
11:00	Nuclear Energy in a Shifting Energy Landscape - Paul Wilson, UW-Madison
12:00 PM	Lunch
1:00	Breakout Session 1
2:00	Breakout Session 2
3:00	Breakout Session 3
4:00	Breakout Session 4
5:30 - 7:30 PM	Buffet Dinner & Awards Ceremony

Friday, February 13, 2026

7:00	Breakfast
8:30	Updates from MREC - All invited Speaker TBD

Friday, February 13 (continued ...)

8:45 AM	Ag Insurance - TBD
9:45	Break
10:00	ATC transmission projects - farm issues - TBD
11:00	Applied Ethics - Thom Thibodeau, Viterbo University
12:00 PM	Adjourn

Thursday Breakout Sessions

- Track 1: Wires
1. Transients: How to Measure, Trace the Source(s), and Evaluate their Effect - John Loud and Ben Cotts, Exponent
 2. Stray voltage real life testing findings - Alex Geiser & Jason Zilisch
 3. Power Quality - Chris Mullins, PMI
 4. Stray Voltage Investigation - TBD

- Track 2: Breakout Renewables/Efficiency
1. From Simplicity to Sophistication: A Look at Residential Rate Design - Jason Strong, National Rural Utilities Cooperative Finance Corporation
 2. Utility Scale Solar New Policies - Eric Udelhofen, OneEnergy
 3. Virtual Power Plants - Speaker TBD
 4. TBD - Speaker TBD



Registration

Please refer to the registration panel for workshop and conference fees. The Pre-Conference Workshop includes materials and break food (lunch and dinner are on your own). Hotel accommodations are not included in the fee.

The **Conference registration fee includes** materials, breaks, lunch, and dinner buffet Thursday. Breakfast is included on Thursday and Friday. Hotel accommodations are not included in the fee. Attendees are responsible for booking their own overnight accommodations.

Make check payable to: Conference Management - MREC-2026 Conference

Mail to: UW & Conferences & Events | Conferences, 702 Langdon Street, Madison, WI 53706

Or register online at: <https://uwmadison.eventsair.com/mrec25/reg>

Cancellations: All cancellations must be made in writing to conferences@union.wisc.edu by Thursday, January 29, 2026 in order to receive a partial refund. A \$110 process and handling fee will be assessed to any cancellation made by the deadline. Cancellations after Thursday, January 29, 2026 will not receive a refund. Substitutions are welcome at any time.

Questions: Call Conference Management at 608-262-6696

Location and Lodging

A confirmation notice will be mailed upon receipt of registration. The conference will be held at:

Radisson Hotel La Crosse
200 Harborview Plaza, La Crosse, WI 54601
Phone: 608-784-6680

A block of rooms has been reserved for conference participants at the nightly rate of \$139/one king bed or \$149/two queen beds, plus taxes. Be sure to mention that you are attending the Midwest Rural Energy Conference to receive the special rate. Please note rooms will be available on a first come, first serve basis.

Registration Form

63rd Annual Rural Energy Conference & Workshop
February 11 - 13

Complete a separate registration form (or copy) for each registrant or register online at:

<https://uwmadison.eventsair.com/mrec25/reg>

Early registration deadline is January 29, 2026.

Name _____

Company _____

JobTitle _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

Daytime Phone _____

Email Address to access coursework _____

The pre-conference workshop and conference are separate events. You can register for one or both.

Pre Conference Workshop - February 11

☐ \$250 (\$270 received after January 29)

Rural Energy Conference - February 12-13

☐ \$480 (\$500 received after January 29)

Both - February 11 - 13

☐ \$670 (\$720 received after January 29)

_____ Total Enclosed

Payment must be made at time of registration. Enclose fee. Checks payable to Conference Management - MREC-2026

☐ Check enclosed

☐ Please charge on the following account:

☐ VISA ☐ Master Card ☐ American Express or

☐ Discover

Card Number _____

Exp. Date _____ Name on Card _____

Signature _____