



Kevin Babcock,
General Manager/CEO

NEW SOFTWARE BRINGS BENEFITS

For more than 20 years, Jackson Electric utilized the same customer information/billing software. Last year, we were notified by that company they were going to cease business by the end of 2018. After reviewing several options, it

was determined that Jackson Electric would contract with the National Information Solutions Cooperative (NISC) to purchase its customer information software.

On February 12, the new system went live. The conversion went smoothly, and I want to thank the members for their patience during this transitional period. On the go-live date, we saw an increase in users with the new online bill pay link, SmartHub. As we move forward, we anticipate seeing more members take advantage of the online and mobile bill pay systems. From the comments we've received, members are pleased with the ease of registration and use of the site.

This software is currently used by more than 40 percent of the nation's electric utilities. Many of the Wisconsin electric cooperatives already converted to NISC, which made it an easy choice for Jackson Electric to work with NISC.

If you have issues registering online with the new system, please contact our office.

Legislative

In February, I, along with a few of your board members, attended Wisconsin Electric Cooperative Association's Education and Lobby Days in Madison. This is a two-day event where the focus is on legislative issues that impact our industry and community. On day two, we had an opportunity to visit our representatives and/or their staff at the Capitol.

The importance of your cooperative being represented at this event is to educate your local representatives about our industry and the impact some regulations may have on their constituents. The majority of our state receives electricity from investor-owned utilities. It is those utilities that serve urban areas, rather than rural. Because electric cooperatives serve rural areas, it is important we stay in front of our local representatives so they stay informed on rural issues.

Politics is where it is at. It's important for rural communities to have support from their own representatives, but also support from other legislators who may represent more urban areas.



THANK YOU, JACKSON ELECTRIC EMPLOYEES



April 9 is recognized as Linemen Appreciation Day by the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association. Jackson Electric's linemen are, left to right, Don Fortun (meter technician), Brian Schultz, Grant Witcraft, Dalton Berg, Jesse Hansen, Brian Dolesy (warehouse clerk), Dan McKevitt, Hazy Wood, David Ripp, and Spencer Paulson. Absent was Matt Bush.



April 25 is Administrative Professionals' Day. Serving Jackson Electric's members in the front office are, back row, left to right, Steve Bucholz, Thereasa Rieck, and Bertina Zager. Seated, left to right, are Pam Bjerke and Deanna Oliver.

WINTER MORATORIUM ENDS APRIL 16

Please contact Jackson Electric **BEFORE** April 16 to make payment arrangements for past-due electric accounts. All past-due accounts need to be reconciled before April 16 in order to avoid any disconnection of your service. Failure to contact us about your past-due account could result in service fees along with disconnection of your electric service.



There are still spots available if you are interested in participating in the JacksonSolar, LLC pilot project. Please contact our office at 715.284.5385 if you are interested in purchasing and installing a solar panel.



A FRESH APPROACH to FEED THE WORLD

What if I told you the future of providing fresh food is here? What if I told you this future is close to home? Would you believe me? You may have already passed by this futuristic approach if you have traveled Interstate 94 near the Northfield exit. You may have wondered what that facility on the hilltop could possibly be. The short answer would be that the facility you see is Superior Fresh, a facility that uses aquaponics to sustainably raise Atlantic salmon and rainbow trout, and to grow a variety of leafy greens.

Aquaponics is the combination of aquaculture and hydroponics. Superior Fresh describes aquaponics as “the symbiotic relationship between fish, beneficial bacteria, and plants.” This means “water from an aquaculture system is fed to a hydroponic system where the by-products are broken down by nitrifying bacteria into nitrites, which are utilized by the plant as nutrients, and the water is then recirculated back to the aquaculture system.” Through this process there is 99.9 percent recirculation, meaning there is very little waste. That’s why aquaponics is such a sustainable approach to providing food for a world with limited resources. Superior Fresh’s mission is “to feed the world with healthy, reliable, and high value food products that are produced using sound practices in a safe environment.”

This business has evolved from the college education of Brandon Gottsacker, chief operating officer. Brandon studied biology with an agriculture/fisheries emphasis at the University of Wisconsin–Stevens Point. He also has a background in business management. During college, Brandon had internships and research training with aquaculture that led him to the present day.

“I learned about re-circulating farms [hydroponics, aquaculture, and aquaponics] in college,” shares Brandon, “and there were a lot of naysayers that said something

Superior Fresh is home to the first indoor Atlantic salmon RAS facility in the United States. The greenhouse is capable of producing 2 million pounds of leafy greens annually.

like this [an aquaponics facility as large as Superior Fresh] could not be successful.” Many aquaponics business models much smaller than Superior Fresh have not been successful. Brandon is determined to prove the naysayers wrong.

The vision for Superior Fresh was conceptualized five years ago, and the company saw its ground-breaking in June of 2015. Building and establishing a business can be a long process. General Manager Kurt Wagaman says that has been the biggest challenge so far. “The biggest reward,” says Kurt, “has been watching the fish grow from egg to where they are now in their development.” Kurt has a background in science education and business management.

“The success of the company will be defined when we can show an ability to get fresh, local produce to consumers on a regular basis,” Brandon and Kurt agree. They hope fresh produce will be available to local consumers every day. The facility can grow two million pounds of fresh produce annually. “That’s 30 times more per foot than conventional agriculture for leafy greens, using 20 times less water,” Brandon explains.

The facility is always looking for ways to improve the

local economy and support the community. “We want to be able to call ourselves a farm and create jobs in a rural area,” says Brandon. “We must recognize this is the future.” The employment opportunities at Superior Fresh range from greenhouse techs, to aquaculture teams, to team leaders, to scientists. The educational backgrounds vary from a high school diploma/GED to Ph.D.

“Although we have advanced technology, we



The 40,000 sq. ft. steel fish house and 123,000 sq. ft. glass greenhouse are situated on a 720-acre native restoration property in Northfield.

still want to have small-town farm values,” shares Brandon. Superior Fresh has shown its values and commitment to the community through collaborations with FFA activities, and its work with both the Boys Scouts and the DNR. “We donated our first produce to Feed My People Food Bank,” Kurt reports. Over 3,600 heads of lettuce were donated. The company intends to maintain a community presence.


It is important for consumers to be educated about where their food comes from. Many leafy greens come from California and Mexico, traveling 2,000 miles or more to reach Wisconsin grocery stores. Atlantic salmon travels 3,800 to 5,600 miles from Norway and Chile, respectively. The product passes through many hands along the way before reaching grocery stores: fisherman, buyer, processor, distributor, retailer, consumer. That’s where Superior Fresh is different. The products will go straight to the retailer from the facility regularly so that consumers can find products that are both local and fresh.

Bringing animals and plants back together in the agricultural process is a practice that distinguishes Superior Fresh from other businesses. Other details that make Superior Fresh stand out are found right in the business name. Superior. Everything is superior compared to competitors, including methods, practices, and the final consumer product. Fresh. The goal is to always have fresh product available for consumers.

Consumers should also know that Superior Fresh products are safe. The leafy greens are non-GMO and organic, using no pesticides, herbicides, or mammalian fertilizers. The cold-water fish are raised using organic processes, and they are free of hormones, antibiotics, PCB, and metals. The fish will be humanely harvested and shipped the same day as processing once they become available.

If a safe product is not enough to convince the consumer to purchase Superior Fresh produce, consider the environmental impact. The business model of Superior Fresh is a sustainable approach to providing food for an abundance of people. Only a minimal amount of new water is needed to operate the system. Production water is irrigated to grow organic alfalfa. Any waste produced from the fish or leafy greens is organically composted, producing a sustainable fertilizer.

In the future, Superior Fresh would like to double onsite so that more leafy greens can be produced. The business also aspires to serve food deserts. The USDA defines food deserts as “parts of the country vapid of fresh fruit, vegetables, and other whole foods...largely due to a lack of grocery stores, farmers’ markets, and healthy food providers.” A sustainable way to produce an abundance of food is important. According to a USDA report, 15.8 million households were food insecure in 2015, meaning they did not have access to adequate food due to a lack of resources.

Safe and fresh leafy greens like romaine, red leaf, oakleaf, green leaf, arugula, spinach, kale, and bib lettuces are currently available for purchase by wholesale distributors who pick up the product directly from the facility. The fish will become available when they are at the appropriate stage in their development. Every day at Superior Fresh may be different. However, the business will maintain a steady-state production all 365 days of the year.—*Brandi Shramek, communications intern* 

Rebates Reminder

Jackson Electric has rebates for the purchase of Energy Star appliances, electric heat pumps, electric boilers, and LED lighting. Go to www.jackelec.com or contact our office for more information.



PURCHASE EVERGREEN, SUPPORT RENEWABLE ENERGY

As a member of Jackson Electric, you can support renewable energy by purchasing blocks of energy through the Evergreen program. This program is a voluntary renewable energy (green power) program and is for those who want to support renewable energy and are willing to help pay for the extra costs associated with its production.

In addition to your monthly electric bill, you volunteer to pay a small, additional charge each month to offset the additional cost it takes to support renewable energy generation. Your investment in Evergreen results in the generation of renewable energy above and beyond state requirements.

Blocks of renewable energy can be purchased for \$1 per block. Use the form below or download the form at www.jackelec.com.

Please sign me up for Evergreen so I can support renewable energy!

- 1 block (\$1 per month)
- 2 blocks (\$2 per month)
- 3 blocks (\$3 per month)
- 4 blocks (\$4 per month)
- 5 blocks (\$5 per month)
- ___ blocks at \$1 per block per month

* **One block = 100 kilowatt-hours**

I understand that this amount is in addition to my monthly energy bill and that I may cancel my purchase at any time.

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____

State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____

Account No.: _____

Complete and return to Jackson Electric Cooperative.
P.O. Box 546, Black River Falls, WI 54615



USE SMARTHUB TO PAY YOUR BILL

SmartHub, Jackson Electric's new online bill pay service, has several features that make managing your account as easy as possible. Whether through the web, your smart phone or tablet (Android or iOS), you'll be able to pay your bill, view your monthly electricity use, and contact our office.



With SmartHub, you can:

- Pay your bill
- View, print, or download current and previous billing statements
- Access your account 24/7
- Review electricity use
- Set up your account for automatic payment
- Receive e-mail and/or text notifications regarding your account

Access SmartHub by visiting www.jackelec.com or by downloading the app on your mobile device through the Apple Store or Google Play Marketplace.

Convenient Ways to Pay Your Jackson Electric Bill

	AutoPay	Mail	Mobile App	Office	Online	Phone	Certified Bank Funds
If I get a paper bill, I can pay by:	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
If I get an electronic bill, I can pay by:	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
If I want to pay by credit or debit card, I can pay by:	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	
If I want to pay with a paper check, I can pay by:		✓		✓			
If I want to pay by cash, I can pay by:				✓			
If I want to make a payment 24/7, I can pay by:	✓		✓		✓	✓	
If I want confirmation of my payment today, I can pay by:			✓	✓	✓	✓	

Paying Your Jackson Electric Bill by Telephone? Call 844.759.3984

This is Jackson Electric's designated secure phone number for credit and debit card payments.

You can still contact our office to make a card payment, but will be redirected to this phone number.

NEED ELECTRIC SERVICE? Make Your Appointment Now

If you're planning to build a house or an additional structure on your property that will need electric service installed, please contact Jackson Electric to schedule an appointment to discuss your electric service needs. We can also help you with electric heating and cooling options, and Energy Star rebates.

ADDING ELECTRICAL LOAD?

If you plan to upgrade your heating equipment or add a substantial amount of electrical load to your meter, please notify Jackson Electric. We will need to determine if your transformer size will be sufficient to maintain the additional load.



Geothermal heat pumps As of January 1, 2018, new installations of geothermal heat pumps are not allowed on the Jackson Electric Cooperative dual fuel rate.

Water heater repairs Jackson Electric will repair water heaters during regular office hours for members who participate in the water heater program. The member must

have a load management receiver connected to their water heater. If the repair is plumbing or electrical related, or due to a dry-fired element, parts and labor may be charged to the member.

Water heaters obtained under Jackson Electric's water heater program are to be used as the primary source of domestic hot water and are not to be used as supplemental water heaters or storage heaters. This will void the warranty, and any repairs may be billed to the member.



Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

Customer Service 715.284.5385
800.370.4607
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Diggers Hotline 800.242.8511
www.jackelec.com

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Board of Directors: Gary Woods, President
Jerry Huber, Vice President
David Peasley, Secretary-Treasurer
Daniel Smrekar, Kristi Hanson, Stanley Gran, Brian Huber, Chris Curran, Jerry Wagner

Kevin Babcock, General Manager/CEO

Jackson Electric Cooperative is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

Your Touchstone Energy® Partner