

# WEC CO-OP CURRENTS

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The newsletter of Washington Electric Cooperative, Inc., East Montpelier, Vermont.

June 2005

## To The Rescue

### Starving Owl In WEC Right-of-Way Lives to Fly Again

**W**ith gloved hands, Nadine Brooke reached into the cardboard pet carrier and scooped up the owl inside. She removed it carefully and then held it against her body, the bird's feet gripped between her fingers and its powerful wings confined by her wrists.

Ray Shatney, who had discovered the weakened owl nearly 12 weeks earlier while clearing right-of-way in Chelsea for Washington Electric Co-op and gotten a message to VINS (Vermont Institute of Natural Science), took his spot beside Nadine, and photographer Janet Steward began snapping pictures. Nadine's mother watched from a lawn chair that Nadine had carried to the field, her two grandchildren beside her.

"I was smoothing out his feathers for a better picture," Nadine explained later, "and I lost my grip."

The owl spotted his chance, and with a startling beating of wings pushed away from Nadine and soared into the air. As the little group watched, he sailed over the field and around a bend in the tree line.

"He did a nice, graceful, happy flight," said Nadine. "It wasn't like he was in a panic."

For a moment their eyes lingered in the direction where they had last seen the owl, marveling at the difference that

a few months of rehabilitation had made in the exotic, wild creature.

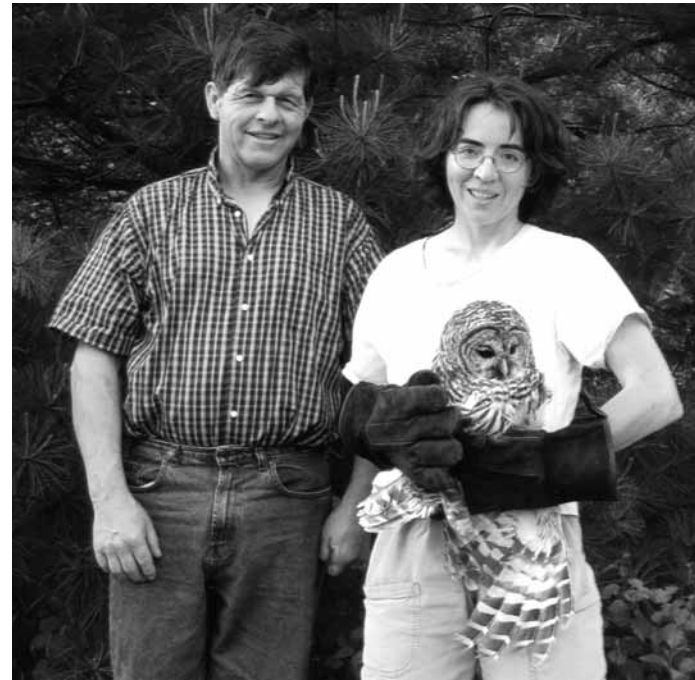
"I was surprised (to hear it had survived)," Ray later told *Co-op Currents*. "I figured the owl had died. It looked like it was starving. When they brought it back, it looked totally different. It flew about six feet off the ground and went about 150 feet and flew around a corner. It was really good to see it disappear like that."

#### Easter omen

A few days before Easter Sunday, Ray Shatney, proprietor of Shatney's Tree Service of Greensboro, was clearing right-of-way for the Co-op's power lines on O'Donnell Road, just off Route 113 between Chelsea and Vershire. Winter was waning in those final days of March, but the cold and ice still were still very much present. Working with Ray were his employees Mark and Matt Foster.

They had seen a barred owl perched in a tree earlier in the week, but on this morning they found it resting in a ditch beside the road. The owl didn't look so good. Its wings weren't broken, but the best it could do was to fly a few feet at a time before collapsing again to the ground.

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The barred owl (left) being held by Nadine Brooke of Chelsea prior to its release on June 11, owes its life to Nadine and WEC contractor Ray Shatney (beside her), and to the bird rehabilitation center at VINS.

Janet Steward

## Vermont Adopts Renewable Energy Goals

### WEC Protects its Credits, For Now

**T**he Vermont Legislature passed a renewable-energy bill during the 2005 session that demands a concerted effort by Vermont electric utilities to increase their use of power generated by wind, solar, thermal and other green sources by 2013.

The bill envisions the establishment of "renewable portfolio standards," which would require electric utilities to include a certain minimum percentage of clean,

alternative power in their wholesale sources of energy. Gov. James Douglas signed the measure into law in a ceremony at Northern Power Systems' Barre Town facility (the former Bombardier plant) on June 14.

Along with the Legislature's approval of on-site dry cask storage of nuclear waste by Entergy Corp. – primarily to

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#### Inside

**WEC has found a wind partner.** Co-op to assist UPC Vermont Wind in researching a Sheffield site, in hopes of adding wind power to WEC's energy mix. Page 2.

**John Bellefeuille, a man for all seasons in WEC's long history,** wins recognition from Northeastern co-ops with Aiken Award. Page 3.

**State takes measures to improve indoor air quality and save lives.** Co-op offers advice and help meeting new air and safety standards. Page 6.

**Joe's Pond gets its beach** as WEC sells the popular recreation spot to Danville. Why did WEC own a beach? Find out on page 8.



Treasurer Don Douglas (above) and nature expert Bryan Pfeiffer combined for an interesting and informative one-two punch at the Co-op's May Annual Meeting. Coverage of the Annual Meeting begins on page 4.

#### Washington Electric Cooperative

East Montpelier, VT 05651

# After Long Search, WEC Selects A Wind-Power Partner

After studying in-state alternatives for participating in a wind electric-generation project to provide members with another portion of their power from a clean, renewable resource, Washington Electric Cooperative has joined with UPC Vermont Wind, LLC, to study the feasibility of a potential project in Sheffield. The companies announced their partnership on June 8.

"This is not Coventry," General Manager Avram Patt emphasized as he described the Co-op's alliance with UPC Vermont Wind. "At Coventry – where, as our members know, we are about to open a 4.8-megawatt generation project using landfill gas – the Co-op owns the facility and will harvest all the electricity it produces. With the wind project our role is as a participant. If the project gets built we expect to get a relatively small portion of the electricity output. UPC will be the owner and developer, and will shepherd the project through the regulatory process."

The Co-op's Board of Directors determined that the Sheffield project represented a good use of the \$941,400 grant WEC received in 2002 from the

U.S. Department of Energy, with the assistance of U.S. Rep. Bernard Sanders (I-Vt). The grant's broad purpose was to help Washington Electric procure electricity from wind, at an installation somewhere in Vermont.

"There are only a limited number of developers and potential wind generation sites in Vermont," said Patt.

*"We are linking up with a company we are confident will be respectful of Vermont's environment and the community that will be home to this project."*

— Avram Patt

"We've had preliminary conversations with all of the players. We determined that UPC, and the site they have been looking at in Sheffield, were on balance the best match for the Co-op."

The decision was based on a number of factors. UPC Wind has a track record that includes the successful development of sites in Europe, and has now received regulatory approval and is building projects in Maine and Hawaii.

(UPC Vermont Wind is a subsidiary of the larger company.)

"We believe they've gone about the process well in other places," said Patt, "and they have been operating respectfully and professionally here in Vermont. They've been talking to people in the immediate community (Sheffield) for a while now; they've visited local officials and had representatives at Town Meeting. We decided that this was a company we could feel comfortable doing business with."

Equally important, the Sheffield site seems promising.

"Although further study is needed, we are hopeful that the analysis will be positive and that the project will go forward," said Patt. "In partnering with UPC, we are linking up with a company we are confident will be respectful of Vermont's environment and the community that will be home to this project."

What WEC brings to the table is its federal grant money, which will help fund the preliminary assessment phase of the project. WEC also brings its experience and positive reputation in the Vermont

energy community and the towns and villages of central Vermont.

"WEC's knowledgeable staff and history of dedication to the environment made this a natural partnership for us," said UPC Vermont President Paul Gaynor. "We look forward to working with WEC and members of the community to develop a domestic, clean, and affordable power option for Vermont."

Obtaining power from an in-state source using wind turbines fits squarely into WEC's philosophy and plans.

"As we've made clear, we are committed to meeting our future power needs from renewable sources – close to home if possible," said Patt, noting the benefits of keeping the investments and revenue largely in Vermont.

But expectations for this project, he noted, are modest. "We expect that the Co-op would purchase just a small portion of UPC's total output, and that the power from UPC's wind installation would account for just a small portion of our total power supply."

Pricing for the power purchase will be finalized between WEC and UPC under a separate agreement at a later date. UPC will sell the balance of the project's output to other utilities.

For further information on the Newton, Massachusetts-based company, visit UPC's website: [www.upcwind.com](http://www.upcwind.com)



## Co-op Currents

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WEC is part of the alliance working to advance and support the principles of cooperatives in Vermont.

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### Editorial Committee

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The Board of Directors' regularly scheduled meetings are on the last Wednesday of each month, in the evening. Members are welcome to attend. Members who wish to discuss a matter with the Board should contact the president through WEC's office. Meeting dates and times are subject to change. For information about times and/or agenda, or to receive a copy of the minutes of past meetings, contact Administrative Assistant Deborah Brown, 802-223-5245.

## Renewable Portfolio

*continued from page 1*

enable Vermont Yankee to continue operating after its storage pool fills up in 2008 – the renewable portfolio standards (RPS) bill was the session's signal achievement regarding energy. Titled "An Act Relating to Renewable Energy, Efficiency, Transmission, and Vermont's Energy Future," the bill not only sets a target goal for raising the profile of green power in the state's energy mix (10 percent), it also creates mechanisms for qualifying or disqualifying generation facilities as renewable, for overseeing compliance, trading

credits, and other elements needed to support a statewide RPS system.

On the whole, the bill moves Vermont toward a formal embrace of renewable energy, as other New England states already have done.

(The bill also provides a layman's definition of renewable energy: "Renewable energy" means energy produced using a technology that relies on a resource that is being consumed at a harvest rate at or below its natural regeneration rate.)

## WEC's unusual position

Washington Electric Cooperative is a proponent of renewable energy, as

*continued on page 3*



Gov. Douglas, second from left, standing behind a wind-turbine blade, prepares to sign Vermont's renewable-portfolio legislation.

# Northeastern Co-ops Honor John Bellefeuille With Aiken Award

The Northeast Association of Electric Cooperatives (NEAEC) recently honored former WEC board member and interim manager John Bellefeuille with its 2005 George D. Aiken Award. The annual award recognizes lifetime achievements on behalf of rural electric cooperatives.

NEAEC's membership is made up of electric co-ops in Vermont, New Hampshire, Maine and upstate New York. The Aiken Award was presented to Bellefeuille at a banquet in Fairlee on May 26, during the association's annual conference.

Bellefeuille was recognized for his service to Washington Electric Cooperative at two critical periods in the Co-op's history. As a young man of 18, Bellefeuille traveled the back roads of his native Chelsea and neighboring Tunbridge in the early 1940s, signing up members to join the new cooperatively owned utility that had recently been started in neighboring Washington County. At the time, large parts of these counties did not have electric service. Because of the pioneering work of residents like Bellefeuille and others, WEC was able to extend service to Chelsea, Tunbridge and many other towns in Orange County.

Bellefeuille, a master electrician and registered professional engineer, went on to enjoy a successful career with Western Electric (AT&T), during which time he and his wife Shirley resided in Massachusetts. Upon his retirement from a management position in 1981, the Bellefeuille family returned to Chelsea.

That was a time of change and some controversy at Washington Electric Cooperative, with many Co-op members questioning their Co-op's direction and management. Bellefeuille was among those raising questions about WEC's costly investment in the Seabrook (NH) nuclear plant, and about the Co-op's democratic process and other issues. He was appointed to fill a vacancy on WEC's Board of Directors in 1988, at a time when the board and management were beginning to change. He was subsequently elected to three full terms. He retired from the board in 2000.

In 1990, Bellefeuille served as interim manager of the Co-op on an unpaid basis for six months when the board was making management changes that

set the Co-op on its present course in terms of power-supply policies and member participation.

The Northeast Association of Electric Cooperatives named its annual award after George D. Aiken in recognition of his strong support for rural electrification in Vermont and nationally, as Vermont's governor and then for many years as its U.S. senator. Aiken attended the pole planting and founding ceremonies for both of Vermont's electric co-ops in 1938 and 1939.

At the May 26 NEAEC meeting in Fairlee, present and former WEC presidents Barry Bernstein and Michael Duane told the attendees of John's dedication to co-ops, rural electrification and democracy. Lola Aiken, wife of the late Governor and Senator Aiken, attended the event and assisted in the presentation.

*As a young man in the 1940s, Bellefeuille traveled the back roads of Chelsea and Tunbridge, signing up members to join the new cooperatively owned utility. Large parts of those counties did not have electric service.*



## Renewable Portfolio

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evidenced by the fact that nearly 40 percent of WEC's energy mix already comes from renewable sources (landfill methane, woodchip and small hydro), and that the Co-op will open its own landfill-methane generation plant in Coventry this summer.

However, during the course of deliberations the renewable portfolio bill presented the troubling possibility that WEC would actually lose some of the important financial benefits of its investments in renewable energy.

In the end, that didn't happen, because the bill in its final form sets a target of 10-percent renewables for Vermont utilities to reach *together* by 2013. If the companies fall short of the target – not necessarily individually, but collectively – and Vermont continues to rely too much on electricity generated from fossil fuels, the mandatory standards will kick in.

"That's several years down the road," said WEC General Manager Avram Patt. "The new law gives the utilities an opportunity to address the Legislature's concerns by developing new sources of renewable energy and making them



*John Bellefeuille, left, who filled a number of roles with WEC over the course of 60 years (from organizer to trustee to interim manager) holds his framed NEAEC George D. Aiken Award. With him is Lola Aiken, wife of the late Vermont governor and senator.*

Linda Gahne Fox

more prominent in Vermont's energy mix.

"But if the state lags on renewable energy production and distribution a new system would kick in, and in that scenario the Co-op would have to hold onto some of its renewable energy credits to meet the requirements of the law. That would obviously mean we would have fewer credits to sell, which would impact our Co-op's revenues."

Since 2001, WEC has held renewable energy credits (RECs) associated with its purchase of power from a landfill gas-to-energy generation facility in Connecticut (see "The Key to Stable Rates," page 4). Selling those credits to electric utilities elsewhere in New England, which need them to meet their states' portfolio requirements, has provided critical income for the Co-op in 2004 and 2005. Once the Co-op sells all or a part of the credits associated with a generation source, it can no longer claim the renewable characteristics of the energy, even though the energy itself is being purchased by members each month.

An early version of the bill would have enacted the portfolio standards more quickly. WEC understood the legislators' zeal to make the state more energy independent, reduce volatility in Vermont ratepayers' electric bills,

contribute less to the nation's greenhouse gas emissions, and support Vermont's renewable-energy industry. But it would have cost WEC and its members some of the income that has enabled the Co-op to avoid rate increases.

"We made the case in testimony in the State House that some Vermont utilities had gone out and actively invested in renewables without being pushed by legislation, and we were concerned that those utilities – particularly our Co-op, which has done more for renewables on a per-capita basis than any other utility in the state – might be penalized," said Patt. "I believe our testimony had some influence on the final form of the bill."

In the end, the Legislature struck a balance.

"The legislation will push the rest of the state further toward renewables, which we applaud. But it also recognizes our situation. It doesn't guarantee that an RPS won't be instituted several years from now, but it gives the opportunity for that not to happen."

"If we do a good job and provide a significant portion of renewable energy to our customers and members, we'll avoid a government mandate and stimulate our Vermont economy."

# The Key To Stable Electric Rates

*Annual Meeting Highlights Methane Benefits; Completes WEC Elections*

**W**ashington Electric Co-op members have been hearing for more than a year about their cooperative's development of a generating station that will use landfill gas (methane) collected in Coventry to produce affordable electric power, exclusively for WEC members.

What they might not have heard about, unless they attended Washington Electric's Annual Membership Meeting on May 3 at the Montpelier Elks Club, was how much they have already

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*'Without the revenue we gain from selling renewable energy credits, projections show we would need a rate increase.'*

— Donald Douglas, WEC treasurer

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benefited from WEC's involvement with landfill-gas electricity. In combination with prudent fiscal management, the Co-op's purchase of methane-generated wholesale power from a facility in Connecticut has made it possible to avoid a rate increase. The Co-op has not raised rates for its members since 1999.

This information emerged in WEC Treasurer Don Douglas' report at the annual meeting. He reminded members that since 2001 WEC has contracted for a portion of its power (approximately two megawatts; WEC's total power demand usually runs at around 10 MW) from a methane generation station at a landfill in New Milford, Connecticut. Douglas explained that electric utilities in some New England states are required by state law to provide a portion of their power from renewable energy sources. The New Milford electricity qualifies as renewable, and our contract with Bio Energy Partners (which operates the generating plant) enables this renewable power to be produced and distributed through the regional electricity grid.

In return, the Co-op earns "renewable energy credits" (RECs), which it can sell to utilities that must prove they are supporting renewable power.

The revenue has made a difference for the Co-op and its members.

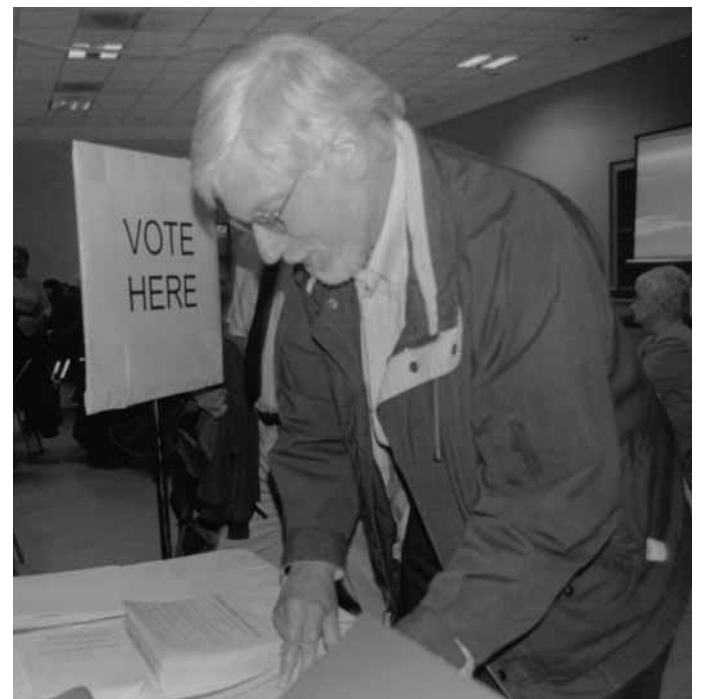
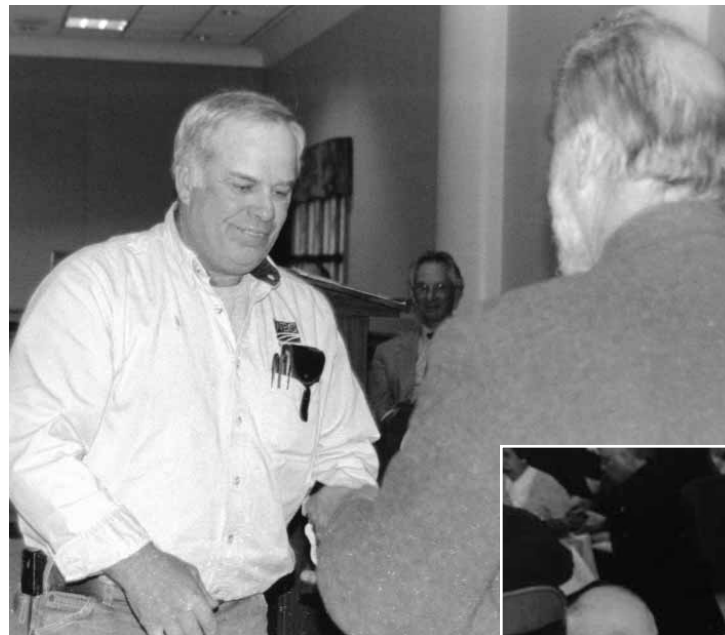
"We have been selling our RECs, and it has prevented a rate increase for our Co-op," Douglas said. "We've run financial forecasts that both include and exclude our revenue from the renewable energy credits. Without that revenue, the projections show we would need a rate increase."

It would be risky for WEC to become dependent on the credits, because



## **Faces (and backs) at the 66th Annual Membership Meeting.**

*Clockwise from top left: WEC members Lori Barg, Linda Fox and Amy Darley (left to right) share a laugh; featured speaker, naturalist Bryan Pfeiffer; Williamstown Co-op member John Taylor casting his vote; a gathering of WEC members breaking bread together; and Operations Foreman Bob Fair receiving a well-deserved award for 35 years of dedication, hard work and leadership from WEC President Barry Bernstein.*



economic and regulatory conditions are subject to change. (That's already happening; see "Vermont Adopts Renewable Energy Goals," page 1). But the Co-op was able to work out a "rate-stabilization plan" with state and federal officials, which allows some of the income from the RECs to be deferred, and applied to future financial calculations.

"We'll be able to draw down on that money later on," Douglas explained.

WEC's rate stability, then, can be attributed to its support for renewable



energy facilities – and this is *before* its own landfill gas generating plant produces its first megawatt.

### Election results

Much of the discussion at the annual meeting – WEC's 66th membership meeting since the Co-op was founded in 1939 – was about the plant Washington Electric will open this summer in Coventry, and the benefits it will provide in terms of reliable baseload electric power (eventually meeting as much as 50 percent of the Co-op's demand).

The meeting, which drew some 170 WEC members, employees and guests, also marked the conclusion of balloting for three seats on the Board of Directors. When the votes had been cast and counted the members had returned two incumbent directors – Treasurer Douglas of East Orange, and Wendell Cilley of West Topsham – to the Board, and

*Bob has been a WEC lineman for 35 years. His knowledge of WEC's 1,200-mile distribution system, his experience and skill, and his leadership qualities are immensely valuable to the company and to the members who rely on WEC for electric service.*

added a new Co-op director, Tim Guiles of Williamstown. Guiles, who holds bachelor's and graduate degrees in engineering fields related to electricity, is a professional pianist and music instructor.

The breakdown of the voting was: 919 votes for Douglas, 908 for Cilley, and 871 for Guiles. There were no additional candidates in this year's election; there were, however, 14 write-in ballots cast.

Voters also approved bylaw amendments proposed by the Board, which pertained in various ways to WEC's capital credit distribution program. The amendments passed by a vote of 702-50. They will not alter the program's function, which is to return portions of the Co-op's revenues to members, for years when there is sufficient revenue to allow such distributions. Two of the amendments, (which were detailed in the April issue of *Co-op Currents*) were wording changes to clarify WEC's practices for tax purposes. The others updated policies for handling capital credits accumulated by former Co-op members.

Tim Guiles, the new face on the Board of Directors, in effect replaced Director Charles ("Bud") Haas. Haas, of Bradford, had served two multi-year stints as a WEC director, and Co-op President Barry Bernstein expressed gratitude and admiration for his retiring Board colleague.

"Bud is someone who is never afraid to ask critical questions and take strong positions," said Bernstein. "His contributions have helped the Co-op maintain

high standards for serving our members and our communities."

As they do at every annual meeting, the Directors set aside time to thank members of the Co-op's staff who had reached employment milestones. Linemen Larry Gilbert and Raymond Hall, and the Co-op's mechanic, Brad Nutbrown, received five-year service awards. Senior Accountant Teia Greenslit, and Mike Myers, WEC's Right-of-Way Coordinator, were recognized for 10 years of service.

Special recognition was reserved for Bob Fair, one of the Co-op's two operations foremen. Bob has been a WEC lineman for 35 years. His

knowledge of WEC's 1,200-mile distribution system, his experience and skill, and his leadership qualities are immensely valuable to the company and to the members who rely on WEC for electric service.

### 'All ours!'

Other features of the annual meeting included a slideshow and lively discussion of wildlife in Co-op Country by local naturalist and WEC member Bryan Pfeiffer and a slide presentation by General Manager Avram Patt showing progress on the landfill gas-to-electricity generating station in Coventry as it nears completion. Patt's pictures

showed the building site in various stages of construction in the snows of winter and the mud of spring, and the massive Caterpillar engines that will produce the electric power, being moved into the nearly complete facility.

With the final slide, an exterior shot of the unassuming, single-story building housing the electric-generation equipment, Patt announced: "There it is. It may not be the most beautiful thing in the world, but it's all ours!"

The audience – Co-op customer/members who indeed do own the facility that will soon be providing power to their homes, farms, businesses and schools – erupted in applause.

## Pfeiffer's Photos of WEC in the Wild

In the darkened room at the Montpelier Elks Club, 170

people fixed their eyes on a projection screen to see and hear what Bryan Pfeiffer, a well-known Vermont naturalist who lives in Plainfield, had to say about wildlife in Washington Electric Co-op's power-line rights-of-way. The first image on the screen showed a row of tree swallows surveying the world from their perch along an electric power line.

"These are our *other* linemen," Pfeiffer quipped.

It got him a laugh, as did many of Pfeiffer's comments and observations about the birds, insects and mammals that are drawn to the open air and sunlight of power line corridors, and to the food sources (pollen and hazelnuts, for example) that thrive in those spaces.

Pfeiffer, a former newspaper reporter who covered Washington Electric Co-op during critical, policy-formulating years in the 1980s and who is now a Co-op member, was the featured speaker at WEC's 66th Annual Membership Meeting on May 3. His talk, titled "WEC, Wires and Wildlife," provided an entertaining counterpoint to the discussion of WEC's budget, its energy policies, and such topics as landfill gas, which had preceded it. With color slides and a sound track of bird songs, Pfeiffer charmed his audience with stories about the many and diverse creatures – from song sparrows to black bears, from spotted salamanders to blue dashers (a dragonfly) – that make use of WEC's 1,200 miles of right-of-way.

Laughs were occasionally replaced by appreciative "oooohs and ahhhhhs" when his magnified photographs displayed such glories of nature as the violet dancer (a damselfly) or the stunning wing patterns of an eastern tailed blue (another dragonfly).

"I find these insects structurally beautiful," said Pfeiffer,



*With color slides and a sound track of bird songs, Pfeiffer spoke about the many and diverse creatures that frequent WEC's 1,200 miles of right-of-way.*

as one shot displayed the long, curved body of a blue dasher beginning its mating ritual. "Think of a color, and you'll find it on a dragonfly." Other striking images included song sparrows, the hermit thrush (Vermont's state bird), and – cheating a bit, because these pictures were taken not *in* a right-of-way but *near* a right-of-way at Berlin Pond – a common loon and a bald eagle. A close-up shot of a power pole revealed strands of fur left by a black bear that had rubbed against it, while another showed deep marks made by a bear, not clawing, but gnawing on the pole.



*Ursine tooth marks on a WEC power pole.*

Pfeiffer also provided biology lessons: forthright, humorous explanations of insect reproduction, the brief appearance above-ground of the spotted salamander to deposit its eggs at a vernal pool before retreating for another year into the earth. His last series of photos were of the ruby crowned kinglet, a small bird with a patch of red "hair" atop its head that sometimes stands straight up as if the bird had received a jolt of electricity. Pfeiffer had doctored the final frame to include a tiny electric plug on the bird's back.

He ended his talk on a more serious note, touching on problematic aspects of the relationship between nature and electric utilities.

"You hear a lot about the impact of mercury and acid rain" (pollutants caused in part by fossil fuel-burning Midwestern power plants), Pfeiffer said. "But the biggest threat is loss of habitat. We're losing these critters because of our habits – tearing down nature to build buildings and malls."

But there is another way.

"What I love about this Co-op," Pfeiffer continued, "is how we care about the impact of our power mix, and how we won't use herbicides that would destroy those hazelnuts that those black bears need."





# Indoor Air Quality Laws Revised for Vermont

## Rules for New Construction Address CO and Ventilation

By Bill Powell  
Director of Products and Services

Two recent changes in Vermont law relating to indoor air quality (IAQ) may be of interest to Co-op members.

In May 2005 the Legislature passed, and Governor Douglas signed into law, Act 19, which requires "the installation of carbon monoxide detectors in housing."

The Co-op has recommended both smoke detectors and carbon monoxide (CO) detectors in previous *Co-op Currents* articles. Both are important, because they can save your life or the life of a family member. Carbon monoxide is a highly toxic vapor – an odorless, colorless gas that can result as a byproduct of combustion.

*Consumer Reports* has tested and reported upon various CO detection units. If you haven't yet purchased one yet for your house, one source is EFi.org (1-800-876-0660), which stocks Kidde products and has a WEC-member discount.

### Mechanical ventilation in new homes

Another recent change in Vermont statute concerns the Residential Building Energy Standards (RBES), which is our state energy code. One change in the code for new construction concerns what's called "mechanical ventilation." Until now, mechanical

ventilation has been *recommended* by your Co-op (and other organizations); now it is *required*, by statute, in new homes.

A simple bath fan and an automatic timer control will meet the requirement, although there are a range of technical solutions available for providing adequate fresh air to a home.

The mechanical-ventilation requirement pertains to new construction, but it's also a good idea for existing homes. If you want more information on IAQ or mechanical ventilation for your home, contact Bill Powell at the Co-op for technical assistance and recommendations.

### Home Heating Savings in Ducts

The Co-op has provided members with home-performance services

through technical field staff from Vermont Energy Investment Corporation (VEIC).

For members with furnaces and duct – make that duct – work, there are often significant additional costs (and savings opportunities) from reducing the air leakiness of the duct system.

Beyond air leakiness, other factors common to home ductwork systems which increase cost include inadequate or unbalanced design, and under- (or over-) sizing.

The only way to properly evaluate any of these conditions is with various diagnostic tests, which you can arrange through the Co-op's Home Performance services. Design and installation deficiencies are diagnosed with a "Duct Blaster." This test will reveal how well or poorly the supply and return airflows



work. Also, Duct Blaster will determine how much hot air is lost from the ductwork before being delivered to the rooms it is intended to heat.

Another benefit of evaluating ductwork is to determine whether or not airborne particulates are being filtered by the system. Airborne contaminants contribute significantly to asthma and other bronchial conditions.

This and other home heating and performance diagnostics are available for reasonable cost from VEIC. Just contact the Co-op for more information. With rising fuel prices, the economics of making home heating systems more efficient is more compelling than ever.

Additional information available at:  
*Home Performance services:*  
(<http://www.washingtonco-op.com/pages/homecomfort.pdf>)

Or, if you want to browse other sites, see:

*American Lung Association*  
(<http://www.lungusa.org>)

*Tamarack Technologies*  
(<http://www.tamtech.com>)

*Vermont Department of Public Service (DPS) webpage for RBES*  
([http://www.state.vt.us/psd/Menu/EE\\_and\\_Renewable/ee12.html](http://www.state.vt.us/psd/Menu/EE_and_Renewable/ee12.html))



### Micro Madness

To some, it seemed like a tornado. In fact, says weatherman Roger Hill, the furious storm that struck the Calais/East Montpelier area at 4:25 p.m. on Thursday, June 9, was "a classic microburst."

In this type of storm a tremendous downdraft of wind is propelled to the ground, and spreads out with tree-snapping winds that can reach 75 mph. The June 9 event also involved golf ball-sized hail, localized flash flooding, and what Hill says could have been 500-1,000 lightning strikes.

Lightning briefly disabled the Co-op's East Montpelier and Maple Corner substations, throwing more than 2,300 Co-op members out of power. The substations were restored by 6 p.m., but some 700 members remained without electricity due to power line damages as crews – who in many places had to cut their way through trees that had fallen across the roads before reaching their work locations – labored into the night to finish repairs. System damages were estimated at between \$6,000 and \$10,000. These pictures were taken by photographer and WEC member Andrew Kline in the Chickering Road area in East Montpelier.

Andrew Kline

### Appliance Rebates From EVT!

Co-op members: Here's your chance to upgrade your appliances, save money by conserving energy, and get money back on your purchase. But it's a limited-time offer. Efficiency Vermont (EVT) is currently offering three rebates for the purchase of ENERGY STAR® qualified appliances.

- \* A \$50 rebate for **clothes washers** purchased December 1, 2004, through December 31, 2005.
- \* A \$25 rebate for **refrigerators or freezers** bought between June 1 and August 31, 2005.
- \* A \$25 rebate **room air conditioners** between May 1 and August 31, 2005.

For more information, contact Washington Electric Cooperative, or Efficiency Vermont (toll-free at 888-921-5990, [www.efficiencyvermont.com](http://www.efficiencyvermont.com)).

**To The Rescue**

*continued from page 1*

The men returned to check on the owl occasionally during the day, and eventually decided it would die if they didn't get help for it. Ray asked a young woman driving by their work site to call VINS. The institute, well-known for its bird rehabilitation center in Woodstock, got the message, and soon Nadine Brooke showed up where Ray and his men were cutting.

"I've been volunteering for VINS as a transporter – picking up injured birds – since 1987," said Nadine, a Washington Electric Co-op member from Chelsea. "The others (birds she had transported previously) were too hurt to be rehabilitated and didn't survive. I was having a busy day that day, but when (VINS) called I had a funny feeling I didn't want to miss this one, and that it might even be nearby."

In fact it was. When Nadine figured out where the tree crew was working, it was only a quarter-mile from her



*"It was starving. At the end of a long hard winter, with a lingering snow cover, owls sometimes can't find enough mice to survive."*

— Nadine Brooke

driveway.

"I parked on the dirt road and hollered over to them, 'Did you see an owl?' They said yes, and Ray took me and showed me. There was some bread on the side of the road, like someone had seen it and felt sorry for it."

Nadine admits she wasn't totally prepared. She didn't have a blanket to throw over the owl, so while the Fosters prepared to hold traffic in case the owl fluttered into the roadway, Nadine distracted the bird with a slice of bread and then threw her sweater over it. Fortunately, she was wearing gloves, because even in its weakened state the owl had plenty of gripping power in its talons.

She got the owl into a box, then

stopped at home to call her children's school ("I had them tell the kids to be ready because we had an owl to deliver!") and headed to VINS.

"It didn't have any injuries other than it needed to eat," she recalled. "It was starving. At the end of a long hard winter, with a lingering snow cover, owls sometimes can't find enough mice to survive."

Somehow, though, the approaching holiday seemed a good omen.

"I said, 'This one's going to survive because Easter is coming up.'"

Later on, Nadine learned that the owl began eating on Easter day.

It was nearly three months later, and dozens of degrees warmer – her field no longer white and frozen but lush and

green – when Nadine returned to VINS on Saturday, June 11, to pick up the owl for its release back into the wild. The bird was waiting in a box with "Pet Waggin" written on the side. It was hard to believe it was the same bird.

"I looked in and saw this big, perky owl with wide-awake eyes," she said, "and that was really nice."

Nadine has lost track of the imperiled owls, herons, ravens, hawks and songbirds she has rushed to VINS over the years. Unfortunately, the odds often are stacked against weak and injured birds by the time they arrive at the institute's Aviation Rehabilitation Department.

"This was a real success story," said Rehabilitation Supervisor Allison Stark, "because I didn't think the bird would make it, it was so undernourished." Vermont, she said, presents a "tough environment" for birds of prey during wintertime (not to mention the rest of us), and particularly for young owls

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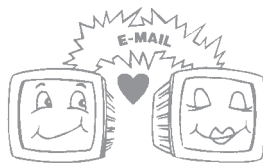
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## A Good 'Deed'

# WEC Transfers Beach Ownership to Danville

It was something of a fluke, an accident of history, that the nicest public beach on Joe's Pond – a place filled with bathers and sun worshippers on lazy summer days – wasn't owned by West Danville, or a local community organization, or the Kiwanis, Moose or Rotary.

It was owned by an electric utility. (Hadn't anyone ever heard that electricity and water don't mix?)

But "was" is the operative word, because on June 13 Washington Electric Co-op General Manager Avram Patt signed papers to convey the beachfront property to the Town of Danville. The West Danville Community Club will take over as caretaker of the property, which consists of a nice grassy slope with picnic tables under a row of trees, a small sandy beach, and a bathhouse with restrooms and changing areas, which Community Club President Gary Larrabee says the club intends to renovate.

For Danville taxpayers – and especially those of West Danville, where Joe's Pond is located – the best news may have been the price. WEC parted with the beachfront property for \$10,000,



*The public beach and picnic area at Joe's Pond, shown here on a rainy June morning, now actually belongs to the public. And it will stay that way. A provision in WEC's sales agreement with the Town of Danville dictates that it remain a publicly accessible recreation area "in perpetuity."*

which was considered a good deal compared with what it might have brought on the real estate market. Danville voters approved the purchase at Town Meeting in March. Local officials are hopeful of receiving donations, which would reduce the cost to the town even more.

"The reason the Co-op has owned that piece of property, for several decades in fact, is that the old Lamoille Railroad used to go through there," said Patt. "You can still see the old rail bed. Washington Electric bought the land in order to take delivery of utility poles that were shipped in by train. That was a

time when the Co-op was building out its system in that West Danville/Walden area. Goods and large items like power poles were transported by rail in those days more than by road."

One of the Co-op's substations is in West Danville, across Route 2 from Joe's Pond.

For years Washington Electric leased the beach property to West Danville for an annual fee of \$1. However, for the Co-op the property presented an insurance liability. It seemed to be in everyone's interest, therefore, for the property to change hands.

The Co-op hit upon \$10,000 as a price that would be comfortable and affordable for the town but would also represent a modest benefit for WEC's 10,000 owner/members.

"We had a responsibility to all our members throughout our service territory to get some value, economically, out of the property," said Patt. "We also wanted to make this work for the folks in West Danville. The price seemed like a good compromise."

An important part of the transaction was that the parties agreed to a covenant that the property would remain a publicly accessible recreation area in perpetuity.

"Rob Ide, of the Department of Public Service and a former legislator from Caledonia County, told me he used to swim there as a kid," Patt said. "He made a point of saying what a wonderful thing the Co-op was doing by letting the town get the property on such good terms. I guess it was a good deal all around."



### To The Rescue

*continued from page 7*

without much experience finding food in unfavorable conditions. This owl's plight was not uncommon, which made its recovery all the more rewarding for everyone.

But owls are notoriously wise. Maybe next winter, and for many winters to come, this one will know how to survive on its own.

### Nature's domain

Ray Shatney is accustomed to finding birds and animals in the power line corridors he works in. During his 14 years tending right-of-way for the Co-op he has deferred to nature many times.

"The right-of-way is a very good place for wildlife," he said (see Bryan Pfeiffer's comments in "WEC in the Wild," page 5). "If we see birds and animals we work around them, or leave them alone and come back later."

Ray has found deer and partridges feeding beneath the power lines, and when that happens he and his crew will go work somewhere else for a while. A Grand Champion breeder of Scottish Highland cattle, he has a soft spot for animals. He once discovered a nest of mourning doves in a tree that he simply

had to cut down because it was becoming a threat to WEC's power lines. His solution was to cut off the branch that held the nest and wire it to another tree – then fire up the chainsaws and get back to work.

These woods and fields belonged to nature long before the Co-op began clearing swaths for rural power lines back in 1939. With people like Ray Shatney and Nadine Brooke around, with "least harm" right-of-way management policies supervised by WEC forester Mike Myers, and with VINS ready and able to nurture victims of Vermont's severe climate, they remain nature's domain, first and foremost.

*(The Vermont Institute of Natural Science is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to "Protect Vermont's Natural Heritage through education and research designed to engage individuals and communities in the active care of their environment." VINS gratefully accepts donations to help with the care of injured or orphaned wild birds. For information, contact the Aviation Rehabilitation Department at 2723 Church Hill Road; Woodstock, VT 05091, or by calling 802-457-2779, extension 125.)*



*Nadine Brooke, doing what few of us ever get to do: holding a wild owl. Moments later, having recovered its strength at the VINS rehabilitation center, the owl flew back into the forest in Chelsea.*

Janet Steward