

WEC CO-OP CURRENTS

Meet and Greet, Co-op Style

WEC's Annual 'Community Meetings'

Worcester and Williamstown were this year's stops on what has become a new tradition for Washington Electric Co-op: holding "community meetings" each fall, where members of the staff and board of directors get together with local folks in school houses and town halls for dinner and a discussion of the issues facing their electric cooperative.

WEC launched this practice in 2003, when it held its first community meetings in Cookeville and Moretown. The following autumn (2004) Co-op representatives went to Chelsea and Twinfield High School (serving Marshfield and Plainfield).

The meetings this year both were held in October, which is National Cooperative Month. That gave WEC General Manager Avram Patt an opportunity to explain that Washington Electric takes its status as a co-op seriously.

"If you take a look at what we do and why we do it, you can usually draw a line directly back to one of the seven Cooperative Principles," Patt told the 20 WEC members who joined him, Engineering & Operations Director Dan Weston, Board President Barry Bernstein and Director Don Douglas, Products & Services Director Bill Powell,

and Member Services Representative Shawna Foran on October 18 at the Williamstown Middle/High School cafeteria.

He directed his listeners to a "Co-op Primer" they had been given. On one side of the sheet were facts about cooperative enterprises in Vermont; on the flip side were the internationally recognized Cooperative Principles. Community outreach, a good description of the dinner get-together they were attending, fell under the Fifth Principle: Education, Training and Information. ("Cooperatives provide education and training for their members . . . so they can contribute effectively to the development of their cooperatives.")

These now-annual events were instituted because WEC's leadership wanted an opportunity to meet, hear from, and explain Co-op policy to smaller, more intimate groups than the Annual Membership Meeting provides. WEC notifies its members in the host town and adjacent towns ahead of time, using bill inserts, and partners with a local service group that hosts the event and serves dinner.

Following the meal the manager and other staff members present both

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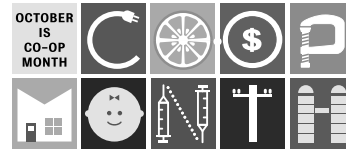
Former WEC board member Monique Hayden (right) and neighbors in Williamstown gathered at the high school on October 18 to learn more about their Co-op and its plans.

Vermont Co-ops Ramp Up 'The Cooperative Way'

Vermont is a state with approximately 624,000 residents.

Almost half of them (300,000-plus) are members of cooperatives.

It's a remarkable statistic, but the impact is undercut by the unfortunate fact that many of those people don't realize that they belong to co-ops. Credit unions are co-ops; the largest insurer of farms in Vermont (which is also the state's second-largest home insurer and ninth-largest auto insurer) is a co-op; employee-owned businesses – including



furniture makers in the Northeast Kingdom and software developers in Chittenden County – are co-ops. Mad River Glen ("Ski it if you can!") is a

co-op – the nation's only cooperatively owned ski area.

These are just some of the many kinds of co-ops found in Vermont. But if an organization doesn't have the word "cooperative" in its title, like Washington Electric Cooperative or the Hunger Mountain (food) Co-op, people often are

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Inside

The Cooperative Principles are a guide for co-ops around the world, including WEC. Check them out on page 2.

Talkin' trash. Poet Geof Hewitt's ode to the efficacy of landfill gas for turning trash to power appears on page 3.

Meet Kevin Lanphear. WEC's newest lineman will be outside working for you on those nights you'll be happy to be in bed. Page 6.

REVVIN' up alternative energy. Statewide conference in Burlington brought the major players in renewable energy together to move Vermont forward. Page 8.



Ken Pearson, left, argues in support of wind-power development at WEC's community meeting in Worcester. Story on page 4.

Washington Electric Cooperative

East Montpelier, VT 05651

Vermont Co-ops

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unaware that they are, in fact, co-ops.

It would be better if they understood and appreciated that fact, because they might then avail themselves more fully of the opportunities cooperatives provide, such as voting for the leaders (in WEC's case, the Board of Directors) that make financial and policy decisions for the organization; or getting goods and services from other types of co-ops. For example, WEC members can join one of a number of area credit unions. WEC members can also ski for less at Mad River on certain days, and can conveniently pick up their passes at the Co-op's East Montpelier office.

Mostly, though, greater awareness can help spread the word about the cooperative model, which is a business structure Washington Electric Co-op strongly believes in.

That belief is why, in 2004, WEC helped organize a loosely knit union of co-ops called the Vermont Alliance of Cooperatives. Its aim is to help people understand, value, and partake of co-ops' offerings in Vermont.

"We [in the Vermont Alliance] are people who believe the cooperative business structure is a good model for doing business in a socially responsible way that looks out for consumers, and for producers in the case of agricultural co-ops," said WEC General Manager Avram Patt (who grew up in

"Members of the Vermont Alliance believe the cooperative business structure is a good model for doing business in a socially responsible way that looks out for consumers."

— WEC Manager Avram Patt

a cooperative housing neighborhood in New York City). "The numbers are very impressive for co-op membership in Vermont, but people often don't make the connection even though they may be members of two or three different cooperatives. Through the Vermont Alliance of Cooperatives we want to bring this more to people's consciousness."

The VAC is a loosely knit, unincorporated organization. But it has a logo, which *Co-op Currents* now features on its masthead (below), and it is developing a website.

For many years cooperatives have had an official "month"; October is National Co-op Month. This year WCAX-TV's weekday program *Across The Fence* aired a special segment on co-ops on October 6. Funded by the UVM Extension Service and the state office of USDA Rural Development, the program featured Rural Development's Jolinda LaClair and Rhonda Shippee (WEC members from Middlesex and Calais, respectively) talking about

Vermont's array of member-owned cooperatives. Avram Patt was then introduced, and spoke about electric co-ops in particular (there are some 930 electric co-ops nationwide, including two in Vermont). Patt also spoke about WEC's landfill gas-to-electricity project in Coventry, as an example of the kinds of innovative projects co-ops pursue to find advantages for their members.

Frequently in our October issues, *Co-op Currents* publishes the seven Cooperative Principles, which were adopted in 1995 by the International Cooperative Alliance.

The philosophy the principles represent makes the distinction clear between co-ops of any stripe and businesses whose names we recognize for their scandalous behavior — the Enrons of the world. Service, as opposed to profit, drives cooperative enterprise, if for no other reason (there are other reasons) than that the co-op structure does not allow room for connivery.

Take a moment to read the Cooperative Principles. You'll find WEC — your consumer-owned electric utility — reflected there.

Co-op Principles

1. Voluntary and Open Membership

— Cooperatives are voluntary organizations, open to all persons able to use their services and willing to accept the responsibilities of membership, without gender, social, racial, political or religious discrimination.

2. Democratic Member Control

— Cooperatives are democratic organizations controlled by their members, who actively participate in setting their policies and making decisions. Men and women serving as elected representatives are accountable to the membership. In primary cooperatives, members have equal voting rights (one member, one vote) and cooperatives at other levels are organized in a democratic manner.

3. Member Economic Participation

— Members contribute equitably to, and democratically control, the capital of their cooperative. At least part of that capital is usually the common property of the cooperative. They usually receive limited compensation, if any, on capital subscribed as a condition of membership. Members allocate surpluses for any or all of the following purposes: developing the cooperative, possibly by setting up reserves, part of which at least would be indivisible; benefiting members in proportion to their transactions with the cooperative; and supporting other activities approved by the membership.

4. Autonomy and Independence

— Cooperatives are autonomous, self-help organizations controlled by their members. If they enter into agreements with other organizations, including governments, or raise capital from external sources, they do so on terms that ensure democratic control by their members and maintain their cooperative autonomy.

5. Education, Training and Information

— Cooperatives provide education and training for their members, elected representatives, managers and employees so they can contribute effectively to the development of their cooperatives. They inform the general public — particularly young people and opinion leaders — about the nature and benefits of cooperation.

6. Cooperation among Cooperatives

— Cooperatives serve their members most effectively and strengthen the cooperative movement by working together through local, national, regional and international structures.

7. Concern for Community

— While focusing on member needs, cooperatives work for the sustainable development of their communities through policies accepted by their members.

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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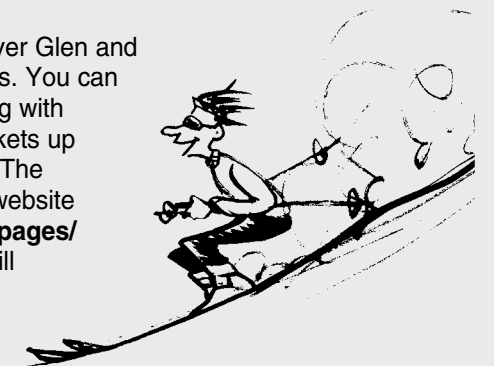
Avram Patt Donald Douglas Wendell Cilley Will Lindner

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.

Now, Call WEC for Mad River Glen Tickets

The geese have flown south, the temperatures have plunged, and ski season is coming! This year the Co-op has an improved deal for WEC members who ski at Mad River Glen — which is also a cooperative. You can now purchase day passes at the Co-op office. The ticket price varies depending on the day, but weekday adult passes are one-third off, compared to tickets purchased at the basebox.

WEC is a ticket retailer for Mad River Glen and members are eligible for special prices. You can call and order tickets by phone, paying with a credit card, then either pick your tickets up here or have us put them in the mail. The Co-op will fill orders placed from the website (<http://www.washingtonco-op.com/pages/madriver.htm>), but members must still either pick them up or have them mailed to your address. This is not an electronic ticket offer.



COVENTRY

The 'Grand Opening' of WEC's landfill gas-to-electricity plant in Coventry is history and the generators are now turning out the power. But encouraging words are still appreciated. U.S. Rep. Bernard, who attended the opening, read the statement below into the Congressional Record. Also on this page is Geof Hewitt's poem, 'Needs.'

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 109TH CONGRESS,
SECOND SESSION, HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Yankee Frugality: Alternative Energy Works— And Saves Money

Hon. Bernard Sanders of Vermont in the House of Representatives, Tuesday, September 20, 2005

Mr. Sanders: Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to bring to your attention, to the attention of the House, and to the attention of the Nation, the remarkable step forward made by the Washington Electric Co-operative in Vermont. This week they opened a new facility which produces electricity from methane, a gas formerly burned as a useless byproduct of the landfill in Coventry, VT. It is a wonderful example of Yankee inventiveness – and Yankee frugality.



The new facility, which costs a relatively modest \$8.5 million, will produce enough electricity for one-third of the Washington co-op's customers, a percentage expected to rise to half when the plant is fully operational and tuned to take advantage of all the methane produced by decomposition in the landfill.

In a time of soaring energy and electricity prices, the co-op has not raised electricity prices for 5 years. [actually, six years – ed.] Rates are not expected to rise in the next 5 years either, because the new power plant operates economically and the electric utility makes good use of renewable energy certificates.

This is a wonderful lesson for the Nation, which is increasingly pressed by both shortages of fossil fuel and by soaring prices for energy of all sorts.

We need to find sources of alternative energy which can meet our needs for power. Contrary to what the large oil companies tell us, not only are such alternatives available now, those alternatives are often far more economical than using fossil fuels.



Whether it is methane power, wind power, solar power, geothermal power, or the use of hydrogen fuel cells as an alternative to gasoline in cars, we must cut our dependence on foreign oil now. We will be better off environmentally, our national security will be enhanced, and – as the Washington co-op has so boldly demonstrated – we may well be better off economically as well.

In short, we need an energy revolution by breaking our dependence on fossil fuels. I am very, very confident our small State of Vermont will lead this. We will be noticed by not only the country but the world.

My congratulations to the Washington Electric Co-op for showing America, with its new facility in Coventry, what can and should be done to make our energy sources secure and sustainable.

the challenge WEC and other Vermont utilities will face when their contract with Hydro Quebec expires in 2015.

Engineering & Operations Director Weston spoke at both meetings about WEC's plans, challenges and costs for providing electric service throughout the 41 towns in its rural territory, and about issues specifically important to members in Worcester and Williamstown and their adjacent communities.

Then there was the matter of wind.


As Co-op members know, Washington Electric recently entered into an agreement with UPC Vermont, which proposes to develop a 52-megawatt (MW) wind electric-generation project in the town of Sheffield. WEC contributed some \$941,000 of federal grant money to help the company complete feasibility studies and other planning work supporting an

application to the Public Service Board for a Certificate of Public Good, the key state permit required for wind-energy installations. The project — 26 two-MW turbines spread across the elevated ridgeline — is consistent with the policy adopted by the Board of Directors of seeking electricity sources that are renewable, cost-effective and close to home. If the Sheffield turbines are built, WEC expects to derive 10 percent to 20 percent of its wholesale power from that project.

But like every other commercial wind project under consideration in Vermont, UPC's proposal has encountered spirited resistance. WEC is now squarely in the middle of the controversy, and a few of the Co-op members who attended the Worcester meeting were among the opponents. Their dissent, as well as their

questions about WEC's selection criteria and other challenges to the Co-op's wind-energy course, was met at the Worcester community meeting with an equally staunch defense from other members who supported the wind initiative.

However, it was notable that at the Co-op meeting these strongly held, strongly expressed opinions did not descend into argument. Vermonters are going to have to have discussions about wind turbines in selected areas on our state's scenic ridgelines, in the context of providing the electricity our homes, farms and businesses demand – and the steep economic and environmental costs of the various options.

The Co-op members who gathered in Worcester on October 11 showed that Vermonters can conduct these difficult discussions in a civic manner. 

Washington Electric commissioned writer and WEC member Geof Hewitt to present an original poem at the Grand Opening in September. His spirited reading of 'Needs' had audience members joining along with him.



Needs

On a Coventry hillside there's nestled a landfill,
Or is the hillside the landfill, snuggled into itself?
The relief map is changing, the contours are spreading
As our valleys fill up and our mountains expand
With items we purchased, dragged home "for the children,"
Bagged up two years later and hauled off as trash.

But the stuff in that diaper is nearly worth gold,
The uneaten kiwi that's starting to mold,
And weeds from our gardens, half licked candy canes
Go into the landfill and come out as methane.

Now methane's a bad gas to let loose in the air
So most landfills torch it in eternal flares,
What a partial solution, what a waste of the gas!
Enter our Cooperative, eyeing the trash.

We've ended dependence on a source that's not green:
If we're talking "eternal," its waste is obscene.
Members be proud, we voted "yes" to conservation
And took a big step with courageous innovation.

If it's organic and starting to rot,
Some leftover soup too long in the pot,
Banana peels! Bananas! Toss organic waste with felicity,
If it makes it to Coventry, it'll come back as electricity!

With respect for our neighbors and with love for the land,
With respect for ourselves, if that's not too grand,
We can go even farther, reduce our reliance
On energy eating, greedy appliances.

We'll consume with care and try to replace
What we are taking from earth's heart and its face.

There should never be valleys that fill up with trash
Or nukes that go haywire when oil supplies crash,
So we're making good progress, we have so much to gain
When we cut back our "needs" and make use of methane!

Geof Hewitt, September 17, 2005

Community Meetings

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general information about the Co-op and information specific to the area where the meeting is being held. Equally important, though, is that the meetings provide an opportunity for members to raise questions directly to the people who work for them (because WEC co-op members do, literally, own the utility).

And there is never any dearth of subject matter. This year WEC provided an updated profile of the Co-op's wholesale energy sources that, for the first time, included the significant contribution our newly opened landfill gas-to-electricity station is making toward filling WEC's energy needs. The graph (see page 4) also hints at

Worcester Area Meeting

A Cure For Power Problems, And A Co-op-Style Debate on Wind

It wasn't easy to find a parking place for the community meeting held October 11 in the Worcester Town Hall. The meeting drew about 35 WEC members, plus Co-op staff and Director Roger Fox. They came not only from Worcester itself, but also Middlesex, Calais and East Montpelier. Each paid \$5 for dinner, with WEC covering the rest of the cost and the profits benefiting the Community Kitchen, which prepares a public lunch once a week and runs the local food shelf. Community Kitchen volunteers cooked and served a homespun meal for the Co-op meeting.

WEC members in Worcester and surrounding towns get their electricity primarily through the Co-op's Maple Corner and East Montpelier substations. (Substations receive high-voltage power from *transmission* lines, which are owned either by WEC, Green Mountain Power or Central Vermont Public Service Corp.; the substations then reduce the voltage and send the power out over *distribution* lines to member households.)

The Maple Corner substation has become old, outdated and inefficient. The condition of substations is an



The Worcester Town Hall was the site of a Co-op community meeting on October 11. At right, Weston Cate takes the long view of land use in Vermont.



important factor in system reliability, which means WEC's performance in parts of Calais and East Montpelier, particularly, is worse than Operations Director Dan Weston – and, no doubt, local members – would like it to be.

Weston was upfront about that in his remarks at the meeting. "We have identified the worst-performing circuits on our distribution system. One of them is in your area, and some of you folks are on it."

The good news was that the Maple

Corner substation is next on the list for replacement (in recent years WEC has replaced its Moretown and South Walden substations). These expenditures must be approved by a special vote of the membership; WEC plans to have the project ready for a vote at the May 2006 Annual Meeting.

Substation rebuilding projects also provide an opportunity to address other reliability issues, including "redundancy," the ability to provide power from more than one substation; in the case of a

major outage caused by a failure at the substation or on the power line, redundancy would mean the Co-op could reroute electricity for many of the affected members from another source, potentially reducing outage durations to 20 minutes or less.

"Once we have the ability to tie the Maple Corner and Moretown systems together we'll be able to pick you folks up from either direction," Weston explained. "We will be asking you to support this project when we have it ready for a vote."

Energetic opinions

Much of the discussion at the Worcester community meeting focused on WEC's involvement with UPC Vermont's proposal to construct a 26-turbine commercial wind farm in Sheffield. The Co-op recently dedicated \$941,000 from a U.S. Department of Energy grant to UPC Vermont, to help the company conduct research and develop its proposal.

Because Washington Electric Co-op's service territory does not extend into Sheffield, there were no Sheffield residents in attendance. However, some WEC members believed they had Sheffield's interests in mind, citing a petition opposing UPC's project that circulated among that town's residents. Stephanie Kaplan and Randy Koch, Co-op members from Calais, had just visited the ridges proposed to host the turbines.

"I think people, before they make a judgment, should go look at that," said Kaplan, "because those ridgelines are really beautiful."

Kaplan, an environmental attorney, added, "The question is not whether wind [power] is good or not. The issue is siting." She pointed out that when Vermonters resisted rampant, mountaintop construction of relay towers for cellular phones after the 1996 Telecommunications Act spurred growth in the industry, companies in some cases accepted alternatives, such as concealing microwave antennae in church steeples. She wondered if such compromises were being sought regarding wind towers.

General Manager Avram Patt pointed out that substituting small, less visibly intrusive wind turbines for the larger ones contemplated for the handful of wind farms proposed in Vermont would lead to thousands of towers, widely spread around the state, to generate a comparable amount of power.

The alternative of purchasing renewable power from outside Vermont – if it becomes commercially available – would shift the environmental burden elsewhere. Hydro Quebec, for example, is proceeding with plans to erect some 3,000 megawatts of wind turbines in remote regions of the province.

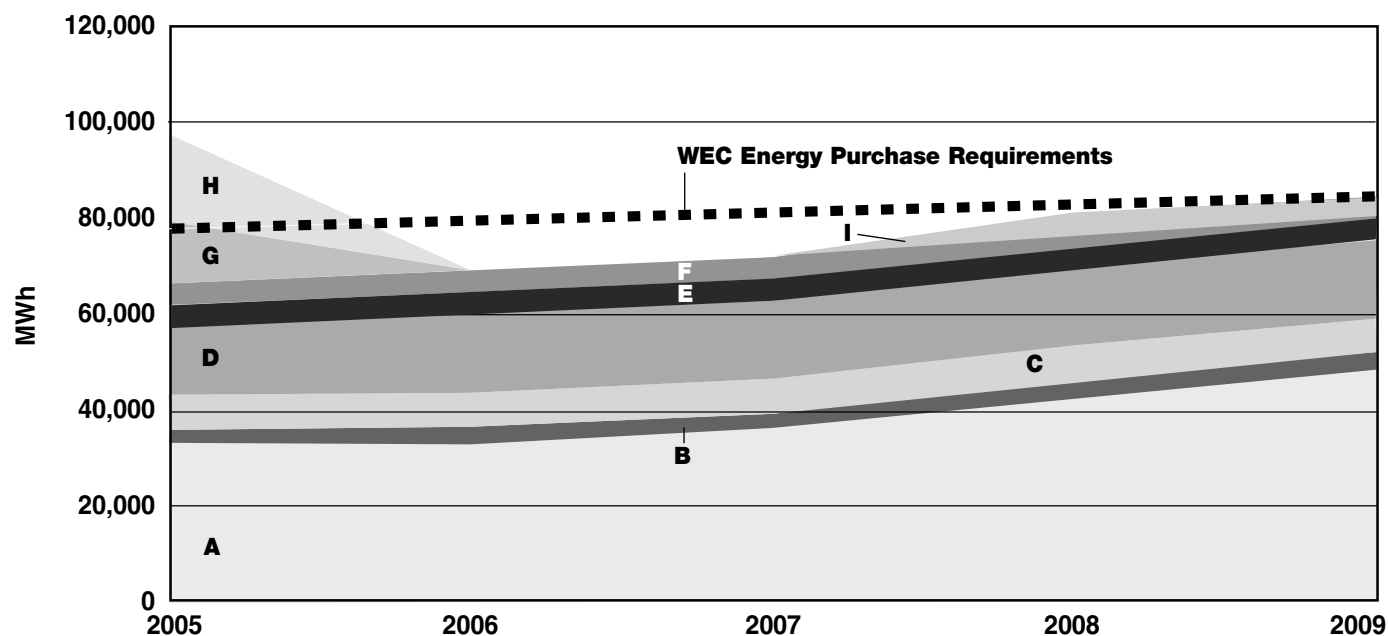
"If that turned out to be a new source for Vermont, we would find ourselves supporting construction of 300 miles of high-voltage transmission lines because we're unwilling to have a few wind turbine projects in our state," said Patt.

Ken Pearson of East Montpelier

Members at the community meetings received a graph showing Washington Electric's wholesale power sources, and the amount of energy each provides. In some years sources flow into (I – projected wind power) or fall out of (G and H – short-term landfill gas projects) the Co-op's power mix. WEC's Coventry project (A) plays the largest part, but notice the contribution of Hydro Quebec (D); this will disappear for Vermont utilities in 2015.

WEC Energy Requirements vs. Generation

Load growth assumed to be 2% per year



- A:** Coventry (landfill gas — WEC)
- B:** Wrightsville (hydroelectric — WEC)
- C:** New York Power Authority
- D:** Hydro Quebec
- E:** Vermont Independent Power Producers
- F:** McNeil (woodchips — Burlington)
- G:** New Milford (landfill gas — Connecticut)
- H:** IES LFG (landfill gas — New York)
- I:** Wind (proposed power from Sheffield)

complained that Vermonters suffered from the NIMBY (not-in-my-backyard) syndrome.

"I've seen [wind farms] all over the world," he said, describing his travels in Europe and Central America. This included Costa Rica, which he described as a "third-world country" nevertheless more progressive in energy policy than the U.S. The pollution from additional coal and oil resources would be far more consequential than erecting wind turbines, he said.

Andy Leader of Middlesex countered that more investment should be made in nuclear power, and noted that many

countries are pursuing that course. Having visited Three Mile Island, scene of America's worst nuclear accident, and found the environment restored to safe conditions, he characterized opposition "based on the quote-unquote health issue" as a "scare tactic."

"I think Vermont is really special," said Leader, speaking both of the state's beauty and its democratic traditions. "You have to listen to the folks who live here."

One of those folks was Weston Cate of East Montpelier, who is viewed as an "elder" – in the sense not only of age but also of wisdom – in central Vermont. Cate put the issue in an historical

perspective.


"What did Vermont look like 125 years ago?" he asked rhetorically, referring to an era when Vermonters clear-cut the land for the sheep industry. Now, the forest has returned.

"There have been lots of changes on our mountains, hills and valleys," he said. "We've lived through it." Cate had "no objection to opening our eyes to finding ways to use nature in our behalf."

Closing thoughts

The discussion continued past the hour the meeting was supposed to adjourn, then picked up again

outside while Community Kitchen volunteers were cleaning up. But before adjournment, Allen Gilbert of Worcester rose to offer this observation to Patt:

"The Co-op by its nature is a democratic institution. This discussion is only going to get more contentious. I wish you well. Personally, I think it's my responsibility to accept the consequences of our demand for energy. I'd be willing to have it behind my house on the Worcester Range." 

Williamstown Area Meeting

Conservation, Efficiency, And A High Profile In Co-op Work Plan

The young people who patrolled the cafeteria serving meals to the two dozen or so folks gathered for WEC's community meeting at the Williamstown Middle/High School wore handsome white smocks bearing the emblem of the Better Choice Café. Indeed, it would have been hard to make a better choice than the tasty, healthy stir fry (chicken, rice and vegetables, with a non-chicken alternative for vegetarians) that the students prepared on October 18.

The Better Choice Café is part of an alternative program for high school students. Teacher and Café adviser Lisa Page said the program started four years ago and has blossomed into a quasi-business, offering alternative lunch menus for students and teachers three days a week and catering special events – like WEC's community meeting. The students prepare and serve the meals, and take obvious pride in their work.

Following dinner, General Manager Avram Patt began the conversation with an explanation of WEC's power supply (see graph, page 4), explaining the Co-op's constant need for planning as sources come into and fall out of the mix. In that context, he put in a strong word for energy efficiency, encouraging people to take advantage of WEC's free energy audits and the resources provided by Products & Services Director Bill Powell. He drew attention to Efficiency Vermont's limited-time offer of its "Home Performance with ENERGY STAR" program (see Page 7).

Efficiency programs help members bring down their electricity bills despite WEC's comparatively high rates (a result of serving a rural, low-density population). The effort has paid off.

"Our members' average usage is below the state average, and well below the national average," said Patt, noting that this was not accomplished through self-sacrifice ("people sitting alone, freezing in the dark") but by utilizing



Williamstown's Better Choice Café is staffed by, from left, Steve Morris, Jeremy Gabree, Mike Dunn, adviser Lisa Page, Nathan Felch, and Alyssa Seaver.

efficient, modern technology. With the price of fuels and wholesale power rising significantly this summer and fall, he pointed out that "every kilowatt-hour that you don't use is a kilowatt-hour we don't have to go out and buy."

The 'high-speed' frontier

In discussing current and potential member services, Patt raised the subject of broadband Internet access. "I'm getting more calls on this subject than any other," he said.

To some degree cable companies are extending their services outward from population centers, but most rural areas still do not have broadband access. (Only one couple in the room raised their hands when Patt asked if anyone had high-speed internet access.)

WEC has begun working with community groups in its territory that are pursuing wireless high-speed services. Rather than sending broadband signals via cables that run along a roadway – usually doubling up on utility poles – wireless access is organized around clusters of users who are served by a local antenna; they receive airwave signals from the antenna, using a small receiver. The "Cloud Alliance" is working to recruit well-situated property owners

to host the antennae, and WEC is involved in the discussions.

The only direct way electric utilities can provide high-speed access is "broadband over power lines" (BPL), which thus far is not widely in use.

"You actually can send broadband signals over electric lines," Patt explained, "but it requires a system for bypassing the transformers, and on our system we average almost one transformer for each meter (customer)."

That alone makes BPL, at this point, prohibitively expensive.

Soliciting members' views on wind energy and WEC's involvement (see "Co-op-Style Debate on Wind," page 4), Patt spoke about Washington Electric's investment in the 52-megawatt project proposed in Sheffield. People asked questions about what made a good site for electric generation from wind (criteria include an elevation around 2,500 feet, and proximity to existing transmission lines to contain costs and minimize environmental impact). They also asked how WEC would benefit at Sheffield.

"We would get about 10-to-15 percent of the power," answered Board President Barry Bernstein. "The developer is talking to two other utilities in the state about taking the rest. The projection is

that most of the power from Sheffield would be used in Vermont."

'System needs you!'

Engineering & Operations Director Dan Weston spoke about plans for improving system reliability in the Williamstown area (people also attended the meeting from adjacent towns).


The substation that serves many of them is located at Jackson Corner on Baptist Street. One of WEC's largest substations, it serves 1,800 members.

Weston said the area is targeted for substantial investment by WEC.

"There is \$1.64 million in our construction plan for the folks in this room," he announced, drawing people's attention to the 2004-2008 Construction Work Plan he had handed out. It identified several projects for rehabilitating old sections of line, relocating some sections to the roadside which makes maintenance and repairs faster and easier, and rectifying voltage problems (voltage can deteriorate over long sections of line). One aim of the work plan is to shorten outages by linking circuits from different substations – specifically, the Jackson Corner, Maple Corner, South Walden and Tunbridge facilities. The Co-op can thereby provide power temporarily from a different direction, while line crews are busy repairing faults that are causing outages.

In response to one member's question – "Do you know when I'm out of power?" or should he call the office at such times? – Weston emphasized that calls were vital.

"The technology exists for utilities to detect power interruptions remotely," he said, "but it hasn't proved itself. So we urge you to call in, because the automated outage-management system that we have, which is among the best in the state, needs the information that you folks can provide."

In fact, the sharing of information – in-person, in a relaxed atmosphere – is the whole point behind WEC's community meetings. Said WEC Director Don Douglas of East Orange, "We'll continue to bring these discussions to the communities we serve in order to get information to our members, and also to hear from them." 

New Challenges Are Nothing New To New WEC Lineman

Washington Electric Co-op's newest lineman traded the salt breeze of the ocean for the frigid winds of Vermont. Representing yet another connection between the Co-op and Cape Cod (already, a consortium of municipal utilities around Barnstable is providing valuable revenue to Washington Electric by purchasing Renewable Energy Credits based on WEC's power production from landfill gas), Kevin Lanphear is a native of Falmouth, at the southwestern tip of the Cape.

Kevin, 34, graduated from high school in Falmouth in 1989 and soon thereafter made his way north to the Green Mountain State, leaving Nantucket Sound and the cold Atlantic behind.

"I came with less than \$300 in my pocket," Kevin recalls. His older brother, Brian, who lives in Hinesburg, had moved here earlier and was Kevin's only connection to Vermont.

temporary jobs around Burlington, Kevin found his way into a field more intrinsic to Vermont than to his original home, with its scrub pines and sandy soil. "I became an arborist," he says.



Kevin Lanphear

That's not just a fancy way of saying that he earned his money with a chainsaw, although he did that, too. For many years Kevin worked for Farr's Tree Service, which performs right-of-way contract work for Washington Electric (clearing and re-clearing power line corridors), and also provides a variety of management services for its clients.

Kevin eventually left Farr's to start his own logging business. A few years later he was hired by Treeworks Ltd., whose Montpelier office sends tree surgeons and specialists all over the country. That's where, over the next five years, Kevin really earned his "arborist" stripes.

"They're specialists in tree preservation," he explains, "using cabling and bracing. We worked a lot on historical trees, such as trees donated by major benefactors at universities. We used stabilizing techniques to help trees maintain their own structural integrity."

His transition earlier this year from arborist to apprentice lineman (Kevin started work at the Co-op on March 28) was a very practical choice. Kevin and his wife, Heather, have two children, a son called Mac (three years old) and a daughter, Eliza (one year). They live in Woodbury.

"There's long-term security in this work," Kevin explains. "Tree preservation is a luxury service; if

the economy [tanks] you're not going to stay busy. With this job, I'll be busy."

Friendly, and a quick learner, Kevin finds that line work matches his skills, experience and interests. He'll be climbing again (poles this time, more than trees) once his apprenticeship is complete. And he's in familiar environs – the great outdoors.

"I have yet to work an indoor job," says WEC's newest lineman, who, if things go according to plan, will never get to call himself an "old salt" despite his Cape Cod birthright.

Welcome aboard, Kevin Lanphear.

Professional progress for Hall and Gilbert

On a related note, *Co-op Currents* received this note from Engineering & Operations Director Dan Weston:

"I am pleased to report that Raymond Hall and Larry Gilbert Jr. have completed all requirements of the Vermont State Apprenticeship Program and are now journeymen line workers."

Our congratulations to Raymond – who recently returned from a stint in Louisiana, helping a co-op there restore electricity to thousands of members after Hurricane Katrina wrecked the system – and to Larry, who has the distinction of being a second-generation WEC lineman, following in the footsteps of his dad (now retired), Larry Sr.



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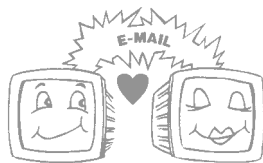
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Vermont Energy Leaders Gather For REV Conference

Boom is Predicted for Wind, Solar and Other Technologies

Half a century ago the United States very nearly chose an energy path distinctly different from the one that, in fact, emerged.

In 1952, on the cusp of this nation's robust economic and technological explosion, the Paley Commission, organized by President Harry Truman to help guide the development of U.S. energy policy, foresaw the potential of natural, non-depleting (renewable) sources of energy. Particularly, it extolled the future of solar energy. The Commission predicted there would be at least 13 million solar-heated homes in America within the decade, and that solar power would continue to grow in the expanding country.

Alas, it was a short-lived vision. Under the administration of President Dwight Eisenhower, another replaced it: the vision of the "peaceful atom."

"That term now is an oxymoron," recounted Harvey Wasserman of the Alliance for Climate Action (also an advisor to Greenpeace USA, and the Nuclear Information & Resource Center), speaking September 17 to the fourth annual conference held by Renewable Energy Vermont (REV).

"So Dwight Eisenhower left the vision of the Paley Commission behind, which was as fateful a decision as has ever been made on this planet," said Wasserman, pointing to environmental degradation, wars, terrorism, and the resultant human suffering, as the outcomes of policies based, instead, on nuclear and fossil fuels. These negative effects were multiplied as the country similarly turned away from mass transit in favor of individual, fuel-wasteful transportation on roadways, highways and interstates.

Wasserman, author or co-author of 11 books on energy, delivered these remarks in his Plenary Address at the REV conference at the Sheraton Hotel Conference Center in South Burlington. Titled "Renewable Energy – A Vision for Vermont," the daylong event covered policy and technology, serving as a forum on where Vermont stands now in terms of developing wind, solar, biomass, geothermal and hydroelectric facilities, and what the future holds for the industry. (Landfill gas was not widely discussed. WEC's new facility in Coventry is unique in the state as a commercially viable resource and probably cannot be duplicated in Vermont, for reasons related to size and economy. However, the project drew praise from several conference speakers.)

Held on a sunny Wednesday, the event attracted some 300 participants to the spacious Conference Center. They included representatives of

Vermont utilities, state regulatory agencies, elected officials, academics, the alternative energy industry, the news media, and interested citizens. Washington Electric is a member of REV (a consortium that promotes renewable energy in the state), and several WEC board members and staff attended the conference.

REV Chair David Hill, welcoming the crowd, described the change occurring in society now – from a primarily fossil fuel-based energy model to new systems using renewable resources – as comparable to humanity's earlier change, from hunter-gatherers of food to planting and harvesting.

Morning and afternoon workshops spanned a range of topics, from common daily concerns ("Keeping Vermonters Warm With Wood Heat") to

Author and activist Harvey Wasserman, right, kicked off the REV conference with a speech on the ascendancy of renewable energy. Below, one of the many hallway displays.



more esoteric subjects like "The True Value of PV Distributed Generation." Some of the other workshops, which were all led by specialists in their areas, examined "State Renewable Energy Policies & Implementation," "Transportation in Vermont – Renewable, Sustainable Solutions," and "How Can Vermonters Plan for a Hopeful Future in an Age of Climate Crisis?" Between workshops the hallways were busy places, as people gathered around more than a dozen displays by renewable-energy companies.

Vision – and tunnel vision

A highlight of the conference was the annual Renewable Energy Awards, presented after lunch. Montpelier-based wind-energy developer Matt Rubin, president of East Haven Windfarm, which has applied for state permits to construct a four-turbine demonstration project on East Mountain (Essex County), received the Renewable Energy Industry Champion Award. Before focusing on wind, Rubin spent some 30 years developing in-state,

followed the awards. Dunsmore discussed the evolution of oil as a basis for U.S. Middle East policy.

Visions of Vermont

Kicking off the day's events, Wasserman and Gov. James Douglas painted two somewhat different views of renewable energy's status in Vermont.

First, though, Douglas addressed the issue of heating fuel. He said Vermonters were expressing particular concern about the high cost of fuel and worrying about heating their homes in the coming winter.

"We'll make sure they have all the resources they need," the governor promised.

He then discussed the capacity of renewable-energy technology to provide "high-quality, sustainable jobs" for



environmentally friendly hydroelectric sites.

State Rep. Robert Dostis (D-Waterbury), chair of the House Natural Resources & Energy Committee, won the Renewable Energy Legislative Champion Award, which was presented by State Sen. Peter Welch, (D-Windsor). Contrasting its work with the policies now dominant in Washington, Welch praised Dostis and his committee for recognizing "that we have the responsibility to leave this earth cleaner than we found it."

The third and final presentation was of an altogether different sort – a tongue-in-cheek presentation of the Energy Ostrich Award. REV board member Lawrence Mott said its purpose was "to highlight missed opportunity – ignoring our changing times in the hope that maybe it [change] will go away 'if I stick my head in the sand.'"

The winner was the Editorial Board of the Burlington Free Press. Mott accused it of maintaining a dogmatic, backward stance on wind energy issues and "not providing current, factual information."

A Keynote Address from former ABC News foreign correspondent Barrie Dunsmore, now a resident of Vermont,

Vermonters, and said that to the extent renewables create "a clean environmental profile and stable prices, we do what we can to encourage them." His support, he said, can be seen in the 2005 Renewable Energy Bill passed by the Vermont Legislature, which he signed on a wind-turbine blade last spring. He also noted the federally funded Vermont Solar and Small Wind Development Program, which he signed after the Legislature passed it in 2003. As further evidence of Vermont's commitment to green energy Douglas mentioned solar-powered Interstate welcome centers, a geothermally heated state office building in Bennington, and biomass systems that heat 26 percent of the public school classrooms in Vermont.

The governor also repeated his earlier proclamation of October as "Wind Energy Month" in Vermont. However, critics contend that his support is lukewarm when it comes to actually siting wind-generation projects, which have met with resistance in communities where they are proposed. Douglas told the REV conference it was important to "maintain the Vermont tradition of dialogue," and expressed his faith "that that process will lead to sound decision-making" about commercial wind projects.

Wasserman's view was more circumspect. He said Vermont was "in the lead rhetorically" about renewable energy, but lagged behind some other states in actual development. Particularly he mentioned Minnesota, which has developed \$70 million of community-based commercial wind power and constructed a wind turbine blade factory in Pipestone that is the town's largest employer. He also mentioned that in some states there was a movement to sign up farmers to sell the wind-power rights on their properties.

"A lot of family farms are going to be saved," he said, "but we have to get to it."

Overall, though, his message was positive in the extreme. Despite policy advances (under Presidents Truman and Carter) followed by setbacks (under Presidents Eisenhower, Reagan, and George W. Bush), he described renewable power's heyday as inevitable. And that heyday is approaching, he said, propelled by the realities of climate change, fossil fuel depletion, and the stagnation of the nuclear power industry and its vulnerability to catastrophic acts of terrorism.

Renewable technologies – wind and solar, and other innovations such as capturing ocean tides to generate power – not only are cleaner and safer, but also are economically advantageous. Until recently, Wasserman said, "people didn't appreciate how profitable and job-producing it would be."

"We now have a global renewable energy business that will not be stopped, and whose promises are beyond calculation. Regardless of who's in Washington, the industry is on a self-sustaining path. In Vermont and elsewhere, there's nothing fringe about it. Quite the opposite – we have no alternative." 