

WEC CO-OP CURRENTS

2001 Capital Credit Program Returns \$200,000

It's fall again, when a Co-op member's fancy turns to capital credit refunds.

For the fourth straight year autumn marks the time for Washington Electric Cooperative to enact the program that returns a portion of the members' money back to where it came from – Washington Electric Cooperative's member/owners. And like last year, WEC has designed a system that will enable people to receive a financial benefit from their membership during the most recent calendar year, along with those who belonged to Washington Electric Co-op some years ago. This year, the "historical" portion of the capital credit refunds is targeted to 1982.

WEC's Board of Directors has designated a total of \$200,000 to be returned to qualified members through the 2001 "Equity Distribution Plan," the same amount as last year. The plan last year targeted half of the total (\$100,000) to retire members' capital credit accounts from 1981 and 1982. But the funding was insufficient to fully address the 1982 accounts, so this year WEC will finish the

job. The \$100,000 now dedicated to 1982 refunds will enable the Co-op to close out the books on that particular year.

The other half of the money this year will be directed to Co-op members from 2000.

Your money

As a cooperative, WEC budgets carefully to keep its annual revenues close to the amount of its anticipated expenses. The primary source of revenue is the money members pay the Co-op through their electric bills. In years when WEC's income does not exceed the cost of running the utility, there are no "margins" to allocate to the members' capital credit accounts. But when WEC does earn margins, as it did in 2000, the money is distributed among those accounts. (Note that this is a bookkeeping process; these are not accounts kept in a bank or anywhere else.)

Each member's portion of the margins is calculated on a percentage basis, depending on how much electricity the

continued on page 3

Message from the President

In the aftermath of the horrific events of Tuesday, September 11, an intense numbness has permeated all of our lives. Many people may feel as if they have been lost in a dark void.

And yet I find a ray of light. In the days and weeks since the tragedy I have had many conversations, and though people have been distraught over the cruelty and loss of life on September 11, the events have made us more aware of the central importance in our lives of family, friends and community.

The tragedy has had a way of refocusing our attention to those things that are most important. The matters that often fill our busy days and the circumstances that accentuate our differences seem to fade into the background.

As we reach out, as a nation, to find our way forward, may we also reach out to one another, in our communities and-in our personal relationships, with patience, tolerance and hope. I know that Washington Electric Co-op's employees and board of directors join me in sending our prayers and deepest sympathies to the families of those who lost their lives on Sept 11, 2001.



The Stars-and-Stripes, with Vermont state flag below, fly at half staff at the Co-op in memory of the victims of the terrorist attack.

Barry Bernstein

Inside

The 2001 Capital Credit list. WEC is searching for these people in order to pay them their refunds for power purchases. Can you help us find them? Page 4.

Energy efficiency and Hydro Quebec costs were on members minds, so they wrote with interesting questions for our general manager. See "Members Write," page 2.

Fifty-percent solution! Pioneering Co-op household wins solar prize and signs onto net metering. Page 6.

So how's renewable energy doing in Vermont? For one professional's opinion, see page 7.



Abigail Faulkner and Hobie Guion of East Montpelier like the reverse spin on their electric meter since they signed up for net metering (page 6).

IBEW embraces new group of employees at WEC. Page 8.

Washington Electric Cooperative
East Montpelier, VT 05651

Members Write

Co-op Currents welcomes letters to the editor that address any aspect of the Co-op's policies and operations, or any matters related to electricity. Readers can write to **Co-op Currents**, P.O. Box 8, East Montpelier, VT 05651. Letters to the editor will not be published in the Annual Meeting (April) issue.

Questions Inspired By Hawken

To The Editor:

I really appreciated Paul Hawken's article in the last issue of *Co-op Currents* ("U.S. Energy Policy Propping Up A Dying Oil Age," July 2001). I read two things that month that floored me. Paul wrote, "In the U.S., for every 100 units of energy that we introduce into our economic system, nearly 98 units are wasted...We are 2-percent efficient."

In the same vein, on July 22 in the *New York Times Magazine*, Jeff Goodell wrote "...California's troubles were in fact caused more by half-baked deregulation than any shortage of generating capacity (one recent study points out that many blackouts occurred when demand was only 75 percent of available supply)."

WOW! After everything I read in the news, I didn't hear that. All I heard was "energy and economic crisis," not that it was a management (and greed) issue.

Paul Hawken asks us to aim toward 10-percent efficiency. It still seems so low, but I guess, it is 500 percent better than it is now.

What is the policy of WEC, and the State of Vermont, towards working toward a goal of improving efficiency?

And a second question: I read recently about microturbines, self-contained generating units that are running everything from hotels to houses. On-site generation seems like it would cut all the transmission losses, and provide a way to use the excess heat as well. Does WEC have any more info on this? Is this something they are exploring?

Thanks for your interest in energy efficiency. It is great to be part of a co-op that is asking these questions, and providing us with good information.

Lori Barg
Plainfield

General manager responds...

Energy efficiency has been a major priority of the Co-op for more than 10 years, and continues to be. WEC directly operates programs that reduce both electric and fossil-fuel energy consumption, and we regularly seek to educate our members in these issues through *Co-op Currents*. Detailed information about things members can do, ways your

Co-op can help, and about how much energy your various appliances use is available on our website, or by calling us. For information about the State of Vermont's policies, you can find the Department of Public Service's detailed plans, policies and other documents, as well as information about the statewide services available from "Efficiency Vermont," at www.state.vt.us/psd.

Concerning distributed generation, this issue of *Co-op Currents* and the previous one featured articles about net metering, residential solar energy systems and fuel cells, distributed generation technologies that are presently or soon will be available for residential customers.

Microturbines are somewhat larger fossil-fuel burning units that are more appropriate for larger commercial or industrial locations (of which WEC has very few on our system). Microturbines can cut transmission and distribution losses, but they still burn fossil fuels and can cause air quality (and even noise) issues locally. They can play a role in improving efficiency and moving toward a cleaner energy supply.

WEC is a member of a national co-op, Energy Co-opportunity (ECO), which presently can provide us with microturbines from a number of manufacturers at good prices. If any of our larger business members are interested, we would be happy to tell you more.

Avram Patt

At What Cost The HQ Settlement?

To The Editor:

Avram Patt's article, "Hydro Quebec Ice Storm Arbitration Settlement; WEC Dissents, Upon Principle" (*Co-op Currents*, July 2001) was extremely informative about this important source of energy for our cooperative. Although hydro power seems to be a clean and clear winner over fossil fuels, purchasing any energy source is a complex commitment. We are fortunate to have competent officers to address these complexities.

One of the outstanding virtues of our cooperative is open and extensive reporting of financial activity. Would it be possible for *Co-op Currents* to publish a detailed report of the line-item expenditures included in the cost of the legal dispute about the ice storm? Avram only reported that it cost more than \$9 million.

Americans are accustomed, sourly, to accepting such generalizations in the media about the cost of legal disputes, but I'll expect more detail from the Co-op. Such detail will not only help us as members to scrutinize our cooperative's expenses; it will also help us understand how most such high-level disputes cost

so much money.

Let me first guess, myself. I'll presume that almost all costs were for human labor by legal counsel and support staff. Generously estimating an average rate of \$100/hour, this dispute must have taken more than 90 thousand hours (45 job years) of thought, discussion, reading and writing.

True? I'm sure every Co-op member wants to know.

Howard Chesshire
Vershire

General manager responds...

The Vermont Joint Owners' total arbitration costs were approximately \$15 million, spent over a four-year period, and WEC's share is about 0.8 percent. While \$15 million is a lot of money from one perspective, especially since we did not fully recover those costs, one could argue that it is not that significant an expense in trying to resolve a serious dispute involving a contract that will cost more than \$2.8 billion over its life. (Several years ago for example, WEC spent considerably more than our share of the HQ arbitration costs to recover our investment in the Seabrook nuclear plant.)

The breakdown of arbitration expenses is approximately:

- **Legal:** 68 percent. In addition to a number of Vermont utility lawyers involved, the largest costs went to the VJO's Montreal counsel (the contract is governed by Quebec law) and a Washington, D.C., firm experienced in international commercial arbitration cases, utility cases in particular;
- **Consultants/witnesses:** 14.5 percent. The core of the dispute was whether or not HQ's transmission system was in fact built to the standards it was supposed to be, and whether or not HQ knew of the deficiencies. It was a highly technical case, and required consultants and expert witnesses, of which there were in some cases only a few qualified ones in North America, on transmission design, engineering, cold region climatology, ice formation, and other subjects;
- **Outside costs:** 17.6 percent. This includes the arbitration panel's own costs, their fees, administrative expenses and travel. This category includes a number of other miscellaneous expenses, such as document and simultaneous testimony translation.

Avram Patt

Co-op Currents

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The Board of Trustees' 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, contact Management and Programs Administrator Denise Jacques, 802-223-5245.

Capital Credits

continued from page 1

member purchased during that calendar year.

The federal Rural Utilities Service (RUS) requires electric co-ops to attain at least 30-percent equity in their property and holdings before they can make capital credit distributions. WEC met that threshold during the 1990s and began the capital credit refund program in 1998. The Board of Directors is authorized to discontinue capital credit payments when it deems necessary, but for the last four years the board has considered WEC's finances to be sufficient and stable enough to continue the program uninterrupted.

In 1998 and 1999, WEC returned more than \$355,000 to those members, or their heirs, that had been with the Co-op during its first 40 years of existence (from 1939 through the 1970s). Last year WEC shifted its strategy to include not only earlier capi-

tal credit accounts (1981 and 1982), but the most recent completed year (1999) as well. The two systems, widely used among cooperatives of all kinds, are called FIFO (first in, first out) for historical repayments, and LIFO (last in, first out), which repays recent members. WEC's 2001 equity distribution program will again combine FIFO and LIFO repayments.

So how's this all going to work?

Locating members

The first thing WEC must do is attempt to locate everyone who qualifies for capital credit payments under this year's program.

This summer WEC sent notices to current members, and to the last known address of former members, who are eligible to receive a capital credit refund of \$20 or more. Those who received a notice were asked to fill out the accompanying card and send it back to the Co-op, verifying they were the member of record, or the member's legal heir – in which case proof or legal standing is required.

Not all qualifying people will be found through the notices. One step WEC takes to reach missing former members is to publish a list of those who have not returned their verification cards in *Co-op Currents*. This year's list can be found on pages 4 and 5 of this issue. Please check to see if any of those people are known to you, especially their current whereabouts. You can help them and help WEC by contacting them and suggesting they call, write or email Washington Electric to inquire about their capital credit refunds.

Staff members are working hard to process the thousands of accounts on the books for the years 1982 and 2000. Their goal is to complete the refunds by December. If you have a check coming to you for \$20 or more, expect it by then. For current Co-op members, capital credits in lesser amounts will take the form of a credit on your electric bill. (For more details of the program, refer to the accompanying story, "How It Works.")

Then, come January 2002, Washington Electric will begin looking at its records from 2001 to determine whether or not we've had another "capital-credit year."

For the fourth straight year autumn marks the time for Washington Electric Cooperative to return a portion of its margins back to where it came from – the Co-op's member/owners.

A Correction

A member contacted the Co-op after reading the *Currents* article on developments in fuel cell technology ("Distributed Generation Opens New Doors For Rural Electrification," July/August 2001) regarding a characterization made about fuel cells and greenhouse gases. The caller referred to the following statement: "...fuel cells do not employ combustion and therefore don't make noise or emit greenhouse gases."

While the statement is correct about the absence of noise, the reference to fuel cells and greenhouse gases, as printed, was inaccurate. All proton-exchange-membrane (PEM)-based fuel cell systems use hydrocarbon-based fuels (such as propane), from which hydrogen is extracted in an electrochemical (non-combustive) process. Carbon dioxide (CO₂), one of the main emissions typically considered a "greenhouse gas," is released as a result of this process.

It would have been more accurate in the article to say that propane-powered fuel cell co-generation (the simultaneous production of electricity and useable heat) does release carbon dioxide, along with water vapor, as by-products of electric generation.

Bill Powell
Director, Products and Services



How It Works

The Mechanics Of Capital Credit Refunds

For the second year in a row the Co-op's Board of Trustees has allocated a specific amount of money – \$200,000 – to the capital credit refund program, rather than retiring all the capital credits from specific time periods as the Co-op did in 1998 and 1999. Designating a specific expenditure for the program helps WEC maintain a stable and dependable budget.

The Board has allocated \$100,000 to repay capital credits earned in 2000. The other \$100,000 will go toward capital credits from 1982.

No capital credit checks will be written for less than \$20. Current WEC members who figure into this year's capital credit refund program (having purchased power from WEC in 1982 and/or 2000) will receive refunds of \$20 or more by check. Refunds due to current Co-op members for less than that amount will come in the form of a deduction from the member's November electric bill. Former members whose capital credit refunds would be less than \$20 will not receive a payment this year. Their accounts will stay active at the Co-op, with a payment coming in the future if and when their refunds reach the minimum amount.

The \$100,000 allocated to capital credits from 1982 will complete the effort begun last year to repay all credits earned that year. However, the remaining \$100,000 will repay only a portion of the year-2000 capital credits. WEC's margins last year reached \$477,737, so the \$100,000 earmarked for capital credits amounts to only about 21 percent of the total.

So how will those limitations affect your repayment?

The moneys dedicated to the 2000 accounts will be applied equitably among the qualifying members in good standing with the Co-op. Since the \$100,000 limit will retire about 21 percent of the total margins, that same percentage will be applied to each member's capital credit account. If that percentage, by itself or in combination with 1982 refunds, yields a total of \$20 or more, a check will be forthcoming.

The remaining percentage (about 79 percent) of the 2000 margins will figure into a refund program in the future.

Some former members' accounts may never reach the threshold required for a payment. In those circumstances, WEC's bylaws allow such small amounts of money to revert to the Cooperative.

If you have received a capital credit check in the past, you know that for most residential members the amount of money is not huge. But it's your money, derived from your slice of the ownership of the company that provides your electric power.

Marketplace

FOR SALE: Snow Machines.

1989 Polaris Indy Classic, 500cc liquid cooled, electric start, hand and thumb warmers; 5,000 miles. Engine rebuilt recently, carburetor jets and clutch serviced. Runs great and is in very good condition overall. Asking \$1,500.

ALSO, 1992 Arctic Cat Pantera, two-up, 440cc liquid cooled, electric start, reverse, hand & thumb warmers; 5,300 miles. Clutch and carburetors just serviced, hard shell saddle bags and front bar bag, back rest. Runs great and is also in very good condition. Asking \$2,100.

ALSO Snow Tires: Cooper WeatherMaster, P175-70-R13, all good, four for \$60.

For all the above, call 476-3760 evenings, or leave message on machine at other times.

FOR SALE: Three-kw inverter,

manufactured by Soleq. It takes and converts 110-volt DC power into 110-volt AC or 22-volt AC. Price negotiable. Telephone Arthur Silvester at (802) 685-3169.

FOR SALE: Gun. 30-40 Craige bolt-

action. Five-shot clip. With sling and one-half box of shells. Weaver scope. \$200. ALSO 1994 Dodge Ram 1500 SLT PKG. 5.9-liter engine. Actual miles, 24,500. Air, automatic 2W. \$10,995. Call 476-3698 or 476-4299.

FOR SALE: 1996 Ford Escort, four-

door sedan. Needs new engine even though the car has only 95,000 miles. But has brand new brakes and tires, and is otherwise in good condition. Inspected. Will sell for \$500, the cost of the brakes and tires. Call 476-3740 nights, or 476-6534 days.

Washington Electric Co-op Seeks Former Members For Capital Credit Refunds

Washington Electric Cooperative is preparing to issue capital credit refund checks to members and former members who bought power from the East Montpelier-based, cooperatively owned electric utility during these two years: 1982 and 2000. Capital credits are refunded to Co-op members (customers) for the years in which WEC's revenues exceeded its operating expenses. The amount of a members' refund is based on the size of the Co-op's margins in those particular years and how much electricity the member purchased during the years in question. Each co-op member has a capital credit account – a bookkeeping entry managed on an annual basis by the Cooperative – in his/her name.

The Cooperative has sent out notices to all members and former members who bought

power from WEC in the years 1982 and 2000 (this does not count the years in between) and whose capital credit accounts indicate they are eligible for at least the minimum \$20 refund in effect under this year's program. The notices were sent to each person's last-known address. Listed below are the names of those people whose notices came back to the Co-op marked as undeliverable. WEC is asking friends, acquaintances and relatives of the people on the list to contact those potential recipients, or their rightful beneficiaries, and have the former member or beneficiary contact Washington Electric Cooperative directly at 802-223-5245, or toll-free at 1-800-932-5245.

WEC will issue this year's capital credit refunds before the end of December 2000.

Abbiati, Stuart	Bonazzi, Michael	Comolli, Aurelia	Eleanor	Geake, Walter	Heuser, Karl	Knowles, Winston
Abel, Richard	Bond, Lawrence (Estate of)	Condit, Gloria	Eklund, John & Judith	Gendreau, Robert	Hibbert, Robert & Sue	Knox, Gordon Jr.
Absher, Thomas	Boucher, Ronald & Jeanne	Congdon, John	Eldred, Allan	Germain, David	Higgins, Andrew	Knudsen, Donald & Verna
Adams, John & Annette	Boulanger, Claude & Madeline	Cooney-Moore, Maureen	Emerson, Lawrence	Gerow, Stanley & Jeannine	Hill, Charlotte	Kuehn, Kate E.
Adsit, Suzanne	Bowen, L. B.	Copeland, Lynn	Emerson, Russell	Getty, Alice S.	Hill, David	Kumpf, Milton
Ahearn, William	Bower, Ronald	Cordaro, Nell	Emery, Luvia	Giacherio, Peter	Hilliari, B. H.	Kyle, Aaron
Ainsworth, Forrest & Helen	Bowler, Barry	Coriveau, Bruce	Emery, Vena	Gile, Ramona	Hiltz, Frank & Brenda	Ladd, John
Alden, George	Bradshaw, Barry	Counter, Dorothy	Eniti, Anita	Gioia, Robert	Hoar, Charles & Ethel	Ladd, Thurman
Aldrich, Georgia	Brancato, Vito & Irene	Cover, Peter	Ericson, Arthur	Girardin, Eugene	Hoar, Raymond	LaFontain, Joyce
Aldrighetti, Louis	Breer, Maria	Covey, Burton	Eser, Ann	Gland, Alan D.	Hodgkins, John Sr.	Lakatos, Peter
Allee, Robert	Broe, Joan	Cox Cable TV Mont	Evans, Charles	Gochee, David	Hoffman, Alfred & Carol	Lamb, Jonathan Sr.
Anders, Irving	Brown, David	Cox, Daniel	Fageley, Lewis	Goddard, Elizabeth	Rae	Landin, Leesa
Anderson, Paul & Jody	Brown, Kenneth	Cressey, Earl & Renette	Fair, Forrest	Gokey, Marian	Hoffman, Mark & Janet	Landry, Alex
Anspach, Denny & Polly	Brown, Philip	Cross, Robert (Estate of)	Farland, Eugene & Katherine	Golbranson, John & Dorothy	Miller	Landry, William
Antonovich, David	Bryant & Dailey	Crouse, Allen	Farnham, Carl	Gontarek, Leonard	Hoffman, Robert	Langmaid, Stephen
Apolito, Sandra & John	Buchholz, Robert & Dianne	Cruikshank, Robert Jr.	Featherstone, Paul	Goodine, Henry	Hoiska, Beniti	Lanning, Stephen
Asack, William & Beverly	Buck, Arthur	D'Agostino, James	Fenoff, Bertram & Barbara	Goodrich, Florence	Holloway, Leith	Larivee, Roland
Atkinson, Elliott	Buckley, Charles	Dailey, Elwin (Mrs.)	Ferguson, Floyd	Goodwin, Doris	Holmes, E. H.	Larkham, Cynthia (Re: Gladys Noyes Estate)
Atkinson, Polly	Buckley, Charles	Dailey, Nanna	Fernon, Herbert	Graham, Norman	Hooper, Gladys	Larkin, Earl
Aucoin, Kathleen	Bunt, Joseph & Margaret	Daley, George	Filiault, Richard	Graves, Virginia H.	Hoover, Karen	LaRocque, Andrew & Linda
Austin-Bradley, Blair & Nancie	Burke, Patrick	Danforth, Robert	Finelli, Janis	Gray, James	Hopkins, Flora & Stephen	Hopkins, Leota & Ralph
Azur, Schuyle & Mark Lewis	Burkholder, Bonnie & Steven	Danforth, Robert & Jacquelyn	Finley, Marilyn	Gray, Malcolm & Joseph Shapiro	Hoyt, Howard	Hoyt, Howard
Bador, Clayton & Elsie	Bushey, Kathleen (Re: Frank Bushey Estate)	Darling, John Jr.	Fischer, Cheryl	Gray, Ronald & Patricia	Hubbard, Eugene	Hubbard, Eugene
Baer, Henry	Bushey, Ralph	Darrow, Agnes	Fisher, Carleton	Greaves, Mark	Hubbell, James	Hubbell, James
Bailey, Bert	Bushey, Reed	David, Lynn	Fisk, Floyd	Greenhouse, Rebecca	Hubbell, Jane	Hubbell, Jane
Bailey, Charles	Butler, Kenneth & Lisa	Davidson, Albert & Lois	Fitch, David E.	Greenway, Maurice	Hurwitz, Liz & Linda Siegel	Hurwitz, Liz & Linda Siegel
Bailey, F. W. & Eva	Butler, Kenneth & Lisa	Davidson, Ralph	Fitzsimons, Helen	Gregory, Helen	Hutchins, Gerald & Betty	Hutchins, Gerald & Betty
Baird, Donald	Caesar, William	Davis, Howard	Flanders, William	Griffin, James & Jeanne	Ickovic, Thomas	Ickovic, Thomas
Ballschneider, George & Gregg	Cain, David Jr.	Davis, Loretta	Flannigan, Steven & Lisette	Griffith, Peter	Irving, Marion	Irving, Marion
Ballschneider, George & Irene	Calderara, Joseph	Davis, Norman	Fletcher, Marion	Griswold, Stillma	Irwin, L. (Trustee for Charlotte Alexander Trust)	Irwin, L. (Trustee for Charlotte Alexander Trust)
Ballschneider, Irene	Calderwood, Wesley	Ddisenhaus, Nancy	Flood, Gordon (Exec. Of Richard Flood Estate)	Grogan, Robert & Barbara	Jackson, Muriel	Jackson, Muriel
Barbieri, Nichola J.	Cambell, Richard	Deangelis, Joseph & Deborah	Fogg, Malcolm	Grove, Richard	Janeway, Charles	Janeway, Charles
Barden, Norman	Camp, Hester	Deaquair, Dwight	Formwalt, Jeffrey	Guilmette, Theodore & Marsha	Jaroach, Eugene Jr.	Jaroach, Eugene Jr.
Barker, James	Campbell, Clarence	Decola, Barry & M. Kelley	Forrend, Jon	Gurnett, L. A.	Jedinak, Gary	Jedinak, Gary
Barnett, Harold	Carbo, Judith	Deforge, Lucille	Forrest, Brian	Gushea, Clifford	Jerry, Stephen	Jerry, Stephen
Barnhart, Katherine	Carbone, Arnold & Kathy	Deforge, Robert	Foster, Richard Jr. & Christine	Hackett Hill Realty	Jewett, Ronald & Gertrude	Jewett, Ronald & Gertrude
Bartlett, John & Cathryn	Carlson, Katherine	Degen, Genevieve	Fournier, Jeannette	Haddad, Alfred	Johnson, Arthur & Juanita	Johnson, Arthur & Juanita
Bayley, Kenneth & Shevaun	Carlson, Robert & Rose	Demingware, Cora	Fowler, Bruce	Hafner, David	Johnson, Gregory	Johnson, Gregory
Beane, Marion	Carlson, Robert & Rose	Denault, Raymond	Fowler, Karen	Haggett, Clifton	Johnson, John Jr.	Johnson, John Jr.
Beaucage, Donald & Deborah	Carlson, Walter	Deneergaard, Chris	Fox, Mildred	Haggett, Dana & Lisa	Johnson, Richard	Johnson, Richard
Beck, Theodor	Carminati, Gene & Judith	Deneergard, Chris	Franks, Lloyd	Hale, Robert & Marjorie	Jones, Allen	Jones, Allen
Beckler, Minnie	Carroll, James & Nancy	Desmarais, Rick	Franks, Ruth	Hall, Kenneth Jr.	Jones, Clifton	Jones, Clifton
Beckly, Eva	Carr, Betsy & Michael	Deuel, Roger	Franzone, Vincent & Rudolph Smoren	Hamelin, Charles	Jones, Robert W.	Jones, Robert W.
Beegan, Lucy (Estate)	Carruth, Philip	Dickenson, Donelda	Freeman, Bernard	Hamilton, R.D.	Jones, William	Jones, William
Beiley, Janice	Carter, Brian	Dickinson, William	Freeman, Melinda	Hanson, Lloyd	Jordan, Wayland	Jordan, Wayland
Bell, Robert H.	Casavant, Richard & Carole	Dimick, Donald & Joanne Davis	French, Bert Jr.	Hardaker, Ramona	Joyal, Pearl	Joyal, Pearl
Bello, Donna & Gary	Cathrew, Ralph & Priscilla	Dittrich, Fred Jr.	French, Colleen	Harrington, John	Jurkiewicz, Helene (Estate of)	Jurkiewicz, Helene (Estate of)
Bengel, James	Chamberlain, Judith	Domencich, Thomas	Freund, Allen & Ellen	Hart, Jeannine Re: Stanley Hart Estate	Justice, Marjorie	Justice, Marjorie
Bennett, Donald Jr. & David Sturges	Champanier, Paul	Dowd, John	Fullerton, John J.	Hart, Lillian	Kalinowski, Franklin	Kalinowski, Franklin
Benoit, John & Pam	Champany, Irene	Downing, Maurice	Gaboriault, Thomas	Hart, Marilyn	Kampmann, Phebe	Kampmann, Phebe
Berman, Mary	Chater, E. W.	Driscoll, Peter	Gadaree, Harold	Hartley, Nancy & William	Kappler, Peter & Jane	Kappler, Peter & Jane
Bery, Gladys	Cheney, Linda	Ducharme, Michael	Gagnon, Francis	Hatch, Dale (Re: Agnes Hatch Estate)	Katz, Stanley	Katz, Stanley
Bessette, Michael	Chester, William Jr.	Duckett, Lesley	Gaines, Jeffrey	Hayden, Edward	Kaula, Joan	Kaula, Joan
Binder, Frank	Chipman, Stanley & Beverly	Duesing, Louis	Gajewski, Joseph & Helen	Hayes, Tom & Jeanne	Kazlow, Gene	Kazlow, Gene
Bird, Norman	Chouinard, Raymond	Dukette, Paul	Galbreath, Maurice & Beverly	Hayes, Walter	Kehrhahn, Vickie	Kehrhahn, Vickie
Bishop, Dolloff & Barbara Euson	Christensen, Christen Jr.	Dunbar, Bessie	Gale, Pliny	Hayes, William	Keith, Gerald & Dorothy	Keith, Gerald & Dorothy
Bissex, Henry	Christenson, Norman	Dunbar, Duane & Jane	Garrison, Jim Sr.	Haynes, Robert Jr.	Kennedy, James M.	Kennedy, James M.
Blachly, Alice	Clarke, Doris	Dunham, Lloyd	Garcia, Norbert	Hazelton, Brian & Valerie	Keough, J.M. (Estate of)	Keough, J.M. (Estate of)
Blair, Robert	Cloud, Rhoda	Dunham, Violet	Gardner, Seth & Carol	Heath, Robin	Kindestin, Joann	Kindestin, Joann
Blake, Gary & Paula	Coburn, Cam	Dunn, Richard Jr.	Garfield, Daniel & Vicki Lynn	Hefferman, Michael	King, Clifton Sr. & Shirley	King, Clifton Sr. & Shirley
Boerner, Hannelore	Coburn, David & Lisa	Dux, Thomas	Gargon, Frank	Heise, Bernard	King, John	King, John
Bogart, Brian	Coburn, Donald Jr.	Dyck, Victoria	Garrity, Charles	Heisholt, Robert	Kingsbury, L.	Kingsbury, L.
Bojorguez, Dean	Cole, Arthur	Edgerton, Robin	Gates, Clay	Henderson, Donna	Kingsbury, Richard & Laura	Kingsbury, Richard & Laura
Bolio, Rollin & Huggette	Coleman, Wilgar	Edmonds, Lawrence & Linda	Gauthier, Dennis & Margaret	Henry, Tom	Kling, Marshal & Maurita	Kling, Marshal & Maurita
	Colli, George Jr.	Edson, June		Herron, Davis	Knapp, Alta H.	Knapp, Alta H.
	Collins, Carol	Edson, Nancy		Herson, Shelley	Knapp, James & Marilyn	Knapp, James & Marilyn
	Colson, Frank	Eisenman, Theodor &			Knowles, Richard	Knowles, Richard
	Comley, James & Caroline					

Martell, Emeline
 Martin, Cynthia
 Martin, Steven
 Mason, Judy
 Mattegat, Otto
 Mattern, Cristine
 Matthai, Maria (Re: Thomas Yahkub Estate)
 Mattoon, Floyd Sr.
 McAllister, Russell
 McAuliffe, Paul & Linda
 McBean, David
 McCabe, Arthur
 McCormish, John
 McCraw, Willis
 McCurdy, Stanley
 McDonald, Deborah
 McElfresh, Peter & Nancy
 McFarland, Stephen
 McGonagle, Lucy
 McHone, Susan
 McLaughlin, Harold & Dona
 McMahan, Franci
 McQueen, Raymond
 McRae, Dennis
 Mead, Thomas & Sherry Collins
 Mears, Edgar
 Meech, George
 Meiggs, Arthur Jr.
 Menard, Robert
 Mercadante, John & Barbara
 Merrill, Howard & A. Evelyn
 Merrill, Kathleen
 Miles, Dale & Jeannette
 Miller, Donald & Ramona
 Miller, Frank
 Miller, Iva
 Milnes, Mark & Gingah
 Monness, Neil
 Monsarrat, Nicholas
 Monteith, Joseph
 Monty, Charles Jr. & Susan
 Moore, Joel
 Moore, Thomas & Sharon
 Morgan, John & Sylvia

Morigerato, Susan
 Morse, David
 Morse, Stanley
 Mugford, Don & Richard Hutchins
 Mugford, Shirley & Walter
 Murphy, Daniel (Estate of)
 Murray, Agnes & Garth
 Murray, Marna
 Murray, Steven & Roberta
 Murtagh, Frances
 Myers, Charles
 Nelson, John
 Nergaard, Paul
 Neuwirth, Bernard
 New England Telephone Co.
 Nicely, John W.
 Nielsen, Anna
 Nolan, Howard
 Noll, John & Barbara
 North Wind Power Co.
 Northland Building
 Nye, Karl
 Oakes, John
 Obarzanek, Eva
 O'Brien, William R.
 Olson, Steig
 Ordway, Kelvin
 Oriol, Jack
 O'Riordan, Kevin
 Ortiz, Angel
 Ortiz, Richard & Melanie
 Osgood, Alzada
 Oszejca, David & Beverly
 Otto, Conrad
 Pacilio, Vincent
 Paige, June
 Palmer, Roger
 Pararott, Gerald & Kathy
 Parker, Bruce
 Parry, John G. Sr.
 Parsons, Kim
 Paskus, Charles & Kathleen
 Pearce, Fred & Renee
 Pearson, Q. A.

Peduzzi, Norman
 Pelkey, Walter
 Pendleton, Ruth
 Penn, Louis & Ann
 Perkins, Howard
 Perrin, William
 Perrinez, Peter & Ruth
 Perry, Courtland, Jr.
 Piccicuto, Richard
 Piche, Louise
 Pieper, Thomas & Laurie
 Pierce, Beverlee
 Pierce, Walter & Louise
 Pierce, Winston & Gwendolyn
 Pilbin, James
 Pilbin, Ronald
 Pinard, Robert
 Platt, Jonathan (Re: Howard Platt Estate)
 Pollander, Beatrice
 Pollina, John
 Porembski, Alice
 Potrzeba, Robert & Elizabeth
 Potter, Fletcher
 Pratt, Rebecca & Bruce
 Preble, W. James & Virginia
 Pregent, Alice
 Pregent, Raymond & Elizabeth
 Prosperi, Robert
 Prosser, Robert
 Protas, Alan
 Proudfoot, Eric
 Prue, Arthur
 Pubins, Frank & Ethel
 Purvis, Stuart
 Rand, Albert & Nancy
 Randall, John
 Randall, Raymond
 Rausch, Edward
 Renaud, Virginia
 Renner, Al
 Retchless, Robert
 Rice, Tim
 Richard, Henry & Helen

Richardson, Dianne
 Riendeau, Richard
 Rivard, Robert
 Roberts, Ricky & Denise
 Robinson, Gerald & Mary
 Robinson, John L.
 Roddy, Roger Jr.
 Roddy, Roger Jr.
 Rodger, Roxanna
 Rogers, David & Lynne
 Rogers, Gregory & Jean Miccolo
 Rogue, Winifred
 Romano, Josephine
 Romero, Jose Jr.
 Rooney, Walter
 Rossignal, Boyd
 Rostosky, Peter
 Rowell, Francis Jr.
 Roya, Cleave
 Rubin, Ronald
 Russell, John
 Ryan, Dona
 Rybert, Allen
 Saglio, Domenic
 Sahlman, Frank & Margaret
 Sahlman, Peggy Jo
 Saltimocca, N.V.
 Saman, Peter
 Sanborn, Kendall
 Sare, Ronald
 Saunders, Robert & Roberta
 Schaffer, Stephen & Naomi
 Schauer, Michael
 Schindler, Robert & Doris
 Schulenburg, Deborah & Douglas & Jennifer Levin
 Seaman, John
 Sease, Stephen
 Seigel, Phyllis
 Senecal, Kenneth
 Severance, W. John
 Sexauer, Howard
 Shatney, Harry
 Shaw, Wesley

Sheean, Michael
 Sherlock, Wallace
 Sherman, Linda
 Shuttle, Donald
 Sidusky, John
 Siegle, Andrew
 Silman, Jefferey
 Simmons Cable TV
 Simone, John
 Simpson, Sheldon
 Sjolund, Kenneth
 Smicelski, Charles Jr.
 Smith, Bruce
 Smith, Margaret
 Smith, Peter
 Smith, Trent & Heidi
 Snyder, John & Sue
 Sorrentino, Alfonso
 Souppa, William Jr. & Barbara
 Specialized Hauling Corp.
 Spitzer, Janet
 Sporbert, Everett
 Squire, Elizabeth
 Stanaway, Susan
 Starrett, Corinne
 Starti, William
 Steers, William
 Stewart, Mary & William
 Stohr, Rose
 Stolzman, Lynda
 Storey, George
 Story, Helen
 Stridsbert, michael
 Strong, Gertrude
 Stryker, Jon
 Stuart, Richard
 Sundaramurthy, M. & Judith
 Sweet, George & Terrie
 Swenson, David
 Szulc, Alfred & Lynda
 Tarshis, Susan
 Tenney, Carlton
 Terrill, Mel
 The Two Penny Circus, Inc.
 Thomas, James
 Thompson, Ray & Helen

Thresher, John
 Thurber, Hayden & Katherine
 Thurgate, Harry
 Tibbitts, Joanne
 Tillberg, Harlan
 Tillotson, Evelyn
 Tillou, Daniel & Jean
 Tirone, John
 Titus, Charles & Dorothy
 Toffling, Lillian
 Travis, Brian
 Travis, James
 Trepto, Una
 Tripp, James
 Tripp, Peter & Roxanna
 Trombley, Steve
 Trombly, Gregory
 Trottier, Charles
 Turcotte, F. M.
 Turgeon, Lawrence
 Turner, Bruce
 Turner, Cecil
 Turner, Emma & Fred Carbonell
 Tuz, Charles
 Ulrich, Charles
 Urcan, James
 Utton, Patricia & Robert
 Van Benschote, John & Ann Mullen
 Van Vechten, Eleanor
 Vanorman, Philip & Sandra
 Vatnick, Itzick & Susan
 Vetter, William
 Vinton, Burnell
 Vivian, Margaret
 Wald, Benjamin
 Waldo, Elaine
 Wallace, Dana
 Ward, Diane
 Wassell, Eleanor
 Watkins, Douglas & Catharine
 Watson, Ethel
 Weart, Richard & Theresa
 Weber, David

Webster, Russell
 Wechsler, Elizabeth & Robert
 Weil, Florence
 Weintraub, Dorothy
 Weissman, G. B.
 Welch, David
 Welch, David
 Wells, Duane
 Wells, Jan
 White, Bernice
 White, Edward
 White, William
 Whitney, John
 Wild, David
 Wilder, Robert
 Willett, Donald
 Willey, Douglas & Diane Laferriere
 Willey, Edythe
 Willey, Richard
 Williams, Harold H.
 Williams, Thomas (Re: Leslie Buck Estate)
 Williams, William Jr.
 Willis, Ann
 Wilson, Robert J.
 Winters, Linda
 Wiseman, Warren
 Witham, Wendell
 Woodard, Charles & Dorothy
 Woodcock, Dwight
 Woodworth, Clayton & Shelly
 Workspace, Inc.
 Wright, Virginia
 Wtkin, T. S. & William
 Wyskoczka, William & Florence
 Young, Edward
 Young, Wayne
 Zalkind'Schur, Margot
 Zeilinger, Harry

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East Montpelier Couple Steps To The Plate

WEC Contest Winners Go SOLAR

As contests go, this one was no match for Powerball. In fact, the winners – Hobart (Hobie) Guion and Abigail Faulkner of East Montpelier – ended up shelling out a lot more money to make use of their prize than the value of the prize itself.

But this was never meant to be a “sweepstakes,” in any sense of the word. The goal of the contest, in which a small package of solar home-generation equipment was to be awarded to a Washington Electric Co-op member, was not to make anyone rich. It was to increase interest in, and gain another foothold for, renewable energy in central Vermont.

The advent of net metering also played a role in the contest, which was designed and carried out over a two-year period by WEC’s director of products and services, Bill Powell. (Powell also provided the prize, passing on the solar equipment that he himself had won in a national promotional competition staged by Trace Engineering.) Vermont’s 1998 net-metering law enables electric utility customers who generate power for their own use – and whose home-generation systems meet state standards – to channel any extra power they produce back into their utility’s distribution system. In exchange, they receive a comparable amount of credit against their future electric bills. It’s a small, but satisfying, financial incentive for those who are interested in home-generation but do not want to go fully independent and take themselves off the electric grid.

That’s a pretty good description of Hobie Guion and Abigail (Apple) Faulkner. On a recent summer morning, when the sky was so bright at 9 a.m. that Faulkner had to shield her eyes with a hand on her forehead, the sunlight poured into the 15 photovoltaic (PV) panels on the roof of their new storage shed. The couple watched with pleasure as the little wheel on their WEC electric meter circled in reverse; instead of measuring how much power they were drawing from WEC’s electric lines, the wheel was tallying the kilowatt hours (kWh) of electricity they were providing to the Co-op. For the moment, at least, their PV panels were generating all the power their household needed, with no help, they pointed out, from Vermont Yankee, Hydro Quebec and the New England power grid.

And they were further reducing their next WEC electric bill by racking up credits for the rooftop power from their storage shed.

“It’s fun to see the meter run backward,” Faulkner said.



Above, “(Meter-gazing) is kind of a silly preoccupation,” says Hobie Guion, but when the meter spins backwards it’s proof that all systems are go. At right, WEC members Guion and Abigail Faulkner pose on a sunny morning beneath a very active rack of PV panels atop their new storage shed.

“It’s kind of a silly preoccupation,” Guion admitted with a smile.

The net-metering angle

Powell kicked off the contest back in September 1998. He had just won a 100-watt Microsine inverter (which changes DC energy into AC, suitable for home use) from Trace Engineering, and a 100-watt PV panel. Always an advocate for renewable energy, Powell was also interested in finding out how much of an effect net metering might have on power usage and power costs in a typical home installation.

And so, in the pages of *Co-op Currents*, Powell offered to turn his Trace Engineering prize, valued at more than \$800, over to someone else, and to help facilitate the professional installation. In return, the member would allow WEC to monitor the PV system for two years and collect data.

The response far outstripped Powell’s expectations.

“I was staggered,” he said. “We had about 80 Co-op members contact us, which was something like 1 percent of



our year-round residential market at that time. I think the people we heard from were drawn toward technological innovation – ‘I like the notion that I can produce electricity from a silent machine that’s still tied to the grid.’ And they were people who want to make an affirmative statement; they support renewable energy because they consider it the right thing to do.”

Fine. But meanwhile, Powell had 80 people all wanting one small solar panel and inverter.

He whittled down the field of competitors to 10, and then applied a scoring system to the remaining candidates that included such factors as solar exposure of the house and property, the nature of the family’s electricity usage, and their

expectations. The 100-watt panel would be of little use by itself. Powell was looking for someone with larger ambitions.

“From the 10,” he said, “the one that percolated to the top was Hobie and Apple.”

50-percent solution

“I saw the story in *Co-op Currents* and decided to put our name into the hat,” said Faulkner. “The original prize was one 100-watt panel, which when you think about it is about enough to power one electric bulb. We wanted to do something more comprehensive, to take the prize and really make it count.”

Faulkner and Guion asked Powell for a printout of their history of electric usage since joining the Co-op in 1992. In it, they could see their personal history, too – when their children (Henry, 6, and Eliza, 4) came along and increased the family’s use of appliances; when Guion, a contractor who specializes in highly insulated, energy-efficient houses, was spending extra time in the shop with his power tools for a large project. They then projected their usage into the future, and evaluated how much of an investment they could make in a PV installation.

“We decided to shoot for 50 percent of our power load,” said Faulkner. “Fifty percent was a nice round number, and represented a number of panels – 15 – that we felt we could pay for and which we could fit on the structure (that Hobie would build).”

With the prize in hand, the couple hired Jim Grundy of Elemental Energy to perform the installation.

But Grundy quickly discovered a problem.

“Each module, or panel, in this design has a 100-watt inverter mounted on the back of it,” he said. (A more common PV design is to employ one larger inverter to convert the DC power generated by all of the panels.) “But when they gave me the module they had won it was a 120-watt module with a 100-watt inverter. Even by Trace’s own standards they were mismatched.”

Whoops.

It would have been bad enough if the panel just under-performed. But Grundy did some testing and determined that it would actually shut down when it approached maximum output, and would turn off the entire solar array with it.

“Ironically,” he said, “at times when they had the opportunity for peak production they would have gotten nothing – no solar power at all.”

Not to worry. Grundy knew another project that could use the 100-watt PV panel and, with Powell’s permission, pulled a switcheroo. Apple and Hobie then increased their investment, and by the time the system was activated last October they had 15 PV panels that, on an annual basis, are providing approximately the 50 percent of their electric usage that was their goal.

The net-metering benefits – gaining credit for electricity they provide to the

Co-op – are icing on the cake.

“In the summer they’re getting close to 100 percent,” Grundy pointed out. “In the winter it’s much less of an impact.”

Amazingly, said Faulkner, when conditions are right PV can even generate solar power from a full moon, which is reflected sunlight.

“I haven’t seen it at their house yet,” said Grundy, “but it happens here.” (Grundy’s home in East Montpelier is fully PV and not connected to the grid.) “Four-tenths of a watt is what it takes to wake the panels up. In a full moon they’ll actually produce that. It’s more of a novelty than anything substantial, of course. Their whole roof, on a perfect night, might generate a watt or two.”

Connected

Faulkner and Guion did not choose to go off-grid, and Faulkner observed that they are as vulnerable as other Co-op members to power outages because they have no batteries for storing their solar-generated electricity. Even on a sunny, peak-production day, if something should cause an outage on WEC’s distribution lines the solar array would stop working.

“It requires a trickle of juice (from the power lines) in order to run,” Guion explained.

That is not only a result of the physical connection between the PV and utility wiring, which enables home-generated power to flow into the grid. Automatic termination, in the event of a utility outage, is required under the net-metering law to protect utility line workers.

“The inverters have a built-in mechanism to shut down quickly if the power line fails,” said Grundy. “If they didn’t, the (home) system would basically be trying to power the whole grid, and the line workers trying to fix a problem wouldn’t know for certain which way the power was coming from. Also, it would result in weird power signals for customers downstream of the PV installation.”

Still grid-connected, the Faulker-Guion household is neither immune to outages nor Simon-pure when it comes to energy usage. But they are doing their part to reduce the air-pollution impact of electricity production. Statistically, for every kWh of power produced by a solar array, a pound and a half of fossil-fuel emissions from generation plants can be avoided. WEC’s Bill Powell calculated that the reduction in purchased energy at the Faulkner-Guion residence represented, in one year’s time, some 3,450 pounds – more than a ton and a half – of emissions not discharged into the atmosphere.

“There are considerable capital costs and a long pay-back period (with solar installations),” said Guion, “so you have to go into it for other than economic reasons. We want to play a part in cutting emissions, and we want to boost PV as an accepted technology.”

Nodding her head, Faulker agreed emphatically. “Somebody,” she said, “has to step out there and do it.”

Renewables’ Vermont Impact Modest Thus Far

At first blush, Washington Electric Cooperative’s rural service territory appears to be a stronghold of solar power in a snowy, often overcast northern state. Interest in net-metering is disproportionately high in this 9,000-member co-op compared to other electric utilities in Vermont.

“Statewide, there have been about three dozen certificates of public good (CPGs) issued by the Public Service Board since net metering was enacted in 1998,” said Bill Powell, WEC’s director of products and services. “In terms of size (i.e., number of electricity customers), we are about 3 percent of the market. But our membership accounts for about 17 percent of the net-metering projects in the state today. Currently we have five projects that are up and running.”

The numbers are not huge. But advocates of solar power in Vermont take their satisfaction in small doses.

Net metering, enacted by the Vermont Legislature three years ago, permits utility customers with renewable home-generation systems to benefit when they produce more electric power than their homes or businesses can use at a given time. Approved net-metering installations can channel that extra electricity back through the meter of the electric utility that serves them, and into the company’s power lines. (Every approved installation, no matter how small, must receive a CPG from the Board, confirming that its power-quality meets state standards.)

At such times the electric meter actually spins backwards. Later, when the monthly electric bill is sent out, the customer is allowed full credit for the home-generated power he has provided to the utility grid, and is charged for the month on the basis of the “net” – that is, power from the grid that the customer has consumed, minus the amount of power she has supplied.

The net-metering law does not permit home-generators to profit financially by selling more power to the utility than they have purchased from it. No money changes hands except in the traditional way – with the customer paying her monthly electric bill and/or service charge. People receive credit, not cash, for each home-brewed kilowatt hour fed into the company’s distribution system. That credit reduces the person’s next electric bill. But at the end of the year, by law, any unpaid credits vanish from the ledger and the new year starts with a clean slate.

Washington Electric has long been a proponent of renewable energy. In fact, WEC is developing plans to include a significant amount of “green” power in its purchased-energy portfolio. Its support of



Jim Grundy of Elemental Energy, in his combination porch and greenhouse.

net metering is consistent with that philosophy.

But notwithstanding the disproportionate involvement of WEC’s membership with net metering, home-generation remains only a blip on the Co-op’s radar screen.

“Net metering has had an almost imperceptible impact on the Co-op’s electric load on an annual basis,” said Powell. “But we take a position of advocating home generation and renewable energy from a philosophical standpoint, understanding that because of the outlay of money people must make to install one of these systems it is not for everybody. You’ve got to have other motivations besides financial incentives to get into this – most likely, reasons having to do with your environmental beliefs. It is not a financially profitable proposition.”

Money problems

Money for solar-power development is a factor not only for individuals, but at the state-policy level also. Jim Grundy, proprietor of Elemental Energy, provides consultation and installation services for PV (photovoltaic) energy systems. Grundy has seen renewable energy take off nationally, but plod along in Vermont.

“The industry is really hot now because of situations like California (where electricity supply and costs have been famously unstable for more than a year), and as an energy alternative in developing countries,” he said. “In lots of places renewables are coming into the mainstream. In my years in the industry this is the first time I’ve seen suppliers run out of stock and equipment manufacturers operating at peak production.”

In Vermont, however, Grundy has seen only a slow increase in the use of renewables. One reason for that, he

believes, is the failure of state government to help defray the costs of expensive installations.

“Elsewhere there are tax benefits and other incentives (to encourage people to invest in alternative energy),” Grundy said, noting particularly a California program under which applicants can recapture up to 50 percent of the costs of a new system. No similar program exists here.

Renewable Energy VT, an industry and advocacy association, hopes to change that. (Grundy serves on the board of the organization, and WEC is a member.) REV is promoting a pair of House and Senate bills in the state Legislature aimed at providing tax credits for individuals and companies that install new renewable-energy systems. Solar, biomass, geothermal and other technologies are included.

But even though tax credits are not a direct government expenditure, they reduce the amount of money in the tax pool. In today’s slowing economy, that’s a high hurdle for advocates to cross.

“There have been various proposals about how that money could be made up,” Grundy said, but no solution has been decided upon. “The bills have many sponsors, but no real champions. So they are just stuck in committees.”

Despite the advent of net-metering and the modest financial incentives it provides, renewable, alternative energy is as slow as maple syrup to catch on in Vermont. Both the political and meteorological climates are less than ideal for these technologies.

On the other hand, our state is peopled by innovators and folks who are conscious of their effect upon the environment. In that sense, Vermont is fertile ground for renewables, and it is the pioneering spirit, in the long run, that may prevail.

Worcester Weatherman Now Featured On WEC Web

Are you among the legions of people who find it almost impossible to catch the weather forecast on your favorite morning radio program? Even when you know what time the report is broadcast you end up being out of the room when it comes on, or your mind wanders and you miss what the weather wizard has to say.

Well fear not! A new source of daily weather information has arrived – accessible whenever you want it and more current than the newspaper forecast that was printed the night before.

The source is WEC's web site: www.washingtonco-op.com.

Fire up the old computer, call up your Co-op's site (surely you've got it bookmarked), and click on the words "Today's Weather Forecast" on the main page. Immediately you will enter the world according to Roger Hill – the freelance meteorologist based in Worcester whose highly specific and localized forecasts have become a mainstay in central Vermont. Hill, who was featured in a front-page story in the March 2001 issue



Roger Hill

of *Co-op Currents*, provides up-to-the-minute information when the Co-op needs to help its line crews and other staff prepare for storms that could damage power lines.

Now Roger Hill provides timely weather forecasts over the web to anyone who

clicks on the Co-op's home page. On a secondary page titled "Weathering Heights," he lists recent temperatures in cities around the state (Burlington, Montpelier, Morrisville, St. Johnsbury and even Lebanon, N.H.), and breaks his forecasts into regions – central Vermont,

the Northeast Kingdom and the Champlain Valley. If you click on highlighted words or phrases in the body of his report you are whisked away to colorful weather maps that are as informative as they are pretty to look at. A column on the left of the page provides links and avenues to discussions of other weather-related topics.

"We have benefited from our working relationship with Roger, and it occurred to us that including his forecasts on the Co-op's web page could be another, pretty unique way of serving our members," said WEC General Manager Avram Patt. "Roger prepares the forecasts for his own website, but he agreed to let us link up with him. It's a feature that I think our members and other people using the Internet will enjoy."

At this comparatively mild time of year, weather forecasts actually are something we can enjoy. But in the coming winter months, when nature deals us blows more severe, Weathering Heights could become a mainstay of your day. Why not take a look at it now?

IBEW Accepts New Union Members At WEC

The International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) increased its ranks in August by welcoming eight new union members from Washington Electric Cooperative. Those eight join the 19 WEC employees who were already represented by the union.

With 1,300 members statewide, IBEW is the primary union representing utility and other electrical workers. The Co-op's operations employees – mostly outdoor workers (linemen, surveyors, etc.), along with those stationed in the Co-op's garage – were already union members. The eight new IBEW members mostly work indoors, at WEC's offices in East Montpelier. Several are member services representatives, who work in the billing department and handle members' concerns over the telephone.

"In July we were notified by the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) that they had received a petition from some of our office employees who asked to join the bargaining unit," said Avram Patt, general manager of WEC. "We had some discussions back and forth with the

union and the NLRB, for the purpose of identifying which employees would be covered by this action. We reached an agreement pretty quickly. The members of the Co-op's Board of Directors, and I personally, believe strongly in the right of employees to be represented by a union if that is their choice. And we have what I believe is historically a good relationship with the IBEW, which I expect will continue."

George Clain of Barre Town is the president of IBEW Local 300, which represents some 1,300 electrical workers in Vermont. (Clain is also a WEC member and was once a candidate for the Co-op's Board of Directors.)

"Our negotiations with Washington Electric went to the NLRB to define who would be eligible (to join the union). The law determines that," he explained.

Once the NLRB, the Co-op and the IBEW agreed on the list of eligible employees the unionization process went

smoothly. (When a company resists the expansion or introduction of a union in its workplace, the union shows up with ballot boxes and the issue goes to a vote.)

"What the Co-op has done by allowing this voluntary recognition (of new union members) is to maintain its integrity," said Clain.

The union president stressed that the employees who wanted representation came to the IBEW. The union did not recruit them.

"These were essentially people who want to know where they're going in their jobs at the Co-op, and when they might get there," he said. "They want clarity about things, including wages."

Washington Electric negotiates three-year contracts with the IBEW. WEC is presently in the second year of its existing contract, and so negotiations will begin anew next summer for a contract to take effect in January 2003. However,

WEC and the union now need to reach agreement about including the new union members into the existing contract. Those discussions are to begin this month.

In an important way, Clain said, union workers have the same goal as the companies they work for, which in WEC's case is service to the membership.

"We pride ourselves on the work we perform," he said. "What we have to offer is our toil, and if we don't do that, and do it well, we'll vanish."

But an important benefit of unions, to their members, he said, is loyalty and fellowship.

"We look out for one another, the same as those firefighters in New York," said Clain, referring to the members of the New York City Fire Department whose concern for each other and for the public was dramatically on display after the September 11 terrorist attack on the World Trade Center.

Clain then quietly added this postscript: "We lost people in that building, too – 15 IBEW members from Local 3, electricians inside the building, are listed as missing."