

WEC CO-OP CURRENTS

Panel Addresses WEC Board On Vermont Yankee

Does Co-op Have a Stake in Legislature's Decision?

Editor's note: The following article relates to a panel discussion about Vermont Yankee that was held before the recent news concerning underground pipes and issues related to radioactive contamination. The article was amended to refer briefly to those events, but they came to light after the discussion, so were not addressed by the speakers.

Vermont's legislative leaders have long known this time was coming – and now it's here. If the Vermont Yankee nuclear power plant in Vernon is going to continue in business after the conclusion of its 40-year operating license in March 2012, the Legislature will have to vote its approval. The state Public Service Board (PSB) cannot give new life to the nuclear plant without the Legislature's consent. And time is getting short.

Washington Electric Co-op ceased taking power from Vermont Yankee early in 2002, turning instead to electricity generated using landfill methane for fuel. Nevertheless, because WEC had an ownership stake in the plant at one time, it's possible that the Co-op and its membership could someday be required to contribute to the cost of decommissioning the plant, if Entergy Nuclear's fund

falls short, as expected. (Entergy purchased the plant half a year after the Co-op withdrew.)

Vermont Yankee's reputation has suffered one blow after another in recent years due to system failures, but there has also been great pressure – from Entergy, from unions representing its workers, and from supporters of nuclear power – to extend its operating permit for 20 years beyond 2012. Vermont Governor James Douglas has challenged the Legislature to get out of the way and let "professionals" make the call. Considering the many critical issues associated with the plant and the state's energy future, no one expects the House and Senate to abdicate their role.

Those issues include:

- the source after 2012 of some 275 megawatts (MW) of electricity (roughly 35 percent of Vermont's total energy needs) now provided by Vermont Yankee;
- terms (cost and supply) of a new contract between Yankee and the Vermont utilities that purchase its power; the outlines of a potential future contract announced by Entergy Nuclear in December 2009 indicate that it wants to cut its allocation to Vermont to 115

continued on page 4



Vermont Yankee has become the biggest story in Vermont, and although WEC is not a Yankee customer the plant's future could affect the Co-op. Above (from left), WEC Treasurer Don Douglas and Director Marion Milne listen to a panel presentation that included nuclear power expert Arnie Gunderson (right).

Resignation Opens Fourth Seat On Co-op's Board

Deadline Extended For Candidates

With the Co-op's 71st Annual Membership Meeting approaching on May 12, WEC President Barry Bernstein announced as *Co-op Currents* was going to press that at least one current director will be leaving the Board this year. The member's resignation – whether it comes before or at the time of the Annual Meeting – means that in addition to the three seats that would normally be up for election in 2010, a fourth seat also will become open.

For Co-op members, the additional opening creates still another opportunity to serve.

"Elections for Board members are open to any WEC member in good standing, and we try to encourage people to run and compete for the Board," said Bernstein. "But I'm aware that people are often hesitant to run when the incumbent directors are all seeking re-election. Now we know for certain that there will be at least one Board seat becoming

continued on page 7

Washington Electric Cooperative

East Montpelier, VT 05651

Inside

Everything but buying it for you! Well, that's an overstatement, but EVT has come up with a stimulating 'stimulus package' to stimulate purchases of energy- and cash-saving appliances. See "A Threefer," page 6.

Big shoes to fill. WEC is determined to keep a top-notch line crew in place, even if it takes a change in tactics. Page 3.

Safety first. In your home and around power lines, electricity must be handled with care. Tips for safety are on page 2 and page 8.

Easy, secure, and paperless. The Co-op encourages members to pay their electric bills electronically, and has made the whole process user-friendly. Page 8.



A couple Caterpillar engines at Washington Electric's generation plant in Coventry, Vermont. Tours of the plant have been popular, and now you can take one from the comfort of your easy chair. Page 2.

Visit WEC's Power Plant, From Home

A 'Virtual' Tour of Coventry Methane Operation

Washington Electric Co-op's electric-generation plant in Coventry, Vermont, has proven to be a pretty hot item (at least for a power plant), creating lots of interest as one of the largest and most successful, new and local energy sources in the state. In recent years WEC has hosted an Open House at the 6.2-megawatt plant during the fall, and dozens of people have showed up – more than 80 last November – to see it firsthand and learn about producing electricity for Vermonters using landfill methane to fuel the engines. It's a good and very affordable way to generate power, supplying well over 50 percent of Washington Electric's needs and productively disposing of methane, a potent greenhouse gas, at the same time.

However, not everyone who is interested has been able to make the trip up to Orleans County to take the tour.

"We hear from Co-op members

and friends in the electric-power industry that they'd like to come to our Open House but haven't been able to arrange the time," says Avram Patt, WEC's general manager. "The last two Open Houses have been held on a weekday, and people often have other commitments."

Now you can take a "virtual" tour of Washington Electric's methane-based generating plant if you have a high-speed internet connection. The virtual tour is also available on DVD.

But now you can take a "virtual" tour of the Coventry plant, if you have a high-speed internet connection. Since WEC is a rural utility and many members have only dial-up service, the virtual tour is also available on DVD, a


copy of which you can get from the Co-op.

The recording was produced by South Burlington videographer Sharon Winzler. WEC hired her to attend the November 4 Open House and record the proceedings, from which she made a video 12 minutes long.

"She filmed the informational presentation I made to groups outside the plant before we'd go in, because it's loud inside and people had to use

earplugs," says Patt. "Then she filmed the tour inside the building, just as it occurred – first in the scrubber room where the methane from the landfill is purified, then in the engine room, and finally in the switchgear room" where monitoring equipment tracks the output and performance of each of the five engines.

Sharon recorded two separate tours among the several that were given that day, then combined the best material to complete the video.

To take the virtual tour on line, go to Washington Electric's website and click on the Coventry video tour link on the home page. Or contact the Co-op office to borrow a copy of the DVD. 



South Burlington videographer Sharon Winzler trains her lens on WEC Manager Avram Patt at a tour of the Coventry landfill-methane power plant in November. Winzler has produced a video of the tour, available online.

Co-op Currents

Co-op Currents (Publication No. USPS 711 -210 and ISSN No. 0746-8784) is published monthly except February, May, August and November by Washington Electric Cooperative, Inc., Route 14, P.O. Box 8, East Montpelier, Vermont 05651. The cost of this publication is \$.44, which is included in the basic monthly charge to each member. Periodical postage rates paid at East Montpelier and at additional offices. Postmaster: Send address changes to *Co-op Currents*, P.O. Box 8, East Montpelier, Vermont 05651.



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

Board of Directors

President	BARRY BERNSTEIN (May 2010)	1237 Bliss Road, Marshfield, Vt. 05658 Bbearvt@aol.com	456-8843
Vice President	ROGER FOX (May 2012)	2067 Bayley-Hazen Rd., East Hardwick, Vt. 05836-9873 rfox@pivot.net	563-2321
	ANDREA COLNES (May 2012)	918 Jacobs Road, East Montpelier, Vt. 05602 alc@sover.net	223-8474
Treasurer	DONALD DOUGLAS (May 2011)	21 Douglas Rd., East Orange, Vt. 05086 dondougl@gmail.com	439-5364
	KIMBERLY CHENEY (May 2010)	143 S. Bear Swamp Rd., Middlesex, Vt. 05602 kcheney@cbs-law.com	223-3181
	ROY FOLSOM (May 2010)	2603 US Rt. 2, Cabot, Vt. 05647 RoyGrnsy@aol.com	426-3579
	DAVID MAGIDA (May 2011)	632 Center Road, Middlesex 05602 vtmagida@aol.com	223-8672
Secretary	MARION MILNE (May 2011)	1705 E. Orange Rd., W. Topsham, Vt. 05086 milne@tops-tele.com	439-5404
	RICHARD RUBIN (May 2012)	3496 East Hill Rd., Plainfield, Vt. 05667 rrubin@sover.net	454-8542

AVRAM PATT
General Manager
avram.patt@washingtonelectric.coop

WILL LINDNER
Editor
Willind@aol.com

TIM NEWCOMB
Layout

Editorial Committee

Avram Patt Donald Douglas David Magida 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.

Electric Safety in the Home

Every year, electricity-related incidents claim lives, cause shock and burn injuries, and result in billions of dollars in property damage caused by electrical fires. To protect yourself from electricity-related injury, check for problems in your home electrical system.

- Check outlets and extension cords to make sure they aren't overloaded.
- Examine electrical cords to make sure they aren't frayed, damaged, or placed under rugs or carpets.
- Make sure that the proper wattage light bulbs are being used in light fixtures and lamps.
- Consider installing ground fault circuit interrupters (GFCI) anywhere electricity and water can mix. Call the Co-op if you need more advice or information on this.
- Unplug appliances before cleaning.
- Use only Underwriters Laboratories (UL) -approved electrical equipment.

For more information on home electric safety, plug into the web site for the National Electric Safety Federation, www.nesf.org. You'll find specific information on plugs, extension cords, circuit breakers, GFCIs, and even a safety quiz for the kids.

Georgia Lineman-Training Center Helps WEC Field Its Team

Being a line worker for an electric utility is a terrific job. Except, apparently, not everyone thinks so.

"It's a job that's darn near ideal, but only for some people," says Dan Weston, who was a lineman himself, and a superintendent for Central Vermont Public Service before coming to Washington Electric Co-op as operations manager in 1998. "It requires mechanical aptitude, an ability to solve problems and think on your feet, to work under difficult conditions sometimes, and long hours; it takes a certain amount of physical endurance, and you need to be someone who's happy working and being outdoors."

It's also a profession that offers job security plus decent pay and benefits, and for those reasons a lot of young men are drawn to it (the field is dominated by men, although there are female line workers).

The trouble is, it's not uncommon for people to try it for a year or two and then to decide it isn't for them. By then the utility they work for has put a lot of time and effort into their training. Under the Vermont Lineman's Apprenticeship Program, which is mandatory for



Vermont utilities, it takes 8,000 hours of classroom instruction and on-the-job training to become a journeyman lineman – and only a journeyman (not an apprentice) can carry out the full range of duties, unsupervised, that a company needs its workers to perform when they're called out to repair damages in a storm or any other kind of emergency. When a company loses

a trainee it has to start with someone new, from scratch.

WEC has had that experience.

"Just like all companies, we've selected the top five candidates for a job and diligently done the interviews," says Weston. "And we've had some success that way. But in some cases the candidate would get a couple years into it and decide that utility work wasn't

Part of Washington Electric's future, apprentice linemen (from left) Amos Turner, Mike Baril, and Kyle Harper.

what he was interested in."

It's an industry-wide phenomenon that has yielded a national shortage of engineers, managers, and other electric utility personnel, not just linemen. But linemen are a special concern because senior personnel participate extensively in their training, which involves 13 weeks of night classes, one night a week, for three years. Weston does a lot of the classroom training himself, and is assisted this year by WEC lineman Kevin Lanphear.

The problem is exacerbated by what Weston and others in the field refer to as "the mass exodus [through retirement] of the Baby Boomer Generation."

"I think it's an important issue that is tied to our need to find qualified replacements in a pool of younger people whose schooling and interests have been more technology-driven," says Weston. "We're all products of our environments, and today's newest generation has been brought up with

continued on page 8

Three Apprentices Bolster WEC's Line Crew

The two newest additions to Washington Electric's line crew are also the first WEC linemen to receive their initial training at the Southeast Lineman Training Center in Trenton, Georgia. Kyle Harper began his employment with WEC almost a year ago, on February 17, 2009, after graduating from the Georgia program. Mike Baril, who worked part-time for the Co-op when he was in high school, joined the staff after graduating from the Lineman Training Center last August.

Kyle, 24, is a native of Bellows Falls. He graduated from Bellows Falls Union High School in 2003, then enlisted in the U.S. Marine Corps and went to Camp Lejeune in North Carolina for basic training. Kyle served in Iraq from January to September, 2007. Following his discharge he attended the lineman's training facility on the G.I. Bill.

Kyle says that steady work and good benefits were what attracted him to utility line work, as well as the opportunity to work outdoors. He had a good example of these advantages within his own family, with a cousin employed as a lineman for Green Mountain Power. Kyle is married, and will soon be moving with his wife from Montpelier to Barre.

Mike Baril is the newest – and at 20 years old, the youngest – member of the Co-op's crew. Mike is a local fellow, a 2008 graduate of Spaulding High School. His father is the proprietor of Summer Street Auto in Barre. Initially, he went to work for Vermont Mechanical, learning commercial plumbing and core drilling (for plumbing installations in new buildings). But like Kyle, Mike has relatives in the linemen's profession, and was attracted to the job security it offered.



Kyle Harper



Mike Baril

Mike made the leap from plumbing to line work by heading down to Georgia for four months of training in 2009. WEC hired him last August.


Mike is single, and is now living in Cabot.

Then there's Amos Turner, also a relatively new addition to WEC's line crew. Although Amos did not attend the Southeast Training Center, when he joined WEC's staff just over a year ago, in December 2008, he brought a wealth of experience with him. Beginning in 1997, Amos, 33, worked in the telecommunications industry, hiring out as a contractor for installation and extension projects in urban and rural settings from North Carolina to New England.

"It was the heyday of broadband," he explains. "Vermont was behind the times then, so I was sent to work in a lot of the cities in the East. I worked in fiber optics and also cable TV."

Eventually he was contracted to Burlington Telecom, part of that company's project to bring broadband to Vermont's largest population center. But Amos wanted to stop traveling and live a more normal life with his family in Glover. So in December 2006 he went to work for the Barton Electric Department. He stayed with the village utility for two years before making the switch to Washington Electric. Although telecommunications work is similar to electric-utility line work, there are important differences and the training and licensing requirements are different. Therefore, Amos, too, is an apprentice line worker, receiving training along with Kyle, Mike, and other WEC apprentices.

Amos makes the 45-minute commute from Glover to East Montpelier, sometimes at odd hours and in unfavorable conditions when the crew is called to duty during storms or for unexpected outages. But for Amos, driving down from the Northeast Kingdom is nothing compared to the journeys he used to make for the telecommunications industry.

And what the Co-op gets is an experienced employee who's used to the rigors and demands of line work. So everyone's a winner. 



Amos Turner

Vermont Yankee

continued from page 1

MW, less than half the power Yankee now provides (even though it was allowed to increase its generating capacity in 2006);

- the plant's safety record, and analysis of whether this facility that was built in 1972 can operate safely until 2032; safety is not within the Legislature's purview – the federal Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) rules on this matter – but Vermonters are concerned about the issue;
- storage, presently on-site, of high-level radioactive waste;
- the future ownership of, and responsibility for, the plant, which Entergy plans to transfer to an independent spinoff called Enexus;
- the availability and adequacy of funds for decommissioning Vermont Yankee, whether it closes in 2012 or later;
- and now, the existence of underground pipes, which Yankee officials had repeatedly denied, and apparent radioactive contamination in that underground system, which lies close to the Connecticut River.

The implications of these concerns for all Vermonters inspired WEC President Barry Bernstein to arrange for four people knowledgeable about Vermont Yankee and statewide energy issues to address Washington Electric's Board of Directors on Wednesday, January 6. The Board carved out time during its annual retreat – a planning session for the year ahead – to hear the speakers' views and ask questions.

Participants were Arnie Gunderson of Fairewinds Associates, of Burlington, Vermont, who provides expert testimony in Vermont and nationally regarding nuclear engineering; Brian Keefe, vice president of government and public affairs for the state's largest electric utility, Central Vermont Public Service Corp. (CVPS); James Moore, clean-energy advocate and policy adviser in energy and climate-change issues for the Vermont Public Interest Research Group (VPIRG); and Cort Richardson, director of the Northeast High-Level Radioactive Waste Transportation Project of the Council of State Governments (Eastern Region). Richardson is a WEC member and served on

the Co-op's Board from 1992 to 1996.

"WEC does not purchase any electricity from Vermont Yankee," Bernstein acknowledged, explaining why he arranged for the panel discussion. "But my feeling is that this is one of the most significant energy issues that have faced the state in the last 50 years, on a par with whether the state should have bought the Connecticut River dams a few years ago, which would have given us much greater sovereignty over our energy sources, costs and supply. The future of Vermont Yankee is an extremely important statewide issue, and I think we and our members should be as

informed and as knowledgeable about it as we can be."

Bernstein disparaged Gov. Douglas' oft-stated admonition to let "the professionals decide" the fate of Vermont Yankee.

"That means letting industries and regulators make all our decisions for us," said Bernstein. "There are lots of historical examples of how tragically that works out. I don't believe in that way of doing things."

"Safe, Clean, Reliable"

Vermont Yankee itself was not represented on the panel, but in advertisements the company promotes its power-generating operation as "safe, clean, and reliable." Its website makes the following claims:

Concerning safety:

"There are three ways we... maintain the highest standard of safety: personnel training, preventative maintenance and redundant safety systems, and high level security... [T]he company has invested millions of dollars to . . . make certain that Vermont Yankee maintains the highest safety and security standards.

"Vermont Yankee's containment structure is among the strongest

"Vermont Yankee has prevented more than 50 million tons of carbon and other pollutants from being released into the environment. As a result, Vermont has the second-lowest per-capita carbon footprint of any state in the U.S."

— Vermont Yankee website



"If it was a comparable plant producing anything besides nuclear power, there's no question; it's a good resource for the state."

— Brian Keefe, CVPS



Relicensing Vermont Yankee would give the state a small portion of the plant's power "for 100 percent of the risk."

— Arnie Gunderson, Fairewinds Associates

structures built by man. It is designed to safeguard the community and plant personnel even under extreme and unlikely accidents or assault scenarios."

On clean energy:

"By avoiding the need to burn coal, gas or oil fossil fuel to generate electricity, Vermont Yankee has prevented more than 50 million tons of carbon and other pollutants from being released into the environment. As a result, Vermont has the second-lowest per-capita carbon footprint of any state in the U.S."

Reliability:

"While countless other facilities were forced to shut down during the August 14th blackout of 2003, Vermont Yankee . . . maintained full power output and even aided New York and the northeastern United States in restoring power.

"[Renewable energy resources] are not currently sufficient enough to provide the huge amounts of baseload

electricity or the 24/7 reliability necessary to fuel Vermont's growing needs... The state needs Vermont Yankee to stay online for an additional 20 years so that it may serve as a bridge to a renewable energy future."

CVPS: Practical concerns

Of the four panelists who addressed WEC's Board, Keefe, of CVPS, was the most supportive (at the time of the discussion) of an extension of Vermont Yankee's operating license. CVPS and Green Mountain Power Corp. would purchase the portion of Yankee power sold to Vermont – roughly 18 percent of the plant's output of 620 MW, judging from its preliminary offer in December.

Concerning a license extension, Keefe said, "If it was a comparable plant producing anything besides nuclear power, there's no question; it's a good resource for the state."

He expressed confidence in the NRC, which concluded in 2008 that Yankee can operate safely and reliably, though he emphasized that CVPS did not favor compromising on safety and was open to qualified alternative opinions.

Regarding Yankee's on-site storage of spent fuel – necessitated by the lack of a national storage facility – Keefe pointed out that "every energy source is going to have some impact. If that were a coal plant and you tried to gather all the waste from 25 years of operation it would be much larger. I think we can manage the waste. Others may disagree."

Vermont Yankee currently does business



Listening to the panel presentation on Vermont Yankee on January 6 are (from left) WEC General Manager Avram Patt, Board President Barry Bernstein, and Vice-President Roger Fox.



"All the other New England decommissioning projects have cost much more than their budgets. The taxpayers have picked up the bill."

— James Moore, VPIRG



"If Yankee is relicensed it would be like saying, 'Well [the radioactive waste] is not a big deal.' I think that would be a mistake."

— WEC member
Cort Richardson

as ENVY (Entergy Nuclear Vermont Yankee), a limited-liability corporation wholly owned by Louisiana-based Entergy Nuclear. However, Entergy is intent on transferring ownership of Vermont Yankee and five other older northeastern nuclear power plants to a new entity called Enexus. For some, the transfer raises red flags, but Keefe said his understanding was that Enexus would have more resources – a greater line of credit from Entergy – than ENVY. "It would be part of a family of facilities that will share more funds," he said.

Where CVPS was most at odds with Entergy was in the outlines of the contract with the Vermont utilities that Entergy sketched out informally on December 18.

"When the plant was sold [by the Vermont utilities to Entergy in July 2002], ENVY agreed to a condition that if the plant gets another term beyond March 2012, for the first 10 years we will share the revenues of the plant if the wholesale price goes above \$61 per-megawatt-hour, with an annual inflation index," said Keefe.

In December Entergy proposed to average out the prospective price increase and eliminate the revenue-sharing provision, a formula it contends would result in essentially the same cost for Vermont utilities. But that cost – wholesale power at 6.1 cents/kWh, indexed for inflation – is 50 percent higher than the approximately 4 cents the companies are paying now, and Keefe said CVPS wasn't buying it.

"That December contract is something we do not find to be in the best interests of our customers," he said. "We have a bird in hand – the revenue-sharing agreement – that we think is more valuable for our customers and we don't want to let it go, at least until we see what else can happen."

Keefe said CVPS was attracted to Yankee as a long-term, stably priced source of electricity. "But there are options out there," he added. "If the plant doesn't get relicensed we'll get our power from somewhere else."

Gunderson: Too much risk

Arnie Gunderson of Fairewinds Associates brings an insider's and a technical perspective to nuclear-operations concerns. Gunderson has a master's degree in nuclear engineering and 35 years experience in the field. He is a consultant to the Legislature's Joint Fiscal Committee and served on the VY Public Oversight Panel appointed by the Legislature in 2008.

Gunderson has concluded that Vermont Yankee is a throwback to an earlier generation of nuclear plants and that it is unfit for continued long-term operation.

"This plant could not be built today," he told WEC's board, referring first to the storage of spent-fuel rods in a water-filled pool at a height of seven stories. Said Gunderson, "That makes it a terrorist target, and it doesn't meet modern seismic criteria for a New England-capable earthquake."

He faulted the design of the plant in other respects as well, including the proximity of the turbine to the reactor and an inadequate, "flimsy" roof. As serious as these structural concerns are to Gunderson, however, is Entergy's track record in maintenance at Vermont Yankee. He charged that ENVY had ignored evident deterioration that led to the infamous collapse

of a cooling tower in 2007 and a transformer fire in 2004. He cited a backlog of corrective projects still waiting to be done.

Gunderson's take on transferring Yankee to Enexus' ownership is that, since the spinoff company's portfolio will consist of six aging plants, "it's a sure bet that over the next 20 years at least one of them is going to have a breakdown," which would reduce the financial resources available for the other facilities.

"My position is this," he summarized. "I'm concerned that the plant is not as safe as it could be. Vermont is pure 'brand.' Any kind of an event at Yankee that could shut down I-91 would ruin the state's reputation for purity. Vermont would be getting [18] percent of [Yankee's] power, for 100 percent of the risk."

VPIRG: Yankee power is replaceable

VPIRG'S James Moore primarily addressed the issue of replacing the power Vermont receives from the Yankee nuclear plant.

"I agree with Brian [Keefe]," he said. "There are lots of options out there."

Moore cited wind and hydroelectric resources in New York State – both planned and existing – that could bolster Vermont's power supply, though that's dependent on improvements to the region's transmission infrastructure.

Additionally, he said, "there's a significant amount of new renewable power projects in the works in New England. Vermont can more than replace Yankee in the near future, largely with renewables" – supplemented, Moore added, by market

power from the New England grid.

(Some observers disagree, noting that Yankee's baseload power is available despite weather conditions that can affect wind and solar generation. Yet it's also true that the grid carries baseload power from conventional and renewable generation sources.)

Moore also spoke to the issue of decommissioning.

Presently, Entergy

claims to have set aside some \$400 million for decommissioning (closing the plant and restoring the site), but Moore said the cost would amount to \$1 billion if the operation went smoothly. Unfortunately, the record reveals that decommissioning rarely does go smoothly.

And in that lies peril for Vermont rate- and taxpayers, because there is precedent for the original owners of such plants to be called on for contributions when decommissioning funds run short. Due to Washington Electric Co-op's past association with Yankee, WEC, in Moore's scenario, could be called upon to help fill the void left by inadequate Entergy funds.

"All the other New England

decommissioning projects have cost much more than their budgets," Moore explained. "The taxpayers have picked up the bill. [Hypothetically] you've got people receiving no electricity from Yankee but getting hit with hundreds of millions of dollars in decommissioning overruns."

Richardson: Vermont should look to its own

The final panelist to speak was former WEC Board member Cort Richardson of East Montpelier, whose 30-year career in energy and environmental policy has included work for governmental and nonprofit agencies. Richardson emphasized that the opinions and insights he was expressing to the Co-op's directors were his personal views.

Now employed by the regional Council of State Governments in matters of policy for radioactive-waste transportation, Richardson was frank about a national nuclear-waste repository at Yucca Mountain in Nevada ever becoming operational. Though it remains official federal policy, development of Yucca Mountain has been stalled for years, the victim lately of a political agreement between Nevada Senator Harry Reid, whose constituents oppose it, and then-presidential candidate Barack Obama.


"Where this leads is to the inescapable conclusion that the National High-Level Nuclear Waste Repository program lies in shambles," Richardson said, although he called himself "a strong supporter" of the Yucca Mountain program.

Vermonters should assume that Yankee's waste is not going anywhere in the foreseeable future. And there's a lot of it – 600 metric tons, and gaining. In the Northeast, Richardson said, there are 24 operating nuclear plants in 14 states, and five no longer operating. Their combined toll is 14,000 metric tons of radioactive waste essentially stranded at those sites, which were not designed to hold it on a long-term basis.

"This is only one consideration in the debate about Vermont Yankee," said Richardson, "but it's an important one. If Yankee is relicensed it would be like saying, 'Well [the radioactive waste] is not a big deal.' I think that would be a mistake."

Approving relicensing would sacrifice the state's leverage over Entergy, Richardson concluded, and would remove the impetus for Vermont to aggressively develop a new energy-supply sector that would provide safer, cleaner energy sources and robust employment opportunities.

"Central-station generating plants like Vermont Yankee actually yield relatively few jobs, important as those jobs are to the people who now hold them," Richardson said. "If we invest in in-state renewable energy and energy-efficiency programs we're going to create jobs and circulate the financial benefits within the state, rather than to stockholders in Louisiana."

"To me," he said, "this future is one that should appeal to the state." 



A 'Threefer' on March 6

Rebate Programs and Tax Holiday Geared Toward Efficient Appliances

1. A sales tax holiday.
2. A rebate from Efficiency Vermont (EVT).
3. An additional rebate, from money derived from the federal government's "economic-stimulus program" – officially, the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA).

March 6, 2010, will provide Vermont residents three ways, heaped on top of one another, to save money on the purchase of qualified ENERGY STAR® refrigerators, freezers, and clothes washers, provided you trade in or legitimately dispose of less-efficient models you are now using.

Then there's Savings Number 4, the most significant of them all, coming from reduction in your energy bill when you own and operate an energy-efficient electric appliance.

As Bill Powell – Washington Electric Co-op's director of products and services – explains, the EVT/ARRA program, coordinated with the state's tax holiday, has related goals: to encourage people to invest in energy savings despite the fact that, these days, it can be difficult for people to spend money for anything; and to stimulate the economy (the "recovery" and "reinvestment" aspects of the ARRA) by making purchases that help stores and suppliers remain in business.

"Our WEC members know that it's important that we all lower our energy use," says Powell, "and they also know they can reduce their monthly costs by buying energy-efficient appliances. But the fact remains that many of us have less disposable income these days for major purchases. Efficiency Vermont has come up with a good way to address this issue, by taking advantage of the tax holiday and the state and federal rebate programs to get people to spend money now for significant, consistent savings through energy conservation."

Moving to higher "tiers"

The ARRA stimulus program, in operation for almost a year, continues to provide rebates to customers who purchase ENERGY STAR-labeled appliances, as *Co-op Currents* has previously reported. But in Vermont, the Department of Public Service and EVT have now introduced the State

Energy Efficient Appliance Rebate Program (SEEARP) that doubles the money customers can get back when they purchase "select" ENERGY STAR-labeled refrigerator/freezers and clothes washers.

The "select" models are more expensive, and they might be harder to find. Rather than being readily available on the showroom floor, a shopper might have to work with the appliance dealer to special-order a "Tier 2" refrigerator

"Many of us have less disposable income these days for major purchases, but by taking advantage of the tax holiday and the state/federal rebates people can spend money now for significant, consistent savings through energy conservation."

or a "Tier 3" washing machine. However, these models achieve greater energy efficiency and save people more money over the long haul, so the extra effort could be well worth it. Furthermore, it could create more demand for these units, leading to an overall reduction in energy consumption.

"All ENERGY STAR units qualify for a rebate," Powell explains. "But if you stretch your budget farther to purchase one of the higher-tier ENERGY STAR models you get more money back from the EVT/ARRA programs. More important is that you'll achieve even greater savings with a higher-tier model than with units that meet the basic ENERGY STAR requirements."

The March 6 tax-holiday savings are an added bonus.

Here are some examples of the savings available:

For a basic ENERGY STAR-labeled refrigerator: \$25 rebate from EVT; \$75 rebate from ARRA; \$36 tax-holiday waiver of 6 percent sales tax for a \$600 refrigerator (an estimated price); the sales tax deduction is based on the retail price before any rebates are applied. Total purchase-price savings, approximately \$136.

For a select ENERGY STAR Tier 3 clothes washer: \$50 rebate from EVT; \$150 rebate from ARRA; \$30 tax holiday waiver of 6 percent sales tax on a washer priced at \$500 (estimated). Total savings from purchase price, approximately \$230.

As noted, it could be harder to arrange to purchase a select (Tier 2)

ENERGY STAR-labeled refrigerator. However, the rebates for those units are higher: \$50 from EVT and \$150 from the ARRA. For an estimated unit cost of \$1,200, the tax-holiday savings would be \$72 – a total reduction of \$272.

"The purchase-price savings, including not paying the sales tax, are significant," says Powell, "but most WEC members understand that the larger savings come from the reduction in energy used over the life of the new appliance.

"Let's assume that your older model uses 4 kilowatt-hours a day. A new ENERGY STAR-rated refrigerator may use 1.2 kilowatt-hours a day, cutting your usage almost by three quarters. Over a 15-year life span, the estimated energy savings with the new refrigerator would be more than 15,000 kilowatt-hours, which at today's prices is worth about \$2,500."

Proper disposal

There's a catch. To qualify for the EVT/ARRA rebates you must prove that you've disposed of your previous, inefficient unit in a way that takes it out of circulation.


"They don't want those appliances to remain in use," Powell explains. "You have to document, through a receipt, that you have taken the unit to a solid waste district or solid waste transfer station, or that the retailer that sold you the new ENERGY STAR unit took your old unit off your hands to dispose of it

properly."

EVT further explains: "The appliance that has been disposed of or recycled must be the same type of appliance that has been purchased." So you can't trade in a washing machine for a refrigerator. But people will be able to purchase more than one appliance – perhaps a refrigerator *and* a clothes washer – and qualify for rebates for both.

After all purchase and disposal documentation has been submitted, rebate checks will come in approximately six weeks.

The combined EVT/ARRA rebate program will extend well past the Vermont tax holiday date of March 6. EVT plans to offer the rebates until Vermont's ARRA funds are used up. However, the tax holiday savings (waiver of the usual 6-percent sales tax) will pertain only to purchases made on March 6. It would be smart to begin your shopping now, and arrange for the model you want to be available at your local dealer's for purchase on that date.

EVT plans to add high-efficiency air conditioners to the rebate program as summer draws near. If you're in the market for an air conditioner, we advise you to wait for that announcement. Meanwhile, March 6 is "prime time" for replacing your refrigerator and/or washing machine with one that will begin saving you money the moment you plug it in. 

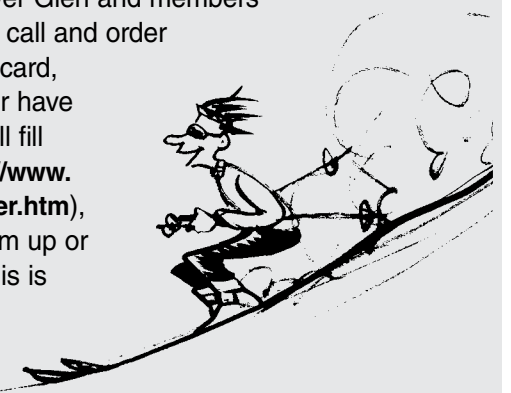
Appliance Type	Efficiency Vermont	Rebate ARRA Funds	Total
Select ENERGY STAR Clothes Washer (CEE Tier 3)	\$50	\$150	\$200
ENERGY STAR Refrigerator or Freezer	\$25	\$75	\$100
Select ENERGY STAR Refrigerator (CEE Tier 2 or higher)	\$50	\$150	\$200

Now, Call WEC for Mad River Glen Tickets

The geese have flown south, the temperatures have plunged, and ski season is here! 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; weekday adult tickets are \$35.

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.

See you on the mountain!



Board Seat Open

continued from page 1

vacant this year, regardless of what the other directors decide, and I'm hoping there will be a lot of interest."

The Board members holding the three seats due to expire this year have not yet announced their plans regarding re-election, leaving open the possibility that there could be one or more additional vacancies not sought by an incumbent. (There are nine total seats on the Board of Directors, and each year three terms expire on the date of the annual meeting.)

In short, it's a good year for people to consider running for the board and providing an important service to their cooperatively owned utility and their community. In order to make the process of becoming a candidate more


manageable – given that the news about an additional vacancy just arrived – the Co-op has moved the deadline for candidate materials to a later date. The deadline announced in December's *Co-op Currents* was Thursday, February 18, 2010. That has now been adjusted to **Thursday, February 25**. By that date candidates should have filed petitions for their candidacy containing the signatures of at least 25 Washington Electric members, in addition to an Affirmation of Receipt, Understanding and Compliance (the petitions and affirmations, along with guidance in using them, are available from the Co-op), plus biographical information that we can publish in *Co-op Currents* along with your photograph. If for any reason the February 25 deadline – some three weeks away – is not feasible, the Co-op will accept your

candidacy materials as late as **March 12**; candidates who file then will have missed the introduction we provide in the March *Co-op Currents*, but will still have time to be featured, along with earlier candidates, in the April edition.

So don't let the timing deter you. The best way to get started is by contacting Administrative Assistant Deborah Brown at WEC's office in East Montpelier; she will provide a packet of information, a petition for the signatures you collect, and everything else you'll need. And she can answer any questions you might have and get you through the process.

If you're considering running, another good idea is to contact Board President Bernstein or any of the other directors, and ask them anything you'd like to know about the Co-op and about the Board. Turn to page 2 of this issue to

find their contact information (phone numbers, mail and e-mail addresses).

And just a reminder of something else that was discussed in our December, 2009, issue: As a Co-op member you have the right to draft an amendment to Washington Electric's bylaws and have it put to a vote by the membership at the annual meeting (and by mail before the meeting). The due date for proposed bylaw amendments is coming right up. The proposed amendment, along with a petition for its adoption bearing the signatures of at least 50 Co-op members, must be filed at WEC's office on or before **Wednesday, February 10, 2010**. For this purpose, too, the person to contact to get started is Debbie Brown at Washington Electric Cooperative. 

WEC CO-OP STORE

WHOLE HOUSE SURGE PROTECTION

Protect individual appliances, valuable equipment with a meter-based SURGE DEVICE. Be Safe, Not Sorry! Special Member Discounts!



A Full Line of "Plug & Play" (DIY installation) Surge Devices

Panamax MAX 2 SPECIALS!

Highest protection, compact size.
Three models, all in stock.
Offer good through March 2010.

Product	List price	Member discount price
Max2	\$39.95	\$32.95 (save \$7.00)
Max2 Coax	\$49.95	\$34.95 (save \$15.00)



If you own a single item such as a TV, a VCR, a computer connected to the internet by a cable or satellite provider, audio equipment or pay TV service, without surge protection you'll have to make up the replacement cost out of pocket in the event of a surge striking. Full protection, and an iron-clad warranty for all connected equipment.

Your equipment is exposed to power surges until you connect your equipment to one of the Panamax heavy-duty Max2 family of products. Be safe, not sorry!

Home Performance with



ENERGY STAR® is a fee-for-service program designed to improve home comfort, durability, health & safety and to reduce homeowners' energy costs.

Services provided as part of a Home Assessment?

- A comprehensive home audit, which may include an evaluation of your heating system, lighting, appliances, windows, building tightness and insulation effectiveness (blower door test, infra-red/thermal scan test)
- Professional advice on ways to improve the comfort and durability of your home, as well as to solve problems and lower your energy bills
- Assistance in prioritizing improvements
- Information on energy-saving products

Contact the Co-op (1-800-932-5245) or Efficiency Vermont (1-888-921-5990) for more information on Home Performance with ENERGY STAR®

Co-op Long Distance Telephone Service

- 6.9 cents per minute (outside VT)**
- 9.9 cents per minute (within VT)
- \$0.99 monthly service charge
- No gimmicks

Billed by Powernet Global. Call to sign up today: 1-866-216-0332, or www.washingtonelectric.coop/pages/phone.htm or call the co-op with questions: 1-800-932-5245.

Call the Co-op at 800-932-5245 or visit us on the web at: www.washingtonelectric.coop/pages/prod.htm



Linemen

continued from page 3

a game controller in their hands rather than a shovel. It doesn't mean, at all, that they aren't willing to do outside work; it's that they've not been exposed to it."

For these reasons, in order to retain a skilled and well-trained line crew – and to be prepared for the eventual, inevitable retirements of the most senior and experienced members – Weston and Washington Electric decided to take another tack.

"About two years ago we started looking at how we could do things differently and get a higher success rate with new workers," he says. "We started an informal program of bringing people in and letting them kind of job-shadow. We took people who had the right basic skills for this work, and who had good attitudes and showed a genuine interest, and let them get their feet wet."

Then an additional avenue opened up: the Southeast Lineman Training Center in Trenton, Georgia. The Center



offers a 15-week Electrical Lineworker Program, three times a year. Students learn the basics of electrical systems, from power generation through transmission and distribution, all the way to the home electric meter. They study practical as well as mathematical applications of Direct Current (DC) and Alternating Current (AC). A course titled Basic Rigging teaches students how to tie knots, splice rope, install blocks and tackle, and calculate appropriate power line tensions. They practice climbing wooden poles, installing cross arms and hardware on the poles, constructing underground electrical connections, and generally operating the equipment and tools of their future trade.

Weston points out that one of the most important aspects of the experience is that it helps students self-select for the lineman profession.

"Between the time they invest and the tuition, which they pay themselves, it's a pretty significant commitment on the part of the individual. It really helps narrow the field of applicants to

people who have a high likelihood of staying in the profession."

Completing the four-month course in Georgia doesn't satisfy Vermont's training requirements after a graduate is hired. Different utilities give graduates differing amounts of credit toward the necessary 8,000 hours of classroom and field-training work. For WEC it's 1,000 hours.

"We also start them off with a somewhat higher rate of pay because they're more qualified," Weston says.

Washington Electric has two new linemen who attended the Southeast Lineman Training Center program: Kyle Harper and Mike Baril (see sidebar on page 3).

"Kyle came to us after graduating from the school and he's worked out very, very well," says Weston. "Mike is


"About two years ago we started looking at how we could do things differently and get a higher success rate with new workers."

— Dan Weston

a guy who shadowed with us for several months, and then went to the school. When he graduated we offered him a job and we're delighted to have him."

There's been a lot of turnover in the Co-op's line crew in recent years, and it has made

the crew progressively younger. There are now 16 linemen, which means Washington Electric is well-positioned to absorb losses as some senior members – loyal and seasoned Co-op employees for decades, in some instances – near retirement.

"I've got high hopes for this young group we've put together," says Weston. "They're very committed and very knowledgeable. They've got good energy and a good spirit. They have big shoes to fill, but I think we're going to be fine." 

Safety Around Electric Power Lines

Overhead distribution lines on the Cooperative's system normally carry 7,200 volts of electricity, and can kill instantly upon contact. Look up and stay clear of nearby power lines when using a ladder, pruning trees, cleaning a pool, installing or removing an antenna, or carrying long pipes. Don't let children climb trees near power lines.

If you come across a downed power line, stay clear. Don't touch anything or anyone in contact with a downed line. If a power line comes down across your car, stay inside and warn others to stay away from the vehicle until rescue personnel arrive. If you must get out of the car, jump clear without touching the vehicle and the ground at the same time.

Teach children to recognize "Danger - High Voltage" signs, and not to play around substations or power lines. Electricity can travel down the strings of kites or balloons and cause shock or fires, so these toys should only be used in open areas, away from power lines.

Full Circle: Receiving And Paying Your WEC Bill Electronically

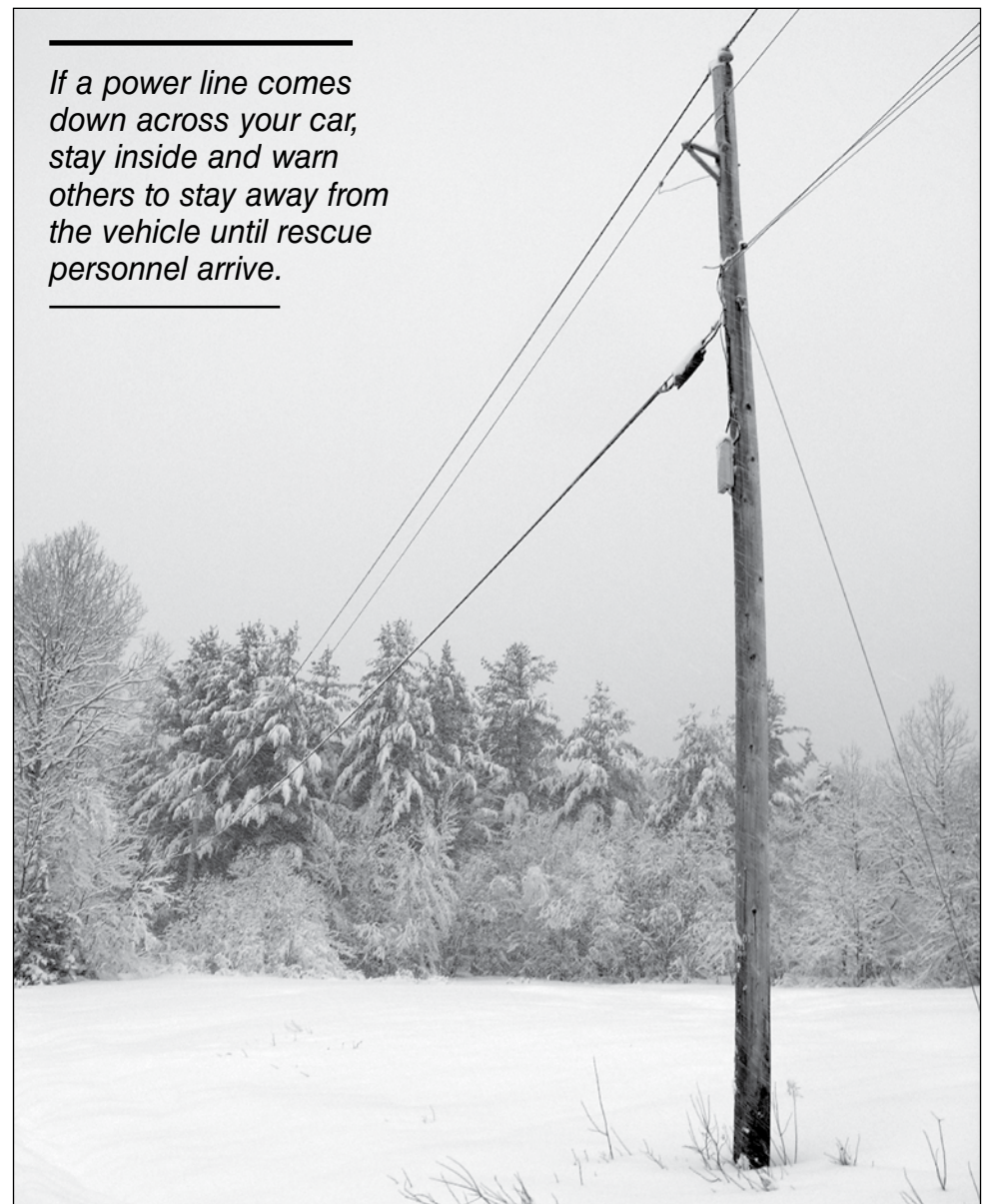
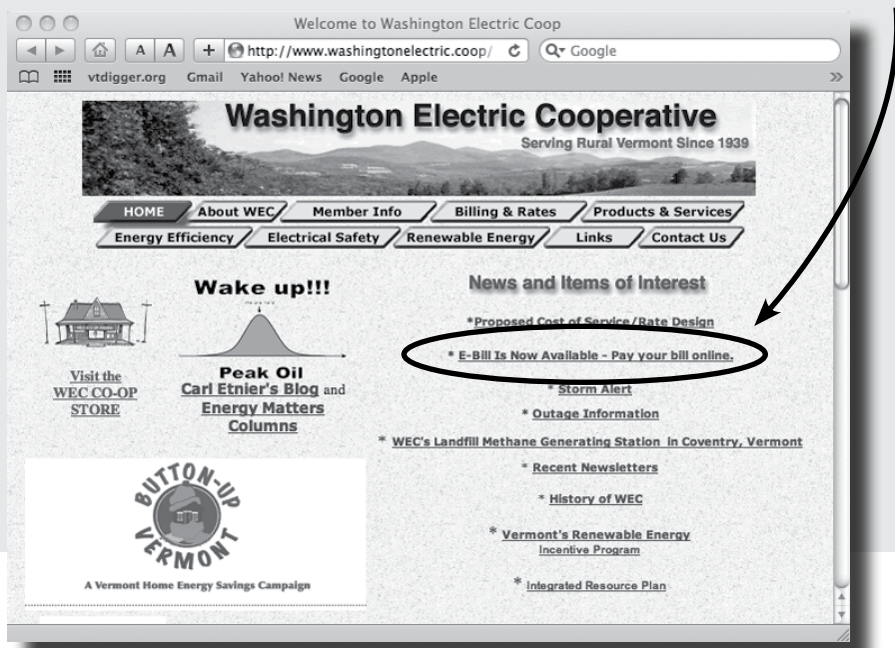
Washington Electric Co-op has taken the next step in electronic billing. Now, not only can you pay your Co-op bill electronically – a service that has been available for quite a while, and which WEC encourages members to use – you can also receive your bill electronically. Many members will find this new service to be more convenient than paper billing through the mail, and to be entirely safe and secure.

WEC has for many years encouraged members to sign up for our Automatic Payment Plan, a free service where your payment is debited from your bank account 16-20 days after you receive your bill. This is the lowest-cost method of bill paying, both for you and for the Co-op. (Members can also make one-time payments online using either a credit card or a bank account debit, but there is a \$3.95 service charge for doing so.)

When you're registered for e-billing you receive an e-mail that tells you your electric bill has "arrived." A link in the e-mail takes you right to the Co-op's website, where you can then access the bill using a secure, password-protected sign-in process. The bill you see online has all the same information that bills have that are sent by mail.

You can sign up for e-billing today by registering a password. There's also a "help" link in case you need assistance.

Members will find e-billing and electronic payment with the Automatic Payment Plan to be more convenient and less expensive than billing and payment by mail. The website makes it easy to sign up, but you're also welcome to call the Co-op and talk to a Member Services Representative if you'd like more information.



If a power line comes down across your car, stay inside and warn others to stay away from the vehicle until rescue personnel arrive.

Electric power lines are part of the landscape in rural Vermont. It's best, and safest, to give them their distance.