

Resilience and Innovation at WEC's 79th Annual Meeting

Welcome to the Operations Center!" said Patty Richards, WEC's General Manager, at the 79th Annual Meeting on May 2. It was a glorious, warm day, and members arrived in East Montpelier comparing how much snow many received just two days earlier while looking over the Co-op's fleet of bucket trucks and all-terrain vehicles parked in front of the center's stunning landscape mural. Hosting the Annual Meeting at home base for WEC's operations team "is a nice way to showcase the hard work that gets done here," she said, and the rows of white tablecloths and china looked festive in the spotless warehouse.

WEC welcomed 230 members to its annual business meeting, which kicked off with a delicious dinner, free with reservation, catered by Bon Temps Gourmet, a WEC member company based in Worcester. Members sat with friends and neighbors to mingle and swap stories.

For members interested in taking advantage of WEC's Button Up program—financial incentives to help members reduce their carbon

footprint—vendors were on hand to demonstrate products. Outside, Joe Canales of Cody Chevrolet parked an all-electric Chevy Bolt next to WEC's trucks. Thanks to a new Button Up

When Bernstein asked WEC's lineworkers to stand, members rewarded the crews with the longest and loudest round of applause of the evening.

incentive, income-eligible WEC members may receive a discount on all-electric and plug-in hybrid vehicles. Inside, Tim Smith of Building Energy talked with members about home weatherization. "I like folks to look at it like your whole house is a system," he said,

explaining strategic changes can improve the efficiency of the whole. That illustrates why WEC has long recommended Building Energy, as achieving efficiency first is the hallmark of WEC's mission.

In his welcome comments to the membership, Board President Barry Bernstein recognized notable guests (see sidebar on p. 4) and extended a special welcome to Gene Reed, Board member Annie Reed's 98-year-old mother. When Bernstein asked WEC's lineworkers to stand, members—well aware crews spent much of 2017 out in the elements, fixing broken poles and rewiring lines during the multiple weather events that pummeled WEC territory—

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Dawn Johnson, Administrative Assistant, welcomes Charlie Nardozzi, master gardener and special presenter at WEC's 79th Annual Meeting. Johnson, who just celebrated her five year anniversary at WEC, applied for the Green Thumbs at Work grant that led to the creation of WEC's workplace garden and launched Nardozzi's relationship with the Co-op.

Heart in the Highlands

Ray Shatney and Janet Steward's beef gift to WEC staff is built on years of hard work and friendship

Vickie sports long blonde hair, and she won't let just anybody brush it. "She hates everybody but me," Ray Shatney said affectionately.

Shatney is a former WEC tree contractor and a lifelong farmer who's raised and shown Highland cattle like Vickie since 1967, when his father, Carroll Shatney, bought one of the "hippie cows" as a novelty to show at fairs and cover the farm's taxes. "Ray's been showing Highland cattle longer than anyone in the US," said his wife, Janet Steward.

The 160-head Shat Acres


Highland Cattle herd is divided between the couple's home in Plainfield and the original, 103-year-old Shat Acres Farm in Greensboro Bend. It is the oldest registered herd in the nation, among the largest, and genetically strong thanks to Carroll and Ray Shatney's careful breeding practices. Shat Acres Highlands rake in prizes: Cinnamon Raisin, the most awarded cow in the breed's history, won more than a dozen Grand Championships at the National Western Stock Show; two of her daughters are also cow/

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Washington Electric Cooperative
 East Montpelier, VT 05651

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WEC's dedicated workers tend to serve long tenures. At the Annual Meeting, General Manager Patty Richards presents a service award to 30-year WEC employee Transmission & Distribution Technician Ed Schunk.

Net Metering Reimbursement Changes Under New PUC Order

On May 1, the Public Utility Commission (PUC) issued a new order drawn from its required biennial review of Vermont's net metering program. To balance the pace of net metering installations and the impact of net metering on electric utilities' rates, the order said, over the next two years the PUC will reduce reimbursement rates by a penny each year to homeowners installing solar. The changes apply only to Certificates of Public Good (CPG) issued on or after July 1. Those members with net metering systems online or with CPG permits in hand before July 1 will continue to be paid the existing program's rates.

"The state regulators took comments from anyone who wanted to weigh in. There were hundreds of filings. My inbox was filled with feedback from the general public, solar developers,

Summary of Changes to Adjustor Values and Compensation			
Category	2017	2018	2019
Category I (up to 15 kW)	\$0.189	\$0.184	\$0.174
Category II (>15 to 150 kW on preferred site)	\$0.189	\$0.184	\$0.174
Category III (>150 to 500 kW on preferred site)	\$0.169	\$0.154	\$0.144
Category IV (>15 to 150 kW on non-preferred site)	\$0.149	\$0.144	\$0.134

and utilities, just to name a few stakeholders," commented WEC General Manager Patty Richards. "While the lower credits may upset some, the Commission is working to

strike a balance. The PUC recognizes that utilities are paying subsidies to encourage Vermonters to install solar systems, but these subsidies should be lower going forward. The payments for net metered systems are causing rate increases and the PUC is mindful of the effects of passing along costs to others. It shows the PUC is paying attention to the consequences, both positive and unintended, of the pace and cost of net metering. The commission continues to support folks who want to install solar, and through this order is taking a step toward finding balance."


The order also reduces reimbursement to large-scale solar farms and arrays. In its press release, the commission wrote, "Specifically, there will be a gradual reduction in the incentive payment for customers who transfer their RECs [Renewable Energy Credits] to their utility, by 1 cent per kWh in each of the next two years. In addition, there will be a 1-cent reduction in the price paid to the very largest net-metering systems (over 150 to 500 kW), which have better economies of scale than residential-sized systems." A chart published by the PUC is printed above.

Many Vermont utilities, including WEC, embrace Vermont's Renewable Energy Standard and incentives that help electric customers become personally invested in renewable power. However, the 2017 net metering incentive structure was so popular, and so many customers took advantage of it, that it resulted in increasing rate

pressure in utilities throughout the state.

WEC and other Vermont utilities were consistent in their comments to the PUC about the rise and impact of net metering on their balance sheets. The commission reported, "a number of Vermont utilities expressed concern about the effect on rates of continued high net-metering prices. Vermont Electric Cooperative and Washington Electric Cooperative each reported that in 2017, the total number of net-metering applications and their capacity exceeded the totals during the prior three and four years combined." In addition, the report says, Green Mountain Power confirmed each year of net metering installations at today's pace and price adds \$2.3 million of upward rate pressure on its ratepayers.

2017 incentives require utilities to support home solar installations, and then to buy the energy back from those homeowners' installations at a rate significantly higher than market prices. At the same time, homeowners with net metering installations continue to use the utility's grid, but compared with other ratepayers, contribute little through their bills to the cost and maintenance of that grid. As the utility pays out more for power and receives less from customers, rate pressure increases.

"WEC's power mix is already 100% renewable. Those members who want to do more and go solar, we fully support you," said Richards. "The balance is to compensate net metering in a way that doesn't pass along costs to others. Solar is expensive and subsidies help folks get started, but they don't have to be as high as they are currently to incentivize Vermonters. The PUC order recognizes we were paying too much. To be true to our mission we support our members who want to generate their own solar, protect those members who may be economically impacted by that, and keep our environmental commitment at the forefront." She respects the PUC's decision, she said, and believes this order is a shift that brings more balance to the finances of net metering while maintaining the net metering incentive system. 

Co-op Currents

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

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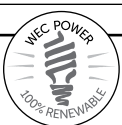
The Board of Directors' regularly scheduled meetings are on the last Wednesday of each month, in the evening. Members are welcome to attend. Members who wish to discuss a matter with the Board should contact the president through WEC's office. Meeting dates and times are subject to change. For information about times and/or agenda, or to receive a copy of the minutes of past meetings, contact Administrative Assistant Dawn Johnson, at 224-2332.

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Happy Birthday VEC!

Congratulations to our fellow rural electric cooperative, Vermont Electric Co-op. VEC, WEC's big sister by one year, turns 80 in 2018.



President's and General Manager's Message

In Their First Regular Joint Column in *Currents*, Barry and Patty Discuss What's Happening Right Now at WEC

Every issue, *Currents* publishes reports from the Board President and General Manager. This month, we're launching a new, conversational format: instead of writing separate columns, Barry and Patty talk to each other about the timely issues facing WEC. We hope this approach keeps a light touch but lets us go a little deeper on each important issue.

3.72% Rate Increase Filed; Takes Effect July 1

Patty: We filed for a 3.72% rate increase with the PUC [Public Utility Commission] to go into effect July 1, and we'll collect \$535,000 in additional revenue. The main driver for this comes from transmission costs. We're seeing increases from [regional grid operator] ISO-NE, GMP [Green Mountain Power], and VELCO [Vermont Electric Power Company]. VELCO's increase is substantial: over half the rate increase is due to VELCO costs going up. We were able to offset some of the transmission increases with reductions in other areas, but the total dollars in transmission were simply too large.

We're also seeing impacts from the SHEI [Sheffield-Highgate Export Interface]. Basically, there's too much generation in the northern part of the state. The power lines are not able to move that much generation. The results for WEC are reduced energy payments for the energy we produce at Coventry and Sheffield Wind. And we're also seeing revenue losses from net metering.

So, the largest driver is power supply: transmission, the SHEI, and net metering. Other drivers, like operation and maintenance cost increases, add up to a lesser extent.

Barry: It's important for our members to know that the board interacts quite intensively with management on how to keep rate increases as low as possible before filing. It's not something done in a short period of time: it's done over a period of months with management and board as a team, using any offsets we may be able to find.

The second important thing is that in May, the board approved our 18th year of capital credit distribution, where we return money to our members from their margin accounts. We're returning



Any kWh that is not used is the most environmentally benign kWh. We want members to remember that.

—Patty Richards

\$750,000 to members this year based on your kWh usage. Since we began the program, we've returned \$5.7 million to members.

We want you to remember the Co-op difference is we return margins to members, and that will help reduce the impact this rate increase has on your bills. The amount you receive in November depends on how long you've been on the Co-op lines.

Patty: That's exactly right. It's unfortunate we have to increase rates, but that's going to be partially offset when our members get a credit or a check in

November 2018 when we issue capital credit retirements.

Annual Meeting at WEC's Operations Center

Barry: This was a unique year in that we held the Annual Meeting at our Operations Center, where we store all the trucks and where the crews work from. Patty made a great point that the members got to see where the action is.

I think the thing that amazed all of us was when we introduced the linemen, there was a five minute ovation from the members who were present. It floored all of us. It was really nice. It was really a special recognition of them, and members' appreciation for the work everybody does.

Patty: It was a beautiful evening and typical Vermont weather. Six inches of snow on Monday, 80 degree weather on Wednesday. The operations center is the core function of our business. For me, holding the annual meeting there ties everything together. We were proud to invite members to the Operations building so they can experience this part of WEC firsthand.

We also had a great turnout. And we loved having Charlie [Nardozi] there to bring in the spring season. Members really seemed engaged and appreciated his keynote talk. We also got a lot of compliments on the food. Bon Temps Gourmet from Worcester, who catered it, is a local WEC member business, actually. All around it was a great night and a great location for a meeting.

Barry: It got high ratings!

Patty: I think people like hearing from

Dan [Weston, Operations Director]. Especially at the Operations Center and talking about storm impacts and grid resilience, it's important to hear from him given the weather events we've had. It's been a brutal few years of storm work here.

Barry: There was some discussion about net metering and larger renewable projects, and I thought it was important that our Board Treasurer [Don Douglas] highlighted members are already receiving 100% renewable power from WEC. We've invested \$20 million in our Wrightsville hydro plant and Coventry landfill projects. That's already part of our bills. We're already paying for 100% renewable power that we get at our homes.

Patty: I don't want to leave the perception that that's an expensive choice we've made. In fact, it's an inexpensive choice. Our power costs are among the lowest of any utility in the Northeast, and that's with an all-renewable portfolio. We want members to invest in solar, if they want to go that route. At the same time, we've gone out and made power purchase decisions to be 100% renewable, but at a much lower cost.

Major Storm May 4-5

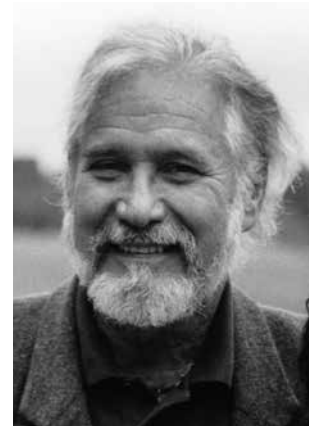
Patty: We had another four day restoration event. We had over half our membership out: 5,100 members out between Friday night, May 4, and Saturday May 5 due to high winds. Some members didn't get power back until Tuesday. Orange County got hit particularly hard.

Barry: There was a large number of broken poles and spans of wire down.

Patty: It's very unusual, the number of major storms we've had.

Barry: We've had six major storms within 18 months. I would just like to say once again our line crew and people in the office just—well, if you see them when they come back from the field, you really know these people have put out all of their energy.

I'm so proud of this Co-op and the people who work here. The applause they got at the Annual Meeting reflects



We've invested \$20 million in our Wrightsville hydro plant and Coventry landfill projects. That's already part of our bills. We're already paying for 100% renewable power that we get at our homes.

— Barry Bernstein

that the members see that too. It's where I think the Co-op difference really stands out.

PUC Issues New Net Metering Order

Patty: We have a story on the new PUC order in this edition [p. 2]. The key thing is: we're hyper-conscious about cost increases to WEC members. We're filing a rate increase and part of that is driven by net metering.

At the same time, we want to offer net metering in a way that's fair to all our members. The PUC has recognized the pace is too rapid, and they've made some changes to the rates being paid. This will help reduce and offset some of that cost shifting and some of that pressure. My

reaction to the PUC's order is favorable because they're heading in the right direction.

Barry: Our WEC management had discussions with the renewable community, and found some common ground in that we all want net metering to head toward long term sustainability. We think over the next year we'll have to continue that healthy dialogue. It's a complex issue and we all want the same end goal: to meet the state's 90% renewable goal in all energy use by 2050. We're all committed to that and we'll keep talking about it to find the best solutions possible.

Rate Design Recommendation Coming Soon

Barry: The WEC board and management have been discussing a rate design change over the last one to two years. Over the next several months we'll be hosting a community meeting to talk to our members about how we got here.

I think it's extremely important for members to know there are a lot of different aspects that need to be balanced. The Board and the Co-op are committed to our members having the lowest carbon footprint that they can, using electricity wisely, and moving away from fossil fuels toward using electricity from renewable resources. That's what we've been dialoging on

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Annual Meeting

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rewarded the crews with the longest and loudest round of applause of the evening.

It was a moving moment. Richards noted that the way storms hit, line crews worked virtually every weekend during the summer of 2017. Later, Bernstein issued a call for volunteers who live near the Co-op's headquarters in East Montpelier who can help feed crews doing round-the-clock restoration work after major storms.

Every year, the membership votes to fill three seats on WEC's nine-member board. This year, three incumbent candidates all won re-election: Vice President Roger Fox received 637 votes; Stephen Knowlton received 549; and Richard Rubin received 558. Candidate Steven Farnham of Plainfield was a close fourth, with 525 votes.

Getting down to business, Bernstein told members that they would see a rate increase on their July bills. The Public Utility Commission (PUC) will determine the final percentage, but "we're hoping to keep this under 5%," he said, adding that member feedback shows more frequent, small rate increases are easier to tolerate than infrequent but hefty increases. The last rate increase was 18 months earlier.

He also said WEC's board would move ahead with rate redesign soon, examining increasing a monthly fixed cost and offsetting that by reducing cost per kilowatt hour. "We're at a crossroads," he said. "We're trying to make that step toward the next decade."

Treasurer Don Douglas reported that the Coventry landfill methane generation plant is running more



Paul Sipple of Waitsfield asks Operations Director Dan Weston what replaces the old porcelain fuse cutouts that cracked with temperature fluctuation. Polymer, Weston replied, which pops out safely, just like a breaker in your home fuse box.

efficiently than ever, producing two thirds of the Co-op's electricity. "We decided to go green in 2003. This was not a popular decision when we did it. We are one of only a few utilities in the whole country that is 100% renewable," he reminded applauding members. In other good news, he said, last year WEC returned \$720,000 in capital credits to the membership. This money represents excess revenue that, in a for-profit utility, would simply enrich investors and shareholders. Under the cooperative model, it's returned to the members who own the utility. He also reported that FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency) funding will hopefully come through for the October windstorm: while for-profit utilities will pay for windstorm damage through rate increases, WEC's

not-for-profit status means FEMA funds will cover about three-quarters of the damage costs. Finally, he said, WEC's audit was clean, with no issues reported.

Richards said that the relentless weather and clustered major storms affected reliability in 2017. Consumer hours out were 46% higher in 2017 than the average of the previous five years. "The weather's getting weird and it seems to be staying that way. Monday, some of you had six inches of snow. Today, it's like the Bahamas out there. We're working to harden the system. We're working on grid resilience," she promised.

Despite difficult weather conditions,

Richards announced that WEC's safety record remains stellar. "We've had 939 days without a lost time accident," she announced, and WEC vehicles have traveled nearly 1.3 million miles without an accident. The Co-op is regularly recognized by the state for its commitment to safety and wellness.

The Co-op's Community Fund, supported by members' voluntary donations of capital credits, continues to grow, Richards said. Currently, about 14% of the membership donate their credits. Last year, the fund gave \$38,465 to small nonprofits that share service area with WEC. That marked a \$10,000 increase over 2016 donations, Richards said, and it makes a big difference. "These are the small organizations that help folks get by in all 41 towns we serve," she said. Members interested in donating their capital credits to the Community Fund can sign up to do so once or in perpetuity, she said, simply by contacting the Co-op.

Operations Director Dan Weston told members that WEC is improving its notification system of planned outages. In June, he said, a new \$7 million construction work plan (CWP) launches. "There won't be a town we don't touch," he promised. He showed members a few pieces

Notable Guests

Several notable guests at the Annual Meeting included Deputy Attorney General Josh Diamond, WEC's former legal counsel; Senator Mark MacDonald of Orange, who sits on the Senate Committee on Natural Resources and Energy, the Joint Energy Committee, and the nuclear decommissioning citizens advisory panel, among others; and Barre's newly inducted Mayor Lucas Herring.

Industry notables included Olivia Campbell Andersen, Executive Director of Renewable Energy Vermont; Coventry consultant John Murphy of Stantec; and representatives from Vermont Electric Co-op (VEC); Vermont Electric Power Company (VELCO); and the Vermont Energy Investment Corporation (VEIC).



Deputy Attorney General Josh Diamond (L) and Senator Mark MacDonald

Service Awards

Whether it's the mission, the appreciative culture, the commitment to health and wellness, or a little bit of all of the above, WEC staff tend to stick around. Every year at the Annual Meeting, the Co-op recognizes staff anniversaries with a service award ceremony marking the long tenures of its dedicated employees. In 2018, WEC celebrated:

Fifth anniversary:

Dawn Johnson, Administrative Assistant
Patty Richards, General Manager

10th anniversary:

Jason Preston, Maintenance Foreman
Amos Turner, Construction Foreman

15th anniversary:

Brian Wilkin, Utility Field Technician

30th anniversary:

Ed Schunk, T&D System Technician

35th anniversary:

Linda Nelson, Assistant Director of Finance



Linda Nelson, Assistant Director of Finance (center), is honored for 35 years of service to the Co-op. General Manager Patty Richards offers her congratulations while Board President Barry Bernstein looks on.





Goddard and Suzy Graves of East Calais enjoy dinner from Bon Temps Gourmet before the Co-op's 79th Annual Meeting commences.

of outdated equipment—fuse cutouts and pole top insulators—that tend to break in extreme weather and cause outages. Crews are replacing them with improved polymer models, he said.

Weston also noted a dreaded threat that is now real: “We’ve got a new critter out here: the emerald ash borer,” he said. The ash-destroying insect was discovered in Orange, a town located within WEC’s service area. Take a hard look at ash and white pines near power lines on your property, Weston advised.

In the question and answer period, John Rosenbloom of Calais explained he is pro-renewable and wants to install solar. He loves WEC’s environmental mission, and is driven to step up personally, he said, so “it’s discouraging I can’t contribute without harming Washington Electric’s economy.” How, he asked, can WEC not just ask members to rely on their Co-op’s 100% renewable credentials, but empower members to have personal agency when it comes to committing to




Joe Kelly, co-chair with Nancy Fuller of the Co-op’s Ballot Committee, accepts members’ votes for the Board of Directors. Kelly, of Williamstown, has served 21 years on the Ballot Committee.

renewables?

Richards said that the WEC board is also interested in stepping up: “We’re going to put a voice to climate change by making a policy statement about that,” she promised. In terms of where individual members can start, she said, “First thing: use energy wisely. Second: let’s do it with renewables. We’re not discouraging folks from doing solar. We want you to have as small a footprint as possible.” WEC can work with individual members to shrink their footprints—and to offer financial incentives to lower carbon use through its Button Up program.

Bud Haas, a former Board member

from Bradford, said, “I believe we’re at another turning point now. The Co-op is going to have to go outside the box and not just be poles and wires.” He wondered what the leadership direction is. Richards agreed: “We’re going to have to innovate. You’re going to see WEC shake things up over the next couple of years,” she said. Battery storage, for example, will dramatically change the power landscape, she said. But, she added, WEC will look at new technologies with good old-fashioned Vermont skepticism instead of jumping on the next hot thing. “Whatever we deliver, we want to do it well,” she promised. 

Members Write

Let’s Prepare Better For Extreme Weather

In at least two places in the current [April] issue WEC leadership give weather events as reasons for outage incidents (Patty on p. 8, and Barry on page 2). I found that jarring. We live in Vermont. We all have to adapt to winter (and other) storms in the ways we dress, the ways we insulate our houses, the backup systems we have. We don’t like climate change and the storms it brings, but, while we work against the factors that cause climate change, we have to adapt to what it is throwing at us, just the way our plants and wildlife do.

What I want from my electric company is an organization that looks ahead to weather events we can expect to have in the future, rather than what happened in the past, and prepares for responses that will get our power back on fast. Patty says that “the reason for missing the duration outage statistic was due to the number and severity of storms.” This Vermont! That’s what we have.

When we lose power, as we did for two long days in October, we lose water, heat, stove, food in the freezer, and computer, as well as light. Perhaps you should measure not only average outage duration but the number of outages that last longer than 2.7 hours. Outages of 2.7 hours are no big deal but outages that last more than 16 hours are a big deal, and, as a member, I would like to know how often they occur.


— Gail Falk, Plainfield

Many thanks to member Gail Falk for writing in. Dan Weston, WEC’s Operations Director, responds:

Gail, we agree with you, and we are on it! In fact, back in 2001 it was clear to WEC the weather was changing. Increased storm severity led to increased damage to the distribution infrastructure, and ultimately increased outages to our members. We realized that simply clearing right of way corridors was not enough to reduce the impact of more severe weather. We had to develop and implement a plan to “harden” the system in a manner that reduced, or at least limited, the impact of severe weather events. Since 2001, WEC has invested over \$14 million into hardening the system. Here’s what we’ve done so far:

- Completed a system wide protective device study and installed over 3,000 fuse points along the distribution system to minimize the number of members affected by any one problem
- Reconstructed or updated all nine distribution substations with state of the art transformers, reclosers, and fault distance locating
- Tested 100% of the 25,000 wooden poles on the system for strength and durability

- Reconstructed nearly 200 miles of line, replacing deteriorated poles and weak conductors, making them less vulnerable to wind and ice events
- Installed an automated meter infrastructure that coordinates with our Outage Management System. This computer system receives signals from meters that tell which lines are experiencing issues or have lost power. It quickly determines which fuse points have opened, allowing outage diagnostics and restoration to occur quickly
- Since 2000, tracked the reliability of every circuit out of every one of the nine substations to identify which lines need more outage prevention work
- Installed more durable hardware on all new lines, including polymer insulators and dead-end insulators, polymer line disconnects, and wildlife guards, minimizing both weather and non-weather related outages
- Implemented a plan to back-feed all of WEC’s substation circuits from alternate sources to minimize the duration and effect of widespread outages. As of 2017, we are able to back-feed all but two of WEC’s nine substations
- Increased our right of way budget fivefold since 2000 to identify and remove danger trees and dense growth
- Implemented alternative methods of clearing ROW corridors using excavators with special cutter heads in an efforts to slow regrowth

WEC has done much to harden our substations and 1,200 miles of line from the effects of severe weather events, and there’s still more to do. Other issues include the maturing of some forested areas, and an increase in insects such as the emerald ash borer that add to the declining health of the trees that line the corridors through which the electrical lines traverse. An increase in insects harmful to trees and forests weakens healthy trees and greatly accelerates the deterioration of the maturing forest, increasing the chance that high winds will topple large, relatively healthy trees well outside the line corridor, breaking both the wire and poles. 

Got something to say?

Letter to the editor, comment, or a story tip?
Drop us a line at currents@wec.coop or
Washington Electric Cooperative, Inc.,
P.O. Box 8, East Montpelier, VT 05651,
Attn: Co-op Currents.



Heart in the Highlands

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calf champions.

Since 2007, Shatney and Steward have also produced top-quality, grass-fed beef. After the October 2017 windstorm, when Shatney's old friends at WEC restored the power that keeps their water and beef freezers running, the couple showed their thanks by giving 50 pounds of their superb ground beef—a \$500 market value—to WEC employees. The gift was much appreciated. "It was a nice surprise. And it made for a great burger night," said Member Services Representative Gordon Matheson.

Much of WEC's membership recognizes the tireless effort staff puts in after a big storm, but Shatney and Steward's gift was doubly meaningful. It was thanks for restoring power, recognition of the work that goes into storm cleanup, and continuing gratitude from Shatney for the time he spent doing tree work for WEC: a job he loved and, he believes, helped save the family farm.

A legacy of work and respect

In 2000, Shatney's elderly father came to the couple for help with a shocker: the farm was going into bankruptcy. Shatney's income contracting for WEC allowed them to leverage the loans that kept the farm going and saved their beloved Highlands. "We wouldn't have the cattle anymore if it weren't for Washington Electric," Shatney said.

For many years, Shatney worked to keep WEC's rights of way clear from danger trees and dense growth. He has the powerful build of a man who's spent his life farming and climbing

and the half smile of a storyteller who knows a joke is sometimes better when you tell only part of it. For a man who claims to be constitutionally unable to work indoors (he tried once, and lasted two shifts), the miles he walked on WEC's lines were "23 years of doing a thing where you had a purpose."

It's quite a legacy of work. While Shatney worked full days on WEC's lines and managed his small business, Shatney Tree Service, he was also doing farm chores and caring for the Highlands before sunup and after sundown every day.

He also accomplished all this without the fingers and thumb of his left hand, taken by a defective winch in a logging accident in 1977.

There's plenty of evidence of Shatney's attention to and impact on others, from his easy friendliness to his business decisions. Just two generations back, his white grandfather and Abenaki grandmother crossed into Canada to marry, because they weren't permitted to in Vermont. As a small business owner, Shatney was responsible for helping diversify the tree industry in Vermont, hiring the first



Janet Steward and Ray Shatney with Vickie, one of their prize Highland cows, at their family home in Plainfield.

female and African-American tree crew members to work on WEC's lines.

Shatney has respect and affection for WEC staff. He still enjoys chatting with folks in the office; he has a deep kinship with folks in the field. He

worked many storms with WEC crews. "We knew each others' families. They were doing storm work when they didn't have power at home," he said. "These linemen put up with a real lot, and they're always polite to their customers."

Still, his favorite part of his work with WEC was interacting with members. He cherishes a memory of arriving onsite during a Christmas Eve outage, and out in the cold and dark, "there's a little boy at the end of a driveway with his arms crossed because he didn't have his Christmas lights," waiting impatiently for tree and line crews to get them back on in time to guide Santa's sleigh. He loved talking with homeowners and the kindness of members who brought cookies or lunch out to crews working their property. Once, Mike Myers (WEC's ROW manager until 2017) asked him how come people told him so much, Shatney recalled, shrugging.

"I think the fact that you're a farmer and lived outdoors your whole life made people comfortable, Ray," suggested Steward. Later, Steward said, "He has done, and endured, so many things that he is able to be empathetic to anyone, regardless of their work or life situation."

Reinventing the farm together

Steward and Shatney met when she called him to examine some trees on her Plainfield property. He called her

afterward and explained he'd need to come back, because as they'd talked for hours, he'd forgotten to look at the trees.

In a twist of fate, they discovered that years earlier, Steward's late husband had bought a Highland calf from Shat Acres for his son to show.

Steward is petite, with an open and friendly manner. She's a Long Island native who, through life's turns, ended up farming in Vermont. For decades, she was a treasured Morrisville first-grade teacher—in 2002, she was awarded Vermont Teacher of the Year—and retired in 2010. She now teaches graduate level classes at Castleton University and at the Stern Center for Language and Learning and is a talented photographer in addition to raising Highlands. Every day, doing chores, she says, she thanks the cattle for "helping me to be real and connect to the earth, the land."


She loves being part of Vermont's food system. "We're really lucky to live in a place where people appreciate local food," she reflected. The original business model was for the herd to fund itself through breeding stock sales. After a hip replacement forced Shatney to stop climbing trees, they changed the model and formed Greenfield Highland Beef. Now, about three-quarters of income from the cattle comes from beef, their Highlands crossbred with Shorthorn cattle, and one quarter from selling breeding stock.

"People say, 'You're in the beef business.' I say, 'Nope, we're in the business of preserving Highland genetics. The beef allows us to do that,'" said Steward. Because the shaggy Highlands take longer to mature than other cattle, the flavor is

exceptional and complex—"aged on the hoof," as Steward says. More and thinner muscle fibers than other breeds mean the meat is more tender, and the Highlands' thick hair is so insulating

that their fat develops within muscles instead of forming as a cap, so the meat is marbled even though the animals are 100% grass fed. Crossbred beef cattle mature a little earlier while maintaining these desirable qualities.

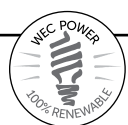
They make a good team, the couple agree, using their different

strengths and mutual respect to run the farm efficiently together. Between raising award-winning show cattle and outstanding beef, Shatney and Steward's efforts were recognized in 2016, when their farm was awarded the Small Business Association's Vermont Family-Owned Business of the Year. As Steward put it, "Our respect for hard, physical labor, our belief in stewardship of the land, our core values of integrity, decency, and respect for all, and our love and admiration of our Highlands have served us well both in our relationship and our business endeavors." 

We wouldn't have the cattle anymore if it weren't for Washington Electric.

— Ray Shatney

Currents seeks out stories about WEC members—both individuals and businesses—whose lives or work reflect one or more of the Seven Cooperative Principles. Ray Shatney, Janet Steward, and Greenfield Highland Beef practice principles four: autonomy and independence, and seven: concern for community. See wec.coop or any October issue of Currents for the full list of seven principles.



Health, Wealth, and Wisdom in the Garden

Charlie Nardozzi nodded his trademark brimmed hat to WEC members and announced, “Welcome to summer!” Nardozzi, a familiar face and voice to Vermont gardeners, was the keynote speaker for WEC’s 79th Annual Meeting. Nardozzi is one of Vermont’s most prominent gardeners: an expert in organic gardening and edible landscaping, host of VPR’s Vermont Garden Journal, author, and speaker, he also consulted with WEC on the Co-op’s workplace garden. Friendly and funny, he kept members rapt, contemplating tomato and carrot varieties, raised beds and floating row covers.

The nice thing about workplace gardens, Nardozzi said, is they bridge over the barriers to gardening many people face: lack of space, lack of time, and lack of knowhow, by allowing workers to share knowledge and grow food together on office property. In addition, he said, workplace gardens offer health benefits to employees, like better nutrition and reduced stress, and efficiency benefits to companies, by promoting team building and creative energy in addition to improving employee health. “And if you do it really well, you’ll have beautiful grounds, too!” he added.

In 2015, WEC won a Green Thumbs at Work grant, a workplace garden startup package supported by the Vermont Department of Health, the Community Garden Network, Gardener’s Supply, and Nardozzi. “When you’re swinging by WEC’s offices this summer, say, ‘I want a tour of the garden,’” he directed members, and read a letter from Member Services Supervisor Susan Golden—Nardozzi preserved Golden’s anonymity, but her laughter gave her identity away—about how participating in WEC’s garden affected her life. “It’s become an obsession, but thankfully, a healthy one,” he read from her note. “I think if I can successfully grow a garden, anyone can do it.”

Nardozzi went on to recommend

heirloom varieties for Vermont gardens. “Heirlooms are regional, passed down through generations,” he said, and added that they often have fun stories. He relayed the tale of “Radiator Charlie’s Mortgage Lifter,” a delicious tomato variety created by an amateur botanist from West Virginia whose seedling sales paid off the mortgage on his truck radiator repair shop.

Nardozzi is also at the forefront of the edible landscaping movement. At a time when environmentally conscientious homeowners are looking for ways to reduce lawn and improve soil and water health, Nardozzi suggests growing beautiful gardens full of things you can eat. He donated a signed copy of his recent book, *Foodscaping: A Practical and Innovative Way to Create an Edible Landscape*, to WEC’s Annual Meeting door prizes, and stayed after the meeting to sell and sign copies for interested members.

As hoped, members came prepared with questions for the master gardener, and he didn’t disappoint. General Manager Patty Richards wanted to know how to combat slugs. Nardozzi had lots of tips: crushed seashells, sharp sand, the organic pesticide Sluggo, copper flashing around raised beds, even raw wool. “Of course, you can always do beer traps, but who wants to waste good beer on slugs?” he asked rhetorically.

A member concerned about soil possibly contaminated by a fuel spill was coached to get rid of the soil, either by digging it out and replacing it, or putting down a barrier under a raised bed. One battling the invasive plants Japanese knotweed and horsetail was advised to keep cutting them down right before they flower. “Theoretically, it will get exhausted,” said Nardozzi, and then offered some straight talk, to chuckles from the crowd: “Or, since you have both, move.”

Another member asked about bringing mason bees onto his property to pollinate plants. Nardozzi recommended not getting too far ahead: better to plant a pollinator garden to attract local bees and other pollinators instead of trucking in the beneficial insects.

As members left the Operations Center after the meeting, with the day’s heat still hanging in the air, they could smell good, damp earth warming after months of winter freeze. It’s time to start gardening in Vermont. 🐝

Charlie Nardozzi cracks a garden joke during his presentation at WEC’s Annual Meeting.



Get to Know Your WEC

Jamie Dailey and Scott Matheson

Have you ever wondered who that is fixing the line up your road, or who you spoke to when you called in about an outage or a bill? Going forward, Currents will regularly profile Co-op staff in this new feature: Get to Know Your WEC.

Jamie Dailey

What he does

Jamie was hired as a Journeyman Lineworker at the end of September 2017. Since he started, he’s been working on off-road construction with Construction Foreman Amos Turner’s crew.

Veteran of the lines

“I was Head Lineman at Hardwick [Electric Department] for a number of years,” explained Dailey. He grew up near Hardwick, and now lives in Walden with his family. He’s a WEC member himself.

Family matters

Jamie’s job requires long hours, but his family understands. “They support what I do, and that makes it all that much better,” he said.

So, his favorite thing outside work is to spend time with his family—especially during the summer. “We do all the outdoor fun stuff we can’t do cooped up all winter,” he said, like boating, riding ATVs, and especially camping. “We stay at campgrounds and tent. That’s what my wife and daughter like,” he said.

Jamie’s son is stationed with the Navy in San Diego, and he has a five-year-old granddaughter and another grandchild on the way. Soon, he hopes, his son’s family will be stationed closer to home. He also has two daughters: his 21-year-old daughter is nearby and works at Eden Central School, and his youngest daughter is nine, “going on 21.”

Scott Matheson

How he got started

In February, Scott was promoted to Journeyman Lineworker from Class 2 Apprentice Lineworker. He’s been at WEC for four years. Before that, he worked at a creamery filling many roles, from mechanic to the warehouse to loading trucks.

He became interested in linework by talking to some of his friends. “Their dads were linemen, so I talked to them, and they told me about the line school in Georgia,” he explained, the Southeast Linemen Training Center. “So I put myself through that.”

Hands-on

Scott’s hobbies complement line work, he said. “I like to build things and fix things,” especially if he’s working with wood or metal. “I’ve always built random stuff, or taken it apart. Fixed them or made them worse,” he smiled.

Right now he’s finishing a woodshed. For inspiration, he looks around his house to see what his family needs. “I usually build what we need around the house, end tables, stuff like that,” he said.

Wedding celebration

Scott grew up in Northfield, and now lives in Topsham in a house he and his fiancée bought two years ago. They’ve been together six years and have two little kids. “We’re pretty outdoorsy,” he said. They love to hike, but with kids ages three and one and a half, “it gets hard planning around naps and food and stuff.”

This month, the couple will get married at their home. They’re looking forward to a small and simple celebration, Scott said. 🐝



Scott Matheson (L) and Jamie Dailey caught together, just after they finished repairing a line felled by a tree in Duxbury.

Manager's and President's Report

continued from page 3

and debating and we hope we'll have the support of our members going forward.

Patty: It's not hard and fast. We're trying to coalesce around one rate structure, and we want to start talking to members about it in more detail. We want to start getting people's reactions.

We're not filing anything with regulators at this point. We're walking around to members with one rate structure, saying, "This is what we're tinkering with, what do you think?"

We're going to have to do more outreach. We did the listening group in November—that was a major undertaking and very helpful. We're not abandoning our emphasis on energy

efficiency. Any kWh that is not used is the most environmentally benign kWh. We want members to remember that.

That said, in order to make a dent in climate change, we need to get people off gasoline-powered cars and fossil fuel heating at home. In order to do that and pursue electrification, it means changing our rate structure. The state is moving toward 90% renewable by 2050. With a 100% renewable electric utility in place, we can make a big difference with each kWh.


The reason we're doing this is about the environment. It's about moving forward with a 100% renewable product and getting people off fossil fuels and shifting them over to renewables, but doing it in a fashion that is still energy efficient.

Barry: We keep in mind the total energy a member pays for. Our goal

is, as they switch from fossil fuel to electricity, their total energy bill will be equal to, and hopefully less than, they're paying now.

Patty: Right. It has to make sense financially.

Barry: Our members are using energy wisely and with less impact

on the environment, which is what this Co-op is totally committed to. It's the reason we invested in a 100% renewable power portfolio before anyone else was talking about this. We've been working toward this, along with energy efficiency, since 1990. We've got a 28-year commitment and we're going to continue with that strong investment. 

Staying Safe in Work Zones

After another battering Vermont winter, summer is the season of maintenance and repair. WEC's lineworkers and subcontracted tree crews are out clearing danger trees and repairing infrastructure to keep your electricity safe and reliable. When this work is done on roadside lines, watch for flaggers directing traffic. It's critical that drivers, pedestrians, and crews practice road safety in work zones.

Rick Stergas, WEC's Safety and Environmental Compliance Specialist, said throughout the state there have been 10 work zone deaths in the past five years. "In Vermont, those are big numbers," he said. As a result, VOSHA—Vermont's regulatory arm of the Occupational Safety and Health Administration—is emphasizing road safety. Stergas just completed his training as a traffic control technician and flagger trainer. That allows him to train and recertify WEC crews as flaggers. Flaggers require a four-hour training every two years, and every WEC lineworker gets that training. "Everyone's responsible for safety. I'm there to give them the tools to get the work done and do it safely," he said.

When crews set up a work zone, there's nothing left to chance. "It's all delineated," Stergas explained. Training covers "how to set it up, how to keep it safe, not just for the traveling public but pedestrians, people with disabilities," and anyone who may be using the road.

While WEC has an outstanding safety record, Stergas points out that "you can't rest on your laurels. You have to be vigilant." A major variable is driver behavior. "In the work zone, you have distracted drivers, you have impaired drivers. We're just out there with cones," Stergas said, pointing out that crews can't secure the site and are vulnerable to factors beyond their control. The stop/slow paddle is a legal device, Stergas said. If a driver were to disregard a


flagger's instructions, their license plate may be recorded and passed along to state police.

The most important thing drivers can do, Stergas emphasized, is to remain aware in work zones. That means drive slowly, follow the flagger's instructions, and, in accordance with Vermont law, don't use handheld devices. Being stopped in a work zone does not mean it's OK to check text messages.

Upon hearing this, Board Treasurer and Orange resident Don Douglas drily noted that one factor may make much of WEC territory safer than other parts of the state. "It's just a little bit safer since there's not much cell service," he said.

Because WEC is owned by its membership, Stergas said, members have an extra investment in keeping crews safe. "As members, they're owners of a company that has guys out here," he pointed out.

Work Zone Dos and Don'ts

- Don't drive distracted or impaired. Be alert at all times, especially in work zones.
- Please be aware of flaggers, equipment, and workers in the work zone.
- Flagger paddles are legal devices. Please adhere to flagger paddles and hand signals.
- Everyone on WEC's operations team is trained and tested on work zone safety, setup, and flagger control. "It's not just about holding a stop/slow paddle," said Stergas. "Our job is to get you through a work zone as quickly and efficiently as we possibly can."
- Please be patient and drive slowly. "It goes a long way toward keeping our guys safe, and our crews appreciate folks who drive slowly through our work zones," said Stergas. 

NOTICE TO WASHINGTON ELECTRIC CO-OP MEMBERS

Notice of Proposed Tariff Changes

On May 17, 2018, Washington Electric Cooperative Inc filed a request with the Vermont Public Utility Commission (PUC) for an increase in retail rates of 3.72%. The main driver of this increase in rates are increasing transmission and power cost related expenses.

This change will take effect with power sold on or after July 1, 2018 and will be reflected on the next bill you receive, in August. If the Public Utility Commission opens a formal investigation of this matter, this increase will be shown as a separate surcharge on your bill until the Commission finishes its investigation.

To determine the impact on your individual bill, use the present and proposed rates column and your average monthly consumption. For example, a residential member using an average of 500 kWh a month would calculate his or her bill as follows:

	Present Rates		July 1, 2018 Proposed Rates	
Customer Charge		\$12.97		\$13.45
First 200 kWh	200 x \$.10373	\$20.75	200 x \$.10759	\$21.52
Usage over 200 kWh	300 x \$.23160	<u>\$69.48</u>	300 x \$.24022	<u>\$72.07</u>
		\$103.20		\$107.04

Any interested person may examine the rate increase filing at the office of the Public Service Board or at the Washington Electric Cooperative office during normal business hours. Comments regarding the rate filing may be submitted to the Public Utility Commission by June 18, 2018 via mail at 112 State Street, Montpelier, VT 05620-2701, via email at puc.clerk@vermont.gov, or through the e-PUC at <https://epuc.vermont.gov/?q=node/32>. Comments filed after June 18, 2018 will also be accepted and considered by the Commission.

	Present Rates	Proposed Rates
RESIDENTIAL		
Customer Charge	\$12.97	\$ 13.45
0-200 kWh/month	0.10373	0.10759
Over 200 kWh/month	0.23160	0.24022
SEASONAL RESIDENTIAL *		
Customer Charge (6 month prepayment)	\$ 77.82	\$ 80.70
0-50 kWh/month	0.10373	0.10759
Over 50 kWh/month	0.23160	0.24022
SMALL COMMERCIAL		
Customer Charge	\$12.92	\$ 13.40
Per kWh/month	0.18962	0.19667
SEASONAL COMMERCIAL *		
Customer Charge (6 month prepayment)	\$77.52	\$ 80.40
Per kWh/month	0.18962	0.19667
LARGE POWER		
Customer Charge	\$22.05	\$ 22.87
Per kWh/month	0.10067	0.10441
Per kW/month	14.26	14.79
TIME OF DAY		
Customer Charge	\$ 12.97	\$ 13.45
0-60 kWh/month - Peak	0.10373	0.10759
Over 60 kWh/month - Peak	0.25637	0.26591
0-140 kWh/month - Off Peak	0.10373	0.10759
Over 140 kWh/month - Off Peak	0.21802	0.22613
SECURITY LIGHT/SEASONAL SECURITY LIGHT		
Per 100 Watt Light/month	\$ 20.18/121.08	\$ 20.93/125.58
Per 400 Watt Light/month	40.35/242.10	41.85/251.10
Per 101 Watt - LED	20.16/120.96	20.91/125.46
Per 91 Watt - LED	19.36/116.16	20.08/120.48
Per 87 Watt - LED	19.01/114.06	19.72/118.32

* Seasonal rates to be eliminated to be replaced with monthly commercial and residential rates.

