

WEC COMMUNITY FUND PROFILE

Groton's Chicken Pie Supper: An Investment in Kids and Community

By Will Lindner

Washington Electric Cooperative's Community Fund helps programs and organizations in and around the Co-op's service territory that, in so many ways, enhance the quality of life in the 41 towns WEC serves. There are social-service programs of all kinds, environmental programs, food pantries, arts organizations, youth sports... dozens of recipients doing inspiring things to make our part of Vermont a better place.

It's hard to imagine, though, that any group could capture more fully the concept of "community" in the Community Fund's title than the Groton Community Club and its primary annual function, organizing and hosting the town's Fall Chicken Pie Supper.

That might not sound like such a big deal – a chicken pie supper. But it's the scale, the history, the cause, and the all-out participation in this particular event that make it special, and make it an occasion that Washington Electric has been honored to support through the Community Fund. Groton, a rural, sparsely populated town (about 1,000 residents) in Caledonia County, at the eastern edge of WEC's service territory, has held its Fall Chicken Pie Supper for 63 years. The next one – scheduled for

October 5, 2019, to be exact, will be the 64th. Peter Lyon, who grew up in Groton and has been president of the community club for the past 10 years, remembers going to the dinner when he was a schoolboy.

But it's not just the longevity of this tradition that makes it special. You would think that a chicken pie supper in a very rural Vermont village might attract 50 people, maybe 125 on a good night. The Groton Chicken Pie Supper, for many years now, has attracted 900 or more diners. They come not only from Vermont and nearby New Hampshire, but from states all over the US, and from abroad. (Lyon has talked with people from England and Germany.) Its organizers have cleverly tapped into fall foliage season, and found reliable ways to get the word out so that visitors, looking for "Vermonty" things to do at the end of a beautiful fall day, will make their plans to come.

When they do, they'll find the Groton Community Building (in the village, at 1476 Scott Highway, a.k.a. Route 302) beautifully decorated with pumpkins and other seasonal adornments, thanks to efforts led by residents Julie Oliver and Nancy Vaughan – two of more than 100 volunteers who dedicate themselves to this event. And there's art created by teacher Jen Dube's students at

continued on page 4



Tracy Puffer

At each seating of Groton's Fall Chicken Pie Supper, 12 cups have a hidden S on their bottoms. It stands for syrup, a prize generously donated by sugarmakers Ashley and Mike Collins, on the right. Shown with them are Cody and Diane Thompson.

What The Future Holds for Wrightsville and WEC

By Will Lindner

The setting

The 190-acre Wrightsville Reservoir, and the Wrightsville Beach Recreational District, are a treasured local asset, offering outdoor activities from picnicking, swimming, and fishing to canoeing, paddleboard yoga – yup, there is such a thing – and an 18-hole disc golf course. Located just off Vermont Route 12, where Middlesex, Montpelier, and East Montpelier converge, the recreational district, established in 1985, is a joint project of those municipalities plus the Town of Worcester. A dozen local businesses and nonprofit organizations contribute additional funding. The district's main season runs from Memorial Day to

Labor Day, with a scaled-back "shoulder season" continuing into early October.

But Wrightsville is more than a recreational asset. The reservoir exists because of the havoc the unchecked North Branch of the Winooski River wreaked on Montpelier in the legendary flood of 1927. In response, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers selected a location on the river near the little community of Wrightsville, designed a flood-control dam, and oversaw its construction between 1933 and 1935 by the Depression-era Civilian Conservation Corps.

Ben Green, an engineer with the Dam Safety Program at Vermont's

continued on page 6

Washington Electric Cooperative
East Montpelier, VT 05651

Inside

Barry and Patty talk climate change in a special President's and General Manager's Message devoted to the topic: P. 2.

Can you join Powershift? If you have wi-fi and an electric hot water heater, you can help reduce WEC's peak costs and keep rates down. More on p. 5.

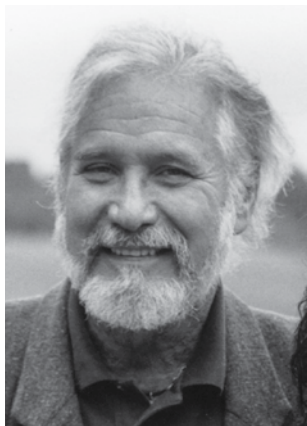
Vol 1, Issue 1: 80 years ago, the first *Co-op Currents* was published – it's republished here! P. 7.

What does the future hold for WEC's Wrightsville hydro plant? Read Will Lindner's piece, above.

President's and General Manager's Message

Climate Change Is the Issue. How WEC is Evolving In Response

Barry: We're going to talk about climate change for this one. But before we get going: On August 5, at 6:30 at the Old Brick Church right next to the Co-op offices, the Public Utilities Commission (PUC) is going to hold a public hearing on our new rate design. We encourage anyone who wants to speak to come.



I just came back from the National Rural Electric Co-op Association (NRECA) board meeting – I'm the Vermont director. The NRECA board recently focused both on climate change across the country, and the effects it's had on various systems. I've talked with directors from the Midwest who

I bring up that meeting because it is related, too. The whole redesign effort has been driven by the state and WEC's environmental and economic concerns. We're also concerned about climate change's effects on our distribution system and on our whole way of life.

are worried about the flooding of the Mississippi and Missouri rivers, and some farmers haven't been able to plant because their land is so wet. The director from Louisiana showed us a video of a \$2.5 million substation burning up in 5 minutes from a lightning strike after a tornado had gone through,

and the following day they had five inches of rain. It was amazing to see it. The director from Alaska talked about the melting of the glaciers and the impact of having the hottest July ever.

Patty: Climate change is a big deal and we need to act now. It's no longer business as usual. Climate change is the slow event that's hitting humanity, and we're not responding well to it. The PUC just put out a report: they're calling it, basically, a war on climate change [link at end]. They're adopting a battle mindset on it, and I think it's spot on. If we are really to do something in the climate change space, we have to do things differently in order to make a dent in this. Our overall strategy requires lots of different tactics, like incentivizing using our Co-op's renewable power supply. If we don't do anything differently, we're the



To have a meaningful impact, we need to put new renewable projects where transmission can use that power without backing down other renewable projects. Location does matter. We want all our renewable generation running to the max so fossil fuel generators elsewhere in New England don't have to turn on.

– Patty Richards

proverbial frog in the boiling pot. This means the state needs new renewable power sources, and we need to come up with new ways of running the Co-op. Which has already achieved the all-important goal of becoming 100 percent renewably sourced.

Barry: You know, Patty, we've seen if we're not thoughtful about where you place a large solar system on the transmission grid, you end up, as they say in utility terms, cannibalizing the generation by displacing existing renewables. New renewables need to be complementary with existing renewables. I personally don't think we're doing that all the time. In order to understand transmission and distribution and climate change together, we need to understand the broader context so we're not stepping on each other's toes.

I think it's extremely important that we, as a state, start to try to rank where we will have our best siting benefits both in terms of displacing fossil fuel plants – not other renewable

generation – and best bang for the dollar.

Patty: As we continue to evolve our business model, we're putting more dollars into Right of Way clearing. That's reactionary, but we have to do it.

Barry: It's also proactive, because we're cutting danger trees before they fall, so they don't fall on our lines.

Patty: That's true, it's both. We have to spend more money right now to keep up with climate change-driven storm damage and get people's electricity back in service. But at the same time, let's be proactive and thoughtful about next steps. As Barry said, like where new generation is being located. To have a meaningful impact, we need to put new renewable projects where transmission can use that power without

backing down other renewable projects. Location does matter. We want all our renewable generation running to the max so fossil fuel generators elsewhere in New England don't have to turn on.

Barry: As you often mention at our meetings, Patty, we need to be sure the changes we make are sustainable because they will need to be ramped up quickly.

Patty: Yes. We've got to transform people's cars from fossil fuel-burning over to electric vehicles. The transportation sector creates half the emissions in the state.

Barry: We have to not just think about turning every fossil fuel car into an electric car, but how that ties into electric buses, and better integrated transportation. So maybe we're not looking for a car to drive our family everywhere, but maybe one that can bring us to an electric bus that can bring us into Montpelier or Burlington. Maybe then there are

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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Vice President	ROGER FOX (May 2021)	2067 Bayley-Hazen Rd., East Hardwick, VT 05836-9873 rfox@pivot.net	563-2321
Treasurer	DONALD DOUGLAS (May 2020)	21 Douglas Rd., East Orange, VT 05086 dondougla@gmail.com	439-5364
Secretary	ANNE REED (May 2022)	3941 Hollister Hill Rd., Marshfield, VT 05658 annereed48@gmail.com	454-1324
	STEVEN FARNHAM (May 2022)	125 Farnham Road, Plainfield, VT 05667-9660 steven4wec@gmail.com	917-2581
	JEAN HAMILTON (May 2020)	3499 East Hill Road, Plainfield, VT 05667 Jean.myung.hamilton@gmail.com	777-6546
	STEPHEN KNOWLTON (May 2021)	160 White Rock Drive, #2, Montpelier, VT 05602 knowlsf@auburn.edu	223-2230
	RICHARD RUBIN (May 2021)	3496 East Hill Rd., Plainfield, VT 05667 richardrubin@gmail.com	454-8542
	MARY JUST SKINNER (May 2020)	P.O. Box 412, Montpelier, VT 05601 maryjustskinner@gmail.com	223-7123

PATTY RICHARDS General Manager patty.richards@wec.coop	KATIE TITTERTON Editor katie@clearspotvt.com	WILL LINDNER Contributing Writer	TIM NEWCOMB Layout
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Editorial Committee

Patty Richards Donald Douglas Jean Hamilton Anne Reed Katie Titterton

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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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.



electric go-carts can help us go shopping in Burlington, and back to the electric bus, and back to our electric car.

Patty: Wouldn't that be great? "I'm taking a trip to Burlington to go go-carting!..I mean, shopping!"

Barry: It's happening elsewhere. I'm always impressed with Jamaica, because that's how people travel to accomplish their everyday tasks. Public transportation vehicles connect at hubs. Jamaica's the same size as Vermont and they have a mountain range through the center that goes through the middle, like our Green Mountains. We need to think about what Vermont looks like in 20 years. I think if it doesn't include busses or trains, we're not heading in the right direction.

Patty: Transportation will need to be multidimensional, as you said. More buses, more trains,

Barry: I just read in this last *Co-op Currents* that Burlington is getting two electric buses, and that's exciting.

Patty: With climate change descending upon us, we know things are going to evolve fast. Things like the Emerald Ash Borer, this invasive beetle that's come into the US is now here in Vermont. We're going to lose a lot of trees. That's going to be a new thing that's a direct result of the impacts of climate change and our changing weather cycle. Climate change is not a static thing. Things are going to evolve. New beetles, more bugs, nastier weather, more frequent and severe thunderstorms. We as a small utility are going to have to respond to this stuff to keep the lights on. It's going to take some dramatic changes for us to change the story. Some things might seem radical, like this rate redesign, but that's how we're going to make a dent in this. We're doing this with real

We have to not just think about turning every fossil fuel car into an electric car, but how that ties into electric buses, and better integrated transportation.

So maybe we're not looking for a car to drive our family everywhere, but maybe one that can bring us to an electric bus that can bring us into Montpelier or Burlington.

– Barry Bernstein

meaning, with the intent of having an impact. We're not going to wait for anyone else to do their part before we start doing ours.

Barry: Yes, the new bugs. Loggers, hunters, everyone I know say they've never come out of the woods with as many ticks. There's no avoiding what's going on. And when bugs eat trees, like the borer, and those trees fall through

our lines, that affects reliability.

Patty: The message I really want


to get across is: this is on the mind of WEC's board and staff every day. We want to do something about climate change. There will be more to come from WEC on this issue. We're changing our pricing because we want people to switch over from fossil fuels, and we're trying to get our system as resilient as possible. There are so many parts to it.

We're offering incentives for people to even switch lawnmowers over to battery powered! So we're constantly evolving, offering new incentives. Think of WEC as constantly tinkering to find new ways to adapt to and combat climate change.

We're running this pilot to control load at people homes ["Join Project PowerShift," p. 5] That may lead into more in the battery storage space.

Battery in peoples homes, maybe utility scale batteries. There's a lot more to come. I want people thinking, this isn't one and done. We have to evolve as a utility in response to climate change, and that's what we're trying to do.

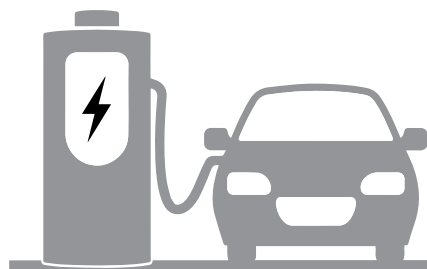
Barry: Has the technology improved on those battery lawn mowers?

Patty: Barry, yes! You wouldn't believe how great they are now! And I've got a battery weed whacker. Love the thing! 

For more information: vtdigger.org, "Regulator: 'Wartime' effort needed to meet electric vehicle target" July 7, 2019

Button Up 2019 Incentives

Incentives for Transportation



WEC

Up to \$1,900 in member incentives towards a new plug-in Electric Vehicle (EV)

- \$1,200 for an all-electric vehicle (AEV)
- \$950 for a plug-in hybrid electric vehicle (PHEV – gas & electric)
- An additional \$700 incentive is available for income qualifying members

Efficiency Vermont

- EV incentive not available

Incentives for Weatherization



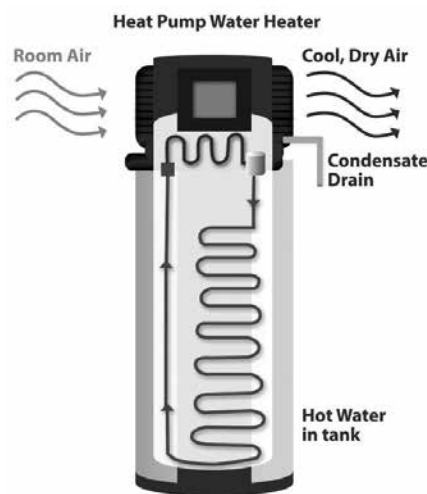
WEC

- Weatherization improvements to building shell: \$600 for Home Performance with Energy Star contractor

Efficiency Vermont**

- Weatherization improvements to building shell: up to \$2,000 for Home Performance with Energy Star contractor

Incentives for Heat Pumps



WEC

- Qualifying heat pump in "high performance" house
- \$250. (incentives for eligible heat pumps based on verified building shell meeting 2019 thermal performance standards; contact WEC Button Up for specifications)
- Heat pump hot water (HPWH) system
- \$250. (HPWH incentive available where a fossil-fueled (oil/kerosene/propane) hot water system is replaced)

Efficiency Vermont*

- HPWH incentive up to \$600
- Cold Climate Heat Pumps:

Equipment Capacity (mini-split)	EVT incentive 2019
≤2 tons	\$400
>2 tons	\$500

Incentives for Pellet Stoves, Furnaces, and Boilers



WEC

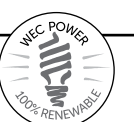
- \$250 for either a qualifying pellet stove or a wood stove. Stoves must be installed by qualified installer.
- Pellet furnace: \$500
- Pellet boiler: \$1000

Efficiency Vermont**

- Pellet stove: \$700 when installed by qualified contractor
- Pellet furnace: \$3,000
- Pellet boiler: \$3,000

**Offers subject to change. See EfficiencyVermont.com for current details.

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Groton

continued from page 1

the Blue Mountain Union School in neighboring Wells River. Julie and Bill Payton transport the artwork over and hang it where it can be appreciated by the visitors.

The student art is an important connection to what is, and has been from the beginning, the purpose of the Groton Chicken Pie Supper. It's a fundraiser to support the cause of education, and encourage students to continue on after high school.

"The focus has always been to help the kids," says Lyon. "We give scholarships to all the kids who continue in school after graduating. It can be anything – getting their CDL [commercial driver's license], going to technical school, pursuing their doctorate in the humanities. It doesn't matter to us. We just want to support the kids."

The scholarships are modest (Lyon doesn't mention the amounts), but they represent the community investing in its children, encouraging its children, loving its children. And the fund for that

Tracy Puffer



Feeding some 900 guests at Groton's Fall Chicken Pie Supper requires four seatings of 200 or more. St. Johnsbury Police Chief Tim Page and his wife Colleen Page, both standing, are two of more than 100 Groton residents who make the annual fundraiser possible.

purpose is replenished by the Chicken Pie Supper every year and has flexibility built into it. Does a student want to take a gap year or two before taking up the next phase of his or her schooling? No problem.

"It's not 'now or never,'" Lyon explains. "The club will confirm with Blue Mountain to make sure that what

they want to do qualifies. But our purpose is just to help kids go on in school."

Sixty-four years ago – when the first Chicken Pie Supper was held in 1955 – education was differently organized in Vermont. There were no union schools; Groton's students attended a local school from grades one to 12. The original idea for the fund-raising supper was to support the hot-lunch program—which, Peter Lyon points out, was for all students; kids didn't have to worry about being classified as needy. They were just classified as being part of their community.

Groton's school closed sometime around 1970, and the students were folded into the Blue Mountain Union district along with youngsters from Ryegate and Wells River. So the Chicken Pie Supper was repurposed. And on June 10 of this year Lyon had the pleasure of handing scholarship checks to six Groton students who graduated that day from Blue Mountain and are planning to continue their education. A seventh will take a gap year and plans to return to school in 2020 – with the home folks from Groton pitching in to help.

WEC, in person

The community's objective is to devote every penny of the revenue it generates from the Chicken Pie Supper to the community in the form of scholarships, with some also going to the town library and Groton Community Building. That's why Washington Electric's Community Fund donation goes toward expenses like advertising and printing tickets. Coordinating with groups in six other

towns, including Marshfield, Plainfield, Cabot, Walden, and Peacham, they create a colorful flyer for the "Annual Fall Foliage Festival" that features an entire week of special events in the various communities, culminating with the Chicken Pie Supper. Groton also advertises the supper on radio and other venues it either finds or creates.

WEC's donation helps cover these bases. Peter Lyon has made it a habit to visit WEC's office headquarters in East Montpelier to submit Groton's application in person.

"I feel like we're asking for something, so that should be done personally. So I see Patty Richards every year," he says Richards, WEC's General Manager, fields requests for Community Fund donations and works with a committee of Co-op directors that makes the decisions. "I enjoy seeing her," Lyon continues. "She always has such a positive attitude. In fact, any time I go in that office all the employees are friendly and helpful."

"I always look forward to seeing Peter. He's so jazzed about the support from WEC and about what the supper offers his community. It's so in line with the cooperative principles. We're really happy to fund Groton's annual event," says Richards.

Lyon also frequently drops in to talk with WEC's Products & Services Director, Bill Powell.

"We talk about solar," says Lyon. "I've got two solar trackers at my home. I really like that technology, and I like Washington Electric's renewable energy policy. [WEC's energy portfolio is 100- percent renewable.] That's something they can and should be proud of."

Come and enjoy

Feeding 900 people, or whatever this year's count will be, might not sound like the quaint small-town experience that visitors seek out and Vermonters enjoy. But the community club puts a lot of effort into running the event smoothly and capturing the small-town essence. Lyon hopes his fellow Washington Electric member-owners will want to come, so there are a few things people should know. First, there are four seatings for the Chicken Pie Supper: at 4:30, 5:30, 6:30, and 7:30 p.m., which reduces the mayhem.

"You need to make reservations, and we sell out weeks ahead of time for most of the seatings," he says. "The 5:30 dinner sells out first, then the 4:30

Community Fund 2018 Report

Last year, the WEC Community Fund again dramatically increased its giving to worthy causes in the Co-op's service area. In 2018, \$45,089 was distributed to 77 charitable organizations. These nonprofits address a range of causes: hunger, mental health, arts, youth and senior programs, natural resources, and many others.

The fund, overseen by a volunteer board and staff committee, responds to requests for donations on a monthly basis. Donation amounts range from \$100 to \$1,500.

All money in the Community Fund comes from the 14% of WEC members who generously donate their capital credits in order to support community causes. To redirect your capital credits to the Community Fund, please fill out the adjacent form, check the box on your bill, or call WEC Member Services. Thank you!

2018 Community Fund donation recipients are:

Barre Heritage Festival
Barry Chouinard Memorial Fund
Brookfield Community Partnership
Cabot Mentoring
Capstone Community Action
Center for an Agricultural Economy
Central Vermont Adult Basic Education
Central Vermont Career Center
Central Vermont Council on Aging
Central Vermont Home Health & Hospice
Central Vermont Humane Society
Champlain Valley Exposition - Vermont Agricultural Hall of Fame
Chelsea Public Library
Community Capital of Vermont
Corinth Historical Society
Cross Vermont Trail Association
EarthWalk
EcoForesters
Fairbanks Museum
Faith in Action

First Branch Community Collaborative
Friends of the Mad River
Girls/Boyz First Mentoring
Good Beginnings
Good Samaritan Haven
Green Mountain Council - Boy Scouts
Green Mountain Film Festival
Green Mountain United Way
Green Up Vermont
Groton Community Club
Home Share Now
Jaquith Public Library
Just Basics
Keeping Track
Kellogg-Hubbard Library
Lotus Lake Camp
Mad River Valley Rotary Club
Montpelier Alive
Montpelier High School Project Graduation
Montpelier Senior Activity Center
Morefest
North Branch Nature Center
Peacham Library
People's Health and Wellness
Plainfield Historical Society
Prevent Child Abuse Vermont
Rural Vermont
Spaulding High School Project Graduation
Studio Place Arts
Stuff-A-Truck
T.W. Wood Gallery
The Governor's Institutes of Vermont
Topsham Historical Society
Town of Groton
Toys for Tots
Turning Point Center
Twin Valley Senior Center
Twinfield Together Mentoring Program
Upper Valley Haven
Vermont Center for Independent Living
Vermont Child Care Industry & Careers Council
Vermont Community Garden Network
Vermont Community Loan Fund
Vermont Council on Rural Development
Vermont Foodbank
Vermont Granite Museum
Vermont Horse Assisted Therapy
Vermont Land Trust
Vermont STEM Fair
Vershare
What's Next Middlesex
Woodbury Volunteer Fire Department
Youth Service Bureau

Capital Credit Authorization to WEC Community Fund

Capital credit donations support worthwhile non-profit groups and projects in WEC's service territory and in central Vermont.

I wish to donate this year's and all future years refunds

I wish to donate only this year's refund (Year: _____)

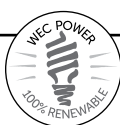
Name _____ Date _____

Address _____

Capital credit and/or Account # _____ Telephone _____

Signature _____

Please return to WEC, P.O. Box 8, East Montpelier, VT 05651
Thank you for your considerate donation to the WEC Community Fund!



and 6:30 servings. 7:30 servings are always available." They'll also prepare take-out dinners.

Volunteers swing into action the day before, chopping and peeling 700 pounds of potatoes and squash, and preparing and distributing 800

pounds of chicken to local, volunteer cooks who add their own preferred ingredients.

"That's a key point," Peter Lyon emphasizes "These are home-cooked meals, and you get a pie fresh out of the oven."

The Page Family in Groton

Giving and receiving at the Chicken Pie Supper

As a lifelong resident of Groton, Tom Page participated in the Groton Community Club's Fall Chicken Pie Supper every autumn. Tom, recently retired as postmaster at the Groton Post Office, started alongside his parents, Deane and Bing.

"Ever since I was a kid," he says. "I helped lug dishes and silverware, and waited on tables for years and years."

Deane was president of the Community Club for some 40 years, and Bing served as chair, or sometimes co-chair, for the Fall Supper. That was an enormous amount of work for her, Tom says appreciatively. While the president of the Club is responsible for the big-picture view of the Club's activities, the chairperson takes on organizing duties for the Fall Supper, as the town prepares to host and feed a number of guests that can exceed Groton's entire population.

"It's a collaborative effort," Tom explains. "The cooks are making pies and chicken pies. Other people are getting the hall ready, and peeling squash and potatoes the night before. Behind the scenes people are buying all the chicken and squash. People are calling each other. It's a huge undertaking, and pretty much the whole town gets involved."

Certainly that was true of the Pages, all Co-op members. What's more, Tom and his wife, Janet, raised four children. Because each of them pursued learning beyond high school, each of them received the scholarship awards that are funded through the supper.

Their oldest, Andrew, 33, is a college graduate living in Burlington, Massachusetts. Keith, 30, studied engineering at UVM. Daughter Natalie, 26, studied biology at St. Michael's College, and is now training as a pharmacist. The youngest, Willis, 23, attended school to become a welder and is employed by Robco Metal Fabricators in nearby Wells River.

The scholarship amounts each year are determined by how much money is raised at the supper and the number of Groton students who decide to pursue further education or training. All students benefit equally. Therefore, the amounts vary, and while the checks may be modest, Tom says, "Anything helps. If it buys a couple of books, or anything, that's a big deal for most kids."

But Tom believes there's another benefit for those scholars, perhaps more important than the money they receive.

"The biggest part of this, at least for my kids, is what it teaches them about being involved in their community," he says. "My parents worked extremely hard on this [event], to make this money available." So have town leaders that followed Deane and Bing, including current Groton Community Club president Peter Lyon, he says.

Giving, Tom Page is saying, is every bit as important as receiving. And for decades, as Groton supports its students' further learning, it also helps them learn the importance of pitching in.




Seated at the front of this table, on the right, are Deane and Bing Page (Bing is in the foreground), who helped lead the supper for decades. Their grandson Willis, sitting across from them, has been both a volunteer and a recipient of a scholarship funded by Groton's Chicken Pie Supper.

Besides chicken pies, potatoes, and squash, the menu includes pickles, rolls from the Red Door Bakery in Marshfield, and a choice of apple or pumpkin pie.

Tickets can be purchased, even this early, by contacting Peter Lyon at 802-584-3020, or at 848 East Shore Drive, Groton, VT 05046. The \$12 cost, says Lyon, makes it "the best deal around!" As for children, "If you can sit

on Mom or Dad's lap, there's no cost. If you sit on a chair of your own, we're gonna charge you six bucks."

There's live music, a welcoming atmosphere, and a cause worth supporting – not only encouraging rural Vermont students to continue their education, but keeping a rural Vermont community vibrant and alive – an excellent way for WEC's Community Fund to spend its money. 

Join Project PowerShift! Limited Time Program Seeks to Cut WEC's Peak Costs

What is a PowerShift event?

During a PowerShift event, WEC will enable your water heater to act like a battery to store energy for when it is needed most. Be part of a 21st century electric grid, working with your member-owned co-op to lower costs for all members and push down our peak demands together by sharing the "storage" capacity available in eligible EHW tanks!

How does it work?

When a PowerShift event is forecasted, a signal is sent to the controls on the water heater to pre-heat water, shifting the energy used to an earlier time period, when energy is less expensive. Because the water in the tank is already pre-heated, the demand for more energy during the event should be much lower.

Does it cost anything to install the device?

The controller and the installation are free to participating co-op members. In some cases, your water heater might already have controls built in, and in other cases, a professionally trained technician will install an advanced control system to your water heater. Members will also have access to a smart phone app that can be used to monitor the performance of their water heaters.

Is this safe for my water heater?

Yes. The advanced controls being used in this demonstration project are commercially available devices, and the use of these advanced controls do not void the warranties of your existing water heater.

Is the bill credit 1-time or is it monthly?

The bill credit is \$5 per month and will be paid throughout the duration of the demonstration as long as the member continues to participate.

Do energy peaks occur daily or does it only happen once in a while?

Energy peaks occur daily, but the costly ones are monthly and annually. Because forecasting these peaks is difficult, WEC will likely call for peak events a few times per month in order to make sure we hit the target.

ENERGY COACH

Energy Coach Says: Join PowerShift!

Here's an innovative idea: Co-op members can use their water heaters as batteries to reduce WEC's peak and associated costs. \$5 bill credit a month to participate. Limited time to sign up! For more information: efficiencyvermont.com/powershift, or email energycoach@wec.coop



Wrightsville

continued from page 1

Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC), says “There are three ratings in our dam-classification system: high, significant, and low. Wrightsville is rated a high-hazard dam. In the unlikely event of a dam failure it would lead to loss of life. So it requires a fair amount of scrutiny.”

In fact, *The Bridge*, Montpelier’s community newspaper, reported in May 2011 that “Downtown Montpelier might well have been submerged under several feet of water on Friday, April 29, had it not been for a 115-foot-high pile of rocks and dirt located three miles north of town. That structure, of course, is Wrightsville Dam, where water had risen some 44 feet to its highest level since the dam’s completion in 1935.”

Scrutiny by Green and the DEC is in play now because of a third asset of the Wrightsville complex, besides recreation and safety. In the early 1980s Washington Electric Cooperative secured the necessary state and federal approvals to build a powerhouse just below the dam, on the Montpelier side, so it could use the impoundment as a source of water to generate renewable electricity. The powerhouse gets its water through a 5-foot-diameter penstock, or pipe, fed by a spillway at the dam. It came online in September 1985.

Hydropower from the Wrightsville station constitutes just 3 percent of WEC’s power supply. But it’s clean, renewable power from a local source, perfectly matching WEC’s philosophy.

However, 1985 was 34 years ago. Washington Electric’s license to generate power, granted by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC), will expire on October 31, 2022. So WEC has some challenges to face and decisions to make: Can it and will it continue to own and operate the Wrightsville power station? How much investment would that require, and is it worth the cost? And can the facility be operated so that it satisfies Vermont’s Water Quality Standards, which protect aquatic habitat in the reservoir and the river? Ben Green, with the Dam Safety Program, will be watching, too, to ensure that any alterations the Co-op might undertake don’t compromise a structure that protects life and property downstream.

Wrightsville’s complexity arises from balancing the ecological aquatic interests, the environmental imperative of generating renewable power, the financial performance of the power supply (its impact on WEC members’ electric bills), and the potential financial consequences of not relicensing the power station. Between WEC, the state, community members, and people who use the impoundment for recreation, there are plenty of players involved.

The environment

Relicensing a power project under FERC can take up to five years. The Co-op got started in 2017, filing a pre-Application Document and a Notice of Intent (to seek relicensing). In April 2018, assisted by consultants from a



A view of the Wrightsville reservoir from the top of the impoundment.

New Hampshire-based engineering firm and WEC’s Director of Engineering & Operations Dan Weston, WEC submitted a 35-page Proposed Study Plan, providing details of WEC’s operation of the facility and initial plans for studies related to water flow and habitat protection. Jeff Crocker, streamflow protection coordinator with the DEC, explains why.

“The (federal) Clean Water Act requires that before FERC can issue a license the state needs to certify that the operation of the facility meets the state’s water-quality standards.

“The issues we look at with hydroelectric generation have to do with how the variation in stream flow affects aquatic habitat, such things as dissolved oxygen levels in the river and the impoundment. We’ll look particularly at trout and non-game species like minnows and other species not sought after by anglers but important to the ecosystem itself.”

WEC’s General Manager Patty Richards and Weston reached out early to Crocker and his department. Weston says they’ve worked well together, and Crocker agrees. “Dan and the Co-op have really been good partners in working with us. They sought agency input early on, and they’ve listened to our advice and concerns. They’re going to be the ones making the decisions. We’re here for consultation,” he says. Both parties having their eye on the big picture: a hydroelectric facility that functions well within the constraints of environmental protection.

“Those folks are charged with protecting Vermont’s streams and aquatic wildlife,” says Weston, “and we want to strive to be good stewards of the environment.”

The project

Operating a powerhouse is a complex business. WEC must constantly be mindful not to take too much water out of the reservoir and to maintain required minimum flows downstream of the site. The Co-op also has an agreement with the Montpelier Recreation Department, which relies on the river to provide sufficient water for its needs.

Under normal conditions (neither severe rain nor drought), water from the reservoir sloshes into two concrete “spillways” at the front of the dam. One provides water to a short streambed called the “bypass reach,” and the other channels water into WEC’s penstock. WEC must manage the spillways to maintain the surface elevation of the reservoir between 635 feet and 633 feet above sea level from September 1 to May 31 each year, and 635 feet to 634 feet from June 1 to August 31. WEC must also maintain a minimum flow in the bypass reach of just under 4 cubic feet per second (cfs), and 25 cfs in the riverbed below the powerhouse, headed toward Montpelier.

Mother Nature, of course, has a say in this. “We’ve seen three years in a row when we’ve had to shut down the plant in July, August, and part of September because of dry spells,” says Weston.

The ongoing challenge for the Co-op is to generate power within these parameters. But the larger challenge that looms with relicensing is to come as close as possible to meeting the state’s “run-of-river” standard – in other words, directing water through the powerhouse to spin the turbines and produce electricity, then releasing it back into the riverbed, in way that mimics Mother Nature.

“If you’re a turtle or a minnow,”

continued on page 8

Updated WEC.coop On Track for End of Summer

*Better outage communication top priority
for website improvements*

Updates to Washington Electric Co-op’s website are on track to complete by the end of the summer, said General Manager Patty Richards and Director of Products & Services Bill Powell.

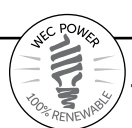
When the site goes live, they said, members will notice that business conducted on washingtonelectric.coop (or wec.coop) will be far more user-friendly and intuitive than it is currently.

As an electric co-op, reliability is WEC’s top priority. But outages still occur. When they do, it’s imperative to communicate with speed and accuracy to members who may be experiencing an outage at their home or business. And because so many people can access the web through their cell phones’ data plans, the website is WEC’s top communication tool.

So, paramount among the updates is the site’s interaction with WEC’s outage management system. A ticker on the home page will provide up to the minute outage information. With a single click, Powell said, members away from their houses will be able to find out whether the power is on at home.

“Our team works every day to make sure the power is on,” said Richards. “But when it goes out, like after a big storm, we need to do everything we can to keep our members updated. After we make these changes to our website, members will find it much easier to learn where the power’s out, where the power’s on, and what’s happening through wec.coop.”

As the final changes are made, there is no exact date yet for the website to go live. But by the time the next issue of *Co-op Currents* reaches your mailbox, the new and improved wec.coop will be online.



80 Years of WEC: Copper Currents

The original issue of Co-op Currents – then known as Copper Currents – makes for an entertaining read and a window into life on the brand new Co-op lines in 1939.

COPPER CURRENTS

Washington Electric Cooperative Oct. 1939
Age: One Month East Montpelier Vt.

BOARD

President – E. Harmon Kelley
Vice President – Roy H. Sibley
Secretary – Treasurer – Lyle Young
Lynn Nelson
Clarence Fitch
Alex M. Robinson
Mrs. Howard Lackey
John Graham
Sydney Morse

The members of your Office Force are itching to do what so many of the other Cooperatives are doing – add another means of facilitating the spread of gossip among the Co-op members. That is the "how and why" of this outburst.

We do not expect in future issues – if we have them – to give all this publicity to your Board of Directors and Assistants, – so save this issue for the list, at least.

If your life line gets out of kilter – call the Doctor.
If your light line gets out of order – call Mont. 442-442

EVERY MEMBER

who sends a suggestion for a better name will get the next issue free!

Tell us in 50 words why members should plan for the future when they have their houses wired. The best story gets a prize.

SOLE COMMENTS ON THIS ISSUE

Pres. Kelley: "It is distinctly understood that the Officers and Board of Directors are not responsible."

Treas. Young: "It's all right as long as it does not cost anything – I don't have to read the blamed thing."

Vice P. Sibley: Would not comment – can it be that I cannot read?

Henry: "Never saw anything like it."

We want items of interest to the members.

For example:

"Pete and Walt have wired their Garage."
"Mr. Whatshisname is taking life easy – he has an electric milker now."
"Mrs. Thosit has a bright new electric refrigerator."

Each member who sends an interesting item will get a free copy of the next issue – if he wants it!

Get your

wiring done

NOW.

Long winter

evenings are here.

If any member fails to get a copy – don't thank us – it will have been mercifully smothered in the mail.

Engineer and Superintendent – "Cap" Millen
Superintendent for Day & Zimmermann – "Zig" Warner
Assistant Engineer – Walter N. Cooke
Office Clerk – Mrs. Dorothy D. Brunelle

The following has been received from Mrs. Herbert Guyett, of East Montpelier, and in spite of the Captain's objections to the reference to him, we are printing it because we like it.

WHEN THE CAPTAIN AND HIS TROOPERS WENT ON PARADE,
Florence H. Guyett

Dedicated to the
Washington Electric Cooperative
East Montpelier Vermont

The time now has come to say
By tenants of our green hills,
Thank God for the great R E A,
And the power for our mills:
Once we trod with Old Father Time:
Now, there meets our vision a scene –
Tho' once thru darkness we did climb –
Of lighted masts of golden sheen.

When a silver haired Captain and
His troopers went on parade,
And the rural folk and horses
Joined the mighty cavalcade.
Green acres we long had treasured
We gave for a right of way,
And leagues and leagues were measured –
The choppers cleared the way.

Lime stone ridges did not matter,
Cause T N T blasts they met,
As troopers to shelter scatter,
That many poles may be set.
To poles, with cross arms in place,
Copper wire they tether,
While troopers, against time they race,
To pull on wires together.

Rural lights for the R E A,
A blessing long denied,
Have come to stay in the U S A,
In houses glorified.
The R E A has kept its vow,
And all the promises made –
A rousing cheer for the Captain
And his troopers on parade.

Mr. Fred H. Brown and Mr. Harry M. MacDougal – but you wouldn't know them – "Brownie and Mac" – called up from Concord, N.H., and wished to be remembered to their many friends.

QUESTION AND ANSWER DEPARTMENT

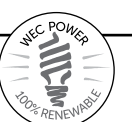
Q. If I want to do something to my wiring, is it all right if I put a ladder on the pole and turn off the transformer?

A. It is a convenient way out. In order to save trouble for your family, we suggest that you make the funeral arrangements first, and leave a note for the police, so they will not think it was murder.

A motor generating plant is being installed. Our Cooperative will be a completely independent unit all our own. LET'S ALL BE BOOSTERS!

Several thousand dollars has been appropriated for preliminary work on extensions into adjoining towns.

NOW IS THE TIME
to come to the office to apply for
WIRING LOANS



Wrightsville

continued from page 6

Weston explains, “the idea is that you won’t notice a difference between the way we control the flow and the way nature would be controlling it.”

Here’s the difficulty. WEC has three “fixed-blade” turbines in its powerhouse. Turbine #1 requires 21 cfs of water to operate; #2 requires 55 cfs; #3 requires 122 cfs. They can be operated singly or in combination. Because they’re fixed-blade, rather than variable, it’s all or nothing: turbine #1, for example, doesn’t operate until it receives the requisite 21 cfs of water through the penstock. Then it uses that water to generate power. So if the cfs is 20, all that water simply goes downstream. But when the cfs reaches 21, the turbine turns on, and the downstream flow is reduced to a trickle. When the cfs drops again, the turbine releases a rush of water.

And the impacts are greater when turbines #2 and #3, or turbines in combination, are operating. Mother Nature, by contrast, is usually far less erratic.

So some choices may lie ahead for the Co-op, although they will be influenced by the results of operational testing scheduled for this summer.. One choice would be to retrofit and/or replace the turbines so they can operate with variable water intakes.

Testing results could provide alternatives. The tests will be assessments of water quality at various distances along the river, and possibly in the reservoir, to look for impacts of water withdrawals. The tests may reveal that WEC could continue using its turbines as they are now, but find ways to modify their use in order to reliably meet the water quality standards and achieve run-of-river status as requested by the state agencies at DEC. That’s liable to result in a 20-percent decrease of power from Wrightsville, Weston predicts, but it could buy time, once ANR permitting and FERC relicensing are achieved, for the Co-op to undertake retrofits gradually, and more affordably, over time.

If such an arrangement proves possible, the reduction in power generation might be offset by an



Coventry Open House and Family Fun Day!

Join WEC and Casella Waste Management on Saturday, September 14, 2019 for an open house at Coventry Landfill!

Tour WEC’s generating plant and learn how WEC uses renewable landfill gas to make electricity. Lunch and activities provided. Plus: great prizes!

Saturday, September 14 • 10:00 am - 2 pm • Rain or shine
21 Landfill Lane (off Airport Road), Coventry, VT 05825

RSVP to Dawn Johnson: dawn.johnson@wec.coop or 802-224-2332
See you there!


advantage: WEC could qualify to receive Low-Impact Hydro RECs.

RECs, as WEC members know, are “renewable energy credits.” For many years the sale of RECs that Washington Electric earns from its investments in wind power and the Coventry generating station (fueled by landfill gas) provided great financial benefits for the Co-op. Their value has suffered lately because so many other

green-power projects have come online. But Weston and Richards say there is significant demand for, and value in, Low-Impact Hydro RECs.

An ongoing process

It’s hard to know right now what lies ahead for WEC and its hydroelectric station. “We’re only two years into a five-year process,” Weston points out. There’s a lot of complexity now, and

a lot of complexity ahead. Richards and Weston both recognize the hydro station’s importance as a source of renewable energy and, less directly, of the recreational and environmental benefits it provides to the surrounding communities and those who live there. So, *Co-op Currents* will revisit the Wrightsville relicensing story as it continues to unfold. 

Notice Of Public Hearing

You are hereby notified that the Vermont Public Utility Commission will hold a PUBLIC HEARING, pursuant to 30 V.S.A. Sections 10, 225, 226, and 227, in **PUC Case No. 19-1270 TF**

Investigation into Washington Electric Cooperative’s Tariff Filing for Proposed Rate Design Changes and a Proposed Change in Rate Schedules on **Monday, August 5, 2019**, at The Old Brick Church, 60 Church Street, East Montpelier, VT (adjacent to WEC main office)

At **6:30 P.M.**, the Vermont Department of Public Service will host a presentation by Washington Electric Cooperative that will describe the requested rate design and changes in rate schedules and be available to answer questions.

At **7:00 P.M.** the **Public Utility Commission** will hear comment from the public.

The above hearing location is handicapped accessible. Any person with a disability who wishes to attend and will need special accommodation should contact the Public Utility Commission (802-828-2358) if they will need that accommodation.

Where’s WEC?

Roundup of where Right of Way crews are currently working to keep your power reliable:

- South Tunbridge feeder, including Hoyt Road and Morrill Road, Tunbridge
- Chelsea Road, Williamstown
- Dunbar Hill, Fayston
- Flagg Pond / Gonyaw Road, Greensboro
- McCullough Hilltop, Middlesex
- Durgin Hill Road, Vershire
- Upper Crosset Hill, Duxbury
- Baptist Street, Williamstown
- Headed soon to Poor Farm Road and Pepper Road, Chelsea

