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CO-OP CURRENTS



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August-September 2024

VEC and WEC Collaborate on Solar Project to Benefit Income-Qualified Members

The Vermont Electric Cooperative (VEC) and Washington Electric Cooperative (WEC) are teaming up on a program designed to help reduce the electric bills of both cooperative utilities' income-qualified members while boosting renewable power. This initiative, funded by federal money, aims to provide relief to eligible members by allowing them to benefit from a solar generation project that VEC has already built. Participants will enjoy a substantial five-year reduction in their electric bills.

WEC has secured 115 spots for qualifying members in this program. Members who qualify at 185% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) based on family size will receive bill credits of \$45 per month for 60 months, or five years. The federally funded ACRE program (Affordable Community Renewable Energy Program) effectively grants participants these bill credits, making it more affordable for utilities like VEC to invest in building renewable generation plants and for their member-consumers to pay for power.

"As a cooperative in one of the most rural parts of the Northeast, Washington Electric Co-op is particularly concerned about the

Washington Electric Co-op is particularly concerned about the impact of electricity costs on lower-income members. This program... aims to alleviate that burden.

— Louis Porter

impact of electricity costs on lower-income members," said General Manager Louis Porter. "This program, made possible by federal funding and the cooperation between WEC and VEC, aims to alleviate that burden."

Porter celebrated Vermont Electric Cooperative's generosity in including its sister co-op, WEC, in this

program. He noted multiple benefits for WEC's membership, beyond the 115 eligible members who will receive bill relief. First, he explained, WEC has no need, and little capacity, to add additional solar projects in its own territory, due to WEC's high number of net metering participants. Access to VEC's solar generation plant provides a valuable opportunity, he said.

Second, he said, in true Vermont cooperative spirit, program collaboration is wise fiscal and time management. "Collaboration among our two cooperatives reduces administrative overhead, making it an efficient use of cooperative resources," he confirmed.

Participation is on a first-come, first-served basis, and WEC's Member Services Representatives are actively informing potentially eligible members

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Plainfield, as well as several other Vermont communities, experienced another disastrous flood on July 10. In May, at WEC's Annual Meeting, meteorologist Roger Hill predicted a hot, stormy summer. Unfortunately, that prediction was accurate. WEC has seen rising outages as saturated ground causes trees to fall; flash floods threaten underground wires as well as roads, fields, and homes. Learn more in the President and General Manager's Message, page 2.

Adding More Electric Over Time? Plan For Your "Can"

Get the right size transformer for your future electric load

Going green can be a slippery slope—in a good way. It's great to invest in emission-free devices, especially when they contribute to quality of life and cost less over the long term. What's important is making sure you have the transformer capacity to power your new devices, both now and several years from now.

Electric vehicles, heat pumps, and heat pump water heaters have entered the consumer mainstream, with reliable performance and more affordable options. They're also easier to buy with plentiful purchase incentives and the promise of savings over time.

These electric devices also minimize the environmental impacts of heating,

cooling, and transportation, especially in WEC territory, where power is 100% renewable and generated close to home, and whose members have long prioritized clean energy. It's no surprise, said WEC Products and Services Director Bill Powell, that WEC members are replacing old combustion devices with electric ones. WEC encourages it.

But about a third of WEC members' transformers are just 5 kVA (or kilovolt-amperes—a measurement unit of the total amount of power a system uses). Increasingly, that's not enough power for members' desired or future electric load. These 5 kVA transformers

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Washington Electric Cooperative

East Montpelier, VT 05651

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Safety Minute: Why is my GFCI outlet warm? P. 8.



It's capital credit refund season! In 2024, WEC will return \$278,833 to members active in 1999. See page 4 for a list of former members due to receive a refund.

President's and General Manager's Message

RES Changes Group Net Metering Rules, Speeds More Utilities Toward 100% Renewable

Summer storms saturate and erode ground, causing more outages

Summer storm outages

Louis: Washington Electric is on track to face another year of high outages and high outage costs due to both winter storms and summer flooding and storms. We don't know exactly how high those costs will be or how much we'll get reimbursed from FEMA for the summer flooding. Like other utilities, we're seeing storms cause extensive damage to our system.

Also, members may notice that since the summer flooding, we've had a number of outages. Saturated ground is causing trees to become uprooted and land on our lines, and landslides impact our lines.

This is how it usually works when we have a major storm: our crews make temporary repairs to get the power back on as quickly as possible, and then have to go back and make final corrections and fixes. That's a great deal of what's going on this summer. In some cases, we have to move entire sections of line due to flooding and erosion. These tasks take up a great deal of time for our crews.

Steve: Falling trees are a major cause of our outages. A number of members have suggested we underground more of our lines. But with these kinds of outages, it's not clear

that undergrounding lines is going to be effective, and may be more difficult to repair in the long run.

Louis: It's interesting you say that, because I recently spoke with a member who has underground lines they're concerned about. It's true that trees don't impact underground lines, but erosion and flooding do. In places where we've had underground lines for years, erosion and flooding are washing them away. They're also typically more expensive and time-consuming to replace. Undergrounding is a tool we do use to prevent outages, but it's not the answer to all problems. In some places, the cost to underground lines is more expensive than expected because there's a lot of ledge or rock, or other underground utilities we have to build around. Yes, it can help, but it's more expensive to replace and repair, and it's not immune to damage.

Steve: We have to respond to changing weather, and there aren't simple solutions to all situations. We have to find approaches that are specific to the problem area. WEC and other utilities need to be creative in being responsive to our changing climate.

array interconnected to the system. The basic issue was how Washington Electric was accounting for certain group net metering systems and accounting for the payment for excess power generated by those systems. The rules around net metering mean it's not entirely clear we were doing it incorrectly, and the net amount of money is not very great, in the tens of thousands.

But we're glad the PUC resolved this, and we're making it right for both individual members and membership at large. We've gone back and resolved that by paying members we owed. In cases where the accounting showed members owed Washington Electric, we've put a debit on their account and set up a payment plan with those members.

What we argued is that we should neither pay out nor recoup, since we were operating under a tariff: any errors should be dealt with going forward, not retroactively. That was unsuccessful with the PUC, and we have changed how we do our billing.

Why is this newsworthy? For one thing, transparency with our members. For another, it was not really about the financial impact one way or the other. Washington Electric was arguing for a way of doing the accounting that it believed was truer to the spirit of net metering being about reducing your own power consumption, rather than getting paid for the power you generate.

Steve: The resolution is fair. WEC is restoring payments and collections to what they should have been, as the PUC has now decided. It means some members are going to get refunded, and some are going to have to pay some. The settlement is included in bills, and we're offering payment plans for amounts over \$100.

Co-op Currents

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Editorial Committee

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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 us, at 224-2332, or visit wec.coop/board.

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Group Net Metering Tariff Case Resolved

Louis: A tariff case for group net metering in which Washington Electric has been involved in is now resolved.

Steve: This resulted from a decision made over five years ago, when WEC proposed, and the Public Utilities Commission [PUC] approved, a tariff regarding the compensation received by a generator of a group net-metered system hooked up directly to the grid. The PUC has since decided that this tariff does not conform to the law. So, we and the PUC are correcting what appears to be both of our errors. It impacts a small percentage of our net metering members, and everyone impacted has been made aware of the ruling.

Louis: The PUC is the ultimate arbiter, and long story short, we were doing it incorrectly. In this type of group net metering, multiple members anywhere in a utility's service can benefit from a designated net metering

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Changes to Renewable Energy Standard

Steve: To lead into the larger discussion of Vermont's revised Renewable Energy Standard [RES], group net metering systems of the type described in the tariff case are no longer going to be permitted with net metering tariffs under the new Renewable Energy Standard. They're considered by the state to be essentially for-profit merchant generators, rather than true net metering systems.

Understanding the new group net metering provision is important to our members. Group net metering of the type where generation hooks directly to the grid, and the supposed off-taker of that power may be anywhere else in WEC territory—which resembles merchant generation, but at lucrative net metering rates—is no longer going to be permitted. But group net metering sited at the location of several contiguous local households banded together is still permitted and will continue. This makes it possible to consume power in the immediate vicinity of where it is generated. Once storage is eventually added to those sites, distributed generation becomes distributed consumption, fulfilling the true promise of local solar energy.

But the main point of the RES is the increased percentage of renewable power required to be purchased or generated by Vermont utilities for their customers to be 100%.

Louis: That's right. The RES bill that was passed by the legislature, vetoed by the governor, and then overridden by the legislature, makes a number of changes to how utilities purchase their power. It speeds up the timetable for utilities that are not already 100% renewable. Right now, three Vermont utilities provide 100% renewable electric power: Washington Electric, Burlington Electric Department, and Swanton Electric. Washington Electric supported the bill because we think electricity in Vermont should be renewable, and we think fellow utilities should join us in providing 100% renewable power.

As Steve said, one change is new group net metering systems of the type described above will no longer be allowed to come online. Renewable Energy Vermont suggested and supported that change, recognizing that group net metering can often be



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— Stephen Knowlton

merchant generation rather than net metering designed to offset the power the members use themselves. We also supported that change.

Another component of the bill requires 100% renewable utilities to connect new load growth to new renewable generation in the ISO-New England grid. That will likely lead to expenses for WEC members. Any time you limit your options, you limit your low-cost options. It's not likely to be a huge cost increase, because there are new renewables brought online in the New England system all the time, and we'll be able to purchase power from any of those systems to supply our load growth.

Additionally, Washington Electric got our own provision in the bill for Hydro-Québec power we have a contract for, but don't purchase ourselves. If we purchase that power, it can count toward our load growth. We were concerned we might be in a position where we were obligated to buy

that power, but it wouldn't count toward that load growth obligation: through 2028, it will count.

Steve: Instituting the RES in 2016 has had a demonstrable effect on the overall cleanliness of Vermont's energy sector. It's an excellent path to say utilities have the responsibility of meeting these standards by this time.

Louis: Any purchasing mandate is designed to favor one group or seller over another, and that's a decision the legislature has made. Steve's right; the RES has had a good environmental impact on Vermont. In 2015, something close to 20% of the state's total carbon came from the electric sector. It's around 2% now, and that's largely attributable to the RES.

Welcome New Staff

Louis: We have a number of new staff at Washington Electric, and I invite our members to join me in welcoming them: Sean Kidder has joined us as an apprentice lineman, Barry Richardson as a stockkeeper, Scott McDonald as a mechanic, and David Sargent as an equipment operator.

That's quite a few new folks for an electric co-op of our size, and we're happy and excited to have all of them. They have different experiences and backgrounds, and show great promise in helping our membership and working with our colleagues here.

Advanced Meters Update

Louis: The review team is going through responses to our request for proposals, and we'll soon select a vendor. We still don't have a grant agreement with the state yet, but we're working on that.

Steve: Let me give a preview of what we expect advanced meters will do. First, they'll give WEC staff a better understanding about when, how, and where power is being used, which should help improve the overall operation of our grid. This increased information should facilitate both reporting and management of outages, enabling WEC to direct resources to where they are needed more efficiently.

The new meters should also allow WEC to design rates and rate structures that are more responsive to individual members' usage. For example, we expect to create time-of-use rates that will be useful for many members who have the flexibility and desire to change their consumption



It's true that trees don't impact underground lines, but erosion and flooding do. In places where we've had underground lines for years, erosion and flooding are washing them away.

— Louis Porter

of electricity to a period of the day when it's cheaper, whether for charging EVs, running clothes dryers, hot water tanks, or pre-heating or cooling their house with a heat pump, to mention a few relatively high-consumption devices. Right now, there's little financial reason for members to change when they use electricity. Opportunities will emerge for monitoring and control of some devices to optimize overall power usage in order to reduce costs.

Louis: Essentially, these meters will give us more information faster and better. Whether it's outages and where they're occurring, the quality of the voltage at members' houses, or the timing and type of use happening to allow a

time-of-use rate.

Steve: We're opening the door to many applications we've heard about, but haven't had the capability to consider or to implement efficiently. It's going to be an interesting time for WEC and WEC members as these meters come online and we get practical experience with their capabilities.

Vermont Offers New Vehicle Incentives For 2024 Flood Damage

In addition to ongoing incentives, new incentives are available to Vermont residents whose cars have been damaged by flooding. The State has modified its programs so that you can get more money towards the purchase or lease of a plug-in electric vehicle or when you trade in your vehicle for other clean-mobility options. Read on to learn about the enhanced incentives available to income-eligible Vermonters whose cars were damaged by flooding.

Replace Your Ride Program — Up to \$5,000 for scrapping a gas- or -diesel-powered vehicle for cleaner transportation options, including the purchase or lease of a new or used plug-in electric vehicle or clean transportation prepaid card.

- The age and drivability requirements are waived for flood damaged vehicles

Incentive Program for New Plug-in Electric Vehicles (PEVs) — Up to \$5,000 for a new purchased or leased PEV

- An additional \$1,000 incentive (up to \$6,000 total) is available to Vermonters replacing a flood-damaged vehicle

MileageSmart Program — Income-eligible Vermonters get 25% (up to \$5,000) towards the cost of a qualifying used high-efficiency vehicle.

- Receive a full \$5,000 incentive, regardless of vehicle price

Program participants may use these programs to stack state incentives together (for up to \$11,000 off the price of a new PEV and up to \$10,000 off the price of a used PEV) as well as with other local utility rebates and federal tax credits. To get your enhanced incentive, complete the application process as you would for the standard incentive. You will be prompted to verify and confirm that you are applying for the enhanced incentive during the application process.

These offers will be available until December 31, 2024.

Learn more about the State of Vermont's transportation incentive programs and apply for your incentives here:

driveelectricvt.com/incentives/vermont-state-incentives

Co-op Seeks Former Members from 1999 for Capital Credit Refunds

In 2024, WEC set to return \$278,833 to members active in 1999

When your electric cooperative takes in more money than it costs to run the utility, where does that money go? Have you ever noticed a credit on your November electric bill? As a member of an electric cooperative, excess revenue is returned to you and your fellow member-owners. This is a significant difference between shareholder-owned utilities and cooperatively-owned utilities. When for-profit utilities collect excess revenue, those profits enrich their shareholders. In contrast, members of cooperative utilities get excess revenue back over time in the form of capital credit refunds. There is a pool of funds allocated for every year the Co-op collected excess revenue; the amounts are different year to year. According to WEC Board Treasurer Don Douglas, WEC has returned \$9,697,000 in capital credit refunds to Co-op members since 1998.

In recent years, the WEC Board usually chose to refund members from both decades past and the previous year, so that both longtime and very new members realized the benefit of belonging to an electric co-op. This year, the Board will refund a total of \$278,833 to eligible members who were on the Co-op's lines in 1999. This distribution, which pushes WEC's total refunds to the brink of \$10 million, means that all members with active accounts before the year 2000 will be fully refunded for excess revenue collected before the millennium.


Refunds to some individuals may be reduced by any uncollected or delinquent amounts owed to the Co-op. Refunds will appear as a credit on current members' November 2024 bills. Former members are also entitled to receive refunds if they have remaining capital credits after they leave WEC's lines. To be

eligible, former members must have a minimum \$50 capital credit distribution and submit an authorization form to the Co-op. For this reason, it's important to keep WEC informed of your current address even after you're no longer a member. In July, WEC mailed Capital Credit Patronage Refund Authorization forms to former members. Those forms are due back by September 27, 2024.

The Co-op has recently begun offering conditional early retirements to the estates of deceased members or their heirs. Contact Dawn Johnson for more information at 802-224-2332.

Listed below are the names of people or accounts from 1999 whose authorization forms were returned as undeliverable. A note about the way names are organized: for accounts that had joint membership by members with two different last names, first names are not tied to their correct last names. Instead, the first names are paired and the last names are paired. Please excuse this system quirk.

WEC's Community Fund

Approximately 14% of WEC members currently choose to donate their refunds to WEC's Community Fund. Any current or former member may direct their refund to the Community Fund as a one-time or ongoing gift. The Community Fund supports small not-for-profits serving Central Vermont communities. The people served by these organizations are often WEC members. The full recipient list is on page 6. A report on 2024 Community Fund activities will be published in *Co-op Currents* in 2025. 

Maureen Abare	Glenn Coville	Harry E Hosmer	Carl & Paula E Millhouse	Cathy Smilovitz	Kristine & Stephen Boswell
Martha Aldous	Joan B Curley	Jay & Brenda B Hutchinson	Wayne W Minnick	Lisa & Geoffrey Hurwitch Smith	Ulrich
Stephanie Alfaro	France G Danyow	Nancy Hutchinson	Ronald & Mary Raynes	Lore & Daniel Miko Smith	Brigette Urquides
Jennifer Anson	Delta Acrop Farm Inc	Randy J Hutchinson	Morrisette	Richard Smith	Vt Housing Finance Agency
Romaine F Bacon	Robert J Denton Jr	Timothy Ingham	David C Morse	Richard & Suzanne T Smith	Vox Box Group
Carole Baldwin	Michael Devitt	Jennifer Isaacs	Susan & Wade A Morse	Williams R Smith Jr	Deborah Wachtel
Levi & Elbert F Barnaby	Shannon Dickinson	Charles E Jerd	Donald A Moulton	Matthew J Sneller	Charles Wainrib
Charles Barrett	Patrick J Donahue	Arthur A Jones	Evelyn L Moulton	Scott & Denise St Pierre	L Elizabeth Waller
David C Bean	Walter A Dow	Tait W Jones	Patricia F Nash	Tom Stammers	Jane E Walz
Philip Beattie	Shawn & Jeanne P Driscoll	Douglas L Jones Jr	Berry Norton	Tara Starzec	Robert E Waterman
Carolyn Beckly	Peggy Drown	Bill Kelly	Linda & Dennis Trapp Norton	Lowell Stephens	Batya Weinbaum
Andre & Sharon Bellavance	Robert Drummond	Jessica Kennedy	Stanley Nutter	Donald G Stewart	Duane Wells
Donald R Bergholm	John M Dufresne	Jerry & Miriam L Kill	Warner Peduzzi Estate	Adele M Stride Estate	Rhonda L Wendel
Connie Berno	Amy Durette	Brian Kimball	Thomas B O'Hara	Walter Sweet	Nicole Wheeler
Randolph & Joann O Berno	Joanne & Ritchie Dunster	Donald F Kokomoor	Adrienne Olney	Patricia Sykas	Raymond L Wheeler Jr
Randy & Breta Grace Berno	Duxbury Campground	Pamela Kurutza	Jake O'Neal	Astrid Tardy	Deborah Willey
Carl & Joyce Martin Berry	Duxbury Country Store	Mary Labender	Justin & Kathleen McNally	Mary Tebeau	Daniel Wright
Roxie L Berry	Frances P Eastman	Laura Lafleur	Parry	Scott Therrien	Wsi Moretown Landfill Inc
Curtis & Tina H Bevington Iv	Victor P Ehly	Christopher & Susan A Lamson	Carol A Perkins	Paul Tighe	Patti Zahoruiko
Joseph & Alice B Bliven	Helen Ellis	Elaine D Lang	Robert Phillips	Katherine A Torrey	Jennifer A Zetarski
Boatmen's Relocation	Helena Faccenda	Philip D Lee	Barbara Philpot	Joseph L Trombly	
Gordon Bock	Jason Farina	Hilda B Lee Estate	William Pollock		
Andrea Bodo	Sonya A Fee-Doran	Whitney & Jason Bagatta	Prudential Asset Recovery		
Claire G Bonekamp	Lori Felten	Lieberman	Timothy C Pudvah		
Sarah Bousquet	Stephen B Fisk	Anthony Lombardo	Richard H Rachals		
Virginia J Boyd	Sienna Flanders	Joseph & Constance A Longe	Cliff Rangnow		
Shane & Nickole C Boyer	James W Flint	David P Lowell	Robert & Roslyn J Rea Jr		
Gerard H Brochu	Melissa Folsom	Ls Realty Inc	Philip P Ricker		
Jocelyne Brochu	Sonya M Foster	Jenny Lussier	Ellen C Robbins		
David M Broughton	Richard & Anna C Gates	Allan N Mackey	Thomas & Debra A Robillard		
Brown & Sons Inc	Charlene & Raymond Gaudette	Susan E Mahoney	David J Rock		
Ronald H Bruce	Silvio A Gendron Jr Estate	"Make-A-Wish Foundation"	David J Rock		
BWL, Inc	Martha Gibson	Arlene S Martin	Calem Romasco		
Lance Cargill	Gavin W Glenney	Marie & Thomas J Martin	Joyce Russell-Faling		
H Alan & Jacqueline Carpenter	Elaine P Grainger	Josh & Kerri-Anne Motyka	Peter & Craige Bridge Saman		
Lisa Carpenter	Chris & Lisa Gramling	Mattey	Janet A Sanborn		
Viggo F Carstensen	Granite Savings Bank & Trust	David E Maxham	William J Seilonen		
Norma Cassani	Leslie & Brian Dunkiel Halperin	Maida & David E Maxham	Ezra & Bonnie Smith Senecal		
Wayne & Linda Chaffee	Gary & Carole Hass	Maurice J McDermott	Mary & Chris Weathersbee		
Jonathan & Carrie Biggam	Wyatt J Healey	Beverly Mckay, Trustee	Settle		
Chase	Christine & Jeremy McMullen	Lois E Melville	Julie & Sam Seymour		
Coldwell Banker Richardson	Heinrich	Margarita Mercado	Thomas & Leanne Donovan		
Assoc	Steve Heischuber	Merchants Bank	Shakspere		
Karen A Cooksey	W J Heney	Josie A Miller	Randy Sheffer		
Thea Cookson	Dylan Hockett	Kenneth Miller	Elizabeth Sicely		
Peggy J Coolidge	Dylan Hockett		Joseph P Sicely		
			April & James Skoda		

Solar Collaboration

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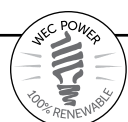
about the program. Members can find information about how to apply on WEC's website.

The application process is straightforward. There are no requirements for members to be physically connected to the solar project, no fees to participate, and other than income, no other limitations on who can join. Applications are managed by the Department for Children and Families (DCF), which as a state agency is tasked with verifying income eligibility. Once DCF confirms qualification, WEC will apply the credit to the member's bill. Each application is projected to be decided within 45 days.

Strong interest in participation could lead to future funding. "One crucial aspect of this program is the potential for additional funding over time," noted Porter. "Even if members do not get into the program in this round, there may be more opportunities in the future."

More information is on wec.coop.

Direct link: washingtonelectric.coop/affordable-community-renewable-energy-program-acre/



Community Fund Profiles: Where Are They Now?

Every year, *Co-op Currents* profiles an organization that receives funding from WEC's Community Fund. In 2024, after several years of major events—floods, a pandemic—we decided to revisit three grantees we profiled in the past to learn if, and how, their needs and services have changed.

The three organizations we returned to are Central Vermont Community Radio, profiled in 2022, the Vermont Foodbank, profiled in 2020, and Turning Point Center of Central Vermont, profiled in 2018 by Will Lindner.

The Community Fund is made up entirely of member contributions. About 14% of WEC's members donate their capital credit refunds to the Community Fund; others make donations out of pocket. This generosity allows the Community Fund to make grants to nonprofits serving the communities in WEC's service area. To learn how to donate your capital credits, or to make a contribution to WEC's Community Fund, contact Administrative Assistant Dawn Johnson at 802-224-2332 or Dawn.Johnson@wec.coop.

Central Vermont Community Radio

Central Vermont Community Radio, known as WGDR in Plainfield and WGDH in Hardwick, has been a staple for local listeners for decades. The station has operated under community ownership since 2021, when Goddard College gave it to the community. Station Manager Llu Mulvaney-Stanak calls it a "50-year-old startup."

In 2022, *Co-op Currents* profiled CVCR after a Community Fund grant helped the radio station through its

ownership transition. At that time, community members had swiftly formed a nonprofit board, navigated FCC filings, and started fundraising.

The station's charm lies in diverse and thoughtful programming reflective of the Central Vermont community. Far from mainstream media, its programming includes eclectic music shows to talk programs tackling social justice and culture. Mulvaney-Stanak and CVCR show hosts pointed to the station's role in fostering community dialogue and providing a counterbalance to mainstream media narratives.

This summer, CVCR faced three crises: the pending sale of Goddard's campus, where the station is located; catastrophic flooding in Plainfield; and a broken audio processor that took WGDH off the air. That third crisis, Mulvaney-Stanak said, was, like floods, related to climate change.

The WGDH equipment is located in a shed on a mountainside in Wolcott. In a sign of just how rapidly the climate has changed in 14 years, the building was heated for winter—but not cooled. "What happened is everything cranked up, heatwise. The audio processor literally fried," said Mulvaney-Stanak. An audio processor should tolerate 24/7/365 performance for 20 years, they said, "but not baking in a shed."

A new audio processor costs \$3,500: a large and unanticipated expense for CVCR. But rooted as it is within its community, Mulvaney-Stanak and board members are concerned about asking CVCR's friends and neighbors for too much help. "We're cautious about donor fatigue," said Mulvaney-Stanak, especially when there is so much dire need in Plainfield

after two years of major floods.

CVCR leaders decided to create a new pool of funds for emergency expenses, like the audio processor, and future-proofing. It's called the CVCR Future Fund, and the board's goal is to fund it with gifts from new donors.

With an online listening community in addition to its broadcast footprint, CVCR's reach is wider than ever—even with WGDH temporarily off the air. Mulvaney-Stanak, a fundraiser in addition to their work in radio, is optimistic there are new potential donors in that listening community. "We're not expecting our current donors to pony up yet again. We didn't think this would happen, but we have to keep fundraising for this and keep meeting our annual budget." Being transparent with their community, they added, is what matters the most.

"I know we have a partner in Washington Electric," Mulvaney-Stanak said. It's helpful that the Community Fund is easy to apply to, and trusts grant recipients to use funding where it's needed, they commented.

In the meantime, the board purchased a new audio processor and WGDH is back on the air, the CVCR Future Fund is accepting funds to cover the cost of new equipment and help future-proof the station, and the Goddard campus is pending sale to a community group with a stated commitment to support CVCR and other tenants.

To listen to Central Vermont Community Radio: tune in to WGDR 91.1, WGDH 91.7, or listen online at CentralVermontCommunityRadio.org

To donate to Central Vermont Community Radio or the CVCR Future Fund:

CentralVermontCommunityRadio.org

Read the original profile from July 2022: washingtonelectric.coop/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/2022-WEC-Currents-for-web.pdf

Vermont Foodbank

In 2020, WEC made a significant contribution to the Vermont Foodbank, aiding in the distribution of food across Vermont as the pandemic caused an unprecedented rise in food insecurity: 46% statewide, and 60% in children, according to Nicole Whalen, then the Foodbank's director of communications and public affairs. At the time, she said, "So many more people now are struggling with hunger who haven't been in that position before and don't know where to turn. Reach out for help. We can connect you with the resources you need to feed yourself and your family—that's why we're here."

Vermont Foodbank is the state's only foodbank—distributing food directly to neighbors and through a network of more than 220 food shelves, meal sites, and other partner food access agencies around the state. Hunger, said Sarah Keblin, chief philanthropy officer at the Foodbank, "is a symptom of not having access to the food we all need and want at any given time, and is impacted by not having enough income and economic security, as well as physical and environmental barriers to food resources."

Keblin said that over the last four years, food insecurity in Vermont, and around the country, has remained high. Pandemic-era supports ended abruptly, inflation and increased costs of everyday necessities have stretched household budgets, and multiple flooding events in our state over the last two years have compounded how hard it is for some communities to access food.

Food shelves report increased visits of anywhere from 10-110% in the last year, and Vermont Foodbank's fresh produce distributions continue to steadily serve between 5,000 and 8,000 people a month—a significant increase from before the pandemic, Keblin said.

It's not a good trend. But what is good, Keblin offered, is that people in Vermont are actively doing something about it. Thanks to community support, including from the members who fund WEC's Community Fund, the Foodbank can continue its mission connecting Vermont neighbors with access to food. "This year, Vermont Foodbank is set to distribute close to 15 million pounds of food," said Keblin, "which represents an increase of 20% over projected distribution, with more



Attendees of Central Vermont Community Radio's (CVCR) 51st birthday party this spring. This summer, CVCR experienced flooding in its hometown of Plainfield, the pending sale of the former Goddard campus where it is based, and fried equipment that temporarily took out the WGDH station. The station is back on the air today and working toward a sustainable tomorrow. CVCR is a grant recipient of WEC's Community Fund.

Community Fund

continued from page 5

than half of that being fresh food.” The Foodbank also continues to purchase and distribute local produce from more than 300 farms across Vermont, helps individuals navigate access to benefits, and partners on advocacy for policies and funding to help end hunger.

“A food-secure Vermont is possible, and Vermont Foodbank will continue to partner and advocate to that end,” said Koblin. “Until then, we, along with countless partners, volunteers, advocates and neighbors, will continue to gather and share nourishing foods. If you or someone you know could use food help—visit our website at vermontfoodbank.org or call us directly at 1-800-585-2265.”

To find food, learn more, or donate to Vermont Foodbank: vermontfoodbank.org, or call toll-free at 1-800-585-2265.

Read the original profile from July 2020: washingtonelectric.coop/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/July2020.pdf

Turning Point Center of Central Vermont

In spring 2017, then-WEC General Manager Patty Richards called Robert Purvis, Executive Director of the Turning Point Center of Central Vermont, to ask him to apply for a grant from WEC’s Community Fund. Turning Point provides peer-based supports for people in the recovery community, including health education and opportunities to support sober socializing and recreation. The funding allowed Turning Point to rebuild its website and better reach audiences seeking their services.

At that point, Turning Point had an operating budget of under \$100,000, and struggled with stagnant funding streams. Now, Turning Point has a budget of more than \$600,000, 12 employees, and stable grant funding. “A lot has happened,” said Purvis. “Those early grants to us from the Community Fund were hugely helpful in helping us get to where we are.”

Purvis is proud of Turning Point’s response during the pandemic: recovery coaches quickly pivoted to meet with support seekers on video conferencing platforms. “Our hospital program didn’t miss a beat,” said Purvis. “Within two weeks of the executive [stay-at-home] order, we had an iPad in the emergency department, and could connect with people there.”

More devastating was the 2023 flood, which forced Turning Point out of their Barre office. Staff kept working with borrowed facilities from community partners, but it was hard, Purvis said: “It’s terrible for morale to not have a place to go. But our staff hung in there.” A flood grant from the Community Fund also helped Turning Point replace furniture and relocate during this time. They moved into two sites: a place in Barre’s “Sidewalk Village” where people can meet privately with recovery coaches, and a recovery community



Congresswoman Becca Balint supported \$400,000 in congressionally directed spending to help Turning Point Center of Central Vermont develop a new peer addiction recovery center in a historic building located in Barre City. Turning Point is also a grant recipient of WEC’s Community Fund. Front row: Rep. Balint; Turning Point staff Rosemary Rosa, John Reese, Bob Purvis, and Mallory Richardson. Back row: Turning Point staff Moriah Haggett, Shannon Duchaine, and Katie Jones; Turning Point Board members Chip Castle and Lee Larson.

center on Ayers Street.

But the big news, Purvis said, is Turning Point is purchasing a historic building in Barre and has plans to create a big, vibrant space for people in recovery. “My goal is a community center with activity going all the time, a hub for people in recovery, for people who don’t know where to go,” described Purvis. “People can get what they need, and also have fun.” He envisions a space full of activity—writing for recovery, yoga, crafts—to draw people in and enrich the community aspect of recovery.

The space is near Spaulding High School, and that’s intentional. Turning Point is part of a coalition seeking funds to reach several central Vermont high schools with recovery and prevention programs. “Youth programs are the least available of any programs, and they’re very much needed,” Purvis explained. He envisions partnering with schools to offer programming that helps teenagers learn to support each other, and works with the whole family: critical, he explained, “to break the cycle of intergenerational transmission of addiction.”

Construction funding in place, Purvis confirmed Turning Point will lead a community campaign to cover furnishings, fixtures, and energy conservation features in the new community center. Looking back to 2017, he reflected with pride, “We’re so much farther along than we were before.”

To find help, learn more, or donate to Turning Point: tpccv.org or call (802) 622-0251.

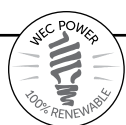
Read the original profile from July 2018: washingtonelectric.coop/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/July2018.pdf

About WEC’s Community Fund

WEC’s Community Fund is made up entirely of member contributions. More than 1,400 members choose to donate their capital credits to the Community Fund; others make donations out of pocket. This generosity allows WEC’s fund to make grants to small nonprofits in the Co-op’s service area. To learn how to donate your capital credits, or to make a contribution to WEC’s Community Fund, call 802-224-2332.

WEC Community Fund Grant Recipients

- | | |
|---|--|
| Adult & Teen Challenge | Neighbors in Action |
| AWARE Domestic & Sexual Violence Services | Northeast Kingdom Council on Aging |
| Barre Partnership | Peacham Library |
| Bradford Public Library | Prevent Child Abuse VT |
| Cabot Arts and Music Festival | Recovery Partners of Vermont |
| Cabot Connects, Cabot Ride the Ridges | Roxbury Free Library |
| Cabot Trails | Rural Vermont |
| Center for an Agricultural Economy | Sage Mountain Botanical Sanctuary |
| Central Vermont Adult Basic Education | Salvation Farms |
| Central Vermont Humane Society | T.W. Wood Gallery |
| Central VT Council on Aging | The Help Fund for Calendonía & Essex Counties |
| Chelsea Historical Society | The Veterans’ Place |
| Chelsea Public Library | Turning Point Center of Central Vermont |
| Community Resilience Organizations | TW Wood Gallery |
| Curtis Pond Association | Twin Valley Senior Center |
| Danville Chamber of Commerce | Upper Valley Haven |
| Duxbury Historical Society, Inc. | Vermont Campership Fund |
| East Montpelier Fire Department | Vermont Community Loan Fund |
| EcoForesters | Vermont Energy Education Program (VEEP) |
| Elevate (formerly: Washington County Youth Services Bureau) | Vermont Farm and Forest School |
| Family Center of Washington County | Vermont Foodbank |
| First Branch Ambulance | Vermont Granite Museum Stone Arts School |
| Green Mountain Council Boy Scouts of America | VerShare |
| Groton Community Club | Washington County Mental Health Services (WCMHS) |
| Hardwick Area Food Pantry | WGDR (Central Vermont Community Radio) |
| Just Basics, Inc. | Worcester Community Kitchen & Food Shelf |
| Make-a-Wish Vermont | |
| Montpelier Alive | |
| Mosaic Vermont | |



Where's WEC?

Right-of-way maintenance is necessary to keep your power safe and reliable. Pole inspections are also underway. This is to maintain reliable electric service and to test the integrity of the poles.

Where are pole inspections happening in 2024?

Chelsea, Corinth, Greensboro, Hardwick, Stannard, Tunbridge, Vershire, Walden, and Wheelock

Washington Electric, or its designee Alamon, will be inspecting and testing the integrity of the poles. This is to maintain reliable electric service in your area.

No power outages will occur as a result of pole inspections.



Questions about pole inspections?

Please contact Ed Schunk: 802-224-2317 or poleinsp@wec.coop.

Puzzle by Betsy Allen

Towns in WEC's Southern Territory

Q Y O K N P N R Y F A Y S T O N Y J F J M K Z M T
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A A P C B B K T Q Y T J G S H L Q T I C E E X O Z
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| Williamstown | West Fairlee | Brookfield |
| Washington | Waitsfield | Strafford |
| Tunbridge | Randolph | Bradford |
| Chelsea | Corinth | Tompson |
| Vershire | Roxbury | Fayston |
| Orange | Berlin | Barre |
| Newbury | | |

Have Your Finances Taken a Hit?

Don't let your WEC bill go past due, or grow beyond what you can manage. **Help is available:** A Member Services Representative will help you put together a budget that works for you. Plus, there are state programs that may help pay down your bill.

Call us today, and we'll help you put together a plan: 802-223-5245 or toll free at 1-800-WEC-5245.

Go Green. Go Electric. Go WEC!

ASK THE ENERGY COACH

Plan ahead for energy upgrades



Dear Energy Coach: We live in an old house and have a long list of energy upgrades we want to make. We started with the blower door test, learned where all the energy leaks were, and got the whole house sealed. Now we want to switch out propane for heat pumps and a heat pump water heater. We're also looking at induction cooktops. When battery storage becomes more affordable, we want to do that, too. How do we plan this out?

The Energy Coach loves it when members plan ahead for energy upgrades.

Let me tell you about a fellow member I worked with: She wanted to install net metered solar with backup storage, and make the transition to an EV. First, she talked with her electrician about any electrical upgrades her home infrastructure might need. She asked her electrician to fill out our Load Sheet, including all the upgrades she projected making. We took a look, talked with her about it, and put her on the list for a transformer, because she needed a larger one to handle all those upgrades.

Then, when she was ready, she got her solar, the connected battery storage, and a Type 2 charger all installed at the same time.

I could tell you other stories about members who don't plan ahead, buy a new 240-volt device, plug it in, blow a fuse on their transformer, and cause an outage. Those are expensive to repair, and their neighbors don't appreciate the outage, either.

My point is, you're on the right track. Call your electrician, and call me. First find out if you need to upgrade your home electrical system. Then we'll look at what your transformer can handle. Then we'll look at the upgrades you want to make, and if it makes sense to pair any of them.

And remember, there are incentives available when you're ready to buy. Use the "Rewiring America Incentive Calculator" on EfficiencyVermont.com to see what you can save on all those upgrades you want.

Ask your energy questions and get energy answers: energycoach@wec.coop

Find the savings calculator and resources from Efficiency Vermont: efficiencyvermont.com/blog/how-to/how-much-money-can-you-actually-get-in-clean-energy-incentives

Emergency Resources

Financial and energy coaching

Contact your local Community Action Agency: Capstone at capstonevt.org or Northeast Kingdom Community Action at nekcavt.org.

Fuel

Running out of fuel? No matter where in Vermont you live, if you are in danger of running out of fuel this winter, call the toll-free Emergency Fuel Assistance number: 1-800-479-6151

Mental health: call 988

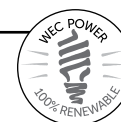
If you are in distress or crisis, call 988. If you prefer to text, text VT to 741741 to reach a crisis counselor quickly. For peer support, call/text 833-888-2557. More resources are at mentalhealth.vermont.gov

Food

Vermont Foodbank: 800-585-2265.
Capstone Community Action: capstonevt.org
Northeast Kingdom Community Action: nekcavt.org
3SquaresVT: 855-855-6181, vermontfoodhelp.com

211

Call 211 to find any emergency resource you need: food, mental health, fuel, shelter, and anything else.



Safety Minute: GFCI Outlets

Electrical safety tips from Safety and Environmental Compliance Specialist David Young

One of our members, Richard Scheibner from Calais, reached out to me about our recent Safety Minute on outlet safety. He enjoyed the topic and had some great feedback. In that column, I discussed the temperature of outlets: warmth can be a possible indicator of damage. Richard and I had a great conversation, and he added an interesting point about GFCIs (Ground Fault Circuit Interrupters). He

noted that they usually emit some heat. That's true, and it's not due to damage. Here's why these outlets are slightly warm, and why they are important.

A properly functioning GFCI might feel warm because there is a small circuit within it, and also a small light. The circuit's job is to compare the power going out of the outlet to the



David Young, Safety and Environmental Compliance Specialist

power coming back into the outlet. If everything is working correctly, these should be identical.

But if the current going out doesn't match what's coming back, the GFCI assumes the electricity is taking an alternate path, which could be dangerous. This could mean there's a problem with an appliance, like a toaster: perhaps the electricity is misdirected to the toaster case, which becomes a fire hazard. At worst, it could

mean the electricity is traveling through a person. That's why the GFCI trips off: it's a crucial safety feature preventing electric current from going where it shouldn't.

The National Electrical Code specifies where GFCIs should be installed, originally focusing on damp or wet locations like garages, outdoor


areas, kitchens, laundry rooms, and basements. Over time, the recommendation has expanded to include more areas of the house. While this is great for safety, it can lead to nuisance trips, turning off something you really don't want turned off, like a refrigerator or freezer.

When I got my electrician license in 2012, GFCIs were not required everywhere. Now, the code suggests having them throughout the house. It's not mandatory if your home met the code when it was built, but it's a relatively inexpensive upgrade, and it's smart. Upgrading is a proactive way to improve safety, and hiring an electrician is often the best route to ensure everything is done correctly and safely.

Here's what you need to know:

- GFCI outlets emit some heat because of their internal circuit. The heat is not an indicator of damage.

- The National Electrical Code now requires installing GFCIs in all damp areas of the house, but only requires this for new buildings. The only areas not affected are bedrooms, living rooms, and dining rooms on the main floor. If those areas are in a basement, it is considered a damp area and must have GFCI protected circuits.
- Upgrading outlets to GFCI is a fairly inexpensive upgrade, and particularly important in damp areas.

I appreciate Richard for contacting me to offer his insights. If you have any questions, please reach out. I value conversations with members, and your questions and suggestions for future Safety Minute columns. 

Members can request safety presentations from David Young for their school, organization, or community group. Contact him at 802-224-2340 or david.young@wec.coop.

Adding Electricity

continued from page 1

are the legacy of past decades' regulations, before the state's sources of electric power were as clean as they are today. At that time, Vermont encouraged utilities to conserve electricity, and to use those smaller, more electricity-efficient transformers.

Over the last few years, Powell said, many members trying to add net metering, Type 2 electric vehicle chargers, or other devices have discovered that their rising electric power need, or "load," is too much for a 5 kVA transformer. Not only have members discovered they need new transformers, but transformer shipments were held up during the global supply chain crunch caused in part by the COVID pandemic. Recently, Powell noted, the shortage started to ease, and WEC has begun to receive transformer orders again with a degree of reliability.

That leaves a long list of WEC members eager to make a lot of electric improvements. Powell, whose tenure at WEC is longer than 30 years, noted that he used to see a request for a larger transformer come in maybe five times a year. "The pace and frequency is now daily," he noted.

And that slippery slope of going green? It's real: a member who upgrades one device is far more likely to upgrade another, said Powell.

"What the member and the Co-op wants to avoid is doing it twice. Do it once and future-proof your location,"

advised Powell, meaning set yourself up with a transformer that may be larger than you need right now, but that will accommodate your future power needs. "Thoughtfully anticipate what you want to do over time, and that'll give us a sense of what you'll need over time."

Powell has seen cases in which a member requests a transformer upgrade—but then continues to add devices that draw a lot of power, and just a year or two later, needs another upgrade. That's a situation you want to avoid.

How it works

A transformer is the device, often attached to a utility pole, that changes the electricity traveling on single- or three-phase distribution lines to a lower voltage safe for regular home and business power use. Nicknamed "cans" for their shape, they come in a range of kVA capacities: 5, 10, 15, 25, 37.5, 50, 75, 100, and beyond.

Most of WEC's transformers serve one household each—this is a rural, sparsely populated territory. Some "joint-use" transformers serve multiple homes: for example, a group of camps on a pond.

If there is more electric demand on a transformer than it can support, it overloads the device. "A fuse that opens on an overloaded transformer causes a big bang and an unplanned outage," described Powell. "Please don't add load without telling your electric co-op about it first, because the consequences of overloading a transformer are expensive and

inconvenient." Members who cause an outage are responsible for the costs of repair—which can exceed \$1,000.


Plan ahead: WEC's Load Sheet

In order to tell WEC about your planned upgrades—and to get in the queue for a new transformer, should you need one—you'll need to submit a Load Sheet. This is a document that helps WEC assess what size transformer members need to meet their current and future electric needs. Accuracy is important, and the sheet specifically requests information about future project plans.

With your electrician's help, you can take care of your current and future to-do lists. Call them to evaluate your capacity before you purchase or install new devices, said Dave Kresock, WEC's Director of Engineering and Operations. "This is when members should have their electrician complete the load study and fill out the Load Sheet." Your electrician will also let you know if you need to make any upgrades to your home's service entrance or other electrical infrastructure in your home before you install any new load.

So tell your electrician about your future plans, and ask them to fill out the Load Sheet on your behalf. If you're installing a Type 2 charger now, but budgeting to build out a cannabis grow operation over the next two years, you will want a transformer that can support it.

Overall, members adding electric load is evidence of members changing

from oil burners to heat pumps, for example, and other upgrades that use renewable electricity. That's better for the environment and, when it means more power purchased from WEC, it's better for the health of the Co-op and the members who own it. When the Co-op's financial margins exceed the cost of doing business, members receive capital credits proportional to the amount of power they purchased—and that shows up as an annual credit on your bill. 

Plan Ahead Resources

WEC's Load Sheet is available online. You may also request one by calling 802-223-5245.

To access the Load Sheet online, visit wec.coop, scroll down to Helpful Documents, and scroll down to the New Construction header to find the Load Sheet PDF. Alternatively, enter washingtonelectric.coop/Document-Center and scroll down to the New Construction header.

Direct link to the Load Sheet: washingtonelectric.coop/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/Load-Sheet-06-2023-1.pdf

For information about incentives, visit EfficiencyVermont.com and search for "IRA Savings Calculator."

Direct link to the savings calculator: efficiencyvermont.com/blog/how-to/how-much-money-can-you-actually-get-in-clean-energy-incentives

