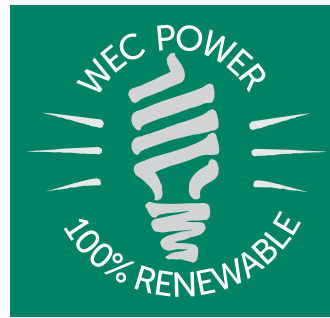




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CO-OP CURRENTS



Vol. 87, No. 1

The newsletter of Washington Electric Cooperative, Inc., East Montpelier, Vermont.

Dec. 2025 – Jan. 2026

WEC's Annual Meeting Is May 7, 2026

*Board Candidacy and Bylaw Amendment
Due Dates*

Save the date: WEC's 2026 Annual Meeting will be held on **Thursday, May 7.**

Three members are elected to WEC's Board of Directors at each Annual Meeting. In recent years, Board of Directors elections have been competitive, and vote counts have been close. If you're considering running for a seat, start planning now. Contact Administrative Assistant Dawn Johnson at 802-224-2332 or dawn.johnson@wec.coop or go to <https://www.washingtonelectric.coop/annual-meeting/> to request a candidate packet.

Candidates have the opportunity to introduce themselves and their positions to the full Co-op membership through biographical and policy statements published in *Co-op Currents* and on wec.coop.

Candidate biographies are printed in the February-March print issue of *Co-op Currents*. Policy statements run in the April-May issue. The due date to submit a candidate biography is **January 27**. This is before the final due date to submit full candidacy materials.

Candidates submitting biographies must indicate their intent to run and follow guidelines in the candidate packet. Even if a candidate misses including their biography in the earlier issue, they are still encouraged to submit one with their candidacy materials: it will be published on wec.coop.

The final date to submit all candidacy materials, including policy statements and a petition signed by a minimum of 25 WEC members, is **March 6.**

Members of the Co-op have the right to petition for amendments to the Co-op's bylaws. The bylaws are available on wec.coop, or you may contact WEC for a hard copy. To petition for a change, members are required to collect signatures in support from at least 50 WEC members. Petitions for bylaws changes are due **February 10.**

Look for information about the candidates and details about the Annual Meeting in future issues of *Co-op Currents*.



Heavy snow causes outages—but cold temperatures and fluffy snow made for pretty rural landscapes in WEC territory this December.

Remarks On WEC Passing 1,000 Net Metering Members

By Stephen Knowlton

Washington Electric has recently reached the milestone of registering its 1,000th net metering member. That means that nearly 10% of WEC's members have solar net metering arrays, and they produce roughly 10% of the electricity consumed by WEC's members.

In the mid-1990s, the Vermont legislature created a net metering law to promote the use of solar electric panels at homes and

I believe that net metering incentives going forward could be productively recast to instead promote the storage of solar energy by batteries or other means.

small businesses. One purpose of the law was to allow people to produce their own renewable power in their backyards or on their rooftops and thus reduce their use of electricity that maybe comes from fossil fuels. Of course, anybody can buy and put up a solar panel to produce electricity when the sun is shining, and pair it with a battery to store what they don't use right away. Most home solar

arrays produce more electricity when the sun's shining than the house uses,

continued on page 7



Attendees listen to speakers at WEC's 2025 Annual Meeting, held at Barre Auditorium. The 2026 Annual Meeting is scheduled for May 7.

**Washington Electric
Cooperative**

East Montpelier, VT 05651

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Inside

No rate increase in 2026: President and GM's Report, p. 2

Members Write: Personal stories about EVs and hot water heat pumps, p. 4

2026 incentive programs: preview what's the same, what's new, and what's coming soon. P. 6

WEC shows care for community through seasonal and ongoing supports. P. 8



Grant funding from the Vermont Low Income Trust for Electricity (VLITE) helped WEC prepare for a flexible future. Story page 6.

President's and General Manager's Message

Affordability Issue:
No Rate Increase Before 2027

Factors Impacting WEC's Rates and Members' Bills

Affordability

Steve: Affordability of meeting life's basic needs, including electricity, has recently mushroomed as a nationwide concern and it would be prudent for Louis and me to say some words to our members about this. In some parts of the country, people are seeing their electric bills go up 10% or more. Barring a catastrophe, WEC is not forecasting a rate increase for at least another year, and not a particularly large one after that. I hope this reassures WEC members who are worried about their WEC bills and are hearing of many utility companies around the country having to rapidly raise their rates to meet increasing costs.

Louis: My office opens to where our Member Services Representatives talk to members in person and on the phone. There are a lot of people in Washington Electric territory who struggle to pay their bills, including their electric bills. We hear those stories firsthand.

Because Vermont is a regulated state, we don't see the wild swings that some of our neighbor states see in electric bills. Having said that: New England is the most expensive region in the country for electricity, and Washington Electric is a very rural electric service territory with very few members per mile of line and very few industrial members. Even though we're not-for-profit and even though we return capital credits to members, it's a

very expensive place to buy electricity. I'm proud to say WEC has a lot of programs to help members with bill costs, including the ACRE [Affordable Community Renewable Electricity] program, which uses federal funding to offset income-qualified members' electric bills. We're hoping to move soon into the second phase of that program, which will make another 100 members eligible to receive those benefits. We have income-based incentives for EVs and other beneficial electrification technologies.

But the most important and successful thing we can do as a utility is keep our total cost of electricity down for all members. That's made difficult by our territory, but also by net metering, which causes a cost shift, where generally high-income members benefit more and lower-income members pay more. It's of concern to us, to regulators, and to legislators, that people struggle to afford to remain in Vermont. Stowe Electric is going to file a tariff to create a low-income program within their own territory. GMP [Green Mountain Power] has a low-income program, and a diverse territory with plenty of commercial and industrial load.

Instead of this utility-by-utility approach, Washington Electric encourages a state program that would provide a low-income benefit to Vermonters across all utilities. There's two reasons for this: one is in territories like WEC, with a lot of net metering and a lot of lower-income members, it would result in people barely getting by helping cover the bills of people who make far more than they do. The other issue with each utility running its own program, from our perspective, is it results with a diminishing number of folks in the middle paying twice: buying power at premium cost from high-income net metering members, and subsidizing the cost of a low-income program.

month is very low, so it's important people compare a complete bill to a complete bill for the same amount of electric use across utility companies. Members who use 100-200 kWh a month have lower bills at WEC than they would at other utilities.

Steve: Members who've been on WEC's lines for many years may recall our earlier two-tier rate was designed to encourage conservation of electricity and it rewarded efficiency by having an inexpensive block of power for one's first 200 kWh of monthly usage and a higher rate for the remaining electricity purchased that month to reward low usage. It seemed to work. And it is always true that the cheapest kilowatt hour is the one you don't need to buy, by being efficient, insulating your home, etc.

But with WEC becoming 100% renewable in 2014, the environmental cost of WEC's electricity portfolio largely went away. More recently, state policy makers and others have come to promote electricity as the cleanest of available energy sources, and suggest it should be priced to encourage its use in place of fossil fuels where appropriate. WEC's cheap lower block was reduced to 100 kWh, leading to an average electricity price between 21 and 22 cents per kWh if you use about 500 kWh a month, which is typical of the average WEC member. Further changes in our bill structure are being explored to take advantage of our new Advanced Metering Infrastructure (AMI) that will be installed over the next few years. Nonetheless, you can see that while the bills must collect the revenue needed to run the Co-op, the design of our rates reflects choices made by the Co-op and our regulators to serve our members equitably.

No Rate Increase in 2026


Louis: Our projection is at soonest, the next rate increase would take effect

continued on page 3

Co-op Currents

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

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

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WEC's Two-Tier Rate System

Louis: The difference between WEC's rates and other utilities has become less pronounced over the last couple of years, as other utilities have raised rates. Our retail electric rate doesn't tell the whole story. Even though our stated electric retail rate is high, the first 100 kWh of use per


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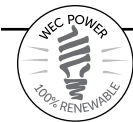
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Got something to say?

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.





January 2027. Because WEC owns Coventry, which provides 60-70% of our electricity, we're kind of off-cycle with other utility companies. We're less dependent on power supply than other utilities.

Steve: I can't say exactly what's driving up rate increases all over the country; the reasons vary. What would drive a rate increase at WEC would be if costs for essential materials and services continue to rise rapidly. We generally have power purchase agreements that mitigate against large changes in power costs.

Louis: We're not immune to power costs because we purchase power at some times of the year to fill in our supply, but about 95% of our annual power supply is in long-term contracts. Those costs are fairly stable.

Steve: With the rest of the country building up electric infrastructure for new data centers etc., there's a lot of demand for electric equipment, transformers, and substations. When demand goes up, it drives up the price for everybody, whether they're expanding to supply larger loads or not. I expect WEC's operating costs will increase, but I hope it will not be as dramatic as what we see now across the country.

Impacts of Renewable Energy Standard

Steve: In addition to requiring all Vermont utilities to provide the entirety of the power delivered to customers to be renewable, Vermont's revised Renewable Energy Standard (RES) also requires all utilities, including utilities already 100% renewable like WEC, to meet a growing share of their load growth from new renewables located in New England. Over the coming years, adherence to the RES is expected to raise utility rates. The purpose of the RES is to reduce Vermont's greenhouse gas emissions from the use of electricity by Vermont consumers. At present, Vermont's electric sector is said to produce only about 3% of Vermont's statewide emissions.

Louis: There's no question the RES bill was going to increase costs



Proceeding with the RES with new mandates, the state should scale back earlier programs that are no longer effective in producing renewable electricity at the lowest reasonable cost.

– Stephen Knowlton

to the consumer. It's a mandate. Utilities, by statute and regulation, are obligated to provide electricity at the lowest reasonable cost they can with the requirements put on them. Anything that mandates a different power portfolio increases costs, because it requires utilities to take something outside of lowest possible cost into their consideration when purchasing power.

The original RES bill increased costs to move the state to more renewable electricity usage. The RES update from two years ago increases costs because it speeds up that process and puts more requirements on what electricity is purchased by the utilities.

In WEC's case, the RES specifies that any increase in load we experience needs to be met in large part by renewable sources that have come online since 2010, deliverable within the New England grid. That means that we cannot fill our increase in load through existing renewable sources that are cheaper, such as Hydro-Québec. Other utilities that are not yet 100% renewable have much more stringent requirements.

WEC supported the RES bill for several reasons. We thought it was going to pass with or without our support, so we supported so we could help inform how requirements were structured in a way that benefits the Co-op. We also supported it because our members demand 100% renewable electricity, and this bill does that statewide. Our position is to be supportive of renewable electricity. I still think we should have supported it, but there's no question that in the 2030s, it's going to be more expensive than if we met our load growth through cheapest available renewable power.

Steve: The RES is a well-meaning approach if the state is to continue having a clean electricity energy portfolio as electric load growth takes place in Vermont. While I personally remain to be convinced that mandating fully 100% renewable electricity to be achieved within the next several years, beyond the Vermont's present 92% fossil-free portfolio, is the wisest, most

economical, and hence a politically durable method of lowering greenhouse gas emissions in the state, it is how Vermont voters have chosen to proceed and I presume Vermont utilities will comply. But with the advent of the 100% RES, it's appropriate to reexamine the worth of earlier incentives that have helped develop renewable power, by which I mean net metering, which is probably the most expensive way a utility can procure solar energy for its members. I think that in proceeding with the RES with new mandates, the state should scale back earlier programs that are no longer effective in producing renewable electricity at the lowest reasonable cost.

Louis: It's a great point, Steve. One of the reasons we supported the bill is because it removed group or merchant net metering, where solar wasn't on, or even adjacent to, the property being served. Solar sited where it's being used is better for our members.

Steve: Even though incentives have succeeded in bringing down the cost of installing solar installations over the last decades, some folks in the solar industry oppose cutting back on net metering and Standard Offer incentive programs because they continue to encourage sales of their products at inflated cost to the ratepayer. So it gets down to the question of what's affordable for the consumer versus what's profitable for the industry



The most important and successful thing we can do as a utility is keep our total cost of electricity down for all members.

– Louis Porter

in moving the state toward its greenhouse gas emission goals? It's a classic political conundrum of who has the most influence in the legislature, where these incentives are set into law.

WEC Not Impacted By Municipal Utility Reviews

Louis: The Department of Public Service (DPS) is conducting reviews of the financial condition of small municipality-owned utilities. WEC has not received one, and we'd comply if we did get it. This is prompted by publicly reported issues at Hyde Park Electric, which is significantly in

debt. Vermont Public Power Supply Authority and Morrisville Water and Light are working to help Hyde Park continue operations. Hyde Park is looking at a 20% rate increase as part of those financial issues.

Separately, DPS has asked for a management audit of Burlington Electric Department. There's no similar question of Burlington's financial viability, but there were several things that the department and the PUC had questions about in Burlington's operations. So, they are conducting a management audit separate from the review of small municipals. The only reason I highlight this is all these stories have been publicly reported, and our members are reading them, and may be wondering about our part—does this review include us? It does not.

Efficiency Vermont

Efficiency Vermont: Free Products and Services

For many Vermonters, energy costs compete with other needs like housing, food, and healthcare. The portion of your household income that goes toward paying your electric bill each month is known as your energy burden. If your household income meets the income levels outlined in the Income Qualifications table, you may be eligible to receive the following free or low-cost products and services:

- A new, energy-efficient refrigerator, deep freezer, dehumidifier, air conditioner, or clothes washer.
- Free LED bulbs to replace older lightbulbs and water-saving devices for faucets.
- An assessment of your home's electrical usage to understand where your house is saving or losing energy. You may also receive an assessment of your home and water heating equipment.

The services available to you are tailored to your household energy needs. Whether you rent or own your residence, we can help you lower your electric energy burden. Learn more: EfficiencyVermont.com/rebates

Income Qualifications	
# of People in Household	Household Income Limit:
1.	\$62,550
2.	\$71,500
3.	\$80,450
4.	\$89,400
5.	\$96,550
6.	\$103,700
7.	\$110,850
8.	\$118,000

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.



Members Write: EVs and Heat Pump Water Heaters

Co-op Currents invites members to write in with their honest experiences buying and installing hot water heat pumps, cold climate heat pumps, electric vehicles, and other new electric tech. Your tips and advice are valuable to fellow members considering similar purchases.

Submit your stories to currents@wec.coop. Stories will be published as time and space allow. Co-op Currents will contact you to confirm before publication. Please keep stories to 500 words or less. If you have a longer story you'd like to share, please email first to inquire.

Joe Truss: EV Lithium Battery Risks

Hi, my name is Joe Truss. I am a firefighter and have taken a class on lithium ion batteries with Gary Moore of Bradford, who is also on the state hazmat team. It is scary when a lithium battery catches on fire: it can not be put out. They make their own oxygen. They even burn under water. In the class they showed a person with a drone flying. When it came to rest, the battery was smoking. He immediately took it off the drone and threw it in the swimming pool and watched it burn.

There was a hybrid in Thetford, VT that burnt up, cause unknown. My son-in-law and I were coming home and stopped at a rest area: in the southbound rest area there was a car fire. We watched and noticed about 10 fire extinguishers near the car, and it was still burning.

Shortly after the class, at Dartmouth there was a fire at a dorm. The firefighter reported it as a bicycle fire. The bike was electric and parked in the doorway so it would not be stolen. Now the college does not allow any EV apparatus in the buildings. They provide a locked metal container for storage.

The EV batteries are made up of multiple cells about the size of your finger. Each cell is capable of producing 5 to 6 liters of toxic gas. About 45% is hydrogen, about 20% is carbon dioxide, the rest is also no good.

My suggestion is if you are going to purchase one, don't park it next to the house. Put the charging station about 20 to 30 feet away. Just keep in mind that the fire department can not put it out.

Joe Truss
East Corinth

Ian Buchanan: Good Experience with Heat Pump Water Heaters

I sympathize with the reliability challenges that Board Member Don Douglas outlined regarding his heat pump water heater in the February-March issue of *Co-op Currents*. We had a propane boiler that required significant repairs two years in and lasted only six years before self-destructing. Whether fossil fuel or electric, if you get a faulty unit, you get a faulty unit, and items produced during the pandemic appear more susceptible to issues than average.

We installed heat pump water heaters in two buildings for reasons similar to Don's. We wanted to turn off our boilers in the summer, reduce basement humidity, use residual waste heat more efficiently, and reduce pollution. Installing them in two significantly different basements has demonstrated that they can be effective across a range of environments. This said, while not required, basic sill insulation in your basement helps, as heat pump water heaters work most efficiently in spaces above 40° F. Also, heat pump water heaters have a compressor and make some noise. Locating it away from the living space or operating it on a timer is recommended if noise is a concern.

From a reliability perspective, our pre-pandemic Bradford-White (assembly date in 2019) heat pump water heater hasn't needed anything beyond the recommended filter and condensate drain cleaning (a 5-minute job). Our four-year-old Rheem (built during the pandemic) required replacement of some thermistors, which Rheem sent under warranty. The thermistors were relatively straightforward to replace, but their location highlighted the benefits of selecting a heater with more clearance to the ceiling than the 7" we have.

We use about 150 gallons less propane and 1200 kWh more electricity a year with the heat pump water heater than our prior fossil-fuel units, which saves a couple of hundred dollars most years. While 120 V heat pump water heaters are available that plug into an existing standard outlet, most heat pump water heaters are 240 V. The additional electrical circuit and condensate pump can make the initial installation cost exceed the cost of replacing a failed tank in an existing fossil-fuel-based system. Efficiency Vermont has expanded heat pump water heater incentives since we got ours, which helps.

Would we install another heat pump water heater? We would. While minor maintenance is required and we did experience a warranty issue with one, the improvements in energy consumption, dehumidification, and pollution reduction have provided value.

Ian Buchanan
East Montpelier

David Kreindler: EV Road Trips and Tires

I bought my first EV in the summer of 2022, fully aware of the possibility of “range anxiety” and the challenges that might arise from the need to recharge multiple times on long trips. Before my first road trip in my new EV — to the coast of Maine with my girlfriend — I carefully mapped out each stop at a Level 3 charger along the way. Because I had little experience with the car and was unsure of its actual range, I was conservative about charging — we planned to stop twice on our way East. What was surprising was that stopping for half an hour a couple of times made the trip much more enjoyable. We sat and talked while the vehicle swallowed electrons. (On the way back, we stopped just once, having gained experience and confidence about the vehicle's range.)

A little over a year later, I was surprised by something that no one had warned me about: my EV wore out its first set of tires in just 15,000 miles — three or four times as fast as any other car that I have ever owned. It turns out that the vehicle's 5,000-lb weight and powerful torque (which a driver might be tempted to take advantage of) are really hard on tires.

So my advice to new EV owners is: hold onto some of the money that you are saving on fuel and by avoiding oil changes and the other routine maintenance that an internal combustion engine-powered vehicle would need; you might need that money for tires.

David Kreindler
Hardwick

Update: After this letter was written, VW changed the tires that come on the ID.4 (and they appear to be the same tires that Hyundai is now using on the IONIQ 5). There is a good chance that this change is evidence of EV manufacturers responding to the need for more durable tires. – DK

Puzzle by Betsy Allen

Community Supports

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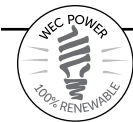
COMMUNITY FUND

FAMILY FUND

CAPSTONE

WARMTH

ACRE



The Co-op Here and Now: WEC Leaders Reflect

October is Co-op Month, and it's also conference season. While I attended a committee meeting related to my duties on the board of the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA), several of my fellow Board members and GM Louis Porter attended the conference for our regional association, Northeast Association of Electric Cooperatives (NEAEC), which includes co-ops in Vermont, New York, New Hampshire, Maine, and Rhode Island. Part of Co-op Month is reflecting on how the cooperative model can stay relevant and functional in changing times and a changing climate, and how electric co-ops work here in Vermont, in the Northeast, and in the nation. We asked everyone who went to a conference to share an interesting takeaway with members reflecting on WEC and co-ops, here and now.

— Don Douglas

Representing Vermont Co-ops

By Don Douglas

I live deep in the pucker brush of Orange County. Four years ago I was elected to represent Vermont to the National Board of the NRECA. It has been both an honor and an education. Cooperatives serve 56% of the landmass of the US. They can be small like WEC or enormous like Pedernales Electric which serves an area about the size of the state of Vermont. 42,000,000 people get their electricity

from cooperatives and they serve 92% of persistent poverty counties. WEC is one of the most progressive coops in the country but all co-ops are governed in the same way and endeavor to provide safe, reliable and affordable power to their members.

Resilient Utilities

By Betsy Allen

Washington Electric Coop is part of a larger organization of co-ops across the country — the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA), serving over 48 million people. We are just one among about 900 co-ops! “Co-ops are the drivers of innovation in our communities,” explained Michael

Partin, President of NRECA. As electric use grows, we will need more power. NRECA's Energy Policy for Resilient Utilities builds on a tri-lemma of three considerations: Access and Affordability, Reliability and Security, and Environmental Sustainability. Satisfying these three legs of utility resilience are often difficult to balance. Michael Partin said that what works in Maine is not the same as in Vermont or Mississippi and that co-ops need the flexibility and freedom of choice to tailor their energy policies for their members. I believe that WEC is doing this hard work of balancing these factors, to keep us a strong and resilient utility.

Prioritizing Safety

By Pat Barnes

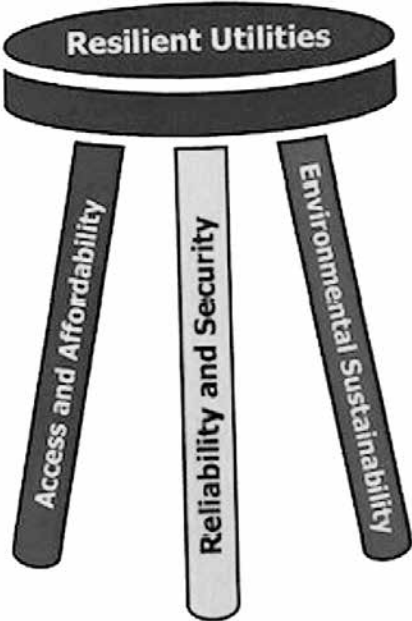
A discussion of pre-shift safety meetings for line crews helped me consider new priorities. I admire our crews who are out in the worst conditions, for long hours managing wires, poles, and trees that can turn deadly in an instant. I want WEC's crews to be trained, equipped, and assigned to complete their work and safely return to their families. When I reflect on the goals of affordability and reliability, I realize these goals pale when measured against the welfare of our crews taking care of our powerlines. If I'm temporarily inconvenienced when our region's climate, terrain, and forest conspire to cause power outages, I want to recommit myself to supporting the men and women of our crews with all due patience and funding.

when making energy decisions for your residence. ISO-NE, our regional electricity broker, has estimated a 5.38% increase in demand over the next five years, much of that to be met from increased distributed generation. Furthermore, it is anticipated that by 2032 during peak solar hours, demand will be reduced to below baseload levels (creating a significantly exaggerated duck curve.) The question remains what to do if those conditions actually come to fruition. Flexibility will be required to ensure equilibrium as these intermittent resources are deployed.

Cooperatives Sharing Their Findings About Batteries

By Steve Knowlton

Many of us were intrigued by a talk about a cooperative utility's experience with the use of battery storage in their operations. The utility is our neighboring cooperative Vermont Electric Cooperative. They have recently made use of several schemes of utility scale and residential scale batteries, mainly for reducing the utility's overall electric load during times of high usage in both the state and all New England, since the cost of electricity and related services are high at these times—this is called peak-shaving. They explained what they found to be the pros and cons of each approach they tried. In my opinion, the audience was delighted to hear someone reporting on actual results they could potentially use themselves, and for us Board members to learn the details of how battery storage is actually done, why it costs what it does, what are the numerous options for deployment, and what business structures are possible (and optimal). It was a great example of cooperatives helping each other by sharing their experience, and a good reason why I was glad to be able to attend the conference on WEC's behalf.

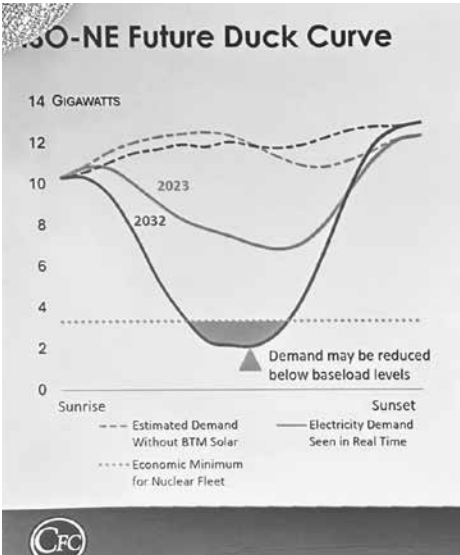


Provided by Betsy Allen, from NEAEC Conference

Managing the Duck Curve

By Susan Alexander

The addition of behind-the-meter solar is climate smart and a reasonable consideration



Provided by Susan Alexander, from NEAEC Conference

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VLITE Grants Moved WEC Toward a Flexible Future

Over 10 years, a three-phase grant cycle totaling \$217,000 from the Vermont Low Income Trust for Electricity (VLITE) helped WEC fundamentally change its members' access to electric vehicles by investing in charging infrastructure, and building out an early system for flexible load management.

VLITE is a public-benefit nonprofit with a significant ownership stake in VELCO (Vermont Electric Power Company), Vermont's transmission-only electric utility. It uses its VELCO dividend income of about \$1 million per year to fund projects and initiatives that advance Vermont's energy policies. VLITE has a special focus on projects that help low-income Vermonters.

WEC received grants in part because its members experience a higher energy burden—the percentage of household income spent on total energy costs—than the state average (13% vs. 11% statewide). One reason for this is there are long, hilly travel distances and limited access to public transportation in WEC's service area,

so members rely more, and pay more, for personal transportation.

Phase 1: Expanding EV Charging Access

Between 2015 and 2019, VLITE funded WEC's installation of some of the first public EV chargers in central Vermont, located at two public schools, two park-and-ride facilities, and a local business.

These chargers have supported 6,500 charging sessions to date, giving WEC members and regional visitors access to Level 2 charging. Data gathered through this early work also shaped the state's understanding of EV charger siting and deployment, paving the way for future public-charging investments.

Phase 2: Flexible Load Management Pilot

The second phase, between 2019 and 2021, piloted PowerShift, WEC's first Flexible Load Management initiative in many years. Partnering with Efficiency Vermont and Packetized Energy, WEC invited members to

enroll their electric water heaters in a program that shifted power use away from expensive peak periods.

The project allowed WEC to test and become familiar with new technology and explored how home appliances can help reduce peak demand. Critically, this pilot became the foundation for WEC's future load-management offerings, including a battery program planned for 2026.

Phase 3: PowerShift EV Charging Program

This final phase launched in 2021. Developed from lessons learned in the first two phases, the expanded PowerShift EV program has delivered the most direct member benefits. PowerShift provides participating EV drivers with a free Level 2 charger, funded by VLITE, in exchange for programming their EVs to charge on off-peak schedules. Members also receive a \$500 Efficiency Vermont rebate toward installation.

To date, 127 chargers have been delivered to WEC members through this program. The incentives reduce

the upfront cost and complexity of EV ownership for members. Managed charging reduces WEC's transmission and capacity costs, which reduces rate increases for the entire membership.

EV charging significantly increases electric load. Unrelated to the VLITE grant, but to remove remaining barriers toward PowerShift uptake, WEC no longer charges members for transformer upgrades spurred by beneficial electrification technologies, such as the EV chargers enrolled in PowerShift.

Based on preliminary results, PowerShift has saved the Co-op and its members more than \$10,000 over the last year by way of avoided peak costs. WEC anticipates these savings will more than double as the program matures—increasing the impact of VLITE's grant.

WEC plans to continue offering chargers to members and will expand the program to additional EV models and brands in 2026.

WEC's 2026 Incentive Programs: What's the Same, What's Changing

Pending Public Utility Commission Approval, WEC Rolls Out Tier III Annual Plans

Incentive programs help WEC members save money as they reduce their carbon footprints. Through Vermont's Renewable Energy Standard (RES), all of the state's electric utilities are required to help members shift their energy use from fossil fuels to other sources like electric power. This requirement is called Tier III, and members often experience Tier III in the form of incentive programs.

Utilities use incentives to make electric vehicles, heat pumps, pellet stoves and other devices more affordable and attractive than their fossil fuel-powered counterparts. Efficiency Vermont, as the state's energy efficiency utility funded by Vermont ratepayers, is the main architect of these incentive programs, though individual utilities also shape their own incentives based on their budgets, priorities, and members' or customers' needs.

WEC has been partnering more closely with Efficiency Vermont to drive more member participation to the program. Co-op members have historically been eager adopters of tech that is least harmful to the environment,

but at the same time, members have paid into Efficiency Vermont more than they have used its incentives. "Our goal is for WEC members to take advantage of all of the incentives available to them: meeting our Tier III requirements, getting their money's worth for the Efficiency Vermont charge we all pay, and achieving better deals for all members" said JJ Vandette, WEC's Director of Special Projects and Innovation, and a member himself.

Most federal incentives created under Biden-era climate legislation were rolled back as of December 31. However, Vandette indicated many incentives accessible to WEC members remain, and several programs are evolving or coming online soon. All of WEC's 2026 incentive plans are pending regulatory approval, and WEC will reveal more program details in 2026.

Same:

Electric Vehicles: Members may still receive up to \$1,000 in WEC incentives.

New:

Electric Vehicle Chargers: Multi-family and workplace EV charger offer.

Coming Soon:

Home EV charger bill credits
Bring-Your-Own-Battery bill credits

Change:

WEC partners with Efficiency Vermont for a single point-of-purchase

incentive for efficient heating systems, including: heat pump water heaters, wood and pellet stoves, air-to-water and ground-source heat pumps, heat pump integrated controls, and ducted heat pumps. Efficiency Vermont will administer these programs alongside their partner installers.

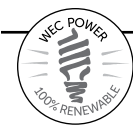
To find out more about 2026 incentives, visit: efficiencyvermont.com/rebates and washingtonelectric.coop/incentives.

Don't Miss This!

Major or time-sensitive incentive picks from JJ Vandette, Director of Special Projects and Innovation

Interactive Energy Usage Tool

Members, Efficiency Vermont launched an Energy Usage Tool to help Vermonters see what appliances and lighting can drive up our energy bills. Plug in 21 cents/kWh: WEC has a lower-than-state-average rate for the first 100 kWh each month, and then a higher-than-state-average rate for additional kWh. Visit efficiencyvermont.com/blog/how-to/how-much-electricity-does-your-home-use to use the tool.



Net Metering

continued from page 1

and they send the excess electricity out to the grid. The big incentive of net metering is that net meterers by law receive a generous credit for the power that they send out to the grid. They effectively recoup this credit when they use power from the grid when the sun isn't shining, like in the evening or on rainy, cloudy days. This lucrative financial incentive has spurred the purchase and installation of residential scale arrays, and the number of arrays grew exponentially over the next two decades. As intended, these incentives provided the young Vermont solar industry the means and opportunity to improve their technical and business practices and bring down the cost of solar to the buyer, which they have done successfully. This has led to the development of a skilled and efficient industry that is crucial for integrating solar into our region's renewable electric energy portfolio.


WEC had welcomed the growth of net metering, and was consistently among the first of Vermont utilities to hit the limits set by the legislature for the number of net metering facilities in their territory. While the above-market credits provided by the net metering process transfers costs of operating the utility from the net meterer to other ratepaying members, the effect on WEC's average ratepayer was minimal due to the small fraction of WEC members who participated in the net metering program over its first two decades. The legislature has since removed any limits on the number of net metering facilities in the state, and net metering has continued to grow to this day. This means the cost of subsidizing net metering by the average ratepayer is also continuing to rise.

As WEC proceeded toward the milestone of hosting 1,000 net metering facilities, it also reached a different milestone: by 2014, WEC and two other Vermont utilities were recognized by the state's Department of Public Service to be 100% renewable. Every kilowatt hour purchased for sale to their customers comes from certified renewable sources. Other utilities are following suit, and all Vermont utilities must soon be 100% renewable by law. So there is no longer much of a benefit to incentivize net metered solar to obtain renewable power, as it is more expensive than other renewable resources including solar that utilities may choose to purchase. People may net meter to save money in the long run and because they want to produce some of the electricity they use, but it unfortunately is one of the least cost-effective ways to address Vermont's climate plan according to Vermont's Public Utility Commission.

As a result, WEC has had a complicated relationship with net metering. Solar arrays are excellent sources of clean electricity, which WEC supports. Since solar arrays

cannot produce power constantly or dependably, they require other technologies like batteries to make them serve as reliable providers of electricity, which is important as solar continues to grow in the state. Any utility that purchases significant amounts of solar power as part of its portfolio must plan for this. I don't think It was intended that the incentive to build up a fledgling solar industry via net metering would continue as an expensive subsidy now that the solar industry is mature. But it is, and it comes not only at a growing cost to the ratepayer, but also at a cost to progress toward less expensive

renewables and as an impediment to promoting beneficial electrification because it unnecessarily raises the cost of electricity for all. In my opinion, Vermont's solar installation industry, thanks to net metering, has graduated from the era when solar was expensive to install. As suggested by WEC's milestone of a hefty 10% market penetration, the solar industry can be expected to stand more on their own without the same incentives from 30 years ago. I believe that most people who've put up net metered solar arrays over the past years have done it with the best intention to provide themselves

with clean electricity in addition to saving money on their electricity bills. I believe the solar industry is far more capable and efficient now, thanks to subsidization by the ratepayer. Nonetheless, the world has moved on. I believe that net metering incentives going forward could be productively recast to instead promote the storage of solar energy by batteries or other means. This would make solar power a more dependable, flexible, cheaper, and equitable resource. That's what I'd like to see by the time WEC reaches the milestone of having 20% of its power come from solar. 

Did You Know?

The Vermont Public Utility Commission requires all electric utilities to publish this Herbicide Use Notification. **Washington Electric Cooperative does not use herbicides in its right-of-way management program.**

Important Annual Notice Regarding Herbicide Use in the Maintenance of Electric Utility Rights-of-Way

The Vermont Public Utility Commission has set forth rules under [PUC Rule 3.600](#) pertaining to the use of herbicides in the maintenance of electric utility rights-of-way (ROW). Each spring, herbicide applications may begin on or after April 1st. These rules afford you important rights and duties. Vermont electric utilities maintain electric line rights-of-way with several methods, including the selective use of herbicides on trees and brush. They also encourage low-growing shrubs and trees which will crowd tall-growing species and, thus, minimize the use of herbicides. Methods of herbicide applications may include stump, stem injection, basal, soil, and foliar. **Only electric utility rights-of-way that have tall-growing tree species with the potential of threatening the electric utility system are treated.**

If you reside on or own property in Vermont within 1000' of an electric utility right-of-way:

- 1. **Sign up to receive written notification** from your local electric utility of plans to apply herbicide on any ROW within 1000' of your property or the property where you reside. Check nearby poles for tags identifying the utility and/or pole number, complete the form below and submit it to your local electric utility by mail before February 15th, 2026 to be added to the notification list. If determined to be qualified, you will receive notification from the utility at least 30 days prior to scheduled herbicide application.
- 2. **You are responsible to make your local electric utility aware** of the location of any potentially affected water supply, and of any other environmentally sensitive area where herbicide application ought to be avoided.
- 3. **Watch and listen for public service announcements** in newspapers and radio ads noting upcoming herbicide applications.
- 4. **Check with your local electric utility** regarding the vegetation management cycle near your particular line.
- 5. **You have the right** to request, in writing, that the utility refrain from applying herbicides in the process of clearing the right-of-way, and the utility may offer alternatives such as herbicide stump treatment or herbicide stem injections.
- 6. **You have the right** to refuse, in writing, the use of herbicides whatsoever at no cost to you if the type of lines in the right-of-way are **distribution lines**, bringing electric service directly to individual customers.
- 7. **You have the right** to refuse, in writing, the use of herbicides whatsoever by paying a \$30 administration fee if the type of lines in the right-of-way are **transmission lines** or **sub-transmission lines**, bringing electricity to or between substations.

For more details, or to ask additional questions, please contact your local electric utility, or one of the following:

(leave blank for local electric co. mailing address and phone)	Agency of Agriculture Public Health & Ag. Resource Mgmt 116 State St., Montpelier, VT 05602 1-802-828-2431	Department of Public Service Consumer Affairs & Public Information 112 State St., Montpelier, VT 05620 1-800-622-4496
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Based on the information above, if you believe you qualify to be notified in advance of pending herbicide applications in the rights-of-way, mail the request below to your local electric company before February 15th, 2026.

Resident/Property Owner Request to be Added to Herbicide Treatment Notification Mailing List			
Name		Town/City of Affected Property	
Street Address		Home Phone Number	
Town		Work Phone Number	
State	Zip Code	O.K. to use work number?	Yes No
Electric Utility Account Number		(circle one)	
Best time to contact you			
Affected Property: Year-Round Residence Summer Residence Commercial Property Water Supply Organic Farm Land Other (Circle all that apply)			
Line/Pole Identification: Utility Initials		Pole Numbers	
Please fill out this request completely to help us determine if you qualify for herbicide treatment notification. MAIL THIS REQUEST TO YOUR LOCAL ELECTRIC UTILITY AT THE ADDRESS LISTED ABOVE BEFORE FEBRUARY 15TH, 2026			



Of Community, For Community

WEC was created by neighbors who banded together to bring electric power to their farms and villages when for-profit utilities would not invest in rural Vermont. Concern for community—a principle shared by all cooperatives—is a priority at WEC. Staff, volunteers, and many members live into it in many different ways—from everyday support services, to donating capital credits to the Community Fund, to seasonal programs.

Member Support Services

The Co-op's first commitment is to meet its members' electricity needs as best it can. Every day, Member Services Representatives are available to help members create budgets that keep the lights on. WEC leaders look for opportunities for bill relief for members who are income-eligible, like through the current Affordable Community Renewable Electricity (ACRE) pilot program in collaboration with sister co-op Vermont Electric Cooperative (VEC). WEC also partners with community action agencies to design resource programs that prioritize access and equity.

Member households with someone who has severe medical needs should notify the Co-op to ensure Vermont Emergency Management checks on them in the event of a major outage. If members with medical needs move or no longer have an issue that requires wellness checks, please let the Co-op know that, too.

Seasonal Programs

Years ago, WEC launched an internal holiday giving project, inviting staff, Board members, and vendors to contribute to bring fully-trimmed holiday magic—food, gifts, and more—to a local family with children. In 2025, WEC is working with the Barre-based

Renita Marshall Helping Hands Foundation to bring the holidays to a local family, providing grocery cards to Bradford-based Veterans, Inc., and donating to a national family fund for children who have a parent die while employed by an electric cooperative.

Renita Marshall Helping Hands Foundation helps Central Vermont families with children who are facing temporary or unexpected financial hardship. To learn more: facebook.com/rmhfhf

Veterans, Inc. is a regional nonprofit with a mission to end homelessness among military veterans. To learn more: veteransinc.org

The Cooperative Family Fund is a nonprofit developed through the leadership of National Rural Electric Cooperative Association in collaboration with National Rural Utilities Cooperative Finance Corporation. It creates trust accounts for the children of parents who die while actively employed at an electric cooperative and helps co-ops support grieving families and colleagues. To learn more: cooperativefamilyfund.com

Community Fund

Nonprofits that work within WEC's service area offer many benefits to members: a cool place to stay during a heat wave; food and fuel access; social connections for youth, elders, and people in recovery; cultural programming sometimes hard to come by in Central Vermont; and so much more.

Small nonprofits, operated by members of the same communities they serve, provide everyday resources and help folks get through challenging times. WEC members have the option to donate their capital credit refunds to the Community Fund. Through these voluntary member contributions, the Community Fund grants tens

of thousands of dollars each year to small nonprofits that serve the communities in the Co-op's service area. The application process is fast and easy, and when there is great and specific need, the Community Fund can quickly shift its giving focus. During the pandemic and after 2023 and 2024 floods, the Community Fund stepped in with low-barrier funding for the organizations best equipped to offer immediate community support.

Community Fund grants support some favorite seasonal programs in Central Vermont. This December, the Community Fund supported local food shelves and veteran families in WEC territory.

This year, consider donating your capital credits to the Community Fund. Locate the form at washingtonelectric.coop/capital-credits/community-fund-donations. You can also clip and send in the form on this page, or call Dawn Johnson at 802-224-2332.

More Ways To Help

WEC regularly seeks volunteers for committees. Annual meeting and Board elections rely on volunteer-led committees for tasks such as counting votes, determining candidates' eligibility, and event prep. Eligible WEC members are also encouraged to run for the Co-op's member-led, democratically elected Board of Directors. If you are interested in running for the Board or joining another committee, contact Dawn Johnson at 802-224-2332.

To learn about other local nonprofits doing good work in WEC's service area, the annual list of Community Fund grantees is a good resource. Each organization on this list makes a difference right here in Central Vermont. See the most recent list of recipients in the August-September 2025 issue of *Co-op Currents*.

WARMTH

All electric utilities in Vermont participate in the WARMTH emergency home heating assistance program. Vermont utility customers may contribute by rounding up their electric bill each month. The program is operated through local community action agencies. In WEC territory, that's Capstone and Northeast Kingdom Community Action, or NEKCA.

To donate, initial the Operation Round-Up box on your electric bill to round up each bill to the next dollar and send the change to WARMTH. If you'd like to contribute more each month, write in the amount. If you bill through SmartHub or would prefer to call, contact Member Services to arrange your donation: 802-223-5245 or 1-800-932-5245. Members may also donate their capital credits to WARMTH.

Members can also donate directly to fuel assistance through their community action agencies: visit capstonevt.org or nekca.org

If You Need Help

- Call 211 to find any emergency resource you need: food, mental health, fuel, shelter, and anything else.
- If you need help paying your WEC bill, call Member Services: 802-223-5245 or 1-800-932-5245
- If you are in danger of running out of fuel, call the toll-free Emergency Fuel Assistance number: 1-800-479-6151
- For food, housing, weatherization, and other services, contact your local Community Action Agency: either Capstone (capstonevt.org) or Northeast Kingdom Community Action (NEKCA, nekca.org) 🐻

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.

Please mail the following authorization form to:
Washington Electric Cooperative, Inc.
Attn: Capital Credits/Community Fund
PO Box 8, East Montpelier, VT 05651



Date _____

I/We want to donate to WEC's Community Fund.
Please consider my/our signature below as authorization to contribute my/our capital credits as selected.

☐ I/We wish to donate this year's and all future years refunds.

☐ I/We wish to donate only this year's refund (Year _____).

Member Signature _____

Name(s) _____

Address _____

Map# _____

Account # _____

Credit card # _____

