

“I Love WGDR, and the Chickens Love It, Too.”

WEC Community Fund grantee Central Vermont Community Radio weathers major transitions, keeping listeners thinking, jamming, and connecting

Central Vermont Community Radio is WGDR, if you're listening in Plainfield, or from about Cabot to Northfield, skirting the top of Orange County. It's WGDH, if you're listening in Worcester, Woodbury, or the southern corner of Orleans county. For around half a century, Central Vermonters have tuned in to shows painstakingly programmed by their neighbors and broadcast from a basement station at Goddard College in Plainfield.

Since the spring of 2021, the radio station has officially operated under the nonprofit Central Vermont Community Radio. “I've described it much like running a start-up that's 50 years old,” said station manager Llu Mulvaney-Stanak. Under Goddard's auspices, the station leveraged a Corporation for Public Broadcasting grant as its primary funding source for years. But when the college moved to a low-residency model, it couldn't justify charging students the activity fees that had provided funds required to match the grant, explained Rick Agran, who hosts the spoken word show “Bon Mot.” The funding loss

forced the station and college to come up with new funding ideas. And according to Mulvaney-Stanak, budget pressures from the pandemic hastened a necessary transition.

Goddard could have sold the station to the highest bidder. There are a limited number of radio frequencies, and they're very valuable. WGDR/WGDH could have become “a radio clone,” said Agran, one of “300 stations across the nation saying the same thing at the same time. That's terrifying to me.” But the college didn't sell the station. Mulvaney-Stanak credits then-station manager Kris Gruen with advocating to Goddard leadership to let the listeners assume ownership of the station. It was a huge gift, Mulvaney-Stanak pointed out. “What Goddard did hasn't really been done before: gifting it to the community, letting us continue to use the space,” they said.

So, quickly, community members came together to form the nonprofit board, do all the paperwork, meet FCC filings, fundraise, and continue

There's a vibe, a sound to WGDR. It's so Central Vermont. There's this attentiveness to place, to community, to social justice, to having complicated conversations. The eclecticism of our programming is in tune with the community already.

– Llu Mulvaney-Stanak

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Courtesy Central Vermont Community Radio

Central Vermont Community Radio host and WEC member Tonio Epstein, left, interviews a guest (pre-COVID). WEC's Community Fund supported Central Vermont's beloved independent radio station as it transitioned to a community-owned nonprofit.

LUNCH RESERVATION (BUFFET LUNCH)

Fall Membership Gathering

September 10, 2022 • 11:00 am – 3:00 pm
230 Fasset Road, East Montpelier, VT

Join WEC staff, directors, and members for a cookout lunch at the WEC Operations Center to chat and celebrate being together again! **Lunch (at no charge) is by RESERVATION ONLY.** To make your reservation, **return this form no later than Friday, August 19.**

Lunch is free for reservations made on or before August 19. Walk-ins on 9/10: \$15 – Adult; \$7 – Child (ages 10 +); Children under 10 free. (No guarantee that meals will be available for those who do not register in advance).

A variety of foods will be available, including vegetarian and gluten-free options. For special food requests not indicated below, accessibility needs, or questions, please contact Rosie Casciero at (802) 224-2322 by August 1.

Return by August 19 to WEC, PO Box 8, East Montpelier, VT 05651

	Member	Guest	Child/Age
Name _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> _____
Name _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> _____
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Name _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> _____

Special food requests/accessibility needs: _____

Map/Account # _____

Telephone # listed on account _____

Registration also available online at www.wec.coop/events

Washington Electric Cooperative

East Montpelier, VT 05651

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WEC's Mike Myers inspects a cleared right-of-way. Learn about WEC's right-of-way policies on p. 6.

President's and General Manager's Message

WEC's Rate Redesign, Incentivizing Beneficial Electrification, Now In Full Effect

Co-op continues to support broadband rollout, Community Fund donations, and hosts two member events in September

New rate design now in full effect

Steve: The final phase of WEC's rate redesign took effect July 1. According to the Public Utility Commission's ruling, we've been required to implement the changes in stages over three years. We've increased the monthly service charge and correspondingly dropped the energy charge.

If we're going to incentivize beneficial electrification, we have to reduce the cost per kilowatt hour of electricity. But we still have to generate the same revenue we need to operate. That's why we increase the monthly service charge to balance the reduction in the cost of energy.

A secondary reason is to partially compensate for the loss of revenue due to net-metering. Regardless of one's opinion of the benefits of net metering, the state net metering tariff makes it more challenging for utilities to cover the cost of providing service when some members are able to partially opt out of paying for the grid infrastructure and service they use. Net metering causes instability in our revenues, but all members – net meterers or not – pay a monthly service fee to access our services.

The downside is this approach can increase the bills of people who are trying to save money on their electric bills by being very efficient. This was a big change for WEC, which for years had been trying to incentivize reducing

one's electric use. We've transitioned because of state policies saying it's preferable to use electricity as long as it's generated renewably. And by 2014, WEC was recognized to source 100% renewable electricity. So with this rate design, we are not helping some people whom WEC had incentivized in earlier years. At the same time, it's a necessary step if we're trying to meet state goals for beneficial electrification. Nonetheless, conservation remains a practical approach to our challenge.

Frankly, I don't think we're going to consume our way to mitigating climate change. I still think being efficient with all energy use is important to keep in mind.

Louis: I have a positive view of this change, in which the customer charge is one symptom. For many years, Washington Electric was unusual in that it tried to reduce use of the product it sells. That was done for a very good reason: to be efficient and reduce power use. That's changed with the realization that the types of power we use have different effects on the climate, and fossil fuels are far worse than renewable electricity.

We continue to do a lot to make sure people have access to resources to prevent wasting electricity. At the same time, it's become widely believed in Vermont and beyond that replacing fossil fuels with efficient and careful use of electricity makes a lot of sense. The change to the customer charge and kilowatt hour rate is one small piece of that broader change. While I agree with Steve that we're not going to consume our way out of the climate change crisis, and that it's essential to prioritize efficiency and changing our consumption of all kinds of energy, I do think it makes sense to incentivize use of electricity where it's efficient and effective.

Steve: When we implemented this rate design several years ago, we got pushback from members who use so little electricity and are unhappy that their bills went up. We can expect pushback from a fraction of our membership.

Louis: And very understandably so. We incentivized people to reduce their electricity use, and now we're increasing their base charge.

Steve: We'll keep working to educate our membership. Since WEC became 100% renewable, we are in a position to act on beneficial electrification. The service charge is higher, but as we replace fossil fuel vehicles and devices with electric ones, members should find their total energy bill – what they pay for gasoline, kerosene, natural gas, oil, biomass, and so on – goes down.

Broadband update

Steve: Broadband is still on a lot of peoples' minds. Even though WEC is not going to be providing the broadband service, we are still actively working with the communications union districts (CUDs) to get them to the stage of installing fiber on WEC poles.

Our operations crew is performing very well in preparation for broadband rollout. They're laying in stocks of new poles to get broadband out to WEC members fairly soon. WEC owns all its own poles, so we should be relatively efficient in working with CUDs to facilitate their installation of broadband on their schedules.

Louis: We just took delivery of a new digger derrick truck that will allow us to have two crews setting poles rather than one, and a new pole trailer, so we can respond to the make-ready needs of the CUDs. What it does is dig holes and set poles in them.

Beyond broadband make-ready work, this is a piece of equipment we needed soon, in any case. It will certainly be a benefit to use in maintaining power lines and our regular power infrastructure as well.

Community Fund

Louis: One of the exciting things about this job for me is working on the Community Fund. The grants go primarily to help groups working in our territory, and to help people in our territory. But one thing I really like a lot is we focus on those organizations that don't have a robust fundraising infrastructure of their own – whether that's local food pantries, or parades and celebration events, or other benefits for the community.

These are organizations that, like WEC, are very connected to their communities, involved in the day-to-day life of people in the towns we serve.

Co-op Currents

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

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The Board of Directors' regularly scheduled meetings are on the last Wednesday of each month, in the evening. Members are welcome to attend. Members who wish to discuss a matter with the Board should contact the president through WEC's office. Meeting dates and times are subject to change. For information about times and/or agenda, or to receive a copy of the minutes of past meetings, contact Administrative Assistant Rosie Casciero, at 224-2322, or visit wec.coop/board-of-directors.

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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*.



They operate like we do, reliant on volunteers and community support. It feels right and fitting we'd support organizations doing that kind of work. Our WGDR donation [see "I love WGDR, and the chickens love it, too"] is a good example: that's a service that many people in our territory listen to and are aware of, and it exists for the same reason WEC does: there was a need that wasn't being provided, and wouldn't be provided if it didn't exist, and community members made it happen.

Steve: When we say WEC is supporting these valuable community activities and functions, we should point out that WEC, the utility, is not doing this. These are WEC members donating their capital credits every year and saying, "I want WEC to select deserving organizations my donation goes to." In addition to the community receiving the benefits, it's the community donating the resources to do it. WEC is happy to be the conduit for our members' generosity.

Louis: Exactly. And any effort like this shows a number of small donations – the amounts members donate from their capital credits – come together to have a big impact on these organizations' missions.

September events

Louis: We're hosting a member cookout at our Operations Center on Saturday, September 10. We missed out on in-person Annual Meetings for the last couple of years because of Covid. We also want to welcome members to the warehouse to see WEC's field operations. Most people haven't been there for a few years. Meet fellow members, meet members of the Board, and talk in an open way about the Co-op and our communities. It's really exciting for me as a new GM to have that opportunity. I'm very much looking forward to it.

We also have a new training yard that the line crews built at the warehouse, a series of poles and wires that crews can work on to do our training. It'll be an opportunity to see what that looks like as well.



It's become widely believed in Vermont and beyond that replacing fossil fuels with efficient and careful use of electricity makes a lot of sense. The change to the customer charge and kilowatt hour rate is one small piece of that broader change.

– Louis Porter

Steve: This is an occasion merited by the fact we haven't had the opportunity to meet with interested members. We users of electricity just flip a switch and turn it on. I'm fascinated to go to a place like the warehouse to see what's needed to actually provide this service. To actually see all the equipment WEC needs to provide reliable service in all weathers. I'm always impressed by it, and it's a recognition to me that nothing I get is easy or can be taken for granted. There are real people who provide this service using investments that Co-op members are willing to make. It's interesting and entertaining to meet the people involved in providing your power.

Louis: We're used to it, but we shouldn't assume that others understand

how it works, why it works, even that it works. This gives people a picture into how 35 people or so provide electricity for 11,000 households.

There's a very significant asset that Washington Electric owns up in Coventry. It's something that belongs to the members and that provides 70% of their power. We will open it to visitors on Saturday, September 17, when Casella holds their first open house at the landfill in two years. This is a chance to see five massive engines running off of landfill gas that would otherwise be flared into the atmosphere. Instead, it provides power for a large number of households around our 41 towns. I think it'll be interesting and educational for people to see what the plant looks like and how it operates.

Steve: It's exciting, it's noisy, and it's interesting for people to know exactly how their power is generated, especially to see one of the variety of creative ways in which local renewable energy is generated around the state. It's going to be a growing interest in the coming decades how utilities either reach or, in WEC's case, maintain our commitments to getting power from renewable energy resources.

Louis: There's been a tremendous amount of renewable development of many types and scales. Coventry is

baseload renewable power. Provided the gas is there, it's on and running. That's a remarkable and valuable thing to have. Washington Electric was one of the pioneers in developing it. It fits well with both the environmental mission of Washington Electric and our provision of electrical power.

Growing membership

Louis: We're an overwhelmingly residential territory in terms of power use. We're unlikely to see in Washington Electric territory major new manufacturing or retail facilities of large scale that would be big power users. As Vermont is increasingly appealing to people from other places, both for the potential to work remotely and for concerns facing people in other parts of the country, we're going to see the attractiveness increase of living in our territory. It's hard to say how much of our increase in membership is due to those factors, but I'd guess what we're seeing is the start of a trend that's going to continue, people seeing our corner of Vermont as an appealing place to live and work if you have a job that allows you to work remotely.

Steve: I admit I didn't arrive in Vermont with the express idea to be served by an electric co-op, but now that I am, I'm more interested in the idea of public services, whether it's electricity or food co-ops or whatever. I hope new members will take to the model and participate in cooperatives and, when they can, consider serving on the board of our Co-op to serve their community as representatives of their fellow members. There's a benefit to participating in getting our power from a co-op owned by ourselves, not tasked with making returns to investors outside our community. That's what I've learned as a Co-op member; I'm really a member of a community I didn't initially realize I was a member of.

Louis: We're serving more people: more lines, more transformers, more everything. It has an impact on member services and operations. A bigger impact for us is that the expectations new members have are very different, if they're coming from someplace not rural and served by a utility with a much denser territory. In an area like ours with relatively few members per mile, storms have a big impact, power lines are away from the road, we have a relatively small staff. A lot of people are not accustomed to service interruptions, the length of time it takes to restore power, and other things people from this area are used to. They're not wrong to expect a lot of the service they're provided



There are real people who provide this service using investments that Co-op members are willing to make. It's interesting and entertaining to meet the people involved in providing your power.

– Stephen Knowlton

by the Co-op. It does mean there needs to be a process of education in both directions, both from members to us in their expectations and priorities regarding the level of service vs. the cost of electricity; and from us, explaining it's just not the same as getting your electricity in a dense urban area.

Steve: If we're getting a strong influx of new members, we obviously have to invest money in providing service to them, whether that's new hookups, pole extensions. Not all this can be covered under "contribution in aid of construction." Are there investments the Co-op will have to make? Loans the Co-op will have to take on, which

we'll pay off presumably through increased revenue? It's not a given that more customers means more revenue.

Louis: It's also important to note we expect members to pay for costs they cause. While of course there are additional costs to the Co-op, we try to adhere to the principle that those who cause the cost pay for it. Upgrades to service are paid for by the member in general, and we try to assign them fairly.

ReWire pilot

Louis: There's an issue that utilities in the state face, which is: How do we make sure that the benefits of electrification and new electric technology and knowledge are shared among people in a fair and equitable way, whether their income allows them to fully participate or not?

One of the big challenges for people who want to install a charger for an EV or use some other technology is that to take advantage of that beneficial electrification technology, their electrical infrastructure may need to be upgraded. ReWire is a pilot project to figure out how to provide assistance to income-qualified members for getting some of those upgrades done.

Washington Electric started the pilot with a grant from VLITE and in partnership with Capstone. Since then, the state and governor have put \$20 million into a program very similar to ReWire. What Washington Electric learns from ReWire will be crosspollinated into the state program, including in Washington Electric territory, and help utilities across the state, and the state itself, on a much larger scale. 

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WGDR

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to program shows – all remotely – as the pandemic continued.

And the community has come through. Through volunteer efforts, grantors like WEC's Community Fund, and individual donations, Central Vermont Community Radio is finding the resources it needs to stay on the airwaves. Mulvaney-Stanak said they get notes all the time that show how embedded the station is in its community. A favorite said, "I love WGDR, and the chickens love it, too. I play it in the barn for them."

Radio personalities

Mulvaney-Stanak is a seasoned nonprofit consultant, though they may be as well known throughout Vermont as a DJ for events and radio. When they caught word that WGDR/WGDH was transitioning to community-owned radio, they offered to volunteer their services – and soon, the board was able to offer them a paid fundraising gig, and then asked them to manage the station.

It's their dream job, they said, and it's satisfyingly full-circle. "I got my start as a high school programmer on WGDR," they remembered. "I grew up in Barre, and in high school my mom would drive me to Plainfield to do probably the worst radio show of the 90's." As their taste and expertise developed, they continued to stay involved in community radio, helping form low-power radio stations in Burlington and programming shows all the while. One thing that makes Central Vermont Community Radio special, they said, is that it's a full-power station with substantial reach – different from most community-owned radio stations, which reach listeners in only about a 10-mile radius.

What else makes WGDR/WGDH



Central Vermont Community Radio programmers gather outside the station on the Goddard campus.

special? Programmers who reflect back to the community exactly who they are. "There's a vibe, a sound to WGDR. It's so Central Vermont," Mulvaney-Stanak said appreciatively. "There's this attentiveness to place, to community, to social justice, to having complicated conversations. The eclecticism of our programming is in tune with the community already." There's the host who leaves kohlrabi outside the station door and invites listeners to come snag one. Music heads whose shows range from grassy Dead Hours to all-electronic instrumentation to freeform shows that refuse to stick to one genre.

There are also many talk shows. Some are on topics of intersectional community interest: the land and our relationship to it, rights and justice, current events, and experience –

such as Indigenous life, queerness, feminism, childhood and parenthood.

Others are specifically steeped in art and culture. Rick Agran compiles his "Bon Mot" program thematically, like a scrapbook of recordings, weaving together clips from old records, internet spoken-word archives, music, and recordings he's made in person of poetry readings and conversations.

Tonio Epstein, a WEC member from Middlesex, has programmed "Magical Mystery Tour" for about 10 years. Every week he reads a book, takes lots of notes, processes his notes, interviews the author, and then edits his hour-and-a-half long show down to an hour for syndication on the Pacifica network. "I interview authors who I find to be particularly interesting, creative, on the cutting edge of new ideas and new ways of approaching the problems

of the world, people who are deeply caring and trying to bring about change and inspire others to live up to that in their own personal way," he explained. He's interested in education, parenting, psychology and neuroscience, and spirituality, and he likes to go deep into his conversations. "I get to read about things that I would be interested in, anyway. And now I can share it with people."

Epstein finds much media toxic. Most media platforms bombard us with information, much of which is calculated to trigger a reaction in us, he explained, and frequently on topics that are outside our control. The breaking news cycle wears us down and makes us less tuned into our own communities, he suggested. He talked about this in reference to TV news, but it's true of social media newsfeeds as well. "I just love the medium of radio. It allows a more personal engagement without having your nervous system hijacked so profoundly," he said. And community radio is different still. "Our sources of media are extremely important, and we should be intentional about how we choose them," he said. "For those reasons, WGDR is an important voice. It's really important to have alternative issues and also different, alternative perspectives. It's why I feel motivated to do all the work I do in my show to offer a counterbalance to the bombardment of horrors."

An intimate broadcast

Community radio is a platform for holding conversations on topics overlooked by mainstream media. It's also a platform for holding a community that can't physically be together, as programmers and listeners found when beloved "Lost Highway" host Ken Feld died in February. The station held what Mulvaney-Stanak called a "live radio wake." Programmers Dave Tucker and John Foster hosted a live show, playing music their friend used to play as family members and friends called in with remembrances.



Queer Nation Radio broadcasts from the Central Vermont Community Radio station.



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“We provided that connective power for two hours and did all those things that help create closure, sharing love of things, reminiscing. That’s the uniqueness and adaptability community radio can have,” Mulvaney-Stanak said.

At the core level, Mulvaney-Stanak loves radio because of its intimacy. “As humans, we’re literally wired to connect to human voices,” they said. “When there’s no visual element to distract you, radio makes it just like, it’s me and

you. I’m talking just to you, I’m playing just for you. You’re invited into the conversation in this undeniably intimate way. And most likely in Vermont, you know that person on the air, or you know who they are.”

The nature of community ownership, Mulvaney-Stanak suggested, points to a symbiotic relationship between WEC and Central Vermont Community Radio. Both were formed by people who realized that their communities were missing a key service and decided to provide it for themselves. For WEC, that was electricity; for WGDR, it was media. Both are owned

Depending on your location, you can find Central Vermont Community Radio on the dial at WGDR 91.1 FM and WGDH 91.7 FM. You can also stream it at CentralVermontCommunityRadio.org.

To support Central Vermont Community Radio with a donation or volunteer interest, visit CentralVermontCommunityRadio.org.

Central Vermont Community Radio, 123 Pitkin Road, Plainfield, VT 05667

by and accountable to their own community members.

This is why Central Vermont Community Radio appreciates ongoing support from WEC’s Community Fund, Mulvaney-Stanak said. “How we do anything is how we do everything,” they

said. “That goes for what we put on the air, the vibe and culture of the station, and how we fund this and resource ourselves. When mission-aligned organizations support each other, we uplift the community. We show there are better ways to do things.” 

About WEC’s Community Fund

WEC’s Community Fund is made up entirely of member contributions. About 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 802-223-2322 or email Rosie Casciero at rosie.casciero@wec.coop.

WEC Community Fund Grant Recipients

Adult & Teen Challenge of New England
 AWARE Domestic & Sexual Violence Service
 Barre Community Justice Center
 Barre Opera House
 Barre Partnership
 Boy Scouts Of America Green Mountain Council
 Bradford Public Library
 Brookfield Community Partnership
 Cabot Mentoring
 Center For an Agricultural Economy
 Central Vermont Adult Basic Education
 Central Vermont Career Center
 Central Vermont Council on Aging
 Central Vermont Home Health and Hospice
 Central Vermont Humane Society
 Chelsea Arts Collective
 Chelsea Public Library

Connecting Hope
 Corinth Historical Society
 Danville Chamber Of Commerce
 Duxbury Land Trust
 Ecoforesters
 Faith In Action
 First Branch Ambulance
 Friends of The Mad River
 Girls/Boyz First Mentoring
 Good Beginnings of Central Vermont
 Good Samaritan Haven
 Groton Community Club
 Hardwick Area Food Pantry
 Hardwick Historical Society
 Hunger Free Vermont
 Jaquith Public Library
 Just Basics
 Kellogg-Hubbard Library
 Mad River Valley Recreation District
 Mad River Valley Rotary Club
 Make a Wish Foundation Vermont

Montpelier Alive
 Neighbors in Action
 North Branch Nature Center
 Northeast Kingdom Council on Aging
 Old Brick Church
 Orange County Parent Child Center
 Peacham Library
 People’s Health & Wellness Clinic
 Plainfield Historical Society
 Prevent Child Abuse Vermont
 Roxbury Free Library
 Rural Vermont
 Salvation Farms
 Studio Place Arts
 T.W. Wood Gallery
 The Center For Grassroots Organizing
 The Veterans’ Place
 Toys For Tots
 Twin Valley Senior Center
 Twinfield Together Mentoring Program
 U-32

Upper Valley Haven
 Vermont Agricultural Hall of Fame
 Vermont Center for Independent Living
 Vermont Community Garden Network
 Vermont Community Loan Fund
 Vermont Council on Rural Development
 Vermont Foodbank
 Vermont Granite Museum Stone Arts School
 Vermont Historical Society
 Washington County Mental Health Services
 WGDR / Central Vermont Community Radio
 Woodbury Volunteer Fire Department
 Worcester 4th of July Committee
 Worcester Historical Society

Fall Membership Gathering

Join WEC for an in-person membership gathering and cookout lunch on **Saturday, September 10, 2022** from 11 AM - 3 PM at the WEC Operations Center, 230 Fassett Road in East Montpelier. Lunch is free and available by reservation only. RSVP at wec.coop/events or by mailing in the form on p. 1.



Come to the Operations Center on September 10 for lunch and an in-person member gathering. RSVP at wec.coop/events.

Open House at Coventry Landfill

Join WEC and Casella Waste Systems for the first open house at the landfill since 2019! Tour WEC’s generation plant and learn how landfill gas is captured to generate electricity. **Saturday, September 17**, 21 Landfill Lane, Coventry, VT. Details to come on wec.coop/events.



Rights-of-Way 101: Responsibilities and Practices

What is a right-of-way?

A right-of-way is a type of easement that gives utilities the right to access private land in order to maintain shared infrastructure, such as poles and wires. Most of WEC's power lines are distribution lines, which have a 20-foot right-of-way on either side of the line. Transmission lines have a 100-foot right-of-way.

Rights-of-way exist so utilities can restore power after outages, make repairs and updates, and manage vegetation growth under the wires in order to keep our electricity service safe and reliable.

What is WEC's responsibility?

WEC's primary responsibility is to provide our renewable electric power to our members safely, reliably, and affordably. In order to do that, we need to keep our rights-of-way clear of large trees likely to fall in the direction of our lines, and clear of brush on the ground. Vegetation may interfere with the wires, and during an outage, it makes power restoration difficult, less safe, and slow. WEC also has a responsibility to show respect for our members through communication and environmental stewardship.

Investing in safety and reliability

Conditions related to climate change are affecting WEC's lines: stronger storms, tree diseases, and invasive species like the emerald ash borer cause stressed or dead trees to fall on our wires. WEC has invested more money into right-of-way clearing in order to prevent these dangerous outages. It is more economical for WEC to invest in prevention than in outage restoration and cleanup, and it improves reliability.



A cleared right-of-way prevents trees from falling on wires and allows operations crews to easily see and access poles, making restoration and repair safer and faster. WEC uses no herbicides to clear rights-of-way.

What is the landowner's responsibility?

Landowners have the responsibility to allow WEC crews access to rights-of-way. That means allowing crews to reach the lines by vehicle and on foot. It also means not using rights-of-way for planting and storage. It is dangerous to put wood piles, equipment, or vehicles in rights-of-way. Small trees must be planted at least 20 feet away from power lines; taller trees must be planted at least 50 feet away. Landowners and members also have the responsibility to call WEC when they see vegetation making contact with power lines.

WEC's right-of-way clearing practices

WEC's operations crew and subcontracted tree crews work in rights-of-way. Crews use chainsaws and other equipment to remove brush and trees. In roadside rights-of-way, members may see crews using bucket trucks to reach branches. In rural rights-of-way, crews may use all-terrain vehicles and climbing equipment. WEC also owns a forestry head skid steer mulcher to clear large stretches of undergrowth.

WEC crews always attempt to contact landowners before accessing rights-of-way on their properties. Good wood is

left for the landowner's use. Other wood may be mulched on site.

All vegetation management is done by hand: WEC does not use herbicides in rights-of-way. 

Outage? Trees or branches leaning on the wires?

Contact WEC immediately: 802-223-5245 or toll-free: 1-800-WEC-5245.

Remember to never move a tree off the wires yourself, and never approach downed wires.

Washington Electric Co-op is committed to the safety of our team and our members.

ENERGY COACH SAYS:

Call Your Contractor

Thinking about weatherizing your home before the winter?

Ready to replace your inefficient or fossil fuel appliances with a new, efficient device – made more affordable through financial incentives from WEC and Efficiency Vermont?

Make an appointment with your contractor today. Materials are scarcer than they used to be, and it takes longer than in the past to get the work done. Don't delay.

Some members may be eligible to have weatherization work done at no cost to them through the community action agencies in WEC's service area: Capstone and NEKCA.

Curious about incentives available to you? Contact the Energy Coach today: 802-224-2329 or energycoach@wec.coop.



Sign up for Outage Alerts on SmartHub

As of May 15, 2022, Washington Electric Co-op is sending emailed notifications of scheduled outages through SmartHub. To continue receiving outage updates by email, you must sign up through SmartHub, accessible through wec.coop.

Outage updates will continue to be posted on the Outage Center page of wec.coop, and auto-calls will be generated to those affected by outages.

By updating your notifications settings in SmartHub, you will receive targeted, real-time information about the outage affecting your line, delivered right to your phone or email. You can also receive billing and usage alerts.

If you don't yet use SmartHub, you can start today: it's accessible by computer, tablet, or smartphone. Call in an outage, manage your usage, pay your bill, and review your payment history all in one place.

If you would like help setting up your account, a WEC Member Services Representative will be happy to help: call 802-223-5245.

Where's WEC?

Summer is here, and crews are busy working to keep rights-of-way clear. Right-of-way maintenance is necessary to keep your power safe and reliable.

Where are tree crews trimming WEC's roadside rights-of-way?

Williamstown:

- Cold Spring
- Ferno
- Flint
- George
- Orange
- Riddell
- Slate Hill Drive

Worcester: Minister Brook, Calais

Middlesex: Shady Hill

For up to date information:

[wec.coop/wec-operations/
right-of-way-notice](http://wec.coop/wec-operations/right-of-way-notice)



New ReWire Pilot Program Offers No-Cost Electrical System Upgrades To Eligible Members

If your home was weatherized by Capstone, you may be eligible for electrical system upgrades that help reduce fossil fuel costs and get you ready for electric vehicles

Washington Electric Cooperative and Capstone Community Action are partnering on a project to upgrade the electrical systems of some WEC members. Called ReWire, the project aims to give members electrical capacity for new electric devices – before a furnace or vehicle fails and replacing it becomes an emergency. Many electric devices save their

owners more money and are more environmentally friendly than their fossil fuel counterparts. But to install them right away, members must have adequate electrical service in place. A consumer shopping for a major device may want the new, efficient model, but needing electrical system upgrades – and needing to pay for it – can prompt them to instead install a fossil fuel replacement that works with the

existing electrical system.

“There are episodes where you have to react quickly, and if there’s an economic barrier, you just lost the opportunity to transition, and you locked out that option for another 20 years,” explained Bill Powell, WEC’s Director of Products & Services.

Powell worked with Paul Zabriskie of Capstone to develop the ReWire program and secure VLITE (Vermont

Low Income Trust for Electricity) grants to cover costs for the pilot. Eligible members will have their electrical systems upgraded, at no cost to them. This means that when the hot water heater quits working, they’ll be ready to install a new heat pump water heater instead of another fossil-fueled appliance. “It’s a big need. It’s called future-proofing,” said Powell.

In addition, WEC and Efficiency Vermont offer stackable cash incentives and attractive financing options to purchase the more efficient equipment on the market.

Who is eligible?

The pilot ReWire program is only available to those WEC members whose homes have already been weatherized by Capstone and who are currently enrolled in fuel assistance (LIHEAP). The reason is twofold: the key weatherization work has already been done – reducing drafts and improving air quality is almost always the first step in any home heating upgrade. Second, those members eligible for Capstone weatherization have already been identified as income-eligible for the purposes of the grant. At this time, no other WEC members are eligible for the program. Eligible members will receive a letter by mail inviting them to participate.

If you think you may qualify, contact Kyle McDonald at Capstone Community Action on 802-477-5257, or email kmcDonald@CapstoneVT.org.



Button Up 2022 Incentives for WEC Members

Thermal Incentives

Weatherization



WEC

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

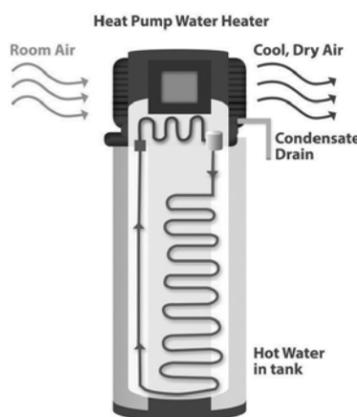
Efficiency Vermont

- Receive 50% of project cost back, up to \$1,000. Income-eligible for up to \$5,000. See efficiencyvermont.com/HP for details.

Heat Pump Incentives

WEC & EVT 2022 Heat Pump (HP) Incentives

	Point of purchase discount ¹	WEC bonus incentive
Ductless - ≤2 tons	\$350	\$250
Ductless - >2 tons	\$450	\$250
Ducted - ≤2 tons	\$1,000	\$250
Ducted - >2-<4 tons	\$1,500	\$250
Ducted - ≥4 tons	\$2,000	\$250
Air to water (A2W) heat pump	\$1,000/ton	\$500
Ground source heat pump (GSHP)		
	EVT	WEC
Up to 10 tons:	\$2,100/ton	\$2,000
10-20 tons:	\$1,500/ton	\$1,000
20-50 tons	\$1,000/ton	\$ 500



¹ Point of purchase discount applied; provided by Efficiency Vermont

Heat Pump Water Heater (Hybrid) Incentives¹

	Point of purchase discount ¹	WEC bonus incentive ¹
Replacing conventional electric hot water	Up to \$600	-
Replacing fossil-fired hot water system	Up to \$600	\$250

WEC encourages members considering purchase of HPWH to select unit with CTA-2045 communication port, to enable future participation in a Co-op load management program

Pellet Stoves, Furnaces, and Boilers

WEC

- \$250 for first time installation of wood or pellet stove; replacement unit for existing stove is not eligible for either Efficiency Vermont or WEC incentives.

Efficiency Vermont*

- Central wood pellet furnaces and boilers: Work with an Efficiency Excellence Network contractor to install a wood pellet boiler or furnace and get \$6,000 back (includes \$3,000 purchase rebate and \$3,000 installer incentive).

Note: WEC incentives of \$600 or more require a completed W-9 form. Please return a completed and signed copy of the first page of your W9 form to WEC. Download the form here: <https://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/fw9.pdf>.

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

802.224.2329 • energycoach@wec.coop

Future-proofing

Eligible for ReWire? You can still prepare your electrical system. Contact Bill Powell, the Energy Coach, with interest and a photo of your service entrance (fuse box) at energycoach@wec.coop or 802-224-2329. wec.coop/energy-coach-home

Curious about weatherizing your home? Contact your community action agency, Capstone or NEKCA, to see if you are eligible for services at no cost to you. NEKCA partners with NETO to complete weatherization work.

Capstone:
(802) 479-1053
1-800-639-1053

NEKCA:
(802) 334-7316

Go Green.
Go Electric.
Go WEC!



New Coaching Program Helps Vermonters Improve Their Financial Health and Climate Impact

This winter, the price of heating oil spiked. This spring, gasoline topped \$5 per gallon in some parts of Vermont. Many of us are feeling the pinch of inflation and cost of living increases. For years, community action agencies have offered income-eligible Vermonters support in managing their finances. Now, a new statewide program ties together financial and energy coaching, making more seamless the process of cutting costs and saving energy.

“Basically, we wanted to bring low and moderate income Vermonters into the climate conversation,” said Kelsey Gibb, the statewide team lead of the new coaching program. The program, launched in March, is state-funded and organized through the Vermont Community Action Partnership, and there’s a coach at each community action agency. In WEC’s service area, that’s Capstone and NEKCA. All coaches work within the statewide program GreenSavingSmart (GreenSavingSmart.org), and also have the freedom and flexibility to bring in partnerships and incentives that exist within their own agency or region. That means, for example, that a WEC member who works with Capstone’s coach, Laurie Kozar, might also end up connecting with WEC’s own Energy Coach, Director of Products & Services Bill Powell, for incentives the Co-op makes available to its own members.

The program developed, Gibb explained, out of community action agencies’ robust financial counseling programs, which serve households earning up to the state median income, or higher with other factors, such as reliance on a single income, or if individuals in the household identify as BIPOC or New American. People with less means are disproportionately affected by the cost of energy, said Gibb, and financial coaches noticed



Livingstone and Rachel Lohia with the 2017 Kia Nero hybrid they purchased through MileageSmart – and reduced their gas spending from \$40 per day to \$40 per week.

that often, their clients’ financial struggles were tied directly to the high cost of heating and transportation: drafty homes, low-MPG vehicles.

One thing financial coaches noticed, Gibb said, was that some Vermonters who qualified for the MileageSmart program, which helps income-eligible Vermonters purchase used high-MPG vehicles, faced difficulty financing the balance of the vehicle cost. The new coaching model helps smooth the path between financial and energy decisions. The program’s aim, Gibb said, is to “fill the gap between programs, build skills, and connect participants with programs and incentives that already exist.”

Kozar, the coach at Capstone, described how coaching could help reduce a household’s bills and emissions simultaneously. Someone might call a coach for help with their finances, she offered, and going over their expenses, their home heating bills show they’re a candidate for weatherization. Or: their gas vehicle won’t pass inspection, and they need help building their credit score to apply for a loan to get a new vehicle, and they discover the MileageSmart program offers \$5,000 toward a newer hybrid. “The role of a coach is to say, ‘This way! These services are over here,’” Kozar said. She links clients with financial partners for low-interest loans and green energy incentives. Coaches work closely with Efficiency Vermont, NETO (Northeast Employment and Training Organization), credit unions, and utilities, among others. She helps clients crunch

numbers and see their monthly bills drop and their credit scores rise.

And every client’s situation is unique. “The program by nature has to be infinitely flexible,” said Kozar. “Heat pumps and EVs aren’t one size fits all.” Someone who drives a low-MPG vehicle but lives in a village with a very short commute, she suggested, may not be a candidate for an EV. “We’re not going to increase a client’s financial burden or energy usage: we’re trying to solve the problem in the best possible way with a focus on financial and energy usage.”

The coaches have participated in training to learn more about various energy incentives in Vermont, but their primary energy expertise is in making the right connections for their clients. Earlier this year, Bill Powell led a training for the coaches. Kozar, a former WEC member, said bringing in Powell was a no-brainer. “He’s so

knowledgeable and has been doing this stuff for so long, he has great resources he could refer us to. I know I can refer clients in WEC’s territory to WEC, and Bill will provide them with great service.”

MileageSmart

The coaching program partly grew out of MileageSmart, and aims to make MileageSmart work better. It’s a program Powell points to as a key support in making high-mileage cars more affordable and lowering emissions in Vermont’s transportation sector.

And while the coaches are very familiar with the program, you don’t need to go through a coach to access MileageSmart. The program focuses on replacing expensive, low-MPG, high-emissions vehicles with used high-MPG hybrids and EVs by covering 25% of the sticker price up to \$5,000. The balance is covered by any combination of trade-in, cash, and/or financing. “It’s not about promoting EVs so much as a high-mileage vehicle that suits your budget,” explained Powell.

Rachel Lohia bought a car through MileageSmart in 2021. When she learned about the program on Front Porch Forum, her husband, Livingstone, was driving for Lyft and their car was “a Jeep Cherokee that was guzzling gas,” she remembered. They filled out the application form on MileageSmartVT.org, and went to an electric vehicle fair at Harwood Union High School to see some vehicles in person. She did her own research, by her own choice and interest, she said, but

added that a coach’s support would be helpful. MileageSmart also sent her listings and dealership locations for available vehicles, and took care of the paperwork.

When it came time to trade in the Jeep and pick up their 2017 Kia Nero hybrid, Lohia said, “we just had to show up with a check.” And just like that, her family’s spending on gas went from \$40 a day to \$40 a week.

Where to begin

Members who need general support managing their finances and bringing down their household costs are advised to start by filling out a quick coaching eligibility form on GreenSavingSmart.org. A coach will reach out directly to eligible members. You can also contact Capstone or NEKCA, the community action agencies operating in WEC’s service area.

Members who are interested in the MileageSmart incentive can start at MileageSmartVT.org to determine eligibility and check vehicle availability. The program serves Vermonters who are at or below 80% of the State Median Income, or \$67,300 for a family of four.

Members interested in purchasing an EV who may not qualify for MileageSmart are still eligible for WEC’s EV incentives – between \$1,200 - \$1,900 for a new EV – and should contact Bill Powell directly. An EV is a big addition to household load; your transformer, wire, and service entrance (or fuse box) need to be assessed and possibly upgraded before you plug it in.

Plus: WEC offers many incentives for weatherization and home heating upgrades that can be stacked with incentives from Efficiency Vermont and financed at low interest. A community action agency coach can help you navigate the best choices for you and your household within your own financial situation and lifestyle; for a la carte services, contact Bill Powell, WEC’s energy coach. 

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.

Find a financial & energy coach

[GreenSavingSmart.org](https://www.greensavingsmart.org)

Capstone:
(802) 479-1053
1-800-639-1053

NEKCA:
(802) 334-7316

Find an efficient vehicle

[MileageSmartVT.org](https://www.mileagesmartvt.org)

Learn about WEC incentives

[wec.coop/energy-coach-home](https://www.wec.coop/energy-coach-home)
energycoach@wec.coop
802-224-2329

