

VREEM is a monthly electronic newsletter published by Renewable Energy Vermont.

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News

1. Poultney Kicks Off "Change a Light Challenge"

Poultney - With the help of Efficiency Vermont, Williams Hardware, and students at Green Mountain College, Poultney residents launched an energy efficiency initiative designed to have statewide relevance.

On October 4, Poultney residents embarked on the "Change A Light Challenge," a program that encourages every resident of the Village of Poultney to swap at least one incandescent light bulb in their home for a new energy-efficient light bulb. Energy efficiency bulbs were provided free of charge to each household, compliments of Efficiency Vermont.

The goal of the program was to replace at least 500 light bulbs during the month of October. As of October 23, 937 bulbs had been changed throughout the area.

During the kick-off event, residents were able to ride a stationary bike that demonstrates the amount of energy needed to illuminate an incandescent light bulb versus an energy-efficient one. The Village of Poultney also hosted a chili cook-off, sidewalk sales, and a parade.

"It takes a village to change a light bulb. We're proud to work with Poultney and hope that other Vermonters will join them in the Change A Light Challenge," said Blair Hamilton, managing director of Efficiency Vermont.

For more information:
www.greenmtn.edu
www.encyvermont.com

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2. DPS Announces Renewable Energy Incentive Program

Burlington - Vermont Department of Public Service Commissioner David O'Brien

announced the rollout of the Vermont Solar and Wind Incentive Program at Renewable Energy Vermont's annual conference on October 8.

As passed by the 2003 Vermont legislature, the program utilizes funds from the petroleum violation escrow fund to provide incentives to homeowners for qualifying solar electric, solar hot water, and small wind systems. \$522,900 is available in the solar and small wind fund.

The available incentives are expected to support the installation of approximately 120 to 150 new renewable energy systems in Vermont within a twelve to twenty-four month period, depending upon the size of installations and market reaction to the program. The program incentives are expected to cover approximately 35% of the total installed cost for eligible systems, according to the Renewable Energy Resource Center (RERC) Web site.

The RERC, a project of the Vermont Energy Investment Corporation (VEIC), will administer the incentive program and provide consumer education and support services. Applications for the program are now available on the RERC Web site.

For more information:
www.erc-vt.org

3. Vermont Bank Announces Low-Interest Renewable Energy Loan

Burlington - Chittenden Bank recently announced a new loan program designed to help finance residential renewable energy systems.

The program offers a reduced interest rate home equity loan when used for renewable energy purposes such as solar hot water installation, solar panels for electricity generation, residential wind turbines, etc.

Starting October 1st and running for 6 months, the interest rate on five-year home equity loans will be discounted 1.00% when the loan is used for renewable energy systems. The minimum loan amount is \$5,000 and the maximum amount is \$50,000.

For more information:
Call (800) 642-5181 or visit www.chittenden.com

4. New Grassroots Group Formed to Support Vermont Wind Energy

Londonderry - A citizen's group dedicated to the promotion of wind energy in Vermont was recently established in southern Vermont.

Fairwind Vermont seeks to "foster a positive view of wind power's potential for the state," according to Rob Roy Macgregor, one of the group's founders. "We'd also like to serve as a clearinghouse for wind energy information throughout the state," Macgregor said.

Started in mid-September by Londonderry-area citizens who support the proposed 40 MW Glebe Mountain wind farm, the group aims to demonstrate that there is grassroots support for proposed wind energy projects throughout Vermont.

Since its inception, Fairwind Vermont has attracted about 40 members and is seeking paid memberships, donations, and grant funding to help cover start-up expenses. The group is applying for non-profit status and intends to develop several state chapters as a way of supporting wind energy

projects across Vermont.

The organization's members have actively participated in the Glebe Mountain collaborative meetings and have helped organized an energy independence presentation by John Berkowitz from Southern Vermonters for a Fair Economy and Environmental Protection.

As the debate around wind energy in Vermont progresses, "we'll continue to inform Vermonters about the benefits of clean, sustainable and renewable wind energy sources at the local and state levels," Macgregor said.

For more information:
Fairwind Vermont
P.O. Box 52
Londonderry, VT 05148
Windfair@webtv.net

5. Survey Indicates Proposed Wind Farm Won't Hurt Tourism

Montpelier - According to a new survey, 95 percent of visitors to Vermont's Northeast Kingdom would not be deterred from further visits by the existence of a proposed four-turbine wind farm. And of visitors who ski, 92 percent said they would ski in the same region if the wind turbines were located on the nearby ridgeline.

These are some of the findings of a new survey conducted for East Haven Windfarm, which is proposing a four-turbine demonstration project atop East Mountain in the town of East Haven, Vermont. The survey, conducted by the Institute for Integrated Rural Tourism, contradicts claims by wind farm opponents that wind turbines would hurt tourism in the Northeast Kingdom.

"The more evidence we gather, the more we are convinced that wind turbines do not drive people away from an area," said Mathew Rubin, president of East Haven Windfarm. "In fact, we believe that our project will become a tourist attraction itself, and we're planning facilities to accommodate visitors."

The survey asked questions of 102 visitors at the Waterford and Lyndon information centers off Interstate 89 on five separate days to find out whether visitors would be deterred from visiting the area if the East Mountain Demonstration Project were to be built.

When survey respondents were asked to view a photo simulation of the installation along with the question: "Would the presence of these four wind towers deter you from visiting this region of Vermont?" 95 percent said no.

Visitors responding to the survey came from around the United States, as well as from overseas, and had numerous destinations within Vermont, including Barton, Newport, Burlington, Stowe, Greensboro, Woodstock, Middlebury, St. Johnsbury, and Jay Peak.

For more information:
www.easthavenwindfarm.com

6. State May Get Help in Purchasing Dams

Montpelier - More than a dozen public and private power companies...are interested in partnering with Vermont to buy the hydroelectric dams on the Connecticut and Deerfield rivers.

"We've gotten quite a lot of interest. There's a fair amount of curiosity, including major players in New England. Many of them have contacted us, and likewise we are contacting others," said Prescott Hartshorne, vice president of Lexecon of Cambridge, Mass., the state's consultant on the proposal.

In early October, the Vermont Renewable Power Supply Acquisition Authority (VRPSAA) voted to investigate such a partnership and asked Lexecon to pursue it on its behalf.

"The state's looking to fulfill where it doesn't itself have core competencies, such as managing the marketing, running the plants, and potentially looking for someone to co-invest," Hartshorne said.

"The hydros are attractive," he said. "There's a certain appeal to the hydros. It is cheaper power; there are no fuel costs to fund; they are environmentally friendly, relative to something like coal."

Sen. Vincent Illuzzi, R-Essex/Orleans and a member of the authority, agreed. "The great interest expressed shows what a valuable asset these facilities are," he said. "Working together, we can all benefit."

The renewable energy authority was set up by the 2003 Legislature to investigate the feasibility of the state buying the hydroelectric dams. The goal was to reduce Vermont's reliance on non-renewable energy and cut the state's high electric rates.

The VRPSAA is expected to have a recommendation ready for the current Legislature by Dec. 1.

(This article was excerpted from the October 12, 2003 issue of the Time Argus as reported by Susan Smallheer)

7. DPS Opposes Renewable Portfolio Standard Plan

Montpelier - The administration of Governor James Douglas is opposing a proposal to require Vermont's utilities to buy some of their power from environmentally friendly sources.

In comments filed with the Public Service Board, which regulates utilities in Vermont, the Department of Public Service said the board should consider whether electric rates might rise under such a proposal.

"The [department] believes that a Vermont [green power requirement], as currently envisioned, will neither serve to advance renewable technology at the national level, nor provide significant improvements in Vermont's environmental quality, nor provide a strong engine for economic growth in the state," wrote Jonathan Lesser, Director of Regulated Planning for the department charged with advocating for ratepayers.

"Instead, [a green power requirement] may exacerbate already high electric rates and weaken the Vermont economy," Lesser wrote. "Something the state's residents and businesses can ill afford."

Lesser's comments came as the Public Service Board considers how to draft a law that mandates utilities buy some of their power from sources like wind turbines or other environmentally friendly sources as called for in the renewable energy bill that passed the Legislature this spring.

A requirement that utilities buy 1 percent of their power from green sources in 2006, and an additional one percent every year until 2015, "... is

expected to result in a net savings to Vermont customers," said the report by Cambridge, Massachusetts-based Synapse Energy Economics.

But the Department of Public Service disputed the firm's predictions, arguing that if green power costs were expected to be that low there was no need to require utilities to buy them since by law they were supposed to purchase the cheapest power they could.

(This article was excerpted from the September 29, 2003, issue of the Time Argus as reported by David Mace)

Features

Company in the Sun: Clean Energy Group

Clean Energy Group (CEG) is a nonprofit organization in Montpelier, Vermont dedicated to increasing the use of clean energy technologies in the United States and abroad through creative financing, business partnerships, public policy, and advocacy. CEG promotes both national and international collaborative initiatives that form networks of public and private investors for clean energy markets and technologies.

CEG works with public officials from around the United States who are responsible for over \$3 billion in new clean energy funds. The organization also manages the Clean Energy States Alliance (CESA), a new nonprofit organization assisting these funds in multi-state strategies and joint projects.

CESA collects and disseminates information and analysis, conducts original research and helps to coordinate joint activities of 17 state funds in California, Connecticut, Illinois, Massachusetts, Minnesota, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island and Wisconsin. In the process of its work with these funds, CEG helps state officials, developers, and others who share an interest in developing clean energy markets and new funds in states that want to create these programs.

CEG was started in January 1998 to promote policies and programs that support replacement of the existing electricity generation system with new, less polluting power generation technologies. Lewis Milford, president and founder of CEG, was formerly a vice-president of Conservation Law Foundation (CLF) and headed its energy project during the restructuring negotiations in New England. CEG employs four full-time professionals and other support staff.

For more information:
Clean Energy Group
50 State Street, Suite 1
Montpelier, VT 05602
(802) 223-2554
www.cleanegroup.org
info@cleanegroup.org

Ask the Energy Expert: Greg Liebert, Vermont's Alternative Energy Corporation

Question: What exactly is "biodiesel" and what are its benefits over regular diesel fuel? Also, how much potential is there for a Vermont biodiesel industry?

Greg Liebert answers: Biodiesel is a renewable and alternative biofuel and a direct replacement for petroleum diesel and heating oil.

Biodiesel is an all-natural, biodegradable, and non-toxic fuel made from vegetable oil or animal fat. The oil or fat is converted to fuel through a process called transesterification, in which molecules within the oil or fat are transformed into two major components - fuel and byproduct (glycerin). This glycerin can be further refined to make a food, cosmetic, healthcare, or pharmaceutical-grade glycerin.

Using biofuels in a conventional heating system or diesel engine results in a substantial reduction of unburned hydrocarbons (known carcinogens), carbon monoxide, and particulate matter (soot), compared to the emissions from heating oil or diesel fuel. A 1998 study, jointly sponsored by the U.S. Dept. of Energy and U.S. Dept. of Agriculture, concluded that burning 100 percent biodiesel instead of petroleum reduces net CO2 emissions by 78 percent. Stated simply, burning biodiesel creates a closed carbon cycle: as the fuel is burned, it releases CO2 into the atmosphere, all of which is recycled by growing plants, which can be later processed into fuel. Consequently, biodiesel is considered a carbon neutral fuel.

The potential in Vermont for the biorenewables industry is immense. Every diesel engine, whether on-road or off, is a candidate for biofuel, as is every oil burner for home and building heat. For every gallon of biofuel used, there is one less gallon of petroleum burned thereby further endangering our environment, economy, and national security.

Greg Liebert

Greg Liebert is President and Chairman of Vermont's Alternative Energy Corporation (VAEC). For more information about VAEC, please visit www.vaec2000.org.

Events

Saturday, November 1, Warren

Passive Solar Design Workshop, sponsored by Northeast Sustainable Energy Association and held at Yestermorrow Design/Build School. John Ringel of Jersey Devil Design/Build will be leading a full-day exploration of passive solar for residential buildings. This workshop will include the basic design, theory, and methods required to maximize the solar potential of your present or future home; lectures, slide shows, and hands-on demonstrations will offer looks at how to best use passive design for home heating, cooling, and daylighting. Tuition: \$95 NESEA members/\$120 non-members, includes handouts and lunch. AIA Continuing Education Credits are available at no extra cost. Register: www.nesea.org/buildings/workshops/#passive

Saturday, November 1, Burlington

Annual Community Family Day. Fleming Museum. As part of the 19th Annual Community Family Day, the museum will offer children's activities and information regarding wind energy to interest children in the Rembrandt paintings of Dutch wind turbines. \$3 admission for adults and children. Information: 656-0750

Saturday, November 18, 9:30 a.m. - 4 p.m., Warren

Green Homes Tour of the Mad River Valley, Yestermorrow Design/Build School. This day-long tour will visit a variety of "green" homes in the Mad River Valley and will focus on sustainable design principles, including passive and active solar design, energy efficiency, off-grid systems, and

alternative and non-toxic building materials. Meet the owners and architects of these innovative homes! Transportation from site to site is provided. Registration: \$35 (lunch is available for an extra \$8 or you can bring your own). Register: 496-5545.

About VREEM

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