

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

=====

In this issue:

*News

1. Vermont State Auditor Urges Efficiency in State Buildings
2. Utility Close to Agreement with Wind Farm
3. Groups Work to Halt Wind Projects
4. Richford Group Explores Combined Heat and Power System
5. Trade Association Launches Renewable Energy Business Directory
6. Vermont Nonprofit Announces Energy Initiative

*Features

Op-Ed: Thomas Stevens on Vermont Wind Energy

*Events

=====

News

1. Vermont State Auditor Urges Efficiency in State Buildings

Montpelier - Vermont could save up to \$2.7 million annually if it put in place energy conservation measures in state-owned buildings as envisioned in the State Agency Energy Plan, according to a special report issued by State Auditor Elizabeth Ready.

The Auditor's Office examined the State's ongoing efforts to comply with the 10-year-old energy plan and released its observations in a review entitled Turning up the Heat on Savings. □

"Vermont has been recognized as a national leader in promoting energy efficiency through Efficiency Vermont, the statewide energy efficiency utility, but 'in-house' efforts to reduce costs in dozens of state-owned buildings have fallen well below the bar set in statute," Ready said.

"Many private companies are able to reduce energy costs by 20% - 30 % through cost-effective conservation steps offered by Efficiency Vermont," Ready said. "At those rates, we estimate the State of Vermont could cut between \$1.2 and \$2.7 million from its total energy bill each year," Ready said.

The Auditor's Office recommends that:

* The State should develop a system to track electric and fuel consumption as a first step toward analyzing and reducing costs.

* State leaders should establish clear goals and specific targets for achieving energy efficiency.

* The government should fully use innovative financing and energy programs, such as those run by Efficiency Vermont, to help the State save money.

"The Douglas administration has brought a strong focus on finding efficiency in state government, and this is one area that could benefit from strong immediate action," Ready said.

For more information:
www.state.vt.us/sao

2. Utility Close to Agreement with Wind Farm

Lyndonville - The Lyndonville Electric Department (LED) is close to signing a deal with EMDC, parent company of East Haven Windfarm.

Attorney Bill Piper outlined the details of the agreement to Lyndonville trustees on January 19. Piper is representing LED in the negotiations and told the board he had followed his "marching orders" as presented by LED manager Ken Mason.

"I was told LED wants to cooperate but at no cost to LED ratepayers," Piper said.

East Haven Windfarm wants to build four 1.5 kW wind turbines on East Mountain in East Haven. Power generated from the wind will be sold to LED.

Under the agreement, every kilowatt-hour of electricity generated by the windfarm will be sold to the New England Power Pool, which is operated by the Independent System Operator in New England. For every one dollar sold, Piper said, LED will get 5 cents. If all goes well, this should amount to about \$97,000 a year.

"It's not a lot of money, but it is going in the right direction," Piper said.

East Haven Windfarm has applied for a certificate of public good with the Public Service Board and is now in the permitting process. LED must also apply for the same approval for a new transmission line to serve the wind turbines.

"LED can't lose money because of this (contract)," Piper told trustees. "It's a win for LED."

(This article was excerpted from the January 20, 2004 issue of the Caledonian-Record as reported by Jeanne Miles.)

3. Groups Work to Halt Wind Projects

Three citizens' groups opposed to wind turbines on Vermont's mountaintops asked state officials on January 28 to halt wind power development

The Kingdom Commons Group, the Glebe Mountain Group and the Lowell Mountain Group asked the governor, the Legislature and members of the state's environmental community to support legislation calling for a moratorium on wind turbine construction until a statewide policy is in place.

"I hope we put a stop to them statewide," said Don Nelson, a founder of the Lowell Mountain Group. "We're trying to make people aware that the State has got to become involved in the long-range siting of these towers."

The groups will push for a moratorium on wind turbines on public and private land.

The Vermont Agency of Natural Resources intends to have a plan for wind

turbine use on state-owned lands later this spring.

"Nothing will even be considered on state lands until we adopt an agency policy," said Michael Fraysier, land administration specialist for the agency.

Senator Ginny Lyons (D-Chittenden) is chair of the Senate Natural Resources committee. She said although she is concerned about industrial development in high-elevation environments, she's not sure a statewide temporary ban is the answer. "It's inappropriate for the State to declare a moratorium for use of private property," Lyons said.

Only one wind turbine project is before the state's Public Service Board. Wind developer Matthew Rubin has proposed a four-turbine demonstration project on privately owned land in East Haven.

(This article was excerpted from the January 28, 2004 issue of the Burlington Free Press as reported by Matt Crawford.)

4. Richford Group Explores Combined Heat and Power System

Richford - Members of the Richford Wood Initiative (RWI) began a pre-feasibility study in January to examine the potential of a biomass-fueled combined heat and power (CHP) plant to be installed in Richford.

The study will cost approximately \$20,000 and is being co-sponsored by the Biomass Energy Research Center in Montpelier and Vermont Electric Co-Op (VEC). The VEC supplies power to about 16,350 users throughout Vermont.

Project coordinator John Osbourne said that project will both generate electric power and supply district heating to the town through a hot water pipeline system. The idea, he said, is to cleanly burn local wood to distribute heat to buildings in downtown Richford. □ The fuel would be derived from wood chips from local forests.

RWI member Dan Parsons said the project would bolster the local economy and may insulate the town from power disruptions as 30% of the energy of the wood fuel could be converted to electricity with the remainder going to produce heat.

(This article was excerpted from the January 6, 2004 issue of the St. Albans Messenger as reported by Linda Collins.)

For more information:
www.ncfcnfr.net/richford.html

5. Trade Association Launches Renewable Energy Business Directory

Montpelier - Renewable Energy Vermont (REV), a trade association made up of Vermont-based renewable energy businesses and interested individuals, has officially launched its web-based renewable energy business directory.

The directory provides access to websites or detailed descriptions of approximately 70 state and regional businesses. The searchable database allows users to locate businesses based on the type of technology desired, the business location and the types of services the business provides.

REV's executive director, Andrew Perchlik, says that the time is right for

just such an information clearinghouse: Every year more and more people are looking into installing renewable energy systems at their home or business. This resource will make it much easier for consumers to find what they are looking for. □

The directory can be accessed at <www.vermont.org/search_result.php>.

For more information:
www.vermont.org

6. Vermont Non-Profit Announces Energy Initiative

Montpelier - The Vermont Sustainable Jobs Fund (VJSF), a nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting the economic health and environment of Vermont, has announced its newest initiative, the Vermont Clean Energy Project (VCEP).

A component of VJSF's Cornerstone Project, VCEP is designed to harness the buying power of the state's major institutions to develop and use clean energy sources. Current Cornerstone partners include the University of Vermont, Fletcher Allen Health Care, Middlebury College, and the Vermont Department of Buildings and General Services.

The Cornerstone Project identifies economic and environmental opportunities, □ said Cornerstone project manager, Ed Delhagen. The fact that Vermont imports so much of its energy creates the potential for real economic and environmental improvement. Vermont has the natural and business resources to generate a large percentage of its energy from renewable sources and efficiency savings. □

VCEP's goals are to create 100 high-quality jobs and foster production of 75 billion British Thermal Units of energy (an amount roughly equivalent to a small wind farm) from in-state renewable energy sources and energy efficiency savings, by 2005.

For more information:
www.vsjf.org

Features

Op-Ed: Thomas Stevens on Vermont Wind Energy

As far as I can tell, the current opposition to wind farms boils down to three arguments: their cost, their unsightliness and whether they offer truly clean energy. And while the conversation will continue until the turbines are built, lines of information and misinformation have already been marked, with some of the usual vitriol.

Some recent letters to the editor discuss the large subsidies the wind farms will receive, implying that subsidies are somehow un-American and anti-free trade. Let's look at some numbers: of the nearly \$13 billion in federal subsidies earmarked for energy, over \$12.5 billion will be given to currently conventional forms of energy: nuclear, coal, oil and gas. Only \$500 million will be given to alternative and renewable energies, such as solar, wind or hydro. Then there are these statistics: if all cars and SUVs sold in the United States were re-engineered to increase their gas mileage by 15%, we wouldn't need Middle Eastern oil at all. In some cars, that amounts to just three miles per gallon. In a Hummer, it's only 1.8. Or how about this: According to the International Center for Technology Assessment,

in a study published before the U.S. war on Iraq, if you added up tax subsidies of the oil industry, government program subsidies, protection costs involved in oil shipment, and the environmental, health and social costs of gasoline usage, you would get a total between \$558 billion and \$1.69 trillion dollars. Given these considerations, the true cost of a gallon of gas at the pump ranges between \$5.60 and \$15.14. Before accusing wind power of being expensive, we must acknowledge that our cheap gas or oil doesn't really come cheaply at all.

Compare the actual cost of producing conventional forms of energy, then, with the proposed cost of wind farms in Vermont. The government's tax subsidy of \$.018 per kilowatt hour requires that producers to be making a profit, as well as power, in order to take advantage of the tax credit. This drive for profit motivates wind developers to devise increasingly less expensive ways of making power from the wind (typically by leveraging advances in engineering and economies of scale), and is quickly bringing the costs of wind power costs in line with conventional energy sources - to the point where the subsidy will no longer be needed. Think of it: Without any financial support, wind will soon compete with conventional sources, which themselves are heavily subsidized. Put simply, wind energy offers a superior value.

Moreover, the concept of wind power is about taking responsibility for the wants and needs of a state that demands more and more electricity. If wind power were to be fully realized in the few areas allowed in Vermont, it could provide up to 20% of stable future energy needs in Vermont, an important number to consider as Vermont's energy needs climb by 1% a year.

Other recent editorials have described how ugly the turbines will be. Reaching compromise on aesthetic appeal may be more difficult than sorting out statistics, unless you attach environmental responsibility to the discussion: wind turbines on a few mountaintops in Vermont may lessen some views, but they are unquestionably less disruptive than the burning fires in the Iraqi desert during the first Gulf War, the oil slicks from the Exxon Valdez, or fires generated by the devastating meltdown at Chernobyl. Wind energy will be cheaper, no matter what the subsidy, because we won't need to employ an army or two to ensure its supply.

Finally, to argue - as some have - that wind power is not clean is often to deny a bigger picture that we cannot responsibly overlook. Compared to the way we harvest oil, coal and gas, harvesting wind energy is an immaculate process. While the discussion about wind energy's hidden costs and potential for environmental degradation must go on if we are to fulfill wind's potential, it should not happen in a vacuum. We must discuss wind's cleanliness within the context of conventional energy's blatant uncleanness.

It is our responsibility to let our legislators know that it will always be cheaper, and cleaner, and just good business to support renewable energy, including wind, in Vermont.

Thomas Stevens is president of the Board of Trustees of Waterbury Village. This editorial originally appeared on 104.7 The Point's commentary series, "That's the Way I See It."

Events

Monday, February 2, 3 - 5 p.m., Hanover, N.H.
Energy: Options and Consequences, panel discussion, 13 Carpenter Hall, Dartmouth College. Panelists are Ed Kintner, former director of fusion development for the U.S. Energy Research and Development Administration, and

James Hornig, founder of the Dartmouth Environmental Studies Program and Network. Moderator is Agnar Pytte, past president of Case Western Reserve University and former Dartmouth physics professor. Part of Public Policy Issues Informed Decision Making: 2004 series sponsored by ILEAD (Institute for Lifelong Education at Dartmouth). Information: (603) 653-0154.

Wednesday, February 4, 7 p.m., Norwich
Meeting of Sustainable Energy Resource Group at the Norwich Library. SERG promotes energy conservation, efficiency and renewables through the formation of town energy committees to help residents, businesses and the municipalities reduce energy consumption, save money, move toward renewables, strengthen the local economy and improve the environment. SERG has formed committees in Norwich, Thetford, Strafford, VT, and Hanover, NH and is supporting the efforts of these groups and working to form additional committees in other Vermont and New Hampshire towns. Information: Bob Walker, (802) 785-4126, SERG@valley.net.

Wednesday, February 18, 9 a.m. - 4 p.m., Montpelier
Environmental Citizens' Lobby Day. Democracy is a tool that works best when used by many hands. VPIRG (the Vermont Public Interest Research Group) and other environmental groups are sponsoring a citizens' lobby day at the Vermont statehouse. From the invasion of genetically-modified organisms (GMOs) in our farm fields to finding clean, renewable sources for our future energy needs, citizens will be sharing their concerns with representatives and senators. No prior statehouse experience is needed; organizers will brief you on issues and lobbying techniques at the start of the day. Sign up at:
www.vtEnvironmentalLobbyDay.org/register.php?a=VPIRG. Information: info@vtEnvironmentalLobbyDay.org.

Thursday, February 19, 9:00 p.m. (check listings) Vermont Public Television
Vermont Wind: Looking Towards our Energy Future
VT Public TV will be showing this documentary on wind energy in Vermont. Following the half hour documentary there will be an opportunity for viewers to call in with questions and comments.

About VREEM

VREEM is a monthly electronic newsletter published by Renewable Energy Vermont with a grant from the Vermont Department of Public Service and U.S. Department of Energy funds secured by U.S. Senator James Jeffords.

VREEM editorial staff:
Greg Strong
Andrew Perchlik
Bronwyn Becker

We want and need feedback and information from our readers. Please e-mail any comments, story ideas, events, complaints, diatribes, or unabashed praise to the editors at vreemnews@yahoo.com.
The editors can also be reached via the REV office at 802-229-0099.

To subscribe to VREEM, please visit www.REVermont.org and click on "Newsletter Sign-up." To unsubscribe, send an e-mail to vreemnews@yahoo.org with the word "unsubscribe" in the subject heading. If you receive unwanted duplicates of VREEM, send us a message at vreemnews@yahoo.org indicating your preferred e-mail address.