

Creature Comforts ~ Salmon are Back!

By Michal Smith

As I write this article the salmon have already been seen in the Nehalem River and plans are being solidified for the annual community wide Salmon Festival.

Every year the "salmon run" and the Vernonia Salmon festival are a marvelous phenomenon to behold.

Of equal gravity is the condition called Salmon Poisoning that dogs can come down with as a result of ingesting raw fish that contain toxic parasites. Generally, clinical signs appear within six days of a dog eating an infected fish with death occurring in 14 days. Only

10% of dogs survive if left untreated. If you suspect that your dog was wandering near the river, a stream or lake with salmon or wild fish and may have ingested raw fish, or if they ate garbage that may contain fish, tell your veterinarian if you see any of the symptoms since the condition can cause death: vomiting; diarrhea; lack of appetite; fever (over 104 degrees); bloody diarrhea; weakness; dehydration; depression; eye or nose discharge; or weight loss.

If the condition is caught early, the treatment will include an antibiotic and a de-wormer to help with the parasite. If your dog is dehydrated then intravenous fluid will be needed. Once treatment has started there should be an improvement within a few days. Infected

dogs can develop an immunity to protect against future problems.

So, as we enjoy the salmon in the river and long fall walks with our dogs in tow, we should be mindful of the risks and employ close supervision over our canines as it is the best preventative measure over this devastating condition.

New in the store are the Aspen dog beds in burgundy and mocha, perfect fall colors for your pooch to recline in; and keep up on your pets' flea treatments at least until winter with in-store sales on Advantage II, Adams and Seresto products this month. Open Mon-Fri 10-6; Sat 10-5; Sun 12-4; 503-429-PETS (7387).

WOEC Current: Board Approves New Rate Structure

By Marc Farmer

At the regular September Board Meeting, the WOEC Board of Directors discussed and approved restructuring the rate schedule and approved a rate increase effective October 1, 2013.

We have heard and considered differing views and respect the right of each member to express their preference in an appropriate manner. We are not doing this because we like high rates, we are doing this as it is our considered position that an increase is required to meet our lender requirements, provide reasonable service and reduce future revenue requirements (less borrowing, lower interest on what we have to borrow based on our financial condition). We understand the hardships and frustrations that our members face, but we must make responsible financial decisions for the overall well-being of the Co-op.

The purposes of the rate restructuring were to:

cover the increased costs from BPA to the wholesale power rates of 9% and transmission rates of 11%, cover the cost of debt service to the loans from the four storm events and resulting projects, increase the tree trimming to reduce outages and resulting overtime expense, rebuild the depleted reserve account for future storm events, pay for increased costs of goods and services to the co-op, and to increase debt payments in order to reduce debt load. Reducing the debt load will help bring the equity ratio back up to 35%, allow us to restore borrowing ability for future projects and/or maintenance, and stabilize or even potentially reduce rates in the future.

The rate schedule will remain a declining block rate but will change from a three tiered rate structure to a two tiered rate structure. The first tier will be from 0 to 1,500 kWh of usage and tier two will be from 1,501 kWh on. This

was done to more evenly distribute the costs of maintaining and operating the system. There will be an overall rate increase of 14%, with part of the 14% being an increase on the base charge of \$2 and the remaining portion of the increase on the kWh charge. The new Residential rate will be: Base Charge \$37.00, Energy Charge 0-1,500 kWh \$0.1385 and over 1,500 kWh \$0.1051. (Please see our website at www.westoregon.org for the full list of rate schedules under the "News" tab, "New Rates Starting Oct 1, 2013".)

There were several rate proposals for the board to consider regarding the setting of new tiers, whether to put no increase on the base charge, \$2 or \$4 (there was no proposal to the board to consider increasing the base charge to \$67), and proposals that would increase rates in 2% increments. The board chose 14% instead of 12%, because it reduced

the amount of time it would take to replenish the reserve account and pay down debt sufficient to restore equity ratios back to 35% from 4 years to 3 years, and potentially be able to absorb the next BPA rate increase in 2015. By going to 14% now, it will provide for rate stabilization and reduce some of the risk from future storm events going forward.

All of the reasons and objectives behind the need for the rate increase are sufficiently covered in the approved rate increase. It was noted by the board that it is all contingent on our ability to survive any future storm events of significant magnitude. This explains the urgency to replenish the reserve account as quickly as possible before another event occurs. If all goes well, the hope is that this will be the last rate increase for at least two years and potentially four years, again, if all goes well with Mother Nature.

Stop Vampire Power Usage

By Sarah Rossi

Vampire Power (also referred to as Phantom load) could be haunting you!

This October we would like to announce our new WOEC program to help members identify the worst offenders, or biggest vampires, in their homes. One way to fight back and take control of your household usage is to use a Kill A Watt Monitor to track the amount of electricity your appliances are using.

West Oregon Electric Cooperative



has started a new program to loan out these energy monitoring devices to members free of charge! You may check out a Kill A Watt monitor for 30 days and use it in your home to plug in different devices to see how much power they are actually using while you are asleep or away from home.

If you would like to start fighting your vampires, just come into the WOEC office and fill out the form to borrow a Kill A Watt Monitor. For more information on this new program please contact me, Sarah Rossi, at the WOEC office 503-429-3021 or memberservice@westoregon.org.

WOEC Board Approves Rate Hike *continued from front page*

Following the public comment portion of the meeting, the Board of Directors deliberated and discussed the possible scenarios, and voted to implement a 14% overall increase that includes a \$2 increase in the base charge and a change to a two tier rate with 0-1,500 kWh at one price and usage over 1,500 kWh at a lower cost.

In additional co-op news, Marc Farmer has completed contract negotiations and accepted a position with the Clatskanie PUD. The Clatskanie PUD will contract for Farmer's services from WOEC starting October 1 through December 17th. Clatskanie will reimburse WOEC one half of Farmer's salary and benefits during this time. Farmer will be working on the budget process for

both utilities since both budgets need to be approved at the December Board Meetings. Farmer has presented a schedule of the days he will be working at each utility for the remainder of the year to both boards. His last official day at WOEC will be Tuesday, December 17th, where he will officially step down following the board meeting. He will then become the full time General Manager of Clatskanie PUD on December 18th.

Vernonia's Voice is published on the 1st and 3rd Thursday. Our next issue will be Oct. 17th.

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