

## Business Notes

# London will head WOEC directors, VanNatta will lead new board

The 2002 West Oregon Electric Cooperative (WOEC) annual meeting was business as usual, with one exception on the board of directors.

Randall Aultman will succeed Joe Riley on the board of directors as the representative from District 3. Riley was unable to run for re-election due to a change in residence out-

side the district. Aultman ran unopposed following district nominating meetings, as did District 7 director David Hess. Both were elected to three-year terms.

"We are sorry to see Joe leave the board," said Robert VanNatta, outgoing board president, "but we are pleased to have a candidate of the caliber

of Randy Aultman to take his place."

Aultman, a long-time Vernonia resident, retired from a career in education, most recently as principal of elementary schools in Vernonia.

"These are challenging times in the power industry," said Aultman. "I look forward to helping find new ways to serve the membership and to keep rates as stable as possible."

In other business, VanNatta reported on regional power supply issues, including an expected rate increase from the Bonneville Power Administration (BPA).

"We don't know what the BPA will do, but we don't expect it to be as severe as the rate increase last fall," VanNatta said. "We will keep you informed as this unfolds."

WOEC Chief Financial Officer Royce Hagelstein reported that, despite the sharp increase in wholesale power costs last year, the cooperative was able to maintain a strong financial position, primarily due to the receipt of funds from a prior settlement with Portland General Electric.

"If it weren't for those funds, we would have seen a small operating loss due to power supply costs," reported Hagel-

stein. "The good news is that, over the last five years, we have been able to rebuild member equity and cash reserves, a sign the co-op is on the right track."

"The only costs passed on to members in the October rate increase were those related to power costs," continued Hagelstein. "Since that time, the co-op has used cash reserves to buffer the impacts of additional power cost increases."

General Manager Russell Green commented on the efforts of a group called Willamette Valley Power and their attempt to purchase Portland General Electric from its bankrupt owner, Enron.

During the question and answer session, Green briefed the membership on the co-op's entry into telecommunications through the NoaNet Project. "We expect to be ready for business by October," said Green. "Our long-term goal is to bring telecommunications infrastructure to the rural communities of Northwest Oregon."

At the conclusion of the meeting, the board selected its

slate of officers for the coming year. Serving as president will be Dixie London; Robert VanNatta is vice-president and Sam Hearing is secretary/treasurer.

The board also selected officers in an organizational meeting for the Columbia Broadband board, the co-op's telecommunications company. VanNatta will serve as president, David Hess as vice-president, and Randy Aultman, secretary/treasurer.

West Oregon Electric Cooperative serves more than 4,000 members in portions of Columbia, Clatsop, Yamhill and Washington Counties. Headquartered in Vernonia, the cooperative has provided electric service since 1944.

## Wilcox & Flegel will close for three days to complete paving

The Wilcox & Flegel cardlock service will be closed August 23, 24 and 25, to complete the paving needed for their new station and access roads.

A diesel fuel truck will serve customers from 2:00 to 6:00 p.m. on Friday, Aug. 23, and the cardlock will be open for full service early Monday, Aug. 26.

"We want to express thanks and appreciation to our customers for their patience during the construction process," said Lori Barber, commercial sales manager for Wilcox & Flegel. "They've been really great."

More improvements are planned for the Vernonia property, but they will not interrupt customer service.

## ODF budget untouched thus far

The Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF) budget emerged from the Oregon Legislature untouched, according to an article by Ed Merriman for the Oregon Small Woodlands Association (OSWA) newsletter. The article reports that OSWA lobbyist Kristina McNitt said that, since the ODF budget reflected a five percent increase over the previous biennium, she had concerns that programs important to small woodland owners might be targeted.

However, since most of the funding for ODF programs is provided through industry fees or matching funds, like most natural resource agencies, ODF funding was not cut. Small woodland owners may be affected by the shifting of \$1 million previously budgeted, to implement a statewide pesticide reporting system as part of the backfill of the state's budget deficit. According to McNitt, the program will be deferred until 2003. Woodland owners are required to file pesticide use reports, just like farmers, and can do so electronically on the Oregon Department of Agriculture internet site.

The ODF budget has also been affected by the busy fire season. Budget adjustments in the last special session includ-

ed \$8.3 million in federal grants and other funding for fire fighting costs. Recent announcements by Governor John Kitzhaber have indicated that the need for additional funds may be addressed in the upcoming special session.

## Vernonia summer water rates in effect

Summer water rates for City of Vernonia water consumers went into effect July 1, 2002, but will not be reflected on water billings until the end of Au-

gust. Summer rates, which were adopted last year in an effort to promote water conservation, will apply through September.

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