

## Power of the People

By W. Marc Farmer,  
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### Where Do We Go From Here?

Like many of our members, we are busy trying to recuperate from the flood and decide what our next move will be. As a result of the December 2006 wind storm and the wind and flood from this last storm, we have several significant challenges we are working on at the same time. When I say significant, it is due to that fact that, collectively, the cost is over \$10 million dollars. I will walk through each of them with you, their dollar impact, and what we have been doing to address them. I have presented each of these challenges to our local, county, state, and federal elected officials and are seeking their assistance.

The first challenge comes from the December 2006 wind storm which damaged much of our main transmission line running from Timber to Elsie. This 16-mile line goes cross country through heavily wooded areas where the right-of-way is only 40 feet and the trees on both sides of the line are over 100 feet. Though I only got a "C" in geometry, I am smart enough to figure out that when the winds blow and the trees fall, the trees are going to take out our transmission line every time. We have one shot under current FEMA rules to underground this line, and for the next 40 to 50 years eliminate this problem. While it is more expensive than putting it back up overhead, it will pay for itself many times over in fewer repairs and replacements. This project will cost about \$3 million. FEMA will cover about \$1.5 million, leaving us with the challenge of finding the other half. I have met with the Oregon Economic Development Department, and Oregon Depart-

ment of Energy to see if they can offer any assistance. We may qualify for some Pass Through Business Tax Credits, and I am working on the paperwork to see how much we might obtain. Steve Scott is working on mitigation funds to add to our underground project. We project WOEC will need to spend at least \$250,000 which we have already incorporated into our business plan and budget. We will be seeking state assistance on the remaining balance of about \$750,000.

The second challenge comes from finding sources of funds to be able to offer energy assistance to our members who have extremely high bills due to using electric heat to dry out their homes from the flooding. Most of our members will experience higher electric bills, because of the colder weather we had this winter compared to others. We will not be providing assistance for weather-related increases, but hope to find funds to assist our flooded members. We will know of our success in the next 60 to 90 days. We will be working with those members, regardless, to allow them time to pay their bills. We are hoping to raise about \$170,000.

Challenges number three and four have to do with maintaining service to our members during a flood and other emergencies. The Vernonia Substation sits in the flood plain and was flooded both in 1996 and 2007. This time, the water was high enough to get into the reclosures and short out our substation. As this substation is also due to have its transformer replaced, it should be obvious to all that it would make no sense to place a brand new \$425,000 transformer back into the flood plain.

Our backup substation we call East Substation, (by the Chinese Restaurant across town), is also located in the flood plain. Our plan is to build a new main substation for Vernonia out of the flood plain, turn the current substation into the backup, and remove the East substation. We already own property that would be a perfect fit to relocate and build the new Vernonia Sub-

station. The cost of this project is \$1,779,000. I have submitted a request for \$1.5 million through a federal appropriations bill to pay for most of the costs, with WOEC paying the balance. We won't know for a few months whether we are successful or not.

The fourth challenge is our headquarters. WOEC needs to be able to remain focused on trying to keep the power on for our members, not on which boat to take staff out in as we did this flood. I have identified two options. Option one would be to relocate our headquarters to higher ground. I have already selected property for this purpose that would keep us within city limits for continued convenience to our members, and is perfect for our offices and warehouse. Projected costs of this project are about \$5.2 million. As state and federal dollars do not pay for "bricks and mortar", we will need to be creative in securing funds for a new building. Option two, if we are not able to find funding, would be to upgrade our current building (as it is over 50 years old) to hold a second story and move all essential services upstairs. We would have to replace other parts of the building, including the roof, to meet load and seismic requirements. An elevator would also be required for handicapped access. Flood prevention measures would need to be included to protect as much of the first floor as possible. These measures, along with the cost of the second floor would be approximately \$2 million. We are developing plans for both options while we pursue funding. Which option we choose will depend on how much money we are able to secure.

The objective in all of these options is to obtain funding from other sources as much as possible instead of placing the burden on our members. While it is a large challenge, it is one worth devoting the time and energy necessary to achieve these goals. Our success is vital to both you and us. We will do all we can, and check every possible avenue to obtain the funds we all need for the future of WOEC.

## Take Izaak Walton League of America's "Clean Boats Challenge"

The BoatU.S. Foundation for Boating Safety and Clean Water has joined the Izaak Walton League of America's campaign to help stop the spread of aquatic invasive species and is urging all recreational boaters who trailer their vessels to take the League's "Clean Boats Challenge."

The challenge is a quiz at <http://www.CleanBoats.org> that educates boaters and anglers on how to inspect and clean their boats to ensure that lakes and streams are protected from non-native, aquatic hitchhikers.

"Taking the Clean Boats Challenge will give boaters and anglers the information they need to make personal choices that can help stop the spread of invasive species," said BoatU.S. Foundation Director of Clean Water Programs Susan Shingledecker.

In addition to the short and easy-to-complete Clean Water Challenge, the Web site also

includes information on how to clean a boat properly and some tips for trailer boaters. For example, it is recommended that a boat and motor be drained and inspected for mud or plant life before departing the launch ramp. It then should be allowed to dry completely for five days before launching into a different body of water.

The Web site has links to a clean boat video demonstration, and maps identifying the locations and spread of invasive species. An educator's resource guide is also available

at the Web site. Boaters can even take an online "Stop Aquatic Hitchhikers Pledge."

The Izaak Walton League is one of the nation's oldest and most respected conservation organizations with a grassroots network of over 40,000 members and over 300 local chapters across the U.S.

The BoatU.S. Foundation for Boating Safety and Clean Water is a national 501(c)(3) educational and research organization that operates more than a dozen programs including the only accredited, free, online

general boating safety course, a low-cost EPIRB rental program, the "Help Stop the Drops" national clean fueling campaign, a free kid's Life

Jacket Loaner Program, and has awarded hundreds of thousands of dollars in grants for boating safety and environmental projects.

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