

## Power of the People

By W. Marc Farmer, General Manager,  
West Oregon Electric Cooperative



### State of the WOEC Union

The first thing to report on for the year of 2010 and going into 2011 is that we actually made it through 2010 without a significant storm or FEMA event. The number of hours spent on outages was down this last year, to the point that it was the third lowest in the past ten years. One of the big reasons, besides lack of major storm damage, was due to the new Timber/EI-sie transmission line performing exactly as expected. Other than BPA losing power to our substation twice, the line has not had even a blink since it was energized. This line would normally cost us thousands to tens of thousands of dollars each year in costly time, energy and cash, to repair or replace sections of the line from tree and storm damage. By undergrounding the line so that it is no longer exposed to trees and wind, we have drastically reduced or eliminated outages and repairs. The cost savings will pay back over time the expense to underground the line. We are truly grateful to FEMA and Oregon Emergency Management for their substantial financial contributions to making this possible for WOEC and its members.

The new building is progressing ahead of schedule and starting to look like a building now. Walls are going up, trusses are being built, and the roofing should be completed by the end of the month. The drainage lines have been installed in the street and got their first good test during the last heavy rains. They performed perfectly and water that normally would have filled the ditch along Weed and run across to the houses on Weed, instead ran into the drains and down the pipes to Bear Creek. It is exciting to see the work and progress of the new headquarters facility. Local people have been hired for various jobs as promised and our dollars are being spent as local as possible as long as the costs are fiscally within reason. We hope to complete the new facility by the end of July so we can move in during August, in time for our Annual Meeting on the 20th.

The new substation has been put on hold while we work through the zoning and permit process with Columbia County. We hope to be able to start the actual construction of the substation by March with a completion date approximately six months from the starting date.

Our pole inspections have produced some surprising, but positive results. We began the cycle of inspecting each and every pole to determine their strength, treat the good ones to last longer, and re-

place the bad ones so we can proactively avoid outages from a weak or bad pole. We anticipated a 10% rejection rate, but have instead have seen rejection ranges from 2.6% to 5.3%. We will be replacing the bad ones during the non-storm months, further increasing the reliability of our system and reducing outage expenses.

Tree trimming that we increased four years ago has been paying off as well. This has also contributed to the reduction of outage hours and expenses. We have noticed significant reduction in outage problems due to trees in areas where we have done extensive tree trimming. Our goal is to continue to reduce outages and the expenses they cause while increasing the reliability of our system. I am happy to report we are successfully accomplishing our objectives.

## DEQ proposes new uses for "graywater"

As Oregon sees increasing demand on the state's limited water resources, the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality is proposing new rules that will allow Oregonians to reuse graywater for certain limited functions such as garden irrigation and other forms of irrigation. Graywater is wastewater originating from showers, baths, bathroom sinks, kitchen sinks and laundries.

DEQ will conduct public hearings on the graywater proposal throughout Oregon in late February and early March, and is seeking public comments on the proposal through Friday, March 11. The 2009 Oregon Legislature legalized the use of graywater for beneficial purposes if permitted by DEQ, and directed the Oregon Environmental Quality Commission to adopt rules for the permitting of graywater reuse and disposal systems.

While graywater is wastewater, it does not include toilet or garbage wastes. Although it may contain a complex mix of organic matter, suspended solids, bacteria and common household chemicals, when used judiciously and in a manner that takes public health into

account, it can help preserve limited water supplies and emphasize the environmental ethics of reusing and recycling.

The proposed rules are available for public review on DEQ's website at <http://www.deq.state.or.us/regulations/proposedrules.htm> (scroll down to "Graywater reuse and disposal systems.") As proposed, the rules would:

- Establish a public policy to encourage reuse of graywater for beneficial uses such as irrigation
- Establish requirements for all graywater reuse and disposal systems to protect public health and the environment
- Define three types of graywater based on level of treatment and identify reuse activities, treatment and monitoring requirements, setbacks, access and exposure controls, and site management practices necessary to protect public health and the environment
- Establish design and construction standards for graywater reuse and disposal systems
- Create a three-tier permitting system that defines permitting requirements based primarily on volume of graywater produced

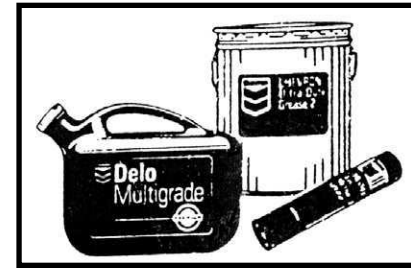
People may submit comments on the proposed rules by mail, e-mail or fax before 5:00 p.m. Friday, March 11. Written comments may be mailed to Ron Doughten, Oregon DEQ, Water Quality Division 811 SW Sixth Ave., Portland, OR 97204-1390. Comments may be faxed to Ron Doughten at 503-229-6037 or e-mailed to [graywaterrules@deq.state.or.us](mailto:graywaterrules@deq.state.or.us).

DEQ will hold four public hearings on the proposed rules including one in Portland. Each hearing will start with a one-hour overview followed by the opportunity to present oral and written comments. The Portland hearing will be held Wednesday, February 23, 5:00 p.m., DEQ Headquarters, 811 SW Sixth Ave., (SW Sixth & Yamhill), 10th floor, Room EQC-A.

DEQ will respond to all comments and may make changes to its rules proposal based on comments it receives. It will present a final proposal to the Oregon Environmental Quality Commission for adoption at the commission's August 2011 meeting.

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