

### Doing the Right Thing About Climate Change



By Michael P. McMahon

If you have detected a shift in the national debate on climate change, you would be correct. The focus in the U.S. Congress is not on whether climate change is a problem, but what to do about it and when.

As the Congress moves aggressively on legislation to curb greenhouse gases — primarily carbon dioxide, or CO<sub>2</sub> — legislators cannot ignore the reality of

energy supply and demand.

The need for a reality-based approach is particularly important for us in the electric cooperative industry, because, according to the experts, the surplus generating capacity that was built up over the years has now run out. In the next 10 to 15 years, we need to increase the generating capacity we own and operate by 50 percent just to meet projected growth in co-op service areas. And coal is the most plentiful and affordable source of fuel today.

New policies regarding coal-based generation at the state and federal levels will have a dramatic effect on our power production and electric rates.

Some folks tout renewable energy as the answer to reducing CO<sub>2</sub> emissions as well as postponing or barring power plant construction. Others urge reducing demand through energy-efficiency programs. Vernon Electric has long embraced both renewable resources and energy-efficiency programs. These options are only part of the solutions, however. Unfortunately, there is no single, inexpensive, quick-fix solution, but we must commit ourselves to getting the job done.

The Electric Power Research Institute, an organization of scientists and electrical engineers, has offered a seven-part strategy. To achieve significant CO<sub>2</sub> reductions by 2030, EPRI says we will need to employ energy efficiency, renewable energy, nuclear power, new coal technology, carbon capture technology, plug-in hybrid vehicles, and distributed generation.

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## Member Appreciation Picnic

For the members of Vernon Electric and Vernon Telephone Cooperatives

### Wednesday, August 15, 2007

3 to 7 p.m.

### Retreat Community Sportsman's Club

Between Viroqua and De Soto. Take Hwy. 82, follow Cty. N south to Retreat. Watch for signs.

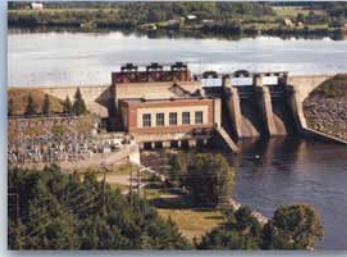
Complimentary pork sandwiches, hot dogs, chips, beans, pop, milk, coffee, and ice cream.

(Sorry, no carryouts available.)



# Evergreen

## Your Energy Choice for the Future



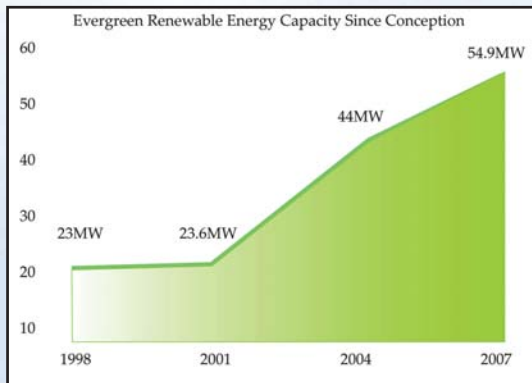
**R**enewable energy sources are getting more attention now than ever before. The topic is frequently discussed by state and federal legislators, regulators, special interest groups, the media, and consumers.

Many of you are interested in supporting renewable energy, but do not wish to make a large investment for a system of your own. We invite you to participate in our Evergreen program as a convenient option. This program provides an opportunity for electric cooperative members in the Dairyland Power Cooperative service territory to voluntarily support the development and research of large-scale renewable electric generation facilities.

adding 20 mw of wind generation in 2008.

By participating in Evergreen, you are supporting Dairyland's increased renewable portfolio and investing in the future of the environment. Your purchase of one 100 kilowatt-hour (kwh) block of Evergreen<sup>SM</sup> renewable energy each month has the same environmental benefits (CO<sub>2</sub> reduction) as planting one-half acre of trees or not driving a car 2,400 miles.

Combining our resources and working together are the most productive ways to develop more renewable electric generation for the future. For more information, visit [www.vernonelectric.org](http://www.vernonelectric.org) or [www.dairyland.com](http://www.dairyland.com). ■



As our wholesale power supplier, Dairyland provides a balanced power supply that is safe, reliable, affordable, and environmentally responsible. Dairyland's diverse "green" portfolio currently includes wind, landfill gas-to-energy, and animal waste-to-energy. Dairyland also supplies renewable energy from the Flambeau Hydro Station near Ladysmith, Wisconsin.

Dairyland is recognized as an industry leader in renewable energy, currently netting about 55 megawatts (mw), and is continuing to grow its portfolio of renewable energy.

During 2007, Dairyland plans to increase its landfill gas capacity by 5.8 mw and add an additional 1 mw of methane digester capacity. Dairyland is also working toward

**YES! I want to participate in Evergreen Renewable Energy. Please sign me up at the following level:**

Number of blocks of energy:	Amount added to my monthly electric bill:
<input type="checkbox"/> 1 block (100 kwh) .....	\$1.50
<input type="checkbox"/> 2 blocks (200 kwh) .....	\$3.00
<input type="checkbox"/> 3 blocks (300 kwh) .....	\$4.50
<input type="checkbox"/> 4 blocks (400 kwh) .....	\$6.00
<input type="checkbox"/> 5 blocks (500 kwh) .....	\$7.50
<input type="checkbox"/> Other: Please specify number of blocks _____	

I understand that this amount is in addition to my monthly electric bill and that my commitment will continue monthly until I notify my cooperative that I no longer wish to participate.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Account No. \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

# RENEWABLE ENERGY Is it Right for YOU?

**R**enewable energy options are receiving a lot of attention as conventional fuel sources rise in cost and concerns about the environmental impact of burning fossil fuels intensify. If you have an interest in learning more about renewable energy because you want to do your part to help the earth, great! If you want to use the sun or wind as a free energy source that will save you money and possibly make you money if you sell excess energy back to Vernon Electric, read on for the economics of renewable energy.

Anyone considering the installation of a renewable system should look into obtaining membership in the Midwest Renewable Energy Association (MREA). The MREA is located in Custer, Wisconsin, east of Stevens Point. An individual annual membership is \$40 and a family membership is \$55. The MREA conducts various workshops and classes covering all types of renewable energy options and sustainable living. The MREA Renewable Energy Fair, held each year in June, is the largest event of its type in the world. You may contact the MREA online through its web site at [www.the-mrea.org](http://www.the-mrea.org), or by dialing 715-592-6595.



*Exhibits at the Midwest Renewable Energy Association Fair included wind turbines and solar panels.*

economics look even worse than these two examples.

## Why Install Renewable Energy?

Okay, so the economics of installing a renewable-energy system aren't real attractive. Why would anyone install such a system? There are a number of "right" reasons for installing a renewable energy system. Most center around the fact that a wind turbine or photovoltaic system is not only a renewable-energy source, but a totally pollution-free source as well, so it's one of the most environmentally responsible things one can do. An array of solar cells on the roof or wind turbine on a 120-foot tower makes a real statement

about the owner's commitment to the environment. If installing a renewable energy system isn't right for you, you can still do your part and purchase renewable energy from Vernon Electric.

Vernon Electric does not generate its own electricity, but rather, purchases it from Dairyland Power Cooperative, headquartered in La Crosse. Dairyland has

a renewable-energy program called "Evergreen" that is available through Vernon Electric Cooperative. Dairyland's renewable energy sources include wind, hydro, landfill gas, and manure digesters. Members pay an additional 1.5 cents per kwh to participate in the Evergreen program. The renewable energy is sold in 100-kwh blocks of energy per month. Participants simply decide how many blocks of renewable energy they want to purchase per month. The Evergreen Program enables members to purchase some or all of their electricity from renewable sources and do their part for the environment without making any investment in equipment. To sign up for the Evergreen program, simply fill out and send in the form on page 5 or you can call our office at 1-800-447-5051 or 608-634-3121. You can also e-mail at [vec@mwt.net](mailto:vec@mwt.net). If you have questions or need more information, visit or web site at [www.vernonelectric.org](http://www.vernonelectric.org) or give us a call. ■



## The Cost of Renewable Energy

The wind and the sun are free energy sources, so renewable energy has to be cheap, right? Well, not exactly. The energy source is free, but the equipment cost is not. In fact, it's rather expensive. A 10,000-watt residential-size wind turbine will cost \$25,000 to \$50,000 to install. On a windy site, it will produce 10,000 to 18,000 kwh per year, or slightly less than \$1,000 to \$1,800 worth of electricity. A 2,500-watt solar-voltaic system will cost \$20,000 to \$25,000 to install and produce about 7,200 kwh per year at a sunny site, which is slightly less than \$720 worth of electricity. After factoring the high equipment cost with the fact that we don't live in the windiest or sunniest place in the United States, the real-world

## Climate Change

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According to EPRI, new technologies such as carbon capture and storage are not yet available and will require an investment of billions of dollars by Congress to become reality anytime soon. A recent Massachusetts Institute of Technology study concludes that widespread application of such technology is more than a decade away.

Those investments and timeline projections seem at odds with the current congressional mindset. There is a reality gap in Washington and across the country on how and when to achieve these goals. We must close this reality gap between imaginary quick-fix solutions and realistic possibilities to reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. It will take a lot of straight talk to get the Congress to recognize the effort will be neither easy nor cheap.

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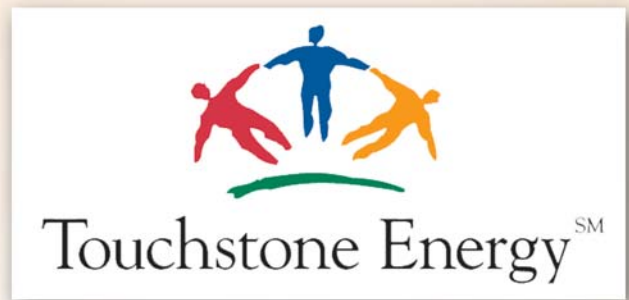
***We will do everything we can to minimize rate increases that will arise as new power plants are built and new environmental regulations add to the cost of power.***

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As a member-owner of Vernon Electric Cooperative, you can be assured that we are doing everything possible to look out for your interests. Vernon Electric and the network of nearly 1,000 co-ops nationwide have two primary concerns as this debate unfolds. Our first concern is to keep the lights on. Second, we will do everything we can to minimize rate increases that will arise as new power plants are built and new environmental regulations add to the cost of power.

We are telling the Congress that any plan to reduce manmade CO<sub>2</sub> emissions should cover emissions from all sectors of the economy, not simply electricity generation. Any climate change proposal should maintain fuel diversity, allowing a variety of fuel sources, including coal and nuclear generation, to meet the energy and economic needs of the country.

America's electric co-ops have pledged to work with the Congress on climate change legislation. The nation needs sound, responsible legislation. Such legislation should provide incentives to increase efficiency and the use of renewable energy sources. Responsible legislation will fully fund research to hasten the development of needed technology. And good legislation will balance the electric bills of consumers, the health of the economy, and the needs of the environment. ■



### National ACSI Score Again Tops Utility Average, Other Industries

Scores from the first quarter 2007 American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI) again place Touchstone Energy Cooperatives well ahead of the utility industry average. Touchstone Energy received a score of 80, while the industry score lagged behind at 73. Touchstone Energy receives a national aggregate score each quarter that consistently falls between 80 and 82.

In addition to topping the utility industry average, Touchstone Energy's score also bested other industries, in some cases by significant margins. An article in the May 15 edition of *USA Today* announced that the airline industry score (63) had dropped below that of the IRS (65) for the first time. A breakdown of scores by individual airlines revealed that United Airlines fared the worst among the seven airlines mentioned in the survey, notching a score of just 56. Southwest Airlines led the pack with a score of 76.

Among other industries, wireless telephone service came in at 68, the U.S. Postal Service at 73, and the hotel industry at 71. Popular brands such as Nike (68) and McDonald's (72) also lagged behind Touchstone Energy's score. ■

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