

*Merry Christmas
and Happy New Year
from Us to You!*



The Board of Directors and the cooperative staff would like to wish everyone the very best as the year comes to a close and of course, a very Merry Christmas and a happy and prosperous New Year.

As cooperative manager, I would like to take this opportunity to especially thank Mary, Don, and Mike for doing what it takes to get the job done and keeping the lights on over the course of a long year.

WISCONSIN PUBLIC SERVICE CAUSES DELAY IN FIBER PROJECT

Our goal of having at least a couple of members lit up by the end of fall was an ambitious one, and with material delays and supply chain issues probably a real stretch, as we have noted before. As we have discussed, key to lighting up the fiber to the Island is the stretch from Gills Rock to Northport. In order to accomplish this, pole contact agreements need to be secured from Wisconsin Public Service (WPS), which owns all the poles except the two at Northport owned by the cooperative. In addition to running their main backbone on the Island and our backbone parallel to it, Nsight is responsible for this part of the project.

Typically, a contact agreement also includes what is called “make ready” costs. Those costs are just as the name indicates: the costs necessary to ensure clearance above the ground, clearance between the neutral and the communications facility (in our case strand and fiber), and any pole loading concerns that may be caused by installation of the fiber. Clearance issues are determined by National Electric Safety Code (NESC) standards and in the case of WPS, they have standards beyond the NESC.

Make ready costs and engineering along this route quite frankly should have been minimal considering that every pole has been replaced as part of reconductoring efforts that began in 2014 and continue throughout the county. Most of these poles are 40' class 3 poles and a good number of them are 50' class 2 poles. These are big poles.

The Public Service Commission of the State of Wisconsin gives utilities 45 days to approve plans and costs or discuss needs from the time they receive the contact plans. WPS received Nsight's study and plans on June 11, 2021. If you look at the calendar, WPS certainly missed the deadline.

The problem we are having is twofold: first, obviously the timing is all bollocked up due to failures on the part of WPS, and second, the computer program that WPS requires to be used to determine make ready needs is indicating that a third of the recently replaced poles need to be replaced again in order to meet NESC codes. The apparent blind dependence on a computer program without the use of actual common sense (my opinion) is ridiculous.

In September, I started questioning WPS (after consulting with Nsight Engineering) and the actual need to replace poles. Based on the figures provided by the computer program, the Frontier contacts already on the poles are in violation of WPS standards. None of the icing standards or heat sag standards imposed by the program could have possibly been applied to these contacts. And ours, which would be placed on the pole above the existing contacts, were failing minimal clearance to neutral under maximum ice sag conditions. Further, if lowered, the contacts would end up being a few inches under the 15'6" clearance requirements that actually exceed NESC requirements.

After numerous contacts, the conversation finally escalated to include upper engineering management, and Nsight and I had a meeting to discuss not only WPS' failure to comply with Public Service Commission timing requirements, but also the insanity of the pole replacement requirements. After we pointed out discrepancies in their numbers they have agreed to revisit the figures provided by the computer program and also the fact that existing pole contacts cannot possibly be in compliance with their own standards.

Obviously, all this will take additional time and then once a determination is made, if changes need to be made, the question remains, who will pay for them?

At this point, we are hoping that WPS/WE realizes that their relationship with the Public Service Commission will be stained, not only by the fact that they are way outside the 45-day window, but also are holding up three Public Service Commission awarded grants totaling just under \$3,000,000. This includes the awarded grant for the Town of Liberty Grove to connect residents along the route in question as well as our pilot project grant in partnership with Nsight and the PSCW ARPA grant we were just awarded.

With any luck, common sense will prevail and Nsight will be able to at least begin installing hardware and strand along the route soon. There is no guarantee though.

Rest assured, we will keep pressure on and the job will get done, but no one is more frustrated at this delay than the cooperative and our partner Nsight.

WORK (AND LIFE) GOES ON

With the bad news (which is part of life) of the previous column, we want to assure you that we are not only continuing to receive equipment and supplies, but installation work here on the Island is continuing. As of this writing, we were on track to complete the modifications to the old meter shop in the office required to house the headend equipment by the end of November. This involves relocating a door, installing a dedicated electric panel, and prepping for the installation of the racking and grounding equipment required.

Shortly after that work is done, we expect to schedule Quantum to the Island to assist us in assembling racking and setting up for the Calix/Juniper equipment as well as the DC powerplant equipment that will be installed in the racking. It is expected that this equipment will arrive sometime in December.

Obviously, configuration of the equipment will initially occur at

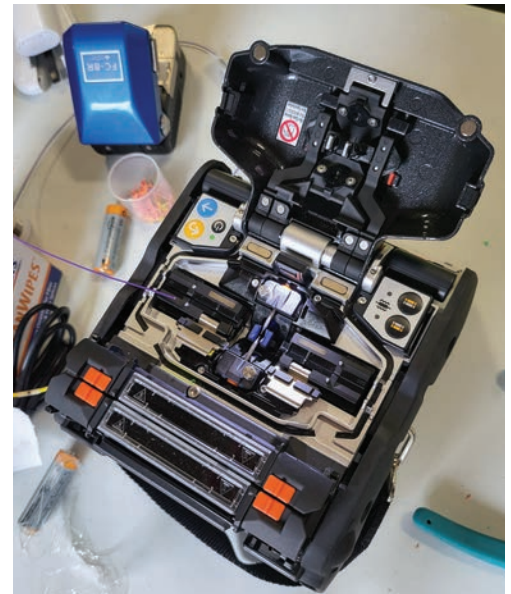


Mike Schmalling, Clinton Tripplett, and Zak Hirn of Quantum testing fiber.

NRTC shops before it arrives, but final configuration cannot occur until fiber (and light!) arrive at the cooperative.

Speaking of NRTC, you may have seen their “Rapid Design” crew, which was present on the Island the week before Thanksgiving. They were working on the engineering of the expanded area as laid out in the latest

grant so any additional material can be procured. The grant included this “Rapid Design” and engineering work for the entire system, so you will see them back to complete the balance of the Island when the weather warms up. These crews come from Alabama, so we told them we would minimize their exposure to the cold!



Left: Clinton trims the fiber ends prior to splicing a test end. Right: Sumitomo Fusion splicing machine.

Brian Mann has begun to work on the HVAC requirements that the equipment, which generates a fair amount of heat, will need, and we are installing hardware and doing our own “make ready” work in order to get as far ahead of the Nsight installation as possible.

Quantum will also be here during the winter months working on internal wiring of the anchor institutions that was included in the grant as well as working on splicing drops if we are able to get some installed. They have already tested 180,000 feet of fiber, an important step since you would rather discover an issue

while the fiber is still on the reel than after it is hung on the poles.

We have been working on procuring some of the equipment that was included in the grant application and instead of focusing on “single-purpose built” equipment, we are adapting equipment that can serve multiple purposes beyond even the fiber project. One exception that you might have seen when you drove by the cooperative is the brand new (although slightly damaged) splicing trailer. It was an opportunity that could not be passed up and that likely would not come again.



The cooperative’s new splicing trailer.



MY CO-OP

LOBDELL POINT ROAD UPDATE

Even though, at times, it seems like the only thing we have going on is fiber-related, that is certainly not the case. After a series of planned outages to complete installation work of the primary electric to feed the new underground along Lobdell Point Road, and one heck of a lot of work by your crew Don and Mike, we have now energized the underground primary. At the time of this writing only one home is currently connected—the new home of Kraig and Zuska Krueger—but by the time you read this, it is likely several more homes and businesses will be connected. This process will likely take us into spring; however, we are now positioned such that, if something were to happen with the overhead lines crossing Arni’s Swamp, we could easily isolate them out of the system. This is a huge step in reliability going forward.

During a scheduled early morning (5:30 a.m.) outage, Don and Mike transfer lines from one pole to another.





NOT THE BEST FOR LAST

We ended last month's pages with the good news that we had won the PSCW ARPA broadband grant, and that was great news. We still wait to hear regarding the NTIA grant.

Unfortunately, this month we will need to end on a bit of a down note. In the October issue we discussed the rising wholesale electric rates and gave you all a heads-up that after the first of the year, it was highly likely that we were going to see the first non-submarine cable-related rate increase since 2015. At this point, there are no indications that this prediction is going to change. Our wholesale capacity (demand) charge is

increasing by \$2.40 per kW of demand, which translates to \$4,800 per month. Economic interruptions due to natural gas supply are on the rise and no longer seem coupled to the weather or equipment events. These interruptions take us outside of our formula rate and force us to buy on the wholesale market. Our formula-based wholesale electric costs are up; although they are fluctuating it looks like we can expect increases that nearly double our wholesale energy rates.

The cooperative board will likely act on a rate increase in December (Merry Christmas) and we will communicate to the membership most likely in a mailing

and in the January issue of this magazine. It is currently likely that the cooperative's base charge will increase by \$4.50 per month for main meters and electric rates will increase across the board by \$0.01 per kWh. At this point, this is only a projection and as we look at trends we may settle on a different amount. As noted before, we are doing our best to keep you informed as no one likes surprises.

In this time of inflation across all sectors except, it seems, income, rate increases can be hard to swallow and we appreciate your patience and understanding. We want to remind our members that there are programs available to help.

Are High Energy Costs Getting You Down?



Energy Services for Door County may be able to help!

Two simple ways to apply for a WHEAP Energy Assistance Grant!

**1 Call 800-506-5596
Locally 920-818-0456**

- For questions or to schedule an appointment.
- To complete a WHEAP application by phone with our helpful and experienced staff.

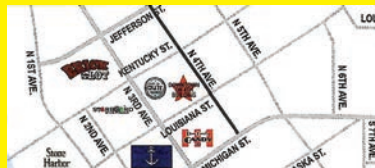
OR

2 You may now also apply online at [HEAT.HELP](https://www.heat.help)

The location to visit or apply for a WHEAP Energy Assistance Grant has changed. The new location is:

**Downtown on 4th Building
101 N 4th Ave., Suite 108
Sturgeon Bay, WI 54235**

* This site is fully accessible.



Energy Services for Door County

is privileged to have been selected as the new organization for administering the **Wisconsin Home Energy Assistance Program (WHEAP)** throughout Door County.

For over **three decades** we have been responsible for providing government, utility supported and charitable **energy assistance grants** statewide to over **100,000 low-income households annually**.

Working closely with **Door County HHS**, other basic service providers and utilities/fuel vendors serving the area, we are committed to providing the highest level of assistance and services possible for those in need.

Our capable staff are available to answer any questions you may have and assist you in applying for WHEAP or other resources that may be of help.

**Don't Delay - Call Us Today at
Energy Services for Door County
920-818-0456**

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