



H A P P Y

new year

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As another year passes, the board and staff of the Washington Island Electric Cooperative would like to wish everyone the very best in the coming year. This last year was a year of major milestones and we expect more in the upcoming months.



STAY SAFE DURING WINTER STORMS

While we had some pretty good storms in December (and it is not over yet at the time of this writing) we only had limited outages due to them. Even with high winds, the fact that the leaves are off the trees help us out.

While it is important to always stay away from downed wires, treating them as if they are live and can kill you (they can), it is even more important to point out that snow is a terrible conductor.

What we mean by this is that if a line goes down in the snow, there may not be enough fault current in order to trip the upstream breaker

Please use the general cooperative line at **920-847-2541** to report outages.

and it is actually more likely to be live under these conditions. Report downed lines, trees on the line, and other such incidents immediately to the cooperative so that we are able to respond and repair them safely. While you wait, if you can keep others away from downed lines, you just might save someone from serious injury or

death, but be sure to keep yourself safe in the process.

Speaking of reporting, please use the general cooperative line at 920-847-2541 to report outages. When you dial, if no one is there you will have the option to leave a message (1) or report an outage (2). Choosing (2) will ring all four of our cell phones. Contacting us on Facebook, Messenger, or email is not an effective way to let us know and will likely result in us NOT knowing there is an outage. We have had a couple of instances where this has occurred and it was pure luck that we noticed there was an outage.

Fiber Update:

PURSUING MORE GRANTS, RUNNING MORE DROPS AS PROJECT PROGRESSES

We have made serious progress in our project since the last update. Michels construction has completed (with the exception of a few small span side runs) the entire backbone for the grant-funded projects. This puts us into a position where drops and splicing are what is left (a bit of an exaggeration) in order to complete this grant. And yes, where you see branches trimmed and a bit of mess potentially in your yard, we will be back to clean it up.

Nsight and WIEC have filed for completion of the Pilot Grant and for reimbursement of the same and we should see that money coming to us early in the year. In addition, we are at a point where, as part of our January report to the Public Service Commission (PSC), we will be filing for a partial reimbursement of our own grant funding.

Matt from Karcz Utility Services helps install distribution underground conduit along Airport Road.



As we have always noted, we will be pursuing other grant opportunities as they arise in order to offset the cost of the project. As we have also said, the project is economically viable without the grants, but getting them not only reduces our long-term debt, but also speeds up the progress.

The PSC announced an additional grant round that will be awarded in March. This will be a pretty small grant round consisting of a total of \$14,000,000 in unused universal service funds that they want to clean up. The big money will become available with the BEAD funding that is expected to be announced this fall.

Nothing ventured, nothing gained, so we will be applying for grant funding as part of this \$14,000,000 round. This could go a number of ways; with so little available, it is likely to be very over-subscribed and our chances might be small since we have already been awarded three grants and there is not much to spread around.

However, it is possible that, in anticipation of the up to \$1 billion that will be distributed as part of the BEAD funding, there may be a fair number of players who do not want to confuse the possibility of getting more money and don't apply. It is also possible that with a good project that finishes the Island, the PSC might look at it as a way to finish a project and decrease the number of players in the BEAD round.

With all that said, we are going to give it a shot. Much like all the grants we have been lucky enough to win, this is not a "check the boxes" grant and will take a fair amount of effort to accomplish and as noted, is far from a sure thing. You have probably heard me say before that when someone says, "let's

just go out and get a grant," I call bologna (and yes, I do not actually say bologna).

As in all our efforts, we will need partnerships. We will have the funding promised by the school to add to our match and ARPA funding allocated by the county as well. We are hopeful that the town will agree to an in-kind match of labor, etc. (yes, those count too). And, as we have in the past, we will be asking for support from our state and federal legislators as well as the organizations that we participate in.

Last but not least, we need your support! Keep your eyes and ears open for requests for letters of support as you have done in the past. We expect to tout the successes that we have had in getting this far, but we need you to chime in as you always have. If we are not successful, it will not be because we didn't try and we will, as always, be teed up for the next opportunity.

We estimate, in today's rising cost and crappy supply-chain world, that we will need as much as \$5,000,000 to complete the project and also provide some needed redundancy. At a 50% match, we would be asking for nearly 18% of the total money available in this round... a bit unheard of and a bit of pie in the sky, but, as we said, nothing ventured, nothing gained.

All that said, we expect to finish the current grant round work by the end of next summer. As we move through the project, what can you, the member, expect? With the feeder and distribution lines complete, we have three additional splitter cabinets that will be installed (each fiber can be split 32 ways). One will be at the Art and Nature Center, one on the corner of Jackson Harbor and Gasoline Town Road, and one



1. Calix XGSPON equipment in the headend room at the cooperative. This is the equipment that sends the connection to the splitter cabinets in the field, which is then distributed to the member. 2. DC power plant in the headend room. Some equipment runs on DC power and some runs on inverted DC power, but this is essentially the battery backup, or UPS, for the entire system. 3. ONT routers being configured to install in members' homes and businesses. 4. Wiring in the back of the inverters for the DC power plant in the headend.

across from Julian's gravel pit on West Harbor Road.

Karcz and WIEC will continue to run drop cables until the weather prevents it. These cables will originate in a splice case on the line and will terminate a grey Network Interface Box (NID) that will be located at the electric meter location.



Mike Jorgenson uses our grant funded skid steer to auger in a down-guy anchor.

If the location is on a pole, then we will need to work with you to get conduit into your house. In some cases, we have done this already. Once the splicing at the main line and at the NID is complete, we will schedule getting into the home to run the final part of the drop and install the fiber router if you want the service. As part of the project, we are doing the initial service installation at no cost,

but if you refuse service and then come back to us at a later date, it is unlikely that it will be free.

Regardless, we are running drops to every location, so no one is being passed by. If you are a seasonal resident, we will splice to the NID and get inside when you are here.

We have noted the service levels before, but 100M/100M service will be \$59.95 per month, 300M/300M service will be \$69.95 per month, and 1G/1G service will be 89.95 per month. This will all be billed on your monthly electric bill.

In addition, we expect to be offering residential and business phone service as well with the details to be worked out as we move forward.

Another thing you can expect and should watch for is a series of classes/seminars offered by Quantum that could start as early as mid-winter. These classes will be:

- General fiber optics: installation and basics
- Home networking/basics of WiFi
- Streaming: how to, dos and don'ts, best practices
- Cyber security

We hope to provide more information and scheduling and once we have things worked out will record the sessions for later reference. Also, since we now have the capability in several locations, we might even try to live stream the classes so those who are not here can participate in real time.

In this world nothing is certain but death and taxes.

...and rising wholesale power costs

They say death and taxes are the only sure things in life. We would like to add a third thing: the cost of purchased power is on the rise. We have been spouting about it for the last couple years, but we are beginning to really feel it.

We are not alone in feeling this. Wisconsin Public Service has opened a docket at the Public Service Commission of Wisconsin for a 14.7% rate hike for its average retail customer. Retail natural gas prices for WPS customers is slated to rise an additional 7%. Our own wholesale rates continue to increase and interruptions (as we have discussed ad nauseum) are also on the increase. Our December 2022 wholesale bill had an additional Christmas present of almost \$20,000 in interruptible costs as well as an increased wholesale rate largely due to fuel and capacity issues. MISO is once again warning—or rather, continues to warn—of the possibility of generating shortfalls due to natural gas supply issues and, as we have previously noted, the far-too-quick move from steady baseload fuels like coal and nuclear to natural gas and intermittent renewables.

We are working hard to hold the line here and avoid a general rate increase, but it is looking more and more as if this is a pipedream (or maybe pipeline dream is more appropriate). As we work through these issues, do not be surprised if a Power Cost Adjustment (PCA) shows up on your bill in order to spread out these additional costs. We hope not, but we want to keep everyone informed and \$20,000 adders to our monthly wholesale bills are pretty difficult to absorb.

As a side note, since we are speaking of nuclear, we should congratulate Miss Wisconsin, Grace Stanke, who is studying to be a nuclear engineer, on her Miss America win. You can read an article about her and her participation in a WECA panel discussion on nuclear energy on page 10 in this magazine.

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