

Net Metering is set to be accepted in January

Bevan R. Smith Jr., Director of the V.I. Energy Office, was armed with details of a decade of research and projects, when he took his argument for net metering before the Public Services Commission.

He gave the first of several presentations to the Commission at its retreat in September. His report was greeted with a great deal of skepticism from Alberto Bruno-

Vega, Executive Director of the V.I. Water and Power Authority. The difference of opinion between Bruno-Vega and Smith was covered extensively in the news media.

Bruno-Vega hypothesized that net metering would only benefit the rich and put a burden on the poor. After several discussions between Smith and Bruno-Vega; Bruno-Vega too became a proponent of net metering.

Bruno-Vega at the October PSC meeting, where Smith made a second presentation, said he "wholeheartedly supported net metering."

The Public Services Commission continued its discussion of net metering at its December meeting. At this time it was decided that since WAPA and the Energy Office were in agreement that WAPA should write a document that

outlines all the terms and conditions associated with net metering. Smith says he hopes to have a net metering document approved during January of 2007.

This document will cover systems that are producing 10 kilowatts or less. WAPA board of directors held a retreat a day after the PSC meeting in December. Smith attended the retreat and reminded WAPA that another agreement will have to be arrived at concerning larger power producers. The agreement concerning system producing more than 10 kW is generally referred to as an Interconnectivity agreement. This agreement which, will open the door to other energy sources besides wind and sun, may be more complicated than the net metering agreement for the small suppli-



Bevan R. Smith Jr. ers.

The net metering agreement is to be adopted for a trial, one-year period.

Giving support to net metering in the Virgin Islands was a recommendation included in a report from the Department of Interior during the summer. The Energy Assessment report said in its executive summary, "There is little opportunity for off-grid solar PV but with the high price of WAPA power, grid connected PV is getting close to being competitive. To encourage private investment in grid connected PV, it is recommended that WAPA adopt true

Continued on Page 2



The Energy Office has helped many residents along on with projects that are capable of selling alternative energy back to WAPA. Above, Ira Francis, of NR Electric, is ready to throw the switch on at the home of Lloyd Williams on St. Thomas.

Vincent George Light the Way Award Winner announced

The Vincent George "Light the Way Award" will be presented to the Elskoe family during Energy Awareness Week, March 19 to 23.

In September Wintdots President Glenn Elskoe unveiled a newly constructed gatehouse - the entranceway to a proposed \$68 million luxury condo development on the slope above Paradise Point on St. Thomas.

The project will embrace solar, wind and other energy-efficient technologies.

Gov. Charles Turnbull attended the event and said, "This will be an example not just for the Virgin Islands but for the nation and for the world,"

St. Thomas-based Wintdots is the developer of the project which is still in the design phase. Elskoe is the son of Dorothy Elskoe, a former educator, Carnival activity leader and historian. The property has been in the Elskoe family for 80 years, and developing it has been a goal for many years. Glenn envisions the construction of five villas, 60 condominiums, a clubhouse, a fitness center and nature trails throughout the 22-acre property.

The estimated 10 condominium buildings and villas are being designed to maximize use of natural light and air flow to

encourage energy efficiency.

Water conservation will be a priority with low-flow fixtures, drip-irrigation systems and porous materials to manage water runoff flows.

"If you take care of the land and the people of the land, in return, the land takes care of you," Glenn Elskoe said at a reception, according to an article in the *Virgin Island Daily News*.

The gated community will also have tennis courts, central and private swimming pools.

Wintdots Development expects to complete final designs of the project this year.

Then the developers

Net metering

Continued from Page 1

net metering (energy going into the grid is the same price as energy from the grid) for private, household PV installations of 10 kW and smaller. Without net metering, private investment in solar at the household level is much less cost effective since most of the solar energy is produced in the middle of the day when household use is typically low. With net metering, the PV system feeds surplus energy into the grid and helps offset the mid-day load peak; then, at night, the house



As soon as net metering is officially part of the process, WAPA can start getting some of its electrical power from panels like these on St. Thomas and start cutting down on the oil it burns.

will submit the plans to the Comprehensive Coastal

Zone Planning Division for approval.

load draws that 'banked' energy back from the grid as needed in the home. For household grid connected PV, it is unlikely that the house system will generate more energy than is used by the household so the end effect is energy conservation for the house, not a mini Independent Power Provider selling power to WAPA."

The web site for the Union of Concerned Scientists says, "This distributed-generation approach provides a new model for the utilities of the future. Small generators, spread throughout a city and con-

trolled by computers, could replace the large coal and nuclear plants that dominate the landscape now."

The same site also points out that in 2005, for the first time ever, the installation of PV systems connected to the electric grid outpaced off-grid PV systems.

Many residents have told staff members at the V.I. Energy Office that they will go forward with solar power systems at their residences as soon as a net metering agreement is signed.

Plans set for Big Solar Sprint

The V.I. Energy Office has set the date for its 12th annual Solar Sprint Race for March 30, 2007 at Sunny Isles parking lot by Wendy's.

Twenty-five public and private schools in the Virgin Islands have been mailed information. Before December a half dozen had already responded positively.

Staff members Kim Matthias, Kasim Andrews and Don Buchanan were following up with educational presentations at the schools during December and January.

At the meetings with teachers, the kits from which the students will build their solar cars will be distributed. Also at the presentations a video will be shown, handouts given out, and regulations discussed.

The program focuses on seventh and eighth grade science students. Building of solar cars for the competition requires skills in both math and science. The primary goal is to generate enthusiasm for science and engineering in young people. The competition also helps improve students' understanding of scientific concepts and renewable energy technologies; and encourages young people to consider technical careers.

The December presentations were at St. Thomas and St. John schools. St. Croix schools were to be visited in January.

The V.I. Department

of Public Works, Department of Education, and Fire Department all contribute to making the program a success.

The Energy Office is considering breaking from tradition and having a race using hydrogen fuel cell for the race in 2008.

Students from eighteen schools participated in the race in 2006. Each school fields three teams with two students on each team. Students from St. Thomas take the ferry to St. Croix for the race.

Winners are picked in two categories.

The 2006 winners in the Best Design Competition were St. Peters and

Paul School, Arsenio Watlington and Jake Heileman mentored by Philip Nelthropp.

The 2006 winners in the fastest car competition were John H. Woodson Jr. High School, Ezral Boyce and Ernel Edmond mentored by Akkido Lindquist

Winners received trophies, plaques and medals from the Department of Planning and Natural Resources of which the V.I. Energy Office is a division, and \$25 to \$50 checks to top five winners in both categories from Senator Louis P. Hill's office.

The students are pro-

vided with a kit that includes a motor and solar panel. The rest of the car is made from materials of the students' choosing.

Sponsors last year included HOVENSA, The West Indian Company Limited, West Indies Solar, Quality Electric Supply Inc., Hendricks International, Bates Trucking & Trash Removal, Oscar Refrigeration, Wendy's, Paradise Waste Inc., Le Bleu and Sustainable Systems & Design International, LLC.

Any business wishing to help with sponsorship this year is asked to contact Don Buchanan.



The Solar Sprint generally captures a lot of attention from the local media. Above photographer Kirsten Duncan of the Avis gets a close up of the action.

Energy Awareness Month is Big Success

The V.I. Energy Office initiated Energy Awareness Month on Oct. 1 with a brand new venue for an outreach.

The Energy Office set up a table with informational material outside the Reformed Church on Kingshill on St. Croix that Sunday evening.

The church which was the recipient of a discretionary grant and had completed an outdoor solar lighting project in July was very welcoming.

The event was called Jazz Vespers and members of the crowd which numbered about 75 people continuously made their way to the table to get information about energy issues.

That was the start. The staff stayed busy for the rest of the month as the office held 18 outreach activities across the three islands. On a couple of weekends, events were held on different islands si-



Joseph Daniel, Energy Operations Coordinator, gets information for a St. Thomas resident at Cost-U-Less.

multaneously. Only one event, due to torrential rainfall, was cancelled.

At all events, the staff discussed energy efficiency and alternative energy sources with residents. Attendance ranged from a couple dozen to several hundred. The events attracted the attention of TV stations, newspapers and internet publications further spreading the word about energy issues.

Over a half a dozen newspaper articles were published. Don Buchanan, the Media Information Specialist, appeared on two TV news shows. Director Bevan R. Smith Jr. gave an in-depth interview on net metering and Kinesha Sylvester and Leila Muller made appearances on TV station cov-

ering an event at the University of Virgin Islands. The Energy Office also had energy saving tips running on five different radio stations and a TV commercial was aired 60 times on the local NBC affiliate. The Director also called in and talked on radio talk shows.

One measure of the success of the month was the increased traffic on the Energy Office web site. The web site had over 2,000 visitors in October. This was up from 747 visits last October. Of course, this increase was not totally from outreach. Since the Energy Office's web site was revamped in July, it has been averaging about 1,500 visits a



Don Buchanan, right, explains how a solar panel works while at Red Hook.

month.

Some highlights of the month were:

Oct. 6

Outreach began in earnest in the parking lot of Cost-U-Less on St. Thomas. Staff talked to and obtained mailing addresses of more than 50 people interested in energy issues

Oct. 7

A big outreach was held at Sunny Isles with good traffic through the tent. The MIS was interviewed for a Channel 8 news program.

Oct. 10

Many students with a curiosity about energy issues were able to talk to Energy Office staff at an outreach at the University of Virgin Islands, St. Croix campus.

Oct. 11

At an outreach at Richmond Post Office on St. Croix, staff answered many questions for local residents. The MIS was interviewed for Channel 2 news program.

Oct. 16-17

Staff met many new faces at a new site for outreaches — the Schooner Bay Market plaza.

Oct. 19

Customers in the St. Thomas Home Depot were seen going directly from the Energy Office table, where cost savings were explained to them concerning the use of compact fluorescent bulbs, to the counter to buy some of those bulbs.

Oct. 21

The outreach at St. Thomas Cost -U-Less on St. Thomas went very



Leila Muller, Program Monitor, left, and Joseph Daniel, right, talk to residents at Franklin Powell Park on St. John.

well. Among the people reached were one who has his own homemade solar water heater and a PTA president interested in the discretionary grant program. Many people brought in bulbs for the exchange program. Most of them said they found out about the exchange by reading the *Source*.

Oct. 22.

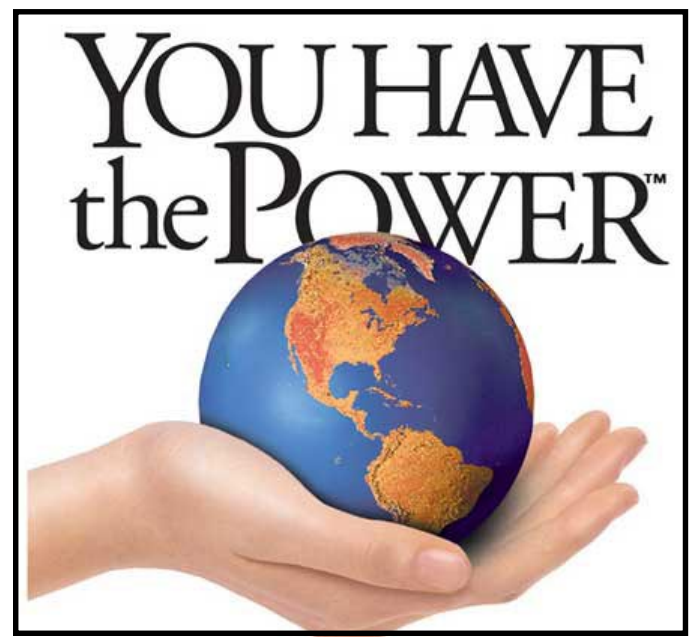
At Franklin Powell Park on St. John an event went well. This was the first outreach during Energy Awareness Month in two years for St. John and several interested residents were supplied with information.

Oct. 27-28

Staff from St. Thomas and the MIS manned a table at the St. John Gar-

den Show for two days. This afforded the opportunity to talk to many residents on that island about energy efficiency and alternative energy. The MIS

and Kasim Andrews also went to the St. John Library and replaced bulbs there with energy efficient compact fluorescents.



Rotarians, Resort employees hear about energy issues

The Rotary Clubs on St. Croix invited the V.I. Energy Office to make several presentations during the last half of 2006.

Don Buchanan, Media Information Specialist, and Patricia Lord, the Program Administrator, went to Harborside Rotary in August to talk about Global Warming. Buchanan went to the Island Center Club later in the same month to speak on the same subject.

Kinesha Sylvester, Administrative Aid, and Buchanan returned to the Island Center Club in October for a presentation on net metering. Buchanan talked while Sylvester ran the slide projector of an abridged presentation on net metering that Bevan R. Smith Jr., director of the V.I. Energy Office, had

made before the Public Services Commission.

At each event the Rotarians showed a deep interest in the subject matter. After each presentation there was a lively session of questions and answers. The *St. Croix Avis* covered the first event at the IslandCenter Club.

Buchanan, who formerly was a Rotary Club member, said, "I really enjoy talking to these clubs. You always find many individuals here concerned about issues – like energy – that affect the daily life of the community."

Also at the end of August, Buchanan and Leila Muller, Program Monitor, spent the day at the Divi Bay Casino Resort. The Resort was sponsoring a



Buchanan

fair for its employees to receive useful information.

Bevan R. Smith Jr., director of the Energy Office, said, "We appreciate any time we are able to go into the community and spread information about alternative energy and energy efficiency. We look forward to accepting invitations from other community groups and organizations in 2007."

Rebate program continues

The Energy Office's present rebate program restarted in October of 2006 and runs through Sept. 30, 2007.

The last program ran from January through June of last year. During that period \$77,428 was rebated for Energy Star appliances and \$148,124 for renewables.

Virgin Islands residents get a rebate on photovoltaic panels of \$3.50 per watt limited at \$3,500.

The rebate for hot water heaters varies by size: 81 to 121 gallons runs \$1,000; 40 to 80 gallons, \$700; and 39 gallons and under, \$500. The rebate for wind turbine generators runs 20 percent off the retail price. Residents also get 15 percent off the retail price for sine wave inverters and 25 percent off electric water heater timers. There is a limit of one on the water heater timers. Residents must shop at certified rebate dealers to get the rebate. Solar water heaters, wind turbine generators, sine wave inverters, and electric water heater timers can be purchased at two locations on St. Croix: Sierra Technical Co. and West Indies Solar.



Leila Muller, right, talks to employees at the Divi Carina Bay Casino Resort.

Building Energy Audit program continues

In December 2004, the Virgin Islands Energy Office (VIEO) and the Virgin Islands Water and Power Authority (WAPA) first partnered to conduct audits for residential, small businesses, and not-for-profit ratepayers. Since then, the team, which is comprised of WAPA technical staff and VIEO staff has completed more than 40 audits. The agencies experienced a lull in activities during 2005 but during calendar year 2006 a total of 31 audits were completed.

Residents may participate in this activity by completing an application, which is available in each District at the WAPA Business Office or the VIEO. Each participant receives an energy conservation care package to start them off on the road to energy efficiency. Additionally, after the team views the participant's energy usage, a recommendation letter is mailed providing no-cost, low-cost energy mea-



Patricia Lord, Program Administrator, left, conducts an audit with two WAPA employees.

sures that could be implemented to help reduce energy consumption. The VIEO is proud to be a part of this activity as it provides a one-on-one with ratepayers.

The program has experienced successes as residents audited have confirmed that energy efficiency

works. One such success story is that of Jacqueline Romain, who's electric bill was upwards of \$500 per month. As a direct result of the audit recommendations Ms. Romain has been able to reduce her bill to less than \$100 per month.

St. Croix Environmental Association Recycling Directory

ALUMINUM CANS

EZ Recycling LLC
Gallows Bay Frame Shop
Gallows Bay Hardwar

BATTERIES

HH Tire & Battery

BLANKETS, TOWELS, SHEETS

Animal Shelter
Duke Deller, Vet
Island Animal Clinic
Progressive Veterinary
Progressive Veterinary

BOOKS

Animal Shelter Flea Market
Bethlehem Homeless Shelter
Project Help
Sunny Isle

BUILDING MATERIALS

Project Help
Trading Post

CARDBOARD

G&T Trucking

CARTRIDGES

printer/copier

Ink Drop

Police Stations

CHILDREN'S BOOKS

Animal Shelter Flea Market
Boys & Girls Club
Public Library
Women's Coalition

CLOTHING

Animal Shelter Flea Market
Bethlehem Homeless Sheltr
Boys & Girls Club
Grigg Home for the Aged
Project Help
Salvation Army
Women's Coalition

HOUSEHOLD ITEMS

working appliances, pots, furniture, etc.

Animal Shelter Flea Market
Bethlehem Homeless Sheltr
Consignment Shop
Grigg Home for the Aged
Project Help
Salvation Army
Trading Post

Uniquities

Women's Coalition

MAGAZINES

Bamboula Haven
Grigg Home for the Aged

MOTOR OIL

V.I. Waste Management
Authority

NEWSPAPERS

Animal Shelter
Country Day School
Duke Deller, Vet
G&T Trucking
Island Animal Clinic
Progressive Veterinary
Progressive Veterinary

OFFICE PAPER, CATALOGUES

Art teachers
Bamboula Haven
PACKING MATERIALS
bubble wrap, peanuts, popcorn
Jan Mitchell
Mail Boxes Etc.

PLANT POTS

- Botanical Garden
- Cruzan Gardens
- Gallows Bay Garden Center
- Garden Spot

CRAP METAL

EZ Recycling LLC
G&T Trucking
Trading Post

TOYS

Animal Shelter Flea Market
Salvation Army
Women's Coalition

WIRE COAT HANGERS

O'Henry's Dry Cleaners
Sion Farm Cleaners
Tropical Cleaners

Compiled by Catherine Childs for the St. Croix Environmental Association. Please call Sue @ SEA 340-773-1989 with changes, additions or corrections.

Energy Office studying grant applications

V.I. Energy Office received applications for two major grants and three mini grants in the grant cycle that ended on Dec. 15, 2006. The next deadline for grants is May 1, 2007

Each cycle the Energy Office issues grants to non-profit and government divisions.

Money is available in four areas: mini grants for classroom projects, Energy Research and Education grants, solar outdoor lighting grants, and building retro-fit grants. Grant applications can be downloaded from the web site at www.vienergy.org.

The Energy Office encourages school administrators, teachers, community and youth organization lead-

ers, and agency heads to submit an application for consideration. The Energy Office Discretionary Grant Program is funded through Stripper Well Restitution funds.



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Rebate Fairs

The Energy Office held two Energy Rebate Fairs last year. Certified dealers displayed products and answered questions about pricing and energy savings. The Energy Star appliances and alternative energy systems displayed had been approved for rebates. The rebates range from \$5 coupons on light bulbs to a \$1,000 on solar water heaters. The fairs were held at Tutu Park Mall in St. Thomas and Sunny Isles on St. Croix, pictured above. The next rebate fairs are planned for March 2007.

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