Washington Electric Cooperative, Inc. Walking the Walk (Marietta, Ohio)

In 1940, when the majority of homes in rural Appalachian Ohio were without electricity, a group of farmers set out to bring electricity to the region. With a loan from the Rural Electrification Administration, they organized the Washington Electric Cooperative, Inc, a member-owned electric distribution cooperative that now serves more than 10,500 customers in rural southeastern Ohio, including those in Athens, Guernsey, Morgan, Monroe, Noble and Washington counties. Part of the Touchstone Energy® Cooperative, Washington Electric operates as one of more than 700 cooperatives (24 of which are located in Ohio) in 46 states, delivering power to more than 16 million consumers.

In March 2012, Washington Electric began operating out of its new, LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certified headquarters in Marietta, Ohio. The building features high-efficiency lighting and controls, a 5.52-kW solar panel system, a geothermal heat pump and cooling system, and enhanced insulation. From here, the cooperative directs an extensive portfolio of renewable energy and energy efficiency initiatives that help to educate its members and move it towards a cleaner energy future.

Customer Programs
To encourage its customers to choose and learn more about renewable energy resources, Washington Electric supports the following programs:

- **Wind Demonstration:** In 2006, Buckeye Power, Inc. (a generation-and-transmission cooperative that is jointly owned by the 25 electric distribution cooperatives in Ohio) and Logan County Electric Cooperative installed a demonstration 10-kW wind turbine at Indian Lake High School. Students monitor the turbine as part of their science curriculum. Similarly, Washington Electric supports the use of wind power through Buckeye Power’s joint ownership of the Story County Wind Energy Center in Iowa, which supplies Buckeye Power with 30 MW of wind capacity for members of Ohio’s rural electric cooperative. Buckeye Power is one of six generation-and-transmission cooperatives jointly sharing the output from this facility under separate Power Purchase Agreements (PPAs).

- **Solar Demonstration:** Also in 2006, in conjunction with Buckeye Power and Butler Rural Electric Cooperative, Athens, Ohio-based Third Sun Solar and Wind Power, Ltd. installed a 2.3-kW demonstration solar array at the Butler Cooperative office near Oxford, Ohio, where Miami University students monitor the unit.¹

- **Geothermal Rebates:** Washington Electric encourages its members to consider a geothermal heat pump system by offering customers a $600 rebate for newly installed geothermal systems.
Washington Electric Cooperative, Inc. Walking the Walk Continued

- **Energy Seminars:** Each year, Washington Electric hosts a series of seminars related to energy efficiency and various heating/cooling options (geothermal, propane, electric heat pumps, etc.). For example, in the winter of 2012, Washington Electric and the Washington County Agricultural Education Teachers Association hosted a free seminar on energy efficiency ideas specific to dairy farms in the region. The seminar was aimed at improving understanding of electric energy usage as well as to explore opportunities for energy conservation in the areas of milk harvest, milk cooling, lighting, air circulation and ventilation, washing and water heating, water systems and compressed air systems.

**Internal Programs**

- **Diversification:** In response to Ohio Senate Bill 221, Buckeye Power and the electric co-ops of Ohio saw increased value in adding renewable energy sources and energy efficiency initiatives to their portfolio. Buckeye Power sought out various types of green power based on the need for sustainability and rate sensitivity for its members. For example, Buckeye Power entered into PPAs with several agricultural manure digester generation systems in northern Ohio, as well as a landfill methane-fueled power plant in Perry County. Energy efficiency initiatives included an entitlement from the New York Power Authority for hydroelectric generation, participation in electric vehicle field tests, and involvement in household energy efficiency improvement and cost monitoring projects, “seeking to determine what the most effective upgrades are for co-op members across the state.”

- **Pooling Resources:** To advance its green power goals, Buckeye Power elected in 2008 to join the National Renewables Cooperative Organization (NRCO), a “super cooperative” whose mission is to identify “opportunities for access to and development of cost-effective renewable energy resources.” Members that participate in NRCO on a volunteer basis include other generation-and-transmission co-ops, as well as distribution cooperatives in multiple states serving more than 22 million consumers. NRCO allows its members to jointly pool their resources to participate in and benefit from utility-scale renewable energy projects. This pooling of resources offers cooperatives the potential to diversify their generation portfolios, bring economic development to their communities, and keep up with evolving legislative and regulatory developments at the local, state and federal levels.

With its partnerships and involvement in green energy initiatives, Washington Electric Cooperative, Inc., has positioned itself to adapt to a changing regulatory and economic landscape in Ohio that focuses on efficiency and renewable energy as an important part of a future energy portfolio.
Washington Electric Cooperative, Inc. Walking the Walk Continued

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