

Consumer Liaison Group Meeting Summary

March 25, 2026

Introduction

The **Consumer Liaison Group (CLG)** is a forum for sharing information between ISO New England (the ISO or ISO-NE) and electricity consumers in New England. The CLG meets quarterly and attracts a diverse group of attendees at each meeting. Meetings are free and open to the public. Participants generally include consumers and consumer representatives (including state consumer and ratepayer advocates), state business and industry associations, chambers of commerce, individual businesses, trade groups, nonprofit organizations, and other end users. Several New England Power Pool (NEPOOL) members and state regulators are also regular, active participants in CLG discussions.¹ CLG meetings generally follow the same format:

- **Opening remarks** from a representative of the CLG Coordinating Committee;
- **Community welcome** from a member of the local community invited by the Coordinating Committee;
- **An ISO regional update by a representative from the ISO**, presenting on regional energy issues and initiatives that have or will be taking place at NEPOOL and ISO stakeholder meetings that can have an impact on electricity prices;
- **A keynote speech** typically from an industry or business executive, policymaker, or regulator—who provides a unique perspective on a particular topic or issue; and
- **A panel discussion**, often representing industry, the ISO, regulators, and consumer perspectives, facilitated by a moderator

The following is a brief summary of the meeting, which was hosted in a hybrid format – remotely and in-person in Randolph, Vermont – on **March 25, 2026**.

The Consumer Liaison Group Coordinating Committee (CLGCC) selects the topic and speakers. The meeting summary is intended to capture the general discussions that took place at the meeting; it does not necessarily reflect the views of the ISO or the CLGCC.

A [recording](#) of the meeting and related presentations can be found on the [CLG page](#) on the ISO website.

March 25: Resilience in the Face of Increasingly Extreme Weather

Meeting Objective: To hear about infrastructure resiliency in light of changing climate and weather patterns, and ways innovation in grid infrastructure can mitigate long-term impacts.

Opening Remarks

Julie Macuga, a researcher with Global Energy Monitor and a CLGCC member from Vermont welcomed meeting attendees and provided opening remarks. Following an introduction to the topic of climate resilience, Macuga introduced Shawna Trader for the community welcome.

¹ NEPOOL is a group formed in 1971 by the region’s private and municipal utilities to foster cooperation and coordination among the utilities in the six-state region for ensuring a dependable supply of electricity. Today, NEPOOL members are ISO stakeholders and market participants. More information is available at www.nepool.com.

Consumer Liaison Group Meeting Summary March 25, 2026

Shawna Trader, a community organizer with Rainbow Bridge Community Center, provided reflections on Vermont’s catastrophic flooding in 2023 and 2024. Trader made “Ecosystem,” or home, the theme of the community welcome. She covered “200 years in 15 minutes” highlighting innovations in bridgebuilding in 1927 following catastrophic flooding in Vermont, recent responses to flooding in the state, and imagining what the grid might look like 100 years into the future. Trader drew on her work with the Rainbow Bridge Community Center in Barre to highlight the human, housing, and equity impacts of climate disasters, especially for tenants and unhoused residents who rely on resilient electricity service. She argued that true resilience requires discomfort and innovation, urging ISO New England and others to envision a future grid that is decentralized, adaptive, and built with resilience embedded from the start. Trader’s slide presentation is posted with the meeting materials.

ISO-NE Regional Update

Eric Johnson, executive director of External Affairs at ISO-NE, provided a [regional grid update covering markets, operations and planning, and highlights of information resources available for the CLG](#). The ISO’s regional update is posted on the CLG webpage.

Markets Update

The markets update provided information on recent wholesale market results and upcoming changes to the market design.

The update provided snapshots for January of natural gas prices and wholesale electricity prices (these prices were up from the prior month and the prior year) and a snapshot of the generation mix (a large amount of oil was used to produce electricity). The ISO presentation also showed comparisons to wholesale prices over the past five years and back to 2008. Wholesale prices in 2025 were higher than the prior two years and lower than three years ago. Cold weather conditions were a primary driver of high wholesale electricity prices in 2025. Wholesale electricity costs are typically reported on a dollars-per-megawatt-hour-basis, but the ISO update also included an approximation of these costs on a cents-per-kilowatt-hour basis because that is how most consumers measure electricity consumption.

The ISO presented a comparison of wholesale and retail electricity prices, which shows that wholesale costs make up approximately one third of overall retail rates. The comparison is part of an explainer the ISO posted in March showing wholesale vs. retail electricity costs.²

Finally, the ISO provided an update on changes that are planned for the ISO’s Day-Ahead Ancillary Services (DA A/S) Market, which the ISO is bringing through the regional stakeholder process and planning to file this year with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) based on recommendations from the ISO’s Internal Market Monitor.

Operations Update

The operations update recapped the amount of electricity consumed in New England in 2025, the types of resources used to produce electricity last year, and the changing energy mix over time. It also provided a recap of power system operations for winter 2025/26.

² *Wholesale vs. Retail Electricity Costs*, March 2026, ISO New England; <https://www.iso-ne.com/about/what-we-do/wholesale-vs-retail-electricity-costs>

Consumer Liaison Group Meeting Summary

March 25, 2026

Net energy for load increased about 1% year over year, with wind up 31% and grid-connected solar up 6%, while oil generation rose during colder periods. Lower-emitting resources supplied most electricity in the region last year and growth in renewables is heavily driven by state policies. ISO New England is now reporting grid-scale energy storage in the annual energy mix. Johnson pointed out that the region would benefit from developing long-duration storage to support reliability during extended cold snaps.

ISO's grid operations update highlighted that winter reliability challenges were tied to higher demand and this winter's peak day was January 25, 2026. Johnson pointed out that solar resources reduce demand for electricity from the grid, but the region experienced reduced solar output due to snow covering solar panels following Winter Storm Fern. The ISO's update highlighted coordination with the US Department of Energy to ensure the availability of generating resources throughout the extended cold weather period.

System Planning

The ISO's system planning update discussed the ISO's evaluation of proposals submitted in response to the Longer-Term Transmission Planning RFP and the ISO's plans to begin to include large loads in its annual load forecast.

Information Resources and Events

The ISO update concluded with CLG announcements, including the upcoming release of the 2025 annual report, posted responses to public comments, and opportunities for continued engagement with ISO New England staff.

A question-and-answer session followed. Johnson responded to questions regarding markets, planning processes, and winter reliability.

Attendees asked whether ISO New England takes positions on emissions policy or the phasedown of RGGI allowances. Johnson responded that regulating emissions and setting RGGI allowances are state policy decisions and that ISO has a limited role with the region's cap-and-trade system. The ISO assists the states with tracking emissions from generating resources that sell power into the wholesale market, but the ISO does not regulate those emissions.

Questions about the Long-Term Transmission Planning (LTP) process focused on transparency and competitiveness following ISO's announcement that two of six proposals would move forward. Johnson explained that the ISO is administering the RFP at the states' request under a FERC-approved process that requires confidential evaluation of RFP proposals against the RFP requirements and the states' objectives. Johnson explained that the ISO presented an update on the process to stakeholders on March 24 at the Planning Advisory Committee (PAC) and that the ISO plans to bring further updates to stakeholders, including the CLG, as it works toward a final recommendation in September 2026.

Attendees reflected on the U.S. DOE order allowing all existing power plants to operate to have an adequate supply of electricity and asked about other options available to the ISO to balance the grid during the winter period of high demand, such as demand response or more clean resources. Johnson said that even with the cold weather period when the grid was operating under stressed conditions, the region did meet all requirements to serve load and meet operating reserve requirements and did not experience a capacity deficiency or an energy shortfall. The ISO would

Consumer Liaison Group Meeting Summary **March 25, 2026**

have called for conservation had those situations occurred. There are opportunities for demand response to participate in the wholesale market, but those resources tend to offer at very high prices and often offer at prices higher than other resources. The ISO doesn't choose which resources will operate – it dispatches the lowest priced resources to meet demand. In the future, Johnson said, other options could include additional conservation led by the states or further investments in energy efficiency.

Additional questions and comments addressed how solar panels are affected by snow cover; interest in seeing total system demand, including electricity served by distributed energy resources; how ISO accesses data from behind-the-meter resources that it cannot see in real-time; data on solar production shown on the ISO to Go mobile app; what energy sources are included in ISO reports on energy storage; and challenges with relying on imports from Québec if both New England and Québec become winter-peaking systems.

Attendees also shared concerns for data center developments and Drew Hudson, CLGCC co-chair, told the audience that the Coordinating Committee is planning to make that a focus of the June CLG meeting.

Keynote Remarks: Ben Edgerly Walsh, Climate & Energy Program Director, VPIRG

Ben Edgerly Walsh discussed the idea of “power,” relating to political and community power, and how VPIRG has built influence by organizing people across Vermont for nearly four decades. He emphasized that consumers, ratepayers, and taxpayers are the same people, and how lived experience with climate impacts—flooding, outages, and infrastructure damage can drive public demand for action. Walsh argued that organizations like VPIRG can help convert that public concern into policy change, enabling proactive, planned responses to climate and energy challenges rather than reactive ones.

Walsh highlighted two policy areas as examples of this approach: Vermont's Climate Superfund (“Make Big Oil Pay”) Act and emerging policies on distributed and portable solar and data centers. He described the Climate Superfund as a legally grounded effort to shift climate damage costs from Vermonters to fossil fuel companies, with potential benefits including resilience investments, grid improvements, and lower storm-related charges on electric bills. He also pointed to rapid growth in interest in small-scale portable solar as a low-cost, equity-focused resilience tool, and warned that data centers are arriving far sooner than expected, threatening grid stability and affordability if not carefully managed. He concluded by stressing the urgency of planning ahead through efficiency, demand response, and smart siting and standards to protect ratepayers and strengthen system resilience as energy demands and climate risks accelerate.

Questions fell into two categories. On portable solar, attendee questions included whether Governor Scott has taken a position on the topic, and if there have been lessons learned from what other states have done about potential roadblocks. On data centers, questions included whether there are regional discussions on data centers in relation to the impact to ratepayers throughout the region, and how data centers can build using sustainable energy efficiency infrastructure.

Panel Discussion: Al McBride, Vice President, System Planning, ISO New England and

Dave Westman (VEIC/Efficiency Vermont) described Efficiency Vermont's role as a regulated, statewide energy efficiency utility and reviewed its response to recent Vermont flood events. He

Consumer Liaison Group Meeting Summary March 25, 2026

outlined how one-time American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding supported rapid recovery through standardized efficiency programs, including weatherization, electrical panel upgrades, and targeted support for low- and moderate-income customers. Westman emphasized lessons learned around rapid deployment, coordination with contractors and agencies, and integrating efficiency and weatherization into rebuilding to improve resilience and manage long-term costs.

Al McBride (ISO New England) discussed ISO-NE's market framework and system planning process, focusing on CAR. He reviewed the three market components—energy, ancillary services, and capacity—and explained that CAR will transition the Forward Capacity Market to a prompt, seasonal design beginning in 2028. The reforms are intended to better reflect actual resource performance under stressed conditions, including seasonal output, fuel availability, and storage duration, while maintaining reliability standards and cost discipline.

Audience questions addressed how different resources will be accredited under CAR, including gas units with fuel constraints, winter solar performance, offshore wind, energy storage, and co-located resources. ISO-NE explained that accreditation methodologies will better reflect fuel availability, seasonal performance, and storage duration, and are being developed through a multiyear stakeholder and FERC process. Additional questions covered negative pricing dynamics, developer financing considerations, and opportunities for public comment, with ISO-NE noting that impact assessments, forecasts, and stakeholder engagement will continue as the new market design is finalized and implemented.

Closing Remarks

CLGCC member **Julie Macuga** offered closing remarks and thanked the presenters and organizers of the CLG meeting. The next CLG meeting will be held on June 2, 2026, in Lowell, MA.

A [recording](#) of the meeting and related presentations can be found on the [CLG page](#) on the ISO website.

After the meeting, External Affairs staff were available to meet with in-person attendees for continued dialogue.