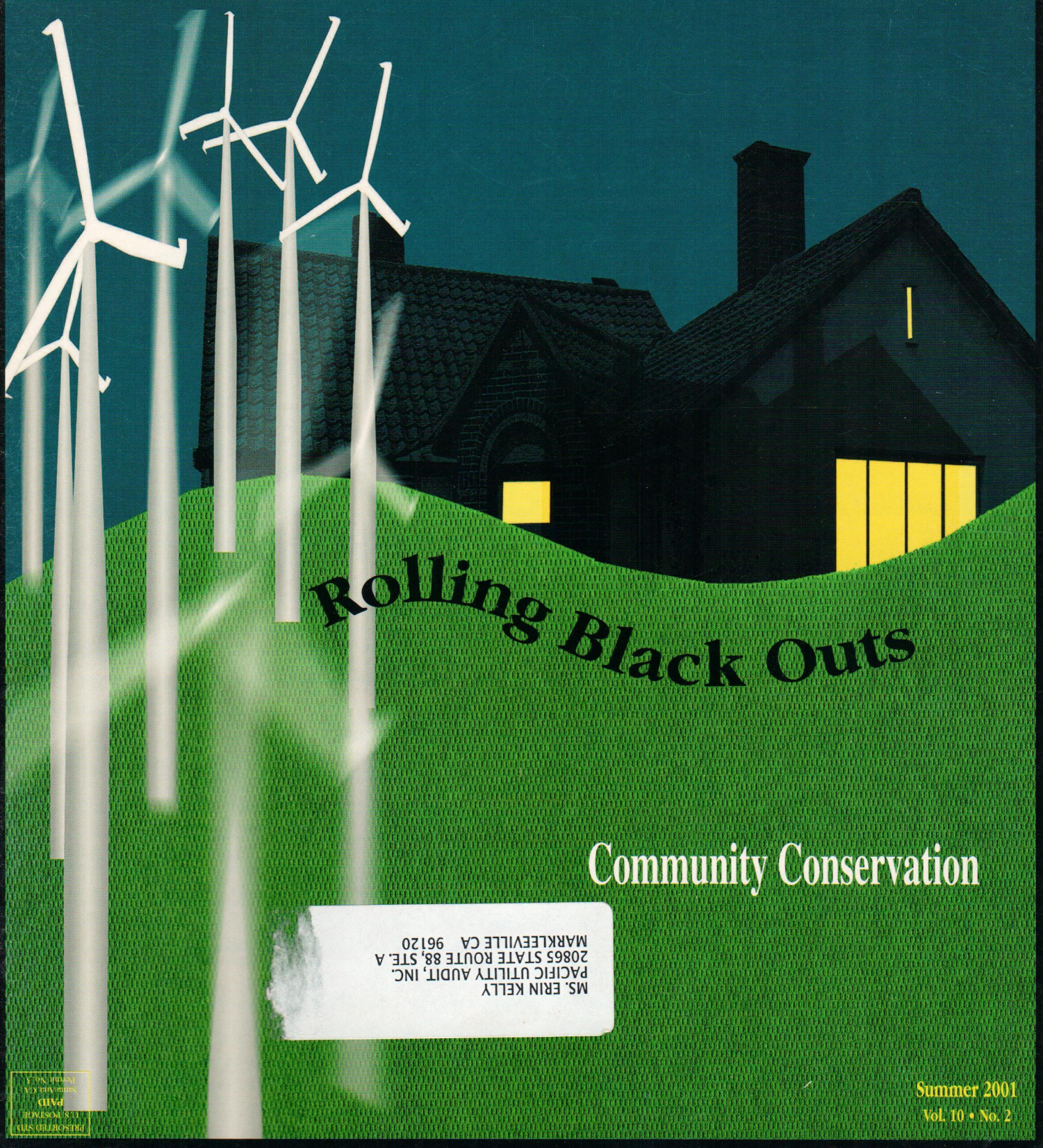
Vision Magazine

The Voice of the California Association of Community Managers, Inc. SM



Rolling Black Outs

Community Conservation

MS. ERIN KELLY
PACIFIC UTILITY AUDIT, INC.
20865 STATE ROUTE 88, STE. A
MARKLEEVILLE CA 96120

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HELP WITH YOUR ENERGY CRUNCH PROBLEMS

Many managers have already taken steps to assist their associations with initiating cost saving and conservation measures. There are many ideas that this writer has gleaned from associates and vendors who serve CID's. These ideas were submitted by Cheryl Wilson, on site manager of Marina Hills and Larry Coggins of L.C. Electrical and Maintenance who has assisted in the implementation of said ideas:

- By changing from photocells to time clocks in many areas of the association you can save 6 hours a day on lighting by setting timers to go off at midnight. Every light in the association doesn't have to burn all night – only those in strategic places, such as stairwells, bodies of water etc.
- Change the timer on the tennis court lights to one hour or less so that if the user leaves the court early the lights don't burn an extra hour.
- Install motion sensor lights for restrooms instead of timer switches which are often forgotten and left on for extended periods of time.
- Turn off "up lighting" and fountains after midnight.

Lewis Hines of Aquatrends Pool Services offered the following advice:

- Many associations have installed pumps which are too large for their needs – big is not always better. As long as the flow rate requirements are not jeopardized you can cut to a half horsepower motor less than you have which will save an enormous amount of energy.

A WAY OUT!

Robert Nordlund of Association Reserves states that reserve studies can be tailored to meet any energy program the Board of Directors deems advisable. He agrees that high efficiency pool heaters and pumps are a great cost saving investment. He also stated that you could save by turning off the spa heater at midnight and turning it back on early in the morning and/or by using some kind of cover for the spa.

We are all familiar with the retrofit program that has allowed associations to install new smaller watt fluorescent bulbs into existing fixtures. From time to time certain utility companies have programs for rebates to any association who embarks on this plan. In addition, some water companies have a special plan for installation of low flush toilets.

All of these are terrific ideas, however, you may still be paying higher rates for service than you should. This can be determined by a utility audit. A utility audit can actually put money into an association's reserves, WITH NO COST TO THE ASSOCIATION WHATSOEVER!

What is utility auditing? In simple terms, utility auditing is an analysis, on-site inspection and review of the association's common area water, sewer, gas, electric, telephone and trash utility bills to identify errors and overcharges such as: sewer fees billed to irrigation water, wrong utility rates applied to bills, decimal point errors, tax errors, misread and/or miscalibrated meters, incorrect service charges etc. There is no cost to the association because utility auditing is a result-oriented business that operates on a contingency basis.

The auditor receives 50% of any refund checks and credit adjustments issued to the association plus a percentage of "after the fact" utility cost savings to the association if overcharging is discovered. All that is required of the association is to provide the utility auditor with copies of the last 12 months utility bills.

With the ever-escalating costs of providing utility services to the association, it is incumbent on every Board of Directors to seek any means to lower those costs. In most instances associations are overpaying simply because they are not aware of how their utility bills are calculated.

It seems that the intrepid Community Manager must once again be creative enough to learn about, advise and implement a plan for saving the budget.

Submitted by Pat Gummeson, CCAM, Total Property Management