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Bringing new energy to NYISO

At the helm since July, Whitley brings "impressive array of talents" to job

By **LARRY RULISON**, Business writer

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EAST GREENBUSH — Expect some bold new ideas to come out of the New York Independent System Operator while Stephen Whitley is in charge.

Whitley is the new chief executive of NYISO, which oversees the state's electrical grid and wholesale electricity market.

He joined the East Greenbush-based organization in July, after a year-long search for a successor to Mark Lynch, who left NYISO at the end of February after three years at the helm.

Whitley was born to work in the energy field. He grew up in Oak Ridge, Tenn., where the U.S. government developed the atomic bomb during World War II.

Today, that city is also home to the Department of Energy's Oak Ridge National Laboratory.

Whitley attended Tennessee Technical University and after that started what became a 30-year career with the Tennessee Valley Authority, which operates power plants and reservoirs across Tennessee and neighboring states.

Before joining NYISO, a not-for-profit corporation regulated by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, he was chief operating officer for ISO New England, which oversees the electrical grid in New England.

"Steve Whitley brings an impressive array of talents and expertise to the NYISO," said NYISO Chairwoman Karen Antion.

And during most of his career, Whitley served in the U.S. Army Reserve. He retired as a colonel and served in Operation Desert Storm in 1990 and 1991.

"It's a great opportunity for me," Whitley said of the NYISO job. "I hope to add value with my experience."

Whitley, who moved into a brownstone on Lark Street in Albany, has already started to push an aggressive agenda in New York, where he is advocating new infrastructure and technologies to bring more renewable energy to the state.

Whitley wants to import more hydropower from Quebec and foster more wind power in New York. He said existing transmission lines need to be upgraded to carry more clean energy into and across the state to places like New York City that need more power.

"Let's start working on our infrastructure," he said. "Studies show that these investments will pay for themselves."

Whitley also is a proponent of wind power, which is why earlier this month NYISO released a study showing that the cost of wholesale power in the state is directly tied to the cost of natural gas and oil, which account for more than 60 percent of the fuel used in power plants in New York.

"Without sustained investment in efficient, nonpolluting energy resources such as wind and hydropower, New York's electricity consumers will continue to see power price swings tied to volatile fossil fuel prices," he said.

Under Whitley, NYISO is pushing an innovative idea to the State Energy Planning Board, which was created by Gov. David Paterson to create a state energy plan. That idea: Use wind power to charge electric cars overnight.

A study presented to the energy board in September shows that wind tends to blow more at night, when most consumer electric demand is at its lowest.

However, if the state were to promote the use of plug-in hybrid cars, that wind energy could be used at a time when there is little demand, to charge the cars overnight. The cost of the electricity could be the equivalent of 80 cents per gallon of gasoline.

NYISO has developed a wind energy forecasting system for the state as developers seek to add more wind farms.

"We can help make this happen," Whitley said. "We're happy to do this. Our people love working on this."

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Stephen G. Whitley

Title: Chief executive officer, New York Independent System Operator

Hometown: Oak Ridge, Tenn.

Residence: Albany

Family: Married with three children and two grandchildren

Education: Bachelor's degree in electrical engineering from Tennessee Technological University

Military service: Retired colonel in the U.S. Army Reserve and the former commanding officer of the 3397th Garrison Support Unit, Fort Campbell, Ky. Served in Operation Desert Storm in 1990 and 1991.

Quote: "This is really an exciting time. New York is going to have a leading role."