



# CONNECTED

The Newsletter of Cowlitz PUD

Volume 9, No. 12

## Energy Conservation Programs Remain a PUD Priority

It all started with a door-to-door service to wrap water heaters with insulation blankets back in 1981.

In the 25 years since then, Cowlitz PUD has paid out \$45 million in incentive payments to residential, commercial and industrial customers wanting to be more energy efficient.

The current funds come from Bonneville Power Administration's Conservation Rate Credit program which is funded through electric rates. BPA and its utility customers consider an investment in energy conservation measures the same as an investment in a new source of electric generation. The more we conserve, the less new power resources we have to build.

Besides insulating about 18,000 water heaters way back in 1981-82, PUD conservation programs have paid for home insulation, double-pane windows, rebates on energy-efficient appliances & heat pumps, more efficient street and commercial lighting, compact fluorescent lights and energy efficiency improvements in industrial processes over the years.

Today Cowlitz PUD continues to offer a variety of conservation incentives, including:

- **EnergySHARE Plus** – Rebates ranging from \$25 to \$70 on the purchase of ENERGY STAR® rated clothes washers, refrigerators and dishwashers, and energy-efficient water heaters. Rebate forms are available at local retailers and at the PUD.

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- **H2 Advantage Plus** – Rebates up to \$700 on residential heat pump systems. We provide customers a list of contractors who are pre-qualified to perform work under this program.
- **Residential Weatherization Plus** – Incentives to insulate ceilings, floors, and walls in your electrically-heated home, after you have had a free PUD energy audit. Qualified low-income customers are also eligible for thermal pane replacement window incentives. Please note that all weatherization measures must be pre-authorized by the PUD and installed by the contractor you select from our qualified contractor's list. Mobile/manufactured homes are not eligible.
- **Commercial Energy Efficiency (CEEP) Plus** – Funding to help pay for lighting improvements for business customers.
- **Energy Savings Plan Industrial Conservation Effort (SPICE) Plus** – Financial incentives for large commercial and industrial manufacturers for the installation of electrical energy saving measures in their processes.

We encourage all customers to conserve energy everyday – by turning off lights, lowering thermostat settings, washing clothes in cold water, etc. Be sure to visit [www.cowlitzpud.org](http://www.cowlitzpud.org) for full details on the programs above and for a variety of energy saving tips and ideas.

## 24-7: PUD Dispatchers Work Around the Clock



*Cowlitz PUD has a dispatcher on-the-job at all times. If the power goes out the primary job for Jason Pithan (above), or whichever PUD dispatcher is on duty, is to call in and coordinate with our line crews, electricians and other employees to restore electricity quickly and safely. Our dispatchers also take your calls during nights and weekends, which can be very busy if the power is out. If you can't reach us because the line is busy or you get a recorded message, take comfort knowing that our dispatchers can monitor the flow of electricity in-and-out of every substation via our computerized Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition (SCADA) system. In most cases they know the power is out the second it happens.*

### What's Happening

#### Important Tax Tips from CAP



Did you work in 2005? CAP and Work Source want you to know that you may be eligible for the Earned Income Credit **if your family earned less than \$35,263**. If so, you'll owe less in taxes and you could get cash back. Even if you don't owe income tax, you can get the EIC.

Here's how you get it: If you were raising children in 2005, file federal tax return Forms 1040 or 1040A, not Form 1040EZ. Be sure to attach Schedule EIC. If you weren't raising children in 2005, just file any federal tax return.

**Claim your CTC refund:** Many families that earned more than \$11,000 may qualify for the Child Tax Credit (CTC) refund — up to \$1,000 for each qualifying child under age 17. See tax form instructions and get Form 8812.

Want more information? Call CAP at (360) 425-3430, ext. 288 or the IRS toll-free at (800) 829-1040.

*As space is available each month in Connected, Cowlitz PUD offers a brief listing to promote programs and activities for public, non-profit groups with wide interest in Cowlitz County (on a first-come, first-served basis). Send your request to: [whatshappening@cowlitzpud.org](mailto:whatshappening@cowlitzpud.org).*

### YOU CAN PAY YOUR PUD BILL ONLINE

[www.cowlitzpud.org](http://www.cowlitzpud.org)

Debit or credit card (Visa/MasterCard)

## Warm Neighbor Program Kicks Off Sixth Year

The Lower Columbia Community Action Council (CAP) and Cowlitz PUD are teaming up for the sixth year to offer the Warm Neighbor Program to assist qualified low-income families needing help to pay their electric bills.

Last year PUD customers generously gave about \$28,000 to Warm Neighbor. Overall, \$130,000 has been donated over the entire five years of the program.

This program gives you the voluntary option to make a payment over-and-above the amount due on your regular electric bill, and then designate that additional amount to Warm Neighbor. Only amounts paid in excess of the amount due can be credited to the fund.

Cowlitz PUD forwards all Warm Neighbor funds to CAP, which in turn uses the funds to assist qualified, low-income residential electric users in Cowlitz County through the winter months.

“We thank those who have voluntarily given to the Warm Neighbor fund in the past,” CAP Executive Director Ilona Kerby. “Every dollar raised is used to help someone in-need to pay their electric bill.”

Electric customers seeking assistance can contact CAP at 425-3430.

**To make a voluntary donation to the Warm Neighbor Program: Complete the designated space on your next PUD bill and send in an amount you would like to donate, along with your PUD payment. Contact CAP at 425-3430 if you prefer to make a direct donation to Warm Neighbor.**

### Contact Information

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## Commission Activities



During its October and November meetings, the Cowlitz PUD Board of Commissioners:

- Was presented an overview of BPA's 2007 new conservation rate credit offering to Cowlitz PUD and an update on our conservation programs.
- Met with District 18 and 19 legislators to discuss energy issues and potential legislation for 2007.
- Held two half-day workshops with PUD staff to comprehensively review the draft 2007 electric and water system budgets.
- Received a progress report from staff and our consultant on the Automated Meter Reading (AMR) project. Cowlitz PUD will begin to install and test a power-line carrier AMR system in about 4,000 homes and businesses in 2007.
- Passed a resolution asking the Longview City Council to retain the heavy industrial designation for the Mint Farm Industrial Park. The PUD Board believes changing the designation to light industrial would negatively affect future economic growth in the community. The PUD has been working in recent months with the CEDC and local industries to upgrade the electrical infrastructure at the Mint Farm.

All PUD Board meetings are open to the public and we encourage customers to attend. Upcoming meetings are scheduled for:

|                      |                      |
|----------------------|----------------------|
| Tuesday, December 12 | Tuesday, December 26 |
| Tuesday, January 9   | Tuesday, January 23  |

Meetings are held in the PUD Auditorium, 961 12th Avenue in Longview at 2:00 p.m., unless otherwise noted. Please consult [www.cowlitzpud.org](http://www.cowlitzpud.org) for up-to-the-minute Board meeting dates and times.

**PUD Website: We're at .org, not .com!**

Please be careful to enter the correct web address when you go online to visit the PUD website. Our address is [www.cowlitzpud.org](http://www.cowlitzpud.org). If you mistakenly enter a .com at the end you will reach an active website, but it has no affiliation with Cowlitz PUD.

## From the General Manager's Point-of-View...

After nearly five years the reconstruction effort at Swift No. 2, Cowlitz PUD's hydroelectric project on the Lewis River, is on the last lap. Frankly it has been a long, hard, difficult effort, and one which I will be glad to see end.

In April of 2002 the forebay wall of the power canal failed, which then resulted in almost total destruction of the powerhouse and adjacent substation. Reconstruction of the hydro project has been the single largest focus (and time consumer) for the Board of Commissioners, many of our staff members, former General Manager Denny Robinson (until he retired at the end of 2004) and me.

The specific chain of events has been reported many times. Because of that I am not going to try to give the whole story again. The short version is that we believed at the time of the failure we were well insured. One insurance company, Lloyd's of London, paid us fairly quickly. Two others filed a lawsuit to get out of paying. One of those eventually paid in full. As for the other, it looks like we will be in court fighting to get our money for another year or more.

We had a number of good contractors work on the project. For the most part they went about doing their job in accordance with the bids, and finished work according to schedule.

However, the contractor who won the canal reconstruction work was somewhat difficult from literally the first week of the contract. Just as a home remodel can be even more difficult and uncertain than new construction, the Swift rebuild has had some challenges which exacerbated the situation. But final resolution of the various claims and counterclaims between that contractor and the PUD was reached in November. As I write this we expect to settle up with the powerhouse reconstruction contractors in early December and essentially close out the contracts by the end of 2006.

While there have been a ton of challenges in rebuilding the project, its completion marks the return of a valuable asset to



the PUD and its customers. We have a brand new facility with an expected life of 50 years or more. With the new concrete canal lining we should not have to worry about the kinds of problems that resulted in the failure. The powerhouse equipment is more efficient and capable of producing more power than the old equipment.

The PUD is close to obtaining a new 50-year license from the

Federal Energy Regulatory Commission to own and operate Swift No. 2. We have worked in conjunction with PacifiCorp as it also seeks to obtain new licenses for Merwin, Yale and Swift No. 1 on the Lewis River. The conditions associated with those new licenses mandate improvements or changes intended to create a healthier environment for fish, but come with a significant cost.

When our PUD forefathers decided to build Swift in the 1950s, they were in the same position as we are today. At that time BPA power was also less expensive than Swift. But they foresaw that Swift power would eventually become a great deal for our customers.

The same is true today. While now more expensive than BPA, Swift power costs less than any other new resource the PUD could acquire. And since it's a hydro project, it's not subject to inflationary pressures on fuel costs like other generation resources.

We have persevered to complete this rebuild. That's because just as our PUD predecessors recognized, the newly rebuilt Swift project is a good deal today – and it will be a great deal for our grandkids.



Brian Skeahan, General Manager