



# CONNECTED

The Newsletter of Cowlitz PUD

Volume 10, No. 6

## PUD Conservation Programs are Available for all Customers

Cowlitz PUD has been in the energy conservation business for over 25 years now, utilizing funding from Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) to help residential and business customers save money on home weatherization improvements, heat pumps, appliances, water heaters and lighting – and save millions of kilowatt hours in the process.

With hot summer weather coming, now is a great time to consider installing an energy efficient heat pump or adding insulation to your ceiling, floor or walls. These measures will help keep your home cooler in the summer and warmer in the winter – and you'll reduce your energy use at the same time.

It's our goal to see every customer have the chance to take advantage of conservation incentives. Call us at (360) 577-7514 to find out more about these programs:

### Home Weatherization

The Residential Weatherization Plus program offers incentives for customers (with electric heat) to insulate ceilings, floors and walls. You'll need a home energy audit first, so call us if you are unsure if an audit was done previously. Qualified low-income customers are eligible for additional benefits, like funding for window replacements.

### Heat Pump Rebates

Cowlitz PUD's H2 Advantage Plus provides residential customers with heat pump rebates up to \$700. Whether

### Inside This Issue:

- Notice to Water Customers
- What's Happening
- A Message from the General Manager

your current heating system is fueled by oil, natural gas or electricity – you can qualify. We believe the heat pump system is the most energy efficient means of creating a comfortable indoor climate.

### Home Appliance Rebates

Our EnergySHARE Plus program offers rebates on your purchase of ENERGY STAR® rated clothes washers, dishwashers, refrigerators and energy efficient water heaters.

### Commercial Programs

Cowlitz PUD has assisted hundreds of businesses and schools with its Commercial Energy Efficiency Program (CEEP Plus) lighting offer, for energy efficiency improvements to existing lighting systems, and improving refrigeration systems. Call us to see if your business qualifies.

### Industrial Financial Incentives

Industrial customers, both small and large, have received financial incentives over the last 14 years for the development and installation of electrical energy saving measures in their processes, such as compressed air, pumping, fan and motor efficiency improvements.

You will find full details at [www.cowlitzpud.org](http://www.cowlitzpud.org) (click on Conservation & Renewables), or by calling our Energy Conservation Department at (360) 577-7514.



*Cowlitz PUD's Swift Power Canal fishing pier, which opened in April 2006, is popular with local fisherman. The ADA accessible structure is located adjacent to the Swift Canal Bridge, about four miles east of Cougar. Each spring, just prior to Opening Day, Cowlitz PUD stocks the canal with one thousand 9-11 inch rainbow trout.*

## What's Happening

### Know the Buzz About West Nile Virus

Cowlitz County had its first West Nile Virus (WNV) positive bird in October 2006 and Clark County had its first human case of WNV.

Mosquitoes can carry a number of diseases, including WNV. With mosquito season underway, Cowlitz County Health Department has some protection tips:



#### Fight the Bite – Avoid Mosquito Bites

- Use an effective repellent outdoors – especially at dawn and dusk when mosquitoes are most active. Follow label instructions for use.
- Wear long sleeves and long pants outdoors.
- Make sure windows and doors are “bug tight” with screens.
- Get rid of standing water and keep water fresh in pet dishes and birdbaths.

Cowlitz County Health Dept: (360) 414-5599  
 WA State Dept. of Health: (866) 788-4787  
 Mosquito Control District: (360) 425-5658

For more information about WNV or to report a dead bird, please go to: [www.co.cowlitz.wa.us/health](http://www.co.cowlitz.wa.us/health)

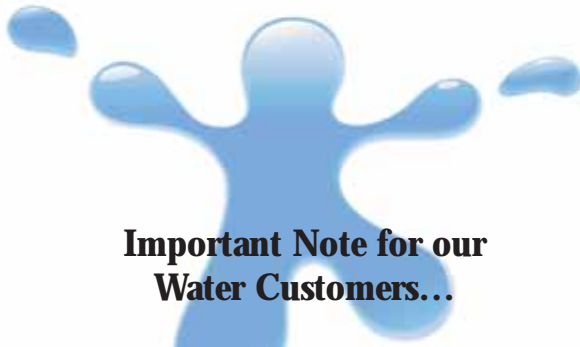
### Did you know?

- √ 68% of Cowlitz County residents are obese or overweight
- √ 1 out of 4 women smoked during their pregnancy
- √ 23.4% of Cowlitz County adults smoke
- √ More Cowlitz County residents die from diabetes, heart disease, all cancers, stroke, cirrhosis, and COPD than the Washington state average

Healthier lifestyles mean longer and improved quality of life for Cowlitz County residents. Take the first step to a healthier life by visiting [www.cowlitzonthemove.org](http://www.cowlitzonthemove.org) for healthy tips and information on upcoming free events, workshops and classes in the community. Remember to eat smart, play hard and breathe free.



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



### Important Note for our Water Customers...

In late June Cowlitz PUD will send out its 2006 Water Quality Report. This is a report published each year which describes the quality and sources of drinking water delivered by Cowlitz PUD, and the programs undertaken to protect water quality. Cowlitz PUD is the water provider for 3,800 customers living in areas around Longview and Kelso, including Columbia Heights, Lone Oak, Beacon Hill, Lexington and Ostrander.

Along with the report we will also include some guidelines for conserving water in case it becomes necessary during the higher water-usage months this summer, or if there should be water supply shortage at any time during the year.

Nearly every PUD water customer receives water from the Regional Water Treatment Plant in Longview, which also serves City of Longview water customers. The treatment plant draws its water from the Cowlitz River north of Kelso. Large amounts of silt in the Cowlitz River could potentially cause problems with the water supply and lead to a call for aggressive conservation measures at any time.

For now we just want to alert customers to the potential of a tight water supply. Please use water wisely, especially as the weather begins to warm up.

**You can now pay your PUD bill at:**

**Woodland Hi-School Pharmacy  
1365 Lewis River Road  
Monday-Saturday, 8:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m.  
Sunday, 8:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m.**

In April and May the Cowlitz PUD Board of Commissioners:

- **Passed a resolution modifying the system development charges for new water connections and amending general schedule fees.** Updated policies and fees are posted on our website. (Go to the "About Us" pull-down menu)
- **Approved a resolution authorizing submittal of an application to the state Public Works Trust Fund** for financing the PUD's ownership interest of the construction of the City of Longview's proposed new water treatment plant in the Mint Farm Industrial area.
- **Adopted an updated PUD Auditorium Use Agreement Policy.**
- **Passed a resolution, under the Economic Development Policy, committing PUD funding toward the construction of a new substation at the Port of Kalama for the Cameron Family Glass Company.**
- **Approved a resolution authorizing the PUD to join the Northwest River Partners' Green Dams, Blue Skies campaign, which supports operating the Northwest hydroelectric system in a manner more beneficial to utility customers.**

#### Upcoming meetings:

Tuesday, June 12  
Tuesday, July 10  
Tuesday, July 24

PUD Board meetings are open to the public and are held in the PUD Auditorium, 961 12th Avenue in Longview. Meetings start at 2:00 p.m. (During March, April and May the meetings were moved up to 1:00 p.m., but will revert back to 2:00 p.m. beginning on June 12).

Please check our website for up-to-the-minute Board agendas, meeting dates and times.

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

I often write about challenging issues that utility managers face in today's electric industry. Recently we've discussed regional and global topics such as salmon recovery, hydro system operation, climate change and renewable power mandates – issues that produce many opinions and call for tough decisions and trade-offs.



There are local issues that elicit a variety of opinions as well. For instance, some disagree with the PUD offering a discounted electric rate for seniors over age 65. Others agree with the policy and have asked the PUD to consider offering rate discounts to a wider group of low-income customers. In March, a PUD customer asked our board to assess every PUD customer a 20¢ per month surcharge to supplement the Warm Neighbor fund.

Another local issue that came to the forefront recently is related to bill collection – and the related costs and fees. In the March 2007 issue of Connected we wrote a story about what it costs per year to send out billing reminders. On an average month we mail out roughly 9,000 late notices to customers who have not paid their bill by the due date. The number represents about 19 percent of our customers.

The postage and handling costs to send those reminders adds up to about \$50,000 a year, which like all our expenses is ultimately paid by all customers. After that story ran we got 15-20 calls and emails from customers displeased with having to bear the expense. It was frankly the biggest response we've had in awhile for one particular item in our newsletter.

For those who responded: I understand your concerns. Even though \$50,000 is a small piece of our \$226 million budget for 2007, it represents an expense that is frankly unfair to the large majority who pay their bill on time. We wrote the article, in part, as a way to let the chronically delinquent bill payers know what they are costing fellow customers.

Here's the rest of the story: Based on the average for January-April 2007, of those 9,000 customers who received a past-due reminder, 1,100 failed to meet the next deadline in time to avoid collection action. Each was sent a letter informing them of a pending disconnect and a \$10 charge was added to their account.

Of that group, an average of 270 per month did not pay (or make reasonable arrangements to pay) and ultimately had their power disconnected. That action carries an additional charge of \$30.

The comments we received on the March article generally asked why no late fee is charged for the first mailing. While no fee is charged specifically on the first reminder, as noted above there are significant charges on a second reminder and service disconnect. These fees are common in the NW power industry and are used to help offset the PUD's costs to collect late bills – for postage, labor costs for those who perform collection work in the field, etc.

But not everyone agrees. Some customers argue that the PUD's late fees are too high and redundant, saying the fees only make a bad situation worse for a customer already having trouble paying their bill. It's even been a topic in the online Daily News Forum.

Sometimes setting policies like this becomes a real balancing act. As a consumer-owned utility, it's our job to make sure that every one of our 47,400 customers is treated fairly and equally. But the issue of these fees is really pretty simple. The Board and I expect customers to pay their bill on time for the electricity they use. If they can't, we have people here to discuss payment solutions.



Brian Skeahan  
General Manager

## Contact Information

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