

CONNECTED

The Newsletter of Cowlitz PUD

Volume 9, No. 7

Water Conservation Urged

Longview and PUD Water Customers Asked to Use Water Carefully this Summer

Due to a filter failure at the Regional Water Treatment Plant (RWTP) and an increased demand for water during the warm weather months, water supplies for Longview and outlying areas served by the regional plant may run low at times for several weeks this summer.

The filter system failure occurred in May at the RWTP, causing a 15 percent loss of filtration capacity. The City of Longview and Cowlitz PUD are requesting their water customers to use water conservatively until repairs are made in late July or early August.

(Cowlitz PUD serves about 3,800 water customers in the Columbia Heights, Lone Oak, Beacon Hill, Lexington and Ostrander areas).

Conservation efforts are necessary to allow area reservoirs to be refilled after being drawn down as a result of the 15 percent reduction of supply and higher use during warmer weather. Restoring reservoir levels and maintaining a proper reserve for fire protection and domestic use are the major concerns at this time.



Inside This Issue:

- Meter Accessibility
- What's Happening in Our Community
- A Message from the General Manager

Important water conservation tips for residents and business customers:

- Discontinue watering lawns and gardens, or irrigate them minimally and only at night. If sprinkling is necessary, adjust sprinklers to make sure that only the lawn or plants gets watered.
- Adjust lawn mowers to higher settings. Longer grass shades root systems and holds soil moisture better than a closely clipped lawn.
- Refrain from power washing homes, decks, patios, or driveways.
- If car washing is necessary, make sure there is a shutoff nozzle on the hose to prevent excess water loss, and wash it on an area of grass that needs watering.
- Turn off ornamental water features and fountains that spray water into the air. Trickling or cascading fountains lose less water to evaporation.
- Avoid filling swimming pools or using water recreation toys that require running water.
- Turn the faucets off tightly after each use.
- Only wash full loads in your dishwasher or clothes washer.
- Install approved conservation aerators on all faucets.

Thank you for your patience while these repairs are being made at the RWTP. Cowlitz PUD and the City of Longview will communicate any updates about the low water situation in The Daily News and Longview-area radio stations.

By Assisting the Meter Reader You Help Make Sure Your PUD Bill is Accurate

Each weekday morning, the PUD's meter readers and service representatives travel to every corner of Cowlitz County. They know every street, house and yard from Cougar to Ryderwood.

And nearly everyday our meter readers encounter situations that prevent them from reaching a meter on that day's route. Clear access to each meter is important. It helps our meter readers stay on schedule, and allows the PUD to send you timely and accurate billings.

Here are some examples of situations that make a meter reader's job difficult, or even dangerous.

- **Meters behind a locked door or gate:** Please leave your gate open when your meter is due for reading or call the PUD and make arrangements to provide us with a key. All customer keys are stored securely in a vault in our office and only leave the vault on the day your meter is to be read.

Budget Plan Sign-up Period Ends Soon

Cowlitz PUD residential customers can sign-up for the popular Budget Payment Plan through August. Even with the recent switch to monthly billing, many customers still prefer the option to make 12 equal monthly payments in the budget plan, thus avoiding unpredictable seasonal electric billings.

To qualify you must be a PUD residential customer and live in a residence with at least one year of billing history. Your account must be paid in full before starting. Find out more about Budget Pay at www.cowlitzpud.org or call us to sign-up or to find out if you qualify.

Contact Information

Cowlitz PUD - 961 12th Avenue
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- **Obstacles blocking the path to a meter:** Shrubbery, vehicles, sports and lawn equipment, or any item stacked or stored near your meter can present a problem. We appreciate a clear path.
- **Dogs in the yard and not on a leash:** A family dog left outside to protect your property, considers a meter reader to be an intruder. When your meter is due to be read, please have your dog on a leash or inside the house or garage.

You can determine future meter reading dates by referring to the current and previous "read dates" on the enclosed bill. Meters are read every 26-34 days.

We appreciate your consideration in keeping PUD meter readers safe and on time.

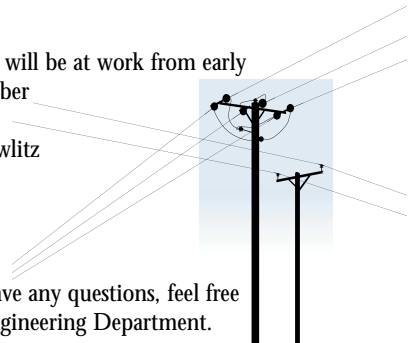
Treatment Program Extends Life of PUD Power Poles

If you are driving around in Woodland this summer and see someone drilling holes in a PUD power pole, don't be surprised.

Cowlitz PUD has hired Innerpole Investigations to test 3,000 poles in-and-around Woodland. The contractor is looking for decay in the poles and if they find it, they will apply a treatment which can extend the life of the power pole by 20 to 25 years. Their work also helps the PUD identify any poles that need replacement.

Each summer the PUD hires a contractor to perform this work. Countywide we have 22,000 power poles and all are inspected every 10 years. The normal life of a power pole is 40 years, but with proper care and treatment, that can be extended to a 60- to 70-year life.

Innerpole employees will be at work from early July through September covering much of the south end of Cowlitz County, including, Woodland, Cougar, Ariel and parts of Kalama. If you see them at work and have any questions, feel free to call the PUD's Engineering Department.



What's Happening

American Cancer Society's

Relay for Life® – Cowlitz/Wahkiakum Counties

August 12-13 - Cowlitz County Expo Center (Fairgrounds)

Relay for Life is a fun-filled overnight event designed to celebrate survivorship and raise money to help the American Cancer Society save lives, help those who have been touched by cancer, and empower individuals to fight back against this disease.

Over 60 Cowlitz PUD employees and family members are ready to take part in our local Relay for Life event, August 12-13 at the Expo Center (Fairgrounds). Dr. Gordon Klatt of Tacoma, the originator of Relay for Life in 1985, will be on hand August 12 to speak and to answer questions.

Locally, participants have set a goal of 80 teams and \$175,000. If you would like to participate and/or contribute please call (360) 575-8980.

National Night Out - Tuesday, August 1

The National Night Out event is designed to heighten crime and drug prevention awareness, generate support and participation in local anti-crime efforts such as Block Watch and Business Watch, strengthen neighborhood spirit and police-community relations. The national event sends a message to criminals: Neighborhoods are organized and fighting back.

The Longview and Kelso Police Departments are organizing National Night Out events for Tuesday, August 1.

In Longview: National Night Out will include a visit to combined Block Watch neighborhoods from the Longview Police Department. Block Watch Groups are asked to come together and get out and barbecue on their street on August 1. If you register your Block Watch group – Longview Police will come and see you, have some giveaways and goodies and congratulate you for your great crime fighting efforts! For more information contact Cindy Turpen at Longview Police Highland Satellite Office, 216 30th Ave., Suite C, or call (360) 442-5850.

In Kelso: Celebrate National Night Out at Tam O' Shanter Park on August 1, 6:00 to 8:00 p.m. This will be a fun night for the entire family with free hot dogs and pop served. Gordon Painter will entertain and the City Council will meet at the park. There will be a free drawing for a kid's bike. For more information, contact Sgt. Andrew Hamilton at Kelso Police, 201 S. Pacific Ave. or call 577-3428.



Commission Activities

This column highlights the activities of the PUD Board of Commissioners. During its May and June meetings the Board:

- **Authorized adoption of a resolution** to increase water rates by 10 percent effective June 1.
- **Awarded a bid for reconstruction** of Gardner's Corner Substation (near Silver Lake) to the lowest bidder, J.H. Kelly, LLC.
- **Approved the economic incentive plan** for Cameron Family Glass Packaging LLC as adopted under the District's Economic Development Policy.
- **Gave approval to submit the Community Economic Revitalization Board (CERB) Rural Application** for funding of the Port of Kalama substation.
- **Accepted the highest bid and sale of surplus property** known as "Substation A" at 975 Hemlock Street, Longview.

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

- Tuesday, July 11
- Tuesday, July 18 (Commissioners meeting room)
- Tuesday, July 25
- Tuesday, August 8
- Tuesday, August 22

Meetings begin at 2:00 p.m. and are held in the PUD Auditorium, unless otherwise noted.

HELP LIGHT UP OUR NEIGHBORHOODS

The easiest and least expensive way to increase lighting of our sidewalks and street is for all of us to use existing outdoor lighting every night, dusk-to-dawn. This includes front doors, front porches, garages, etc. Lights, like locks, must be used to be effective.

Cowlitz PUD suggests using a Compact Fluorescent Light (CFL) to light your porch or driveway. If you use one 25-watt CFL for an average of 10 hours per night, the electricity costs just over 1¢ per day. That means for less than \$5.00 a year you can provide additional security for yourself and help light up your neighborhood to help fight crime.



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

Enron: It Proves the Continued Importance of Public Power

The May 26 Oregonian headline read: *"The Enron Trial: Jury finds Skilling, Lay guilty of deceit."* The Daily News and about every other newspaper across the country offered similar headlines.



The story has local interest, since Enron owned Portland General Electric at one time. But Enron's impact spread much further than just the West, and it left cheated ratepayers, weakened local economies, and lost retirement savings in its wake.

Before we discuss what went wrong in the Enron debacle, let's take a look back to the roots of the electric industry in the U.S. It might help us avoid another "Enron."

It has always been understood that the electric industry is what economists call a natural monopoly. Because the costs of power plants, transmission towers and distribution lines are so expensive, having multiple companies compete for the same customers is senseless.

Early on most electric service was provided by private power companies that only provided service to residents of large cities. The public became concerned about these monopolies charging too much.

In response, the government took steps to protect utility customers. They set up state commissions with the authority to set fair rates.

In 1935 the Public Utility Company Holding Act, (PUHCA) was passed, which limited utilities from merging and growing so big they couldn't be controlled. (For the purpose of PUHCA "Public" really means privately-owned).

Most importantly laws were passed that established publicly- and cooperatively-owned utilities that could be controlled and held accountable by their customers through the electoral process. A main mission of public utilities, including PUDs, was to provide service to rural and hard-to-serve areas.

The idea was to create a model where private utilities, regulated by government, intermixed with consumer-owned utilities. This provided a competitive yardstick for both and best served all customers of this vital business. While there were some breakdowns over the years, it mostly worked well.

Fast forward to the early 1980s when Internorth Natural Gas and Houston Natural Gas merged to form a new company called Enron. Under the "leadership" of Kenneth Lay, Enron sought to change the very basis of the electric utility industry.

When Enron got rolling, people had forgotten why PUHCA was adopted, why public power was formed, and why regulatory commissions were established. It was popular to complain about governmental regulations. Publicly-owned enterprise was called inefficient. There was no such thing as a natural monopoly. Competition was good. So was "customer choice."

So Enron and others took advantage of this political climate. Lobbyists got Congress to repeal PUHCA. They got rules that favored them and their new way of doing business. They said "It will be great. Just trust us."

(I am proud to note that Congressman Baird, Senator Murray and especially Senator Cantwell objected strongly to the repeal of PUHCA.)

Enron's way turned out to be a bill of goods. By 2000-2001 when they had the rules and laws they wanted, Enron and others that created this so-called free market, competition and customer choice then illegally manipulated those markets to increase their own profits. This came at the expense of their customers and western ratepayers.

When they began to be discovered, they lied. They sold their stock before it came crashing down, but wouldn't let their employees do the same. And now a judge has found the top guys at Enron guilty. But the ratepayer's money is gone. The employee pensions are gone. And there is nothing more that can be done, except remember.

This story demonstrates what makes Cowlitz PUD and over 2,000 other public utilities and 900 co-ops different. Public power does not profit at its customer's expense. Our only purpose is to provide the best possible service at the lowest possible cost, commensurate with sound and prudent engineering, business and utility practices. We are part of our communities.

That's it. That's what we do and that's who we are. I can speak for public utilities across the country and say we are proud of our part of the industry, and will fight to make sure the Enrons of this country don't get their way again.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "B. Skeahan". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Brian Skeahan, General Manager