



# CONNECTED

The Newsletter of Cowlitz PUD

Volume 13, No. 2

## CAP and Cowlitz PUD Team Up to Offer “Warm Neighbor Plus” in 2010

Cowlitz PUD and Lower Columbia Community Action Program (CAP) are working together to offer a special 2010 program to help low-income PUD residential customers who may not normally qualify for financial assistance.

The funds are the result of the 2009 settlement between the State of Washington and Enron. In December, Attorney General Rob McKenna announced that his office was distributing \$9 million statewide to utility customers who were gouged in 2000-2001 by the energy crisis orchestrated by Enron and other West Coast energy trading firms.



Cowlitz PUD's share of the settlement is \$95,692. As part of the settlement, the State requires these funds to be used to help reduce heating expenses or to support weatherization programs for low-income households.

“We like the idea of using these special funds to help customers who make a little too much to qualify for the standard Warm Neighbor funds or other energy assistance programs,” PUD Board President Ned Piper said.

### Who Qualifies for Warm Neighbor Plus?

The PUD has contracted with CAP to assist PUD residential users whose income falls between 125 and 200 percent of federal poverty guidelines, who are behind on their electric bill and facing a pending disconnect of service.

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Under the guidelines of Warm Neighbor Plus a one-person household could be earning a monthly income between \$1,128 to \$1,805 to qualify; a two-person household could earn from \$1,518 to \$2,428 per month.

“These funds will allow us to help at least 190 households, and probably more,” said Sheila Girt, CAP's Energy and Housing Director. “These are the families who fall through the cracks; earning too much money to qualify for energy assistance, but too little to cover all of their family's bills.”

The funds need to be distributed by December 31, 2010, and assistance is available to a client only once during the year.

CAP manages the PUD's Warm Neighbor Fund, which paid \$28,386 in 2009, for 453 households. CAP also manages the PUD's Senior Discount and Disabled Discount programs, as well as the federal Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP).

Through the Warm Neighbor Program and LIHEAP, CAP assisted 2,541 households with payments to heating source vendors totaling \$747,194 in 2009.

**For more information on  
Warm Neighbor Plus call CAP  
at 360-425-3430, ext 231.**

## New Beaver Bay Substation is Now Online



*Work was completed in December on the new Beaver Bay Substation, located east of Cougar and adjacent to the PUD's Swift No. 2 Powerhouse and Yale Reservoir. The new substation allows the PUD to greatly improve the reliability of the electric system by adding a second source of power distribution to the 1,000 customers living in the area between Ariel and Cougar. JH Kelly of Longview was the general contractor on the job.*

### We Appreciate You Keeping the Path Clear for the PUD Meter Reader

Cowlitz PUD is making good progress on installing a new automated electric meter at each business and residence in Cowlitz County, but the new automated system won't be completed and operating until 2012. Until that time, we will continue to send meter readers just like we have since the 1940s.

Each day PUD meter readers travel to every corner of Cowlitz County. They know every street, house and yard from Cougar to Ryderwood. Nearly everyday they encounter situations that prevent them from reaching a meter, including:

- **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.
- **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. Clear access to each meter helps us stay on schedule, and provides for a more timely and accurate billing. Thank you in advance, we appreciate your help.



## What's Happening

### 2010 Census Questionnaires Arrive by Mail in March

Residents are asked to complete and return their census survey by April 1. Your information is confidential under federal law and is mandatory to complete.

Your answers to 10 questions will provide data to help delegate \$400 billion (over \$1,000 per person) in federal funding for schools, employment, human services, infrastructure and emergency services. For each person who does not complete the survey, our community loses \$10,000 in federal funding over 10 years.

Questions: Contact Jennifer Keene at the Cowlitz-Wahkiakum Council of Governments at [jkeene@cwco.org](mailto:jkeene@cwco.org) or 360-577-3041.

### Live Healthy, Live Happy Senior Connections Fair

**Saturday, May 1, 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.**  
**Cowlitz County Expo Center**

Over 50 exhibitors will provide social connections, employment readiness, financial literacy, legal information, health screening, education, volunteer opportunities, and personal care or home care assistance.

You'll enjoy live entertainment, give-a-ways, door prizes and guest speakers. Test drive innovative medical equipment, sign up for a Spa Day or participate in dance and exercise. There will be seating for rest and snacks available. Admission is free. Donations will be accepted for CAP Food Warehouse.

For participation/registration information contact:  
Anita Hopkins at Lower Columbia CAP  
360-425-3430 or 1-800-383-2101 (ext.288)  
[www.lowercolumbiacap.org/SeniorConnectionsFair](http://www.lowercolumbiacap.org/SeniorConnectionsFair)

*As space is available in Connected, Cowlitz PUD offers the What's Happening column to provide public, non-profit groups with wide interest in Cowlitz County an avenue to promote their activities (on a first-come, first-served basis). Please send your request via email to: [whatshappening@cowlitzpud.org](mailto:whatshappening@cowlitzpud.org).*

## Commission Activities



### January 2010 highlights:

- **Joined commissioners from 27 other Washington PUDs in Olympia** to meet with legislators to discuss issues related to public power and other interests of PUD customers.
- **Adopted the 2010 budget proposed by the Beacon Hill Sewer District** to operate the water system owned by Cowlitz PUD.
- **Approved a contract with Lower Columbia CAP**, for CAP to administer \$95,692 in funds provided by the State of Washington to assist qualified low-income customers with electric bill payments.

### Upcoming PUD Board meetings:

Tuesday, March 9

Tuesday, March 23

These public meetings are held in the PUD Auditorium, 961 12th Avenue in Longview at 2:00 p.m. Please check our website for up-to-the-minute Board agendas, meeting dates and times.

## Go Green!

You can support the development of environmentally friendly "Green Power" sources like wind, solar, low-impact hydro, geothermal and biomass. The cost is as low as \$40 a year and may be tax deductible. To learn all the details:

1. Log on to [www.cowlitzpud.org](http://www.cowlitzpud.org)
2. Go to the **Conservation and Renewables** menu
3. Click on **Purchase Green Tags**



## BE SAFE AROUND ELECTRICITY

When using a ladder, carefully inspect the surrounding area to ensure no power lines are in the vicinity. If you need to work near a power line serving your home or business, call Cowlitz PUD at (360) 423-2210 or (800) 631-1131 and we can temporarily de-energize it, allowing you to work more safely.

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

Having lived much of my life in Nebraska and then working as a general manager of electric utilities in two counties with large rural areas like Cowlitz, I'm familiar with the perception that city customers receive more attention than rural customers.



Public Utility Districts in Washington were founded in the 1930s, thanks to many dedicated Grange members. The private power companies at that time, with their eyes on their balance sheets, were unwilling to make the necessary investments to serve rural customers.

PUDs, on the other hand, came into existence to serve all customers – city or rural. Our goal is to provide an equal level of service and reliability to all.

We're making significant capital improvements, with the most notable in 2009 in the Lewis River Valley where we've invested \$3.7 million to upgrade the electric system serving from Ariel – Cougar. It included building the new Beaver Bay substation east of Cougar, relocating 1.5 miles of overhead lines off a troublesome cross-country route and replacing seven miles of line with a heavier wire, less prone to tree damage. There's a little work left which will be done in 2010.

The project will help meet future load growth and reduce the number and length of power outages. Outages will always be more prevalent in rural areas, due to the distances power lines run and additional exposure to trees and stormy weather.

Over 60 percent of our lines are underground, but terrain and cost require that some lines remain overhead. We have replaced over 65 miles of older underground lines in the last two years.

The new Beaver Bay substation offers an alternate path to serve the area from both the east and the west, allowing us to minimize or even avoid some power outages. Our first big test

came when high winds hit January 17, blowing trees into power lines and causing considerable damage near Ariel.

About 250 customers lost power through the night in the Lake Merwin area. However without the system improvements nearly 1,000 would have lost power. The new system worked by isolating the outage to a much smaller area.

This is one of several recent major projects. The PUD substation on South Silver Lake Road was rebuilt in 2007-2008 and now receives two transmission feeds – a key factor to improved reliability. More work is still ongoing in the Spirit Lake Highway corridor, but electric system reliability to the entire area is much improved.

The PUD has purchased property on Ocean Beach Highway near Bunker Hill Road, anticipating the need someday for building a substation to better serve customers living west out Ocean Beach Highway. The North Woodland substation built a few years ago benefits Woodland and Kalama and the Delameter substation was razed and rebuilt not long ago to lift it above potential flood waters.

Work continues in Kelso and Longview as well. We're reconstructing the Washington Way and Olive Way substations in Longview, which will provide an upgrade from 69 to 115 kilovolts. We have a lot more planned through 2018 and projects like automated metering and our new enterprise-wide software systems will benefit all customers, no matter where you live.

The people of Cowlitz County voted in 1936 to establish a PUD, in an effort to see that anyone who wanted electric service could have it. No matter where you live in the county, you are entitled to receive our best efforts to have a well-engineered, well-built and well-maintained electrical system.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Brian Skeahan', written in a cursive style.

Brian Skeahan  
General Manager

## Contact Information

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