



CONNECTED

The Newsletter of Cowlitz PUD

Volume 11, No. 9

Hydropower: A Renewable Resource Like No Other

Plain and simple the Pacific Northwest's hydroelectric system is a clean, reliable, low-cost and renewable energy resource.

As a member of Northwest RiverPartners (NWRP) Cowlitz PUD is part of a campaign called Green Dams, Blue Skies, which spotlights the benefits of Northwest rivers. That includes renewable power generation – along with transportation, irrigation, recreation, and fish and wildlife habitat.

NWRP is a coalition of businesses, utilities, farmers, ports and other river users who understand what's at stake when it comes to our dams. Specifically the campaign seeks to build understanding of hydro's benefits and its critical importance to the region's economic health, by informing federal and local legislators, regional decision makers, businesses and citizens.



**Green Dams
Blue Skies**
Celebrating the Power of the Northwest

"Northwest fish runs are strong and hydro continues to play an essential role in providing our region clean, renewable and affordable electricity," NWRP Executive Director Terry Flores said. "But we never want to take a good thing for granted, so it's vital that we recruit vocal support for hydropower."

A recent poll of Washington, Oregon and Idaho voters shows that citizens overwhelmingly understand and appreciate the value of the region's dams. Pollster Tim Hibbitts, of Davis, Hibbitts & Midghall, Inc., conducted the 2007 survey, which was commissioned by NWRP.

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- Cost of a Porch Light
 - Pole Treatment Program Underway
 - A Message From the General Manager

Poll respondents named hydropower, which supplies 85 percent of Cowlitz PUD's energy needs, as the region's most practical source of energy. Wind power finished a distant second, followed in order by nuclear, solar, natural gas and coal. Hydro was considered a renewable resource by 86 percent of respondents.

NW citizens understand that wind power is a less reliable than hydro, since it only generates electricity when the wind is blowing. "Hydroelectricity is a natural partner for our growing wind industry, because it can be used to fill in when the wind isn't blowing," Flores said.

NWRP is calling on individuals, businesses and organizations to sign on. To join in go online to www.nwrivertpartners.org and click on the Green Dams, Blue Skies logo or you can call Northwest RiverPartners at (503) 274-7792.

"The hydro system already is being operated to give top priority in almost all circumstances to fish passage and survival," Flores said. "The goal of Green Dams, Blue Skies is to raise awareness of the improvements at the dams and in hydro operations on behalf of salmon."

Hydropower supports the region's booming windpower industry by ensuring there is electricity when the wind is not blowing. Hydro can generate power more quickly and reliably than any other energy resource.



You can use your porch light year round for under \$6

We are often asked about what it costs to run a porch light or spot light that is left on all night. Here are two answers to the question – the first based on using an incandescent bulb and the second one based on a compact fluorescent bulb (CFL):

1. A 75-watt incandescent bulb, running an average of 12 hours per day (dusk to dawn), uses 900 watt hours of electricity in a day or 0.9 kilowatt hours (kWh). Over a 30-day period it would use 27 kWh.

At the PUD's 5.12¢ residential electric rate it would cost you about a nickel per day, \$1.38 per month or \$16.56 per year to light your front porch with a 75-watt incandescent bulb.

2. CFLs are much more efficient lights, so you could substitute a 26-watt CFL and get even more light than a 75-watt incandescent. A 26-watt CFL, running an average of 12 hours per day, uses 312 watt hours of electricity in a day or 0.312 kWh. Over a 30-day period it would use 9.36 kWh.

The 26-watt CFL will cost you 52¢ a month or \$5.75 per year for the electricity, saving you over \$10.

It's your choice whether you leave a light on at night. It sure is a positive from a security standpoint, and in a city residential situation it really helps light up the block. As you can see a CFL will save you in electric costs and the bulbs normally last for several years.

IMPORTANT: If using a CFL as a porch light, be sure to select one that is listed for "outside use."

Annual treatment plan extends life of PUD power poles

Cowlitz PUD's electric system includes over 20,000 power poles, each with a normal life span of 40 years.

With proper care and treatment that life can be extended to 60-70 years. That's why the PUD inspects a portion of its power poles each year for decay and insect infestation. Every pole is inspected on a 10-year cycle.

The PUD has hired Osmose to test about 2,200 PUD poles in North Kelso and Castle Rock. If you see Osmose employees drilling holes in PUD poles, it's okay. That is how they test them. 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 us identify poles that need replacement.

While conducting the pole tests, contractors also look for rotted cross arms, rusted guy wires, cracked insulators and other damage. Any concerns are reported to the PUD so we can perform the necessary maintenance.

Osmose's work will end late this year. If you have any questions, please call the PUD's Engineering Department.

Deadline is nearing to apply for low-income rate discount programs

Low-income senior and disabled customers of Cowlitz PUD can apply until December 1 for a discounted electric rate in 2008-2009. Call CAP at (360) 425-3430 for an appointment to determine your eligibility for a rate discount.

To qualify:

- You must occupy the subject premises and be age 65 or older (senior rate), or be disabled and earn a disability income (disabled rate).
- Electric service must be in the qualified low-income customer's name and you must have been signed for service as a Cowlitz PUD residential electric customer for the past 12 consecutive months.
- You must meet low-income standards based on 2008 federal poverty guidelines:

Persons in HH	Gross HH income 20% discount	Gross HH income 10% discount
2 or less	under \$14,000	\$14,000 - \$21,000
3	under \$17,600	\$17,600 - \$26,400
4 or more	under \$21,200	\$21,200 - \$31,800

Customers can only participate in one of the rate discount programs, even if they meet the requirements of both.

What's Happening

Be a Part of a Volunteer Team

...making a difference at the Cowlitz Free Medical Clinic!

The Cowlitz Free Medical Clinic (Free Clinic) is open Wednesdays 5:00 -

9:00 p.m. to serve adults over 18 years of age who have no medical insurance and who are in need of urgent care.



The Free Clinic urgently needs volunteer interpreters to help support the Spanish-speaking patients seen, especially female patients. The clinic also needs volunteers for many medical, clerical and front office positions. Contact Susan Wendel at (360) 501-1205.

The Cowlitz Free Medical Clinic understands and serves the health and wellness needs of our community's medically uninsured adults, by providing free, high quality, urgent health care. www.cowlitzfreemedicalclinic.org

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: whathappening@cowlitzpud.org.

Commission Activities



September highlights:

- **Attended the Washington PUD Association fall meetings**, which offered a forum on climate change and a planning session for public power issues expected in the 2009 state legislative session.
- **Approved bid awards for a new aerial man lift and contract labor to install distribution system underground facilities.**
- **Met with a group of 12 PUD employees in a 90-minute roundtable discussion of PUD business and issues.** Over the past year every PUD employee has had the opportunity to take part in one of these monthly sessions with the Board of Commissioners and General Manager.

Upcoming PUD Board meetings:

Tuesday, October 28

Tuesday, November 25

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.

Automated Metering - *Installation begins in Kalama area*

Cowlitz PUD's Automated Metering Infrastructure (AMI) project goal for 2008 is to have 11,000 new meters installed by the end of the year. Through September we had installed nearly 8,500, putting us well on the way to meeting the goal. Cowlitz PUD meter technicians worked in Castle Rock during much of September, before shifting to Kalama late in the month. Technicians will be working up the Spirit Lake Highway in October.

By the end of 2011 all 48,000 PUD customers will have a new automated meter that communicates on a real-time basis with computers in the PUD office, via a signal over power lines. Meters will be read automatically from the PUD office. One day you'll be able to monitor your electric usage online and set your monthly billing date.

Do the old meters and new meters look alike?

The new automated meters are the same size and shape as the meters we have used for years. The big difference you will see is that the new meters offer a digital read-out of your meter reading. That makes the new meters much easier to read. The old meters had four or five dials, each like a tiny clock with a pointer and numbers.

If you have a question about automated metering, please email it to us at customercomments@cowlitzpud.org and type "Automated Metering" in the subject line. You can also send your question to us at 961 12th Avenue, Longview, WA 98632. Please write "Automated Metering" next to the address.



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

It's been a year now since the White Creek Wind Project began producing electricity. With a capacity of 205 megawatts, it is one of the largest public power initiated wind projects in the United States. Cowlitz PUD has rights to 46 percent of that energy for 20 years.



In 2005 when we decided to partner with three other public utilities and develop White Creek, we believed that several things would happen:

- Some type of renewable portfolio standard, requiring utilities to acquire a certain amount of renewable energy, would be adopted either at the State or Federal level.
- Our Bonneville Power Administration contract for 2011 and beyond would place responsibility for local load growth squarely on our shoulders.
- Congress would continue to provide financial incentives for the construction of wind power, at least through 2007.

All three expectations came true. Washington voters passed Initiative 937 calling for 15 percent of a utility's generation portfolio to be from non-hydro renewables by 2020. Our new BPA contract will require us to develop our own generation resources to meet future loads, and Congress extended financial incentives for wind development through 2008.

When our Board committed to White Creek in 2005, it could see that this was not only our lowest-cost option for renewable power, but also our lowest-cost option for any new power source. Since then a surge in the price of natural gas, coupled with state legislation effectively prohibiting a coal-fired option, has proven that we made the right choice.

Now three years later we are basically in the same position. There is land in Klickitat County, adjacent to the White Creek project, which is capable of being developed. Our load forecasts show we need additional wind power to meet our

I-937 requirements. We aren't sure what Congress is going to do about another extension of the financial incentives, but we're inclined to believe they will be extended. Natural gas prices continue to be high, making that a price-volatile alternative.

However, some things have changed since 2005. The cost of wind generation equipment has jumped, mostly due to demand and the rising cost of steel. The proposed capacity of the new project (called Harvest Wind) is 80-100 megawatts, less than half of White Creek. That reduces some of the "economies of scale." Plus the site is a little less windy. Added up, all these factors make the Harvest Wind power output more costly per megawatt hour (MWH) than White Creek.

But at the same time we need additional renewable power to comply with I-937 and to meet customer electrical demands. Even at a higher price per MWH the Harvest Wind power is still a positive alternative in today's market, so it looks pretty certain we will proceed.

This is probably the PUD's last wind power development for awhile, but not the end of the development of new sources of renewable power to meet future growth and state mandates. We will continue to look out for attractive power supply alternatives, like geothermal, biomass, landfill gas and solar.

Speaking of solar power I expect the PUD's 2009 budget to include plans for testing solar options, to help us get a feel for the practicality of developing something larger in coming years. We will also be able to share what we learn in the solar market with our customers who have an interest in a home installation.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "B. Skeahan".

Brian Skeahan
General Manager

Contact Information

Cowlitz PUD - 961 12th Avenue
PO Box 3007 Longview, WA 98632
(360) 423-2210 - Toll free WA (800) 631-1131
website: www.cowlitzpud.org
Email: customercomments@cowlitzpud.org

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COMMISSIONERS: Buz Ketcham, Ned Piper,
and Mark McCrady
GENERAL MANAGER: Brian Skeahan
EDITOR: Dave Andrew