



# CONNECTED

The Newsletter of Cowlitz PUD

Volume 13, No. 5

## PUD Launches Refrigerator-Freezer Recycling Program

Cowlitz PUD's newest residential energy conservation program offers customers a \$30 check for recycling an old refrigerator or freezer.

An old refrigerator can use a lot of electricity, which really becomes wasteful and costly if it is only being used to store a six-pack of soda or a few frozen items. This program offers our customers an incentive to safely recycle an old refrigerator or freezer, and reduce their electric bill significantly.

The majority of spare refrigerators can use 3-4 times the energy of newer models. A 20-year-old refrigerator or freezer consumes an average of 1,500 kilowatt hours annually, which would cost a PUD customer about \$77 a year in electricity charges.

The PUD has teamed up with JACO Environmental on the recycling program, which began April 19. Residential customers can schedule a curbside pickup of up to two refrigerators/freezers by calling JACO toll free at (877) 577-0510 or can schedule a pick-up online at [www.cowlitzpud.org](http://www.cowlitzpud.org).

**To qualify, the refrigerator or freezer must be:**

- In working condition
- 10-30 cubic feet in size
- 1995 models or older



### You'll Help the Environment

JACO recycles about 95% of the materials used to manufacture each refrigerator or freezer and safely disposes of the toxins and ozone-depleting chlorofluorocarbon gases from foam insulation. Proper recycling of the foam insulation and refrigerant in the cooling circuit can prevent the release of up to the equivalent of five tons of CO<sup>2</sup> into the atmosphere.

For more details about refrigerator-freezer recycling, contact Cowlitz PUD's Energy Conservation Department at (360) 577-7514, (800) 631-1131 or [mailbox@cowlitzpud.org](mailto:mailbox@cowlitzpud.org). The incentive check is mailed 4-6 weeks after appliance collection.

### RECYCLE AN OLD REFRIGERATOR/FREEZER

- ★ EARN A \$30 INCENTIVE CHECK
- ★ REDUCE YOUR ELECTRIC BILL

To schedule curbside pickup:  
 JACO Environmental (877) 577-0510  
 Online at [www.cowlitzpud.org](http://www.cowlitzpud.org)

## Cowlitz PUD's Electric Plug-in Hybrid Vehicle

Last year Cowlitz PUD converted a 2009 Toyota Prius Hybrid into a plug-in hybrid electric vehicle (PHEV) in an effort to demonstrate a new technology and to better understand how this new technology will affect our business.

PHEVs are outfitted with a battery pack sufficient to power the vehicle from 20 to 40 miles on a battery charge alone. Considering that half the cars on America's roads are driven 25-miles a day or less, a plug-in with a 25-mile range battery could eliminate gasoline use in the daily commute of millions of Americans. The cost of an equivalent "electric" gallon of gas is estimated to be less than \$1.

### PHEV Fuel Facts

- Since June 2009 the PUD's plug-in Prius has averaged 86.4 miles per gallon with a monthly average electrical usage of 127.5 kilowatt hours (which costs \$6.53 at today's PUD electric rate).
- In comparison, our unmodified Toyota Prius averaged 49.3 miles per gallon during the same period of time.
- The plug-in hybrid takes about 5.5 hours to charge using a



standard household 120-volt outlet.

- The battery charge lasts an average of 25 miles and during that time achieves over 100 miles per gallon.

### Other Facts

Plug-in vehicles often recharge at night using excess power from base-load power plants that are already running, so the charging won't generally add to the peak electricity demand. It's estimated that the

existing U.S. electrical grid has sufficient capacity to fully fuel three-quarters of the nation's 217 million passenger vehicles.

### I-5 Electrification

Cowlitz PUD is participating in a regional discussion with the Washington State Department of Transportation, several other WA utilities and representatives from Oregon, California and British Columbia seeking stimulus funds to build vehicle plug-in infrastructure along Interstate-5. President Obama announced last year that \$2.4 billion of U.S. stimulus money will be spent on developing electric vehicle technology, with the goal of having a million plug-in hybrids on the roads by 2015.

## Budget Pay Signup Underway

With the PUD's Budget Pay plan residential customers make 12 equal monthly payments on their electric bill. Only residential customers qualify, the residence must have at least one year of billing history and your account must be paid in full before starting. Sign up ends in August.

Call to see if you qualify or find out more  
at [www.cowlitzpud.org](http://www.cowlitzpud.org).

## What's a kilowatt hour? What does it cost?

When you use electricity to cook a pot of soup on your stove for 1 hour, you use 1,000 watt-hours of electricity. A 100 watt light bulb turned on for 10 hours also uses 1,000 watt hours. One thousand watt-hours equals 1 kilowatt-hour, which is usually abbreviated as 1 kWh.

It costs a Cowlitz PUD residential customer a little over a nickel for 1 kWh or about half of the average cost for the entire United States, which is 10.54¢ per kWh.

So in Cowlitz County it costs you about 5¢ to cook that pot of soup for an hour. That same 1 kWh of electricity used to cook a pot of soup would cost 15¢ in Maine, 8¢ in Tennessee or Montana and 11¢ in Texas.

**YOU CAN PAY YOUR PUD BILL ONLINE**

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

Debit or credit card (Visa/MasterCard)

## What's Happening

### Working Together to Stop Wire Theft



The PUD has posted Crime Stopper signs at every substation around Cowlitz County in an effort to help identify and prosecute people who steal utility wire and electricity.

Crime Stoppers offers a unique crime fighting tool by creating a partnership between the media, citizens, businesses and all of the law enforcement agencies in Cowlitz County.

Each week a "Crime of the Week" is highlighted in the media and anyone with information about that crime is asked to call Crime Stoppers to provide information. All calls are anonymous. If your tip leads to an arrest or filing of charges, you could earn a reward up to \$1,000.

Visit [www.cowlitzcrimestoppers.com](http://www.cowlitzcrimestoppers.com) or call (888) 577-1206 for more information. If you witness someone stealing electricity or tampering with PUD lines, call 911 immediately.

*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).*

## Garage Sale Time: Please Don't Post Advertisements on Power Poles

Cowlitz PUD employees have a favor to ask: Please don't hang signs on power poles.

The reason we ask is that it's potentially dangerous for our employees – and it's also against the law. RCW 70.54.090 prohibits attaching signs, posters or other objects to power poles.

It's that time of year when garage sales are in full swing and we understand it's tempting to staple or nail advertising signs, flyers for missing pets, etc., to PUD poles. While we understand these are very worthwhile events, hanging a sign on a power pole can create a dangerous situation for PUD line workers.



Working on power lines is a dangerous job. The nails and staples used to hang a garage sale flyer can damage the special protective clothing, boots and gloves worn by line workers, increasing the danger of electrocution. A lineman working at night can not see the nails and staples left behind from a sign that once hung there.

In order for PUD line crews to ensure reliable service to all customers, electrical workers must be able to climb power poles safely in all kinds of weather – day or night. We count on your cooperation to assure the safety of our employees and to help provide you quality electric service.

Thank you in advance for acknowledging this concern and for obeying the law.

## Commission Activities



### April 2010 highlights:

- **Authorized a transfer of 208 final accounts from 4th quarter 2008 to reserve for bad debts**, totaling \$22,488. That represents the lowest bad debt write off dating back into the 1990s. The Board was also advised that \$23,757 was recovered on accounts previously transferred to bad debt, leading to a net gain for the quarter of \$1,269. The Board commended staff for its hard work to achieve such a small write-off total.
- **Approved the lowest responsive bid for the 2010 underground line plow project from Potelco, Inc.** The project calls for the installation or replacement of about 20 miles of underground lines.

### Upcoming PUD Board meetings:

Tuesday, June 8

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.

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

When Cowlitz PUD and its utility partners decided to develop the White Creek Wind Project back in 2006, we faced many uncertainties.



At the time the passage of Initiative 937 was still on the horizon and a new long-term sales contract with BPA loomed in our near future. We asked ourselves "How big a wind project should we build?"

We had leases with Klickitat County property owners for a 304-megawatt, 132-turbine project. Frankly that presented too big a financial bite, especially given the uncertainty over our future with BPA and our renewable requirements.

So we settled on a 205 MW project with 89 turbines and delayed the decision on the remaining potential. Waiting too long, however, would risk losing landowner agreements and allow them to negotiate with other developers.

We developed a unique financing plan to build White Creek. By utilizing private entities to take ownership and sell the power back to us, it allowed the benefits of Federal income tax credits and accelerated depreciation provisions in tax code to be passed to customers. That lowered the power output costs below what most others paid for new wind projects.

White Creek began operation in late 2007. In 2008 we began planning to develop the remaining 99 MW with public partners Eugene Water and Electric, Lakeview Light and Power and Peninsula Light and named it Harvest Wind. Cowlitz's share is 30 percent.

At first we anticipated financing Harvest Wind similar to White Creek. But things changed with the collapse of the financial markets in 4th quarter 2008. The universe of private investors looking for income tax credits pretty much vanished over the two years between developing White Creek and Harvest Wind.

We also faced price increases in wind generation equipment. It was time for a new plan.

We rolled up our sleeves and eventually identified an alternative financing mechanism offered by the Federal government as part of the economic stimulus package. Instead of using tax credits based on energy production, we qualified for a 30 percent credit based on our capital costs. This Investment Tax Credit eventually lowered the capital costs of the project by \$60 million, which reduced the net cost to \$160 million.

The Federal approval for the grant was finalized in early April and Cowlitz received \$18 million as its share of the Investment Tax Credit grant, which will replenish the financial reserves we drew down during development of the project.

We also took advantage of a labor-related component at Harvest Wind, which was not available when we planned White Creek. A provision in I-937 gives new renewable projects an extra 20 percent production credit for utilizing at least 15 percent of its construction labor from state-approved apprenticeship programs. At Harvest Wind over 19 percent of the applicable labor was done by apprentices.

It's a win-win. Utility customers benefit from additional renewable credits that can be sold in the market by their utility, while at the same time we help prepare the next generation of workers with needed skills and experience. The Washington State Apprentice and Training Council certified our apprenticeship utilization on April 16.

Harvest Wind began operating on December 15, 2009. The combination of White Creek and Harvest Wind will provide us an economical source of power supply to help meet future load growth and our renewable portfolio standards. It took a lot of hard work to get there, but it feels good to be ready for what we think our future will bring.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "B. Skeahan". The signature is fluid and cursive, written over a white background.

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](http://www.cowlitzpud.org)  
Email: [mailbox@cowlitzpud.org](mailto:mailbox@cowlitzpud.org)

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