

Frequently Asked Questions

Reference	Topic	Question	Answer
100	General Information	What is Thurston PUD?	Public Utility District No. 1 of Thurston County (Thurston PUD) was officially formed in 1938 by a vote of the people. We currently own and operate 275 water systems, serving over 7,960 families, businesses, schools, and parks. Thurston PUD provides water planning and utility services to the citizens of Thurston County, and also owns and operates water systems in Pierce and Lewis counties, one water system in King County, and a few water systems in Grays Harbor and Kitsap counties.
110	General Information	When is the meeting on the proposed rates, fees and charges?	The Public Meeting on the proposed rates, fees and charges for Pattison customers will be on Thursday, February 11 at 6:00 p.m. A link to join the meeting is at https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81962631769 There will be no Commissioners present at this meeting. PUD staff plan to introduce the proposed transition rates to you and answer your questions. The Public Hearing, where the PUD Commissioners will listen and hear public testimony on the proposed rates is Tuesday, February 16, 2021 at 5:00p.m. A link to join the meeting is at: https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89145648745 At this hearing, PUD staff will introduce proposed rates and make a recommendation to transition Pattison customers over three years to standard PUD rates.
120	General Information	What is the difference between a privately-owned water utility and publicly-owned water utility?	Publicly owned utilities are non-profit. Where privately-owned utilities are regulated by the Washington State Utilities and Transportation Commission (UTC), Thurston PUD is governed by three elected officials from Thurston County who are accountable to its citizens. The Thurston PUD Board of Commissioners set rates, fees and charges and the cost to operate and maintain our water systems is spread across all customers.

130	General Information	Why didn't my community get the opportunity to buy our water system?	The Pattison Water Company is a privately-owned organization and the owner had the right to sell to whomever he wanted. Deciding to sell to the customers, or another regulated company versus a public entity has both advantages and disadvantages. In this instance, the owner determined that selling to Thurston PUD offered the best opportunity for the continuation of a high level of service and less financial disadvantage.
140	General Information	Why does Thurston PUD own water systems in other counties?	Thurston PUD acquired 153 water systems in several counties and has operated and maintained them since 2005. These systems were sold to the PUD by another owner of water systems regulated by the UTC who sold them to the PUD. In 2017, the PUD purchased another 140 water systems from a UTC managed for profit company. This resulted in the PUD owning and managing systems in multiple counties and this provides an economy of scale for the PUD to provide service more efficiently and more effectively. If there is another PUD in a county in which Thurston PUD operates that has an active water utility, Thurston PUD would consider transferring those systems to that PUD in the future. Thurston PUD has the authority in Washington State statutes to own and operate systems outside of its own county boundaries.
150	General Information	Where is Thurston PUD located?	Thurston PUD Headquarters is located at 1230 Ruddell Rd SE, Lacey, WA 98503
160	General Information	How many employees does Thurston PUD have?	Thurston PUD has 27 employees. Twelve of these employees are technical field service staff who support water systems directly.
170	General Information	Who should I call in case of a water emergency?	Our Field Technicians are available 24-hours a day, 7 days a week. If you are experiencing a water emergency, please call 360-357-8783. If you call after business hours, you will be directed to our third-party call center that will forward your message to our on-call technician.

180	General Information	Will Thurston PUD add fluoride to my water?	The PUD does not fluoridate any of its water systems.
190	General Information	How will backflow testing be conducted?	Backflow prevention device testing is an annual requirement to ensure they are working properly. Thurston PUD does not offer backflow inspections. You will need to have your backflow device inspected by a trained and licensed professional, then provide the test results with us. We will send a questionnaire to you to fill out with your New Customer Application Packet.
200	PUD Property Tax	Why does the PUD have a property tax?	The PUD Commissioners were required to pay for election costs for PUD Commissioners beginning in 1990; prior to this, the County paid for election costs. The PUD Commissioners implemented a small County-wide property tax assessment to pay for election costs. Today, the property tax levy costs a homeowner of a property valued \$400,000 a one-time annual cost of \$3.03. These funds pay for Commissioner elections and other Commissioner related expenses. This property tax levy helps keep your rates lower than they would be without the property tax paying for the election and other PUD Commissioner related costs.
300	Rates, Fees & Charges	What rates, fees and charges are being considered?	Thurston PUD staff will recommend a three-year transition for Pattison customers. This means, PUD staff recommend giving Pattison customers three years to phase in Pattison customers to full standard PUD rates.

A link to the recommended rates fees and charges is at:

<http://www.thurstonpud.org/docs/Rates/Proposed%20Rates,%20Fees%20&%20Charges%20-%20Pattison%20Water%20System%20-%202021.pdf>

A link to examples of costs at different levels of consumption is at:

<http://www.thurstonpud.org/docs/Rates/Proposed%20Bill%20Impacts%20-%20Pattison%20Water%20System%20-%202021.pdf>

305	Rates, Fees and Charges	Why is there such a large rate increase for incoming Pattison customers?	<p>During the acquisition process, the current Pattison rates were reviewed. Pattison is a privately-owned water utility regulated by the Utilities and Transportation Commission (UTC). In order to change rates, a UTC-regulated utility has to undergo a very extensive and expensive process. Because of the complexity and the cost, private utilities do not normally engage in a rate case before the UTC very often. Because of this difficult and expensive process, your rates have not changed in the last 10 years, but the price to operate and maintain a water utility has increased over the years. One of the components of the total charges all PUD customers pay is the \$10.00 a month per equivalent residential unit (ERU), which is used for water system infrastructure investment. The PUD expects to invest \$2.3 million dollars in the Pattison water system infrastructure in the next five years.</p> <p>Thurston PUD purchased the Pattison water system and must repay the debt service over the next twenty years.</p> <p>Thurston PUD staff are recommending to the PUD Board of Commissioners that current customers on the Pattison water system have a 3-year transition period to the standard PUD rates. Since your current rates under Pattison Water Company were lower than PUD rates, it was extremely important for our staff to find a balance between rates and the costs needed to operate your water system. Our rates are comparable to similar utility systems.</p>
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310	Rates, Fees & Charges	Why didn't my rates go up with Pattison and why are the PUD's rates so different from theirs?	<p>Pattison is a privately-owned water utility regulated by the Utilities and Transportation Commission (UTC). In order to change rates, a UTC-regulated utility has to undergo a very extensive and expensive process. Because of the complexity and the cost, private utilities do not normally engage in a rate case before the UTC very often. Because of this difficult and expensive process, your rates have not changed, but the price to operate and maintain a water utility have gone up over the years. Additionally, when infrastructure needs to be replaced, the customers are levied a capital surcharge for that infrastructure replacement once it is replaced. The PUD has a goal of saving what we can and proactively planning for replacement of infrastructure. Thurston PUD is a publicly-own water utility that is governed by three elected officials, the PUD Board of Commissioners. The PUD Commissioners have rate making authority and review rates, fees, charges, and surcharges. The review them annually and make adjustments in rates, fees charges and surcharges when they are necessary. Our rates are comparable to other similar utilities.</p>
315	Rates, Fees and Charges	Will any rates fees and charges be eliminated or changed?	<p>1) The PUD will no longer perform or charge for backflow testing; however, it will still be required. More information on this is below. 2) Some customers pay a fire hydrant charge. This will be eliminated; the PUD does not charge specifically for fire flow availability. 3) There will no longer be a ready to serve fee. 4)The PUD will still continue to collect charges for street lights communities have added previously and will pay for the street lights.</p>
320	Rates, Fees & Charges	What is the \$4,000 General Facility Charge (GFC)?	<p>The District has limited capacity to serve additional customers without infrastructure installation and replacement. The General Facility Charge (GFC) is levied by the District measured by an equivalent residential unit (ERU) being one ERU. GFCs are payable to the District when a new applicant who is not on a metered connection to the District requests and is approved for water service. A proportionate share of costs is required to be paid to the District to help pay for the cost of replacing</p>

			the water general facilities, (i.e., source, storage, treatment, and transmission facilities).
325	Rates, Fees & Charges	What do rates cover?	The base rate and consumption charges are billed to all PUD customers and collected to pay for operating expenses including but not limited to water system general maintenance and testing for water quality, transportation costs, staff wages and benefits, and certificated training and payments toward outstanding debt service.
330	Rates, Fees & Charges	What do my rates cover? What does the capital surcharge cover?	Your rates cover the costs needed to operate and maintain the utility. This includes salaries, electricity for pumping, and routine maintenance. In addition, it is also applied to administrative functions like office supplies and office space. The Capital Improvement Charge helps cover the cost of replacing your major capital infrastructure. This includes pipes, pumps, wells, and similar built assets. It doesn't include vehicle costs, which are covered in the rates.
335	Rates, Fees & Charges	What is the Capital Surcharge?	The capital surcharge is the primary financial tool used to help fund water system infrastructure replacements. All PUD customers pay a monthly capital surcharge of \$10.00 month per equivalent residential unit (ERU). The capital surcharge is used only for infrastructure replacements/improvements that are in the District's Asset Management Plan (AMP). An AMP has been constructed for each water system including the Pattison water system. An AMP forecasts the capital improvements or replacements that will be needed for your water system--specifically the timing of the replacement/improvement, and the projected cost. We have an AMP for each water system we own and operate. Capital surcharges are used to help fund system replacements at the end of an asset's life cycle. The PUD has made a commitment to all of our customers that we will be good stewards of these monies you pay as surcharges and only use them for infrastructure replacement.

340	Rates, Fees & Charges	Why are you charging a Capital Surcharge? What capital projects or improvements does our system need?	The capital surcharge is paid by all PUD customers. We've created an Asset Management Plan (AMP) for your water system that includes all the upcoming replacements that will need to occur in the next 50+ years. The capital surcharges collected go toward those capital improvements. These costs are shared by all PUD customers. According to the AMP, the Pattison water system has approximately \$2.3 million dollars' worth of work to be completed through 2025.
345	Rates, Fees & Charges	If I don't have a meter, do I have to pay an additional fee to have a meter installed?	Existing customers that have an active water service connection <u>do not</u> have to pay an additional fee for a meter to be installed.
350	Rates, Fees & Charges	Will I need to pay the New Account Setup fee?	No, this fee is waived for customers transferring from an acquired water system.
355	Rates, Fees & Charges	Will I be required to pay a Refundable (Security) Deposit?	No, the refundable deposit requirement is waived for customers transferring from an acquired water system. Please note, a refundable deposit may be required if in the future you have a poor payment history on your PUD utility bills.
360	Rates, Fees & Charges	Why don't you offer a Senior Citizen discount rate?	Our current rate structure does not include a separate rate for seniors. Our rates are fair and equitable among all customers regardless of age.
365	Rates, Fees & Charges	With the rate increase, I'm afraid of my monthly bill.	The PUD has programs to assist customers who are experiencing difficulty in paying their bills. One program, the Equal Payment Plan or EPP, was created by our customer-based Utility Rate Advisory Committee. The EPP program averages customers annual consumption and applies that average to the next year's rates. Customers pay the same amount each month without any surprises. Then we "true up" the amount at the end of the year to get the next year's average. We also have other resources that gives our Customer Service Team the flexibility to work with customers who are having a difficult time paying their bills.
400	Billing	When will I receive my bill?	Bills are sent at the end of each month and are due on the 15th. The March bill will reflect consumption for 18-19 days. The April bill will reflect charges for a full month of consumption.

410	Billing	What should I do if my bill seems higher than usual?	If your bill seems higher than normal, you should first check to see if you have a leak. Locate your water meter and check the leak indicator or the dial to see if it's spinning. If it's spinning, you may have water running somewhere on your property or you may have a leak. If have determined that you don't have a leak, please give our Customer Service Team a call at (360) 357-8783.
420	Billing	What happens if I am unable to pay the bill?	If you are unable to pay your bill, please contact our Customer Service department and they will discuss payment plan options. You may also be eligible for our Project Help Program; the Project Help Application for Assistance is available on our website at http://www.thurstonpud.org/links-and-forms.htm
500	Payment	What forms of payment does Thurston PUD accept?	Cash (not during Covid-19 pandemic), check, money order, Visa or MasterCard credit/debit card, draft auto pay.
510	Payment	How do I make a payment?	Until further notice, you can mail, call in or make a payment online. By mail, you can make a payment by check or money order. You can also drop off a check or money order at a secured drop box at 1230 Ruddell Rd SE, Lacey, WA 98503. You can call and pay over the phone with a Visa or Mastercard debit or credit card. You can also pay online using a debit or credit card or by drafting from your bank account directly. We also have autopayment options.
520	Payment	Can I pay in person?	Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we are not accepting in-person payments. However, a secured drop box is available for payments at 1230 Ruddell Rd SE, Lacey, WA 98503.