



Thurston PUD Newsletter

We are committed to providing safe, reliable, affordable, and sustainable water services to the customers we serve.

December 2019

Leadership Message

2019: The Year of Stabilization

By John Weidenfeller, General Manager

If 2018 was the year of growth and change, then 2019 was the year of stabilization. I am proud of the work that PUD employees put into integrating the workforce after the acquisition of late 2017. Employees used most of 2018 to grow into their new roles, new organization and new workloads, all while ensuring that the taps kept flowing with safe, reliable drinking water.

In 2019, employees placed tremendous effort toward organizational alignment by creating a work environment built on professionalism, respect, trust, and hard work. Employees worked together to transform PUD culture to a learning organization that retains historical best practices while remaining open to re-evaluating and reassessing current policies and procedures.

In 2019, the transformed PUD leadership team used foundational resources, like the Asset Management Plan, to plan and complete important infrastructure projects. As stated in our last newsletter (*Your Capital Surcharge at Work*, November 2019), our newly formed Field Operations Team saved the District tens of thousands of dollars in labor costs from the work they performed on capital projects. Our new team has worked together to tackle water loss. Thanks to information gathered from the evolving Planning and Compliance Team, the Field Operations Team was able to install meters throughout the entire Timberline Village water system. Metering this system and others results in more accurate billing and the protection of our water resources.

This year has been an important one filled with professional and personal growth for all PUD employees, old and new. Next year's focus will be to amplify our strongest areas, and secure and sustain vulnerable areas. There is still plenty to be achieved in the PUD's evolution, and I envision next year will be filled with more accomplishments, refinements, and achievements.

Lastly, many customers expressed their appreciation of PUD employees and recognize the hard work they put into providing safe, clean, and reliable water service. We want to engage with customers more to understand how we can improve the customer experience. In January 2020, we plan to launch a Customer Satisfaction Survey. We will give a \$5.00 credit to customers that complete the survey. We continue to recruit customers to join the Utility Rate Advisory Committee. In 2019, the URAC passed five recommendations that were adopted by the Commissioners that include a fifth tier in rates, budget billing, and water consumption conversion charts from cubic feet to gallons. Visit www.ThurstonPUD.org for a URAC application.

I hope customers can continue to engage with us in 2020. I wish you and your families a safe, happy, and warm holiday season.



John Weidenfeller
General Manager

Thurston PUD Commissioners

District 1

Linda Oosterman

District 2

Russell E. Olsen


District 3


Chris Stearns


The 2020 Proposed Budget
is available online at:

[www.ThurstonPUD.org/
our-rates.htm](http://www.ThurstonPUD.org/our-rates.htm)

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Your Capital Surcharge at Work: What is a Capital Surcharge?

In 2018, Kim Gubbe, Director of Planning and Compliance, presented the 2019-2024 Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) to the PUD Board of Commissioners for approval. The plan forecasted eight critical areas of water infrastructure that would need installation or replacement through 2024. A **capital improvement plan** is a short-range plan, usually four to ten years, which identifies projects and equipment/component purchases, locations, timing and financing options. Kim presents a CIP budget for the Board's consideration and approval at annual budget hearings each year. The proposed CIP budget lists projects that the District plans to undertake for the next year.

Kim uses the **Asset Management Plan (AMP)** she developed to inform her capital improvement plan. An AMP is a detailed plan that identifies equipment replacement for each water system. A capital improvement plan uses that information and groups replacement by equipment or component and further groups them according to the years they will require replacement.

For the last two years, the District featured visual boards at budget hearings that listed all CIP projects for 2019-2024. In 2019, we were able to check off many replacements off the list.

To see this list, visit our website at www.ThurstonPUD.org. Completed projects on the list will be marked on the list. Next year's adopted capital budget and operating budget can also be found online at www.ThurstonPUD.org/our-rates.htm.

Some projects were completed before their forecasted replacement due to equipment failure. When this happens, the actual replacement date is entered into that water system's AMP and used to forecast when the next replacement can be anticipated. It should be noted that, with the exception of a few large water systems, it is Thurston PUD's current practice to allow system components to reach the end of their useful life before replacement.

In 2018, the PUD was able to complete over \$264,000 in replacements and as of June, our team was able to complete almost \$320,000 worth of replacements and upgrades for 2019 alone.

Improving and maintaining our infrastructure is critical to ensuring you have safe, reliable, clean water. Planning documents like the CIP and AMP help orchestrate the work to get project management teams, engineers, contractors, field operations teams and customers on the same sheet of music.

Take some time to see what's in store for your water system in the coming years.



New well pump installation at the Post Lane water system.



New Installations: Well, Water Line, Blow Off Pipe, Tanks and Electrical at the Indian Crest I Water System.

2018 Audit Report Results ‘No Significant Deficiencies’



Annually the Washington State Auditor’s Office (SAO) conducts a Financial Statement audit for the PUD, and an Accountability for Public Resources audit is performed every other year. In October, the SAO completed their annual audit of our 2018 financial statements. ***The SAO did not report any significant deficiencies or material weakness in our financial reporting.***

We look forward to ensuring our financial statements are consistently presented fairly and accurately according to internal policies, Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP), as well as state and federal laws and regulations.

If you would like to review the complete Audit Report including Financial Statements and supplemental information, visit our website at www.ThurstonPUD.org.

Save Your Stamp: 3 Ways to Securely Pay

Thurston PUD offers several ways to pay your utility bill, without any additional fees! Save a stamp by using these secure methods to pay your bill each month:

- **Pay online.** Login to your account by visiting www.ThurstonPUD.org and clicking ‘Pay Bill Online’ at the top of our website.
- **Sign up for Auto Pay.** Our automatic payment service will draft your payment around the 15th day of each month.
- **Pay by phone.** Use our new automated phone system to make a payment with a Visa, MasterCard, or e-check at any time.

What are the benefits of paying Thurston PUD directly?

- **You save money.** Save your stamp, and pay your bill without any additional fees.
- **Payments are immediate.** The payments you make online or by phone are reflected on your account immediately. There’s no need to wait 2-14 days for us to receive your payment.
- **Track your payments.** You will receive a confirmation number for each payment made. Don’t worry about mailed payments being lost again.
- **Save your payment information.** Login online to save your preferred payment method to your account to eliminate the hassle of entering your payment information over and over again.
- **It’s eco-friendly!** Save your checks and envelopes. We also offer a paperless billing option through our website to save paper.

If you sign up for paperless billing and Auto Pay, you will receive a one-time \$5.00 billing credit. To get started, click on the green icon at the bottom of our website at www.ThurstonPUD.org.

Remember: We never charge any fees to pay your bill online or over the phone. If you have any questions, contact us by e-mailing PUDCustomerService@ThurstonPUD.org or calling (866) 357-8783.

PUD Holiday Closures

PUD employees look forward to spending time with their loved ones during the holidays.

We will be closed on the following dates:

- **Wednesday, December 25, 2019**
- **Wednesday, January 1, 2020**
- **Monday, January 20, 2020**

Although our offices will be closed, we will have emergency on-call services available 24/7. If you have an emergency during these dates, call (360) 357-8783 and your issue will be addressed by the on-call technician.

Protect Yourself Against Scams

Thurston PUD wants you to be aware of scammers and con artists who target utility customers by posing as utility representatives and demanding immediate payment of a past due bill to avoid disconnection of your water service. Although we do call some customers to help them avoid disconnects, we also send out past due notices to alert those customers. If you have not received a past due notice, but receive a call threatening disconnect, give us a call immediately.

What to watch for

- Scammers posing as utility employees by phone or going door-to-door.
- Scammers threatening to disconnect water service if payment is not immediately made.
- Scammers leaving a voicemail message with a call back number, usually a 1-800 or unfamiliar area code number.
- Scammers pressuring customers to purchase any kind of prepaid card to make immediate payments.

How to verify a Thurston PUD representative

Our representatives:

- Will never make a home visit requesting credit card, banking, or financial information.
- Will never request payment on a prepaid card.
- Will provide employee identification on request.



What to do when you suspect a scam

If you think someone is trying to scam you, contact Thurston PUD during regular business hours to check on the status of your account. Remember:

- Thurston PUD accepts cash, checks, money orders, and Visa or MasterCard payments. We will never ask you to purchase separate prepaid cards to avoid disconnection. See all our payment options at www.thurstonpud.org.
- Never give your credit card, debit card, or banking information to anyone without knowing their true identity.
- Scammers can use 'spoofing' technology to display Thurston PUD's name and number. Be cautious when speaking with individuals regarding calls you receive.

How to report a scammer

Please call us toll-free at (866) 357-8783 to report any suspicious activity. Report scammers to one of the following agencies as well:

- Washington Attorney General's Office – (800) 551-4636 or <http://www.atg.wa.gov/FileAComplaint.aspx#Online>
- Federal Trade Commission – (877) FTC-HELP or <http://www.ftc.gov/complaint>

"Project Help" Low-Income Assistance Program

Our "Project Help" program is available to low-income, Thurston PUD customers to avoid water service disconnection. The program was recently opened to all low-income customers, including customers that rent or lease. If you are a low-income customer in need, please visit our website at www.ThurstonPUD.org for an application or call us at (866) 357-8783. If you would like to donate to the "Project Help" program, please complete the following information, and mail back to our office.

I authorize Thurston PUD to bill my account \$_____.

- ☐ One-time only
☐ Each month

This authorization shall remain in effect until the PUD receives written notification from me to terminate this agreement. I understand that if my account becomes past due, this authorization becomes invalid.

Name: _____ Account No.: _____

Service Address: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____