

Commissioner Message

Effective Water Utility Management Takes Investment

By: Chris Stearns, Thurston PUD Commissioner, District 3

At Thurston PUD, there are two (2) major components to the financial operations of Thurston PUD: 1) Day to Day Operations and Maintenance, and 2) Infrastructure Sustainability. Ongoing operations and maintenance of the utility is funded through rates, fees and charges. Sustainability of the utility over time involves having a viable capital improvement plan, an asset management plan and a base level of funding for long-term infrastructure replacement through a capital surcharge fee. These factors bring together many resources to invest in our water infrastructure whether it is to rehabilitate, replace or install new assets.



Chris Stearns,
Commissioner - District 3

Rates, fees and charges are reviewed annually as part of the budget process and updated as needed to cover annual operations and maintenance of all Thurston PUD water systems. A **capital improvement plan** is a fiscal management tool used to coordinate the location, timing and financing options of capital improvements over a six to ten year period. An **asset management plan** is a planning document that helps manage and plan for replacements of all the District's assets, infrastructure components and equipment. And the third important term is **capital surcharge**. The capital surcharge is the dedicated monthly charge that each PUD household contributes to and is reserved only for infrastructure replacement costs.

Capital infrastructure costs can account for a large portion of the District's total long-term funding needs. Without proper planning, we run the risk of not being able to pay for replacements and repairs when they are needed, which can lead to deteriorating service and, ultimately, public health risks.

When I was first elected as a PUD Commissioner in 2009, the Commissioners that were in office at the time and I recognized that there was no long-term strategy to address the wave of repairs our water systems were going to require in the future. At that point in time, the PUD operated similarly to most water utilities: pay for current costs and maintenance. There was no comprehensive planning for the future. Most water utilities, especially those regulated by the Washington Utilities & Transportation

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Thurston PUD Commissioners

District 1

Linda Oosterman





District 2

Russell E. Olsen

District 3

Chris Stearns

Important Messages

-  PUD offices will remain closed until further notice.
-  Don't miss another water alert! Give us a call to update your contact information!
-  Learn about Cross Connection control and Backflow Assembly on Page 3.
-  Do you qualify for Project Help? Review Page 4 for more information on this important Customer Support Program.

Thurston PUD
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Commission, have tremendously low rates and no way of planning for and recovering costs for repairs and replacements except to complete infrastructure improvements and then charge the water system customers for those specific improvements. This type of business model can lead to sporadic, exorbitant surcharges on each individual water system. The PUD's method places a timeline for upgrades to water systems sooner producing less failures and better quality service overall.

Last year, the District invested \$1.1 million back into critical water projects, and this year we are on track to put about \$450,000 back into your water systems. Next year we plan to spend \$2.8 million on improvements to water systems.

Infrastructure reliability is the primary focus of these aspects of capital planning. With reliable infrastructure, the District can focus on water quality excellence, system reliability, regulatory compliance and enhancements to business processes that improve efficiency and provide cost savings.

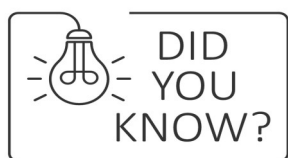
Our highest priority is getting clean, safe water to your homes. Because you count on us for your water needs, investment in all 275 of the District's water systems is paramount to building a strong, viable and efficient utility for future generations.

Serving All PUD Water Systems, Great and Small

Last quarter, the District invested \$28,600 back into water systems. We were able to complete six projects at six different water systems that served a combined total of 173 families.

Below is a table of the work that was conducted and the amount that was spent to complete those projects. These infrastructure replacement projects were funded by the monthly capital surcharge and will ensure that the District continues to provide safe, clean and reliable water service to all our water systems, regardless of how many connections they have. As you can see from the table below, we have water systems that serve only four families and some, like our Tanglewilde-Thompson Place system, that serve 1,700 families. No matter the number of connections, every PUD system has access to capital surcharge money and are treated with as much care and attention as the others.

Water System Name	No. of Customers	Materials & Supplies Descriptions	Total
Whitney	4	Treatment Replacement	\$ 5,000
Elk Heights	37	Booster Pumps and Controls Replacement	\$ 7,000
Hunter 2	5	Well Pump Replacement	\$ 3,200
Nisqually Highlands	55	Booster Pumps and Chlorine Equipment Replacement	\$ 8,500
Horsfall	64	Well Pump Replacement	\$ 2,300
Shadowood	8	Well Pump Replacement	\$ 2,600
	173		\$28,600



At 13 employees, the Field Operations Team is the largest department at the PUD. This team exemplifies the hard-working spirit of the PUD staff out in the field each day.

Our highly-trained crew is on-call 24/7 to provide our customers with clean, safe and reliable drinking water.

Backflow and Cross Connection

Here at the PUD, our Planning and Compliance Team covers many important aspects of water utility service. Two of these aspects are backflow assembly test tracking and cross connection control. Because these topics are vital to the PUD's mission in providing you and your family with safe and reliable drinking water, we wanted to provide the information listed below.



What is a Cross Connection?

A Cross Connection is a point in a plumbing system where the potable (drinkable) water supply is connected to a non-potable source. Thurston PUD is committed to ensuring your drinking water remains clean and safe. Customers assist us with this goal by completing the Water Use Questionnaires and Annual Backflow Assembly tests.

The most common cross connection for non-commercial customers are irrigation systems. Other potential cross connections include (but are not limited to) hose bibs, livestock watering and/or animal water troughs, swimming pools, hot tubs, boilers, fire sprinklers systems, wash basins or service sinks.

What is Backflow and Backflow Assembly?

Backflow is the flow of non-potable water (or other substances) back into the potable water distribution system and can contaminate an entire water system. A Backflow Assembly is a device used to prevent backflow events, allowing water to flow in only one direction. Washington Department of Health (DOH) rules require an approved Backflow Assembly be installed on all service lines (at a location downstream of the water meter) with a potential cross connection.

Additionally, Washington State drinking water regulations require backflow assemblies be tested annually to ensure the backflow prevention assembly is functioning properly. A Washington State Department of Health (DOH) certified Backflow Assembly Tester (BAT) is required to complete the testing of your backflow assembly each year.

If you are required to test your Backflow Assembly:

→ Select a tester from the list of approved backflow testers TPUD has validated. For a list of backflow testers, please visit www.ThurstonPUD.org and click on Links & Forms at the top of the webpage.

OR

→ Select a tester that has been approved by the State of Washington (visit <https://grcc.greenriver.edu/wacertservices/bat/hire-a-bat/>). Please note: if you choose to use a backflow tester that has not been validated by TPUD, the backflow tester must provide a copy of their current DOH BAT certification and test kit calibration validation with the backflow test results. *All three items must be received by TPUD for your test results to be accepted.*

Protection from backflow conditions is an essential step in protecting your drinking water system. We appreciate your help in keeping the water supply safe for all customers.

If you have any questions regarding Cross Connection control or Backflow Assembly testing, please contact us at (360) 357-8783 or by email at backflow@thurstonpud.org.

Holiday Closures

The PUD will be closed for the following holidays:

- Christmas Day - Friday, December 25, 2020
- New Year's Day - Friday, January 1, 2021

If you experience a water emergency during any office closures, please call (866) 357-8783 to connect with the PUD's answering service. We have staff on-call 24/7 to address any emergencies that may arise.



We wish you and your family a safe and happy holiday season!

Project Help - Customer Support Program

For many families, times can be tough during the holiday season. With COVID-19, times are even tougher this year. Our staff at the PUD is dedicated to providing excellent service and support to our customers, and we want those in need to take advantage of all the resources we offer.

Do you qualify as income-eligible and need assistance with paying your water bill? Have you and your family been affected financially by the COVID-19 pandemic? You may qualify to receive a credit towards your utility bill through our Project Help Program. For other available resources, please visit our website at www.thurstonpud.org/customer-support.htm.

To be eligible for assistance you must: (1) be a customer with the PUD, with an active account in your name, (2) have received a past due notice for your water service, and (3) provide documentation that household income is \$40,000 or less **or** have been financially impacted by COVID-19 and can provide documentation of your employment status. If you are a customer in need, we encourage you to reapply yearly. Contact our Customer Service Team with any questions or concerns about the program's requirements.

To apply, visit our website at www.ThurstonPUD.org to complete the Project Help application (found on the front page of our website). If you'd like to request a paper copy of the application, please call us at (866) 357-8783 to speak with our Customer Service Team.

If you're interested in making a one-time or monthly donation, please call us at (866) 357-8783, email PUDCustomerService@thurstonpud.org, or return the form below with any payments mailed to our office at Thurston PUD, 1230 Ruddell Road SE, Lacey, WA 98503.

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: _____