



Thurston PUD Newsletter

We are committed to providing safe, reliable, affordable, and sustainable water services to our customers.

December 2023

Commissioner Message

2023: A Year in Review

By Chris Stearns, Thurston PUD Commissioner

This year, I had the honor of serving as Chair of the Thurston PUD Board of Commissioners. At the beginning of the year, I shared several goals the PUD Board and Staff planned to focus on in 2023. I am happy to report many of these goals were completed, as well as several other large projects.



Commissioner Chris Stearns, District 3

Sustainability

Sustainability is one of the Board's strategic goals, so this year we focused on developing a solid succession plan for staffing purposes. The PUD also hired two new employees for our Field Operations Team – we will be recruiting for a Laborer position later this year. The PUD is actively recruiting for an Accounting Assistant to join our team; individuals that are interested in this position can review our website at www.thurstonpud.org for more information. To build our organization in the future, we will continue to create more connections in Thurston County and surrounding areas.

Emergency Preparedness

Emergency preparedness is another top priority at the PUD to ensure we supply reliable water service to our customers. In 2024, the PUD will begin deploying water trees to provide water from selected water system reservoirs during events that may cause widespread outages. Water trees will let customers get water from a hydrant or valve if there is an emergency or disaster so that customers can still have access to safe drinking water when there is no power. We hope to work with customers on our water systems, so that our communities still have access to water from reservoirs in the event of a large earthquake.

The PUD received funding through the Washington State Military Department and Federal Emergency Management Act (FEMA) for the installation of a new generator at the Meadows 690 water system, the PUD's third largest water system, and for two trailer-mounted generator systems. These generators are currently on back-order and we hope to receive and put them into use in 2024.

The PUD recently installed a seismic valve at the Tanglewilde 600 water system. We have installed the "ShakeAlert" system software so that in the event of a large earthquake, the reservoir will not drain if there is a water main break. We have installed seismic valves and hope to activate the system by the end of 2023.

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Thurston PUD Commissioners

District 1

Linda Oosterman

District 2

Russell E. Olsen

District 3

Chris Stearns

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Thurston PUD will be closed for Christmas Day on Monday, December 25, 2023.

For water emergencies after normal business hours, call us at (866) 357-8783, your call will be routed to our answering service and on-call staff.

Thurston PUD
1230 Ruddell Road SE
Lacey, Washington 98503
(360) 357-8783
Toll-Free: (866) 357-8783
Fax: (360) 357-1172
www.ThurstonPUD.org

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Completed or Ongoing Projects

Staff completed many projects, several of them designated as Capital Improvement Projects (CIP) which are funded by the Capital Budget for replacement or improvement of infrastructure such as property, buildings, equipment, and other water system assets. Some of the key projects that have been started and that are expected to be completed by the end of 2024 or into 2025 include:

- *Pattison 500 water system* – This project included installing a new well, booster pump stations, and reservoir. A Drinking Water State Revolving Fund (DWSRF) loan and grant funding was obtained to complete this project.
- *Tanglewilde-Thompson Place 600 water system* – This multi-phase project is planned within the next several years and one of the largest proposed in PUD history, it includes replacing several miles of mainline pipe, hydrants, meters, and district lateral service lines. We completed the project report this year and are currently searching for funding sources.
- *Hawley Hills 686 water system consolidation project* – This multi-phase project is wrapping up and will result in a more reliable water service for the residents of Hawley Hills, Deerfield Park 1 & 2, and the Marvin Gardens water systems. Recently, the new water reservoir was stained to be more visually appealing to the community residents. A Drinking Water State Revolving Fund (DWSRF) loan and grant funding was obtained to complete this project by the end of 2023.
- *Brown 249, Marshall 228, and Garden Acres 1 601 water systems pumphouse replacements* – The PUD received a Public Works loan for replacement of the failing pumphouses at these water systems. Work should be completed at all three systems by the end of 2023.
- *Glen Alder 522 water system upgrades* – The PUD was approached by the customers of this Thurston County community water system with 15 families in 2021 to join the PUD. The District secured a Drinking Water State Revolving Fund (DWSRF) loan to complete necessary upgrades to the water system with 50 percent loan forgiveness. Customers on this system are paying for all of these system upgrades through a monthly DWSRF loan surcharge on their bill.
- *Country Club Estates 521 water system mainline replacement* - The PUD was approached by the customers of this community water system with 43 families in 2021 to join the PUD. The District secured a Drinking Water State Revolving Fund (DWSRF) loan to complete necessary upgrades to the water system with 50 percent loan forgiveness. Customers on this system are paying for all of these system upgrades through a monthly DWSRF loan surcharge on their bill.
- *Country Club 679 water system Green Cove Culvert Project* – Thurston County has planned a road project to remove a failed culvert, to allow fish passage, in the embankment under Country Club Road and replace the roadway with a bridge crossing Green Cove Creek. The PUD has a six-inch water main that is part of the Country Club 679 water system buried under Country Club Road in the embankment that will need to be replaced, and we will need to provide water service during the construction project on this County road project. The PUD has negotiated an Interlocal Agreement with Thurston County to work together to best design a new water main to cross Green Cove Creek that is in the best interest of the public. We are also actively searching for funding sources for this project.
- *Meter replacements* – Aging meters were replaced with new meters to ensure accuracy of customer billing and usage data for planning purposes.



The newly-stained Hawley Hills 686 reservoir.

2023 was another jam-packed year and I, along with my fellow PUD Commissioners, look forward to continuing to serve your communities by providing clean, safe, and reliable drinking water to you.

What's Happening at The PUD —That's a Wrap on 2023!

2023 is coming to a close, and it's been quite a year! While we close out the year, below is a list of items and tasks our teams within the PUD are currently working on:

Accounting and Finance: Currently, this team is actively recruiting for an Accounting Assistant; individuals that are interested in this position can review our website at www.thurstonpud.org for more information.

Administrative Services: Administrative Services is assisting the Accounting and Finance Team with the Accounting Assistant recruitment process. This team is also working to update spreadsheets and processes for PUD-owned facilities and planning for the upcoming new year.

Customer Service: This team recently wrapped up enrollment of new customers to our Equal Payment Plan (EPP) Program and completed their annual account review of existing EPP customers. They are now focused on prioritizing cross-training with all tasks and all Customer Service Representatives as a goal for 2024.

Field Operations: Our crew is still busy with meter reading, infrastructure/equipment replacement, and necessary repairs to provide customers with safe and reliable drinking water. One of our crew's winterization tasks include installing heat sources in pumphouses to prevent frozen pipes during periods of low temps.

Planning and Compliance: This team is actively working on major construction projects at our Glen Alder 522, Hawley Hills 686, Country Club Estates 521 and Pattison 500 water systems. They are completing the required follow-up for the Cross-Connection Control Program customer questionnaires and backflow testing received this year. To wrap up the year, they are double checking that all the required samples for 2023 were completed, and they recently completed Thurston and Lewis County Hazard Mitigation Plans.

Avoid Frozen Pipes

Chillier temperatures are upon us and can lead to frozen plumbing and pipes which can also lead to significant property damage and costly repairs. In order to help you prepare for winter, we compiled a list of tips to avoid frozen pipes:

- **Keep your house warm.** The general recommendation for thermostat temperatures during the day (or when someone is present in your home) is between 68 and 72 degrees Fahrenheit. At night (or when you aren't home), you may want to set your thermostat between 62 and 66 degrees Fahrenheit.
- **Heat colder spaces in your home.** Set up fans to blow heated air into colder spaces, and open vanity or cabinet doors so heated air can reach pipes under sinks or anywhere you may have exposed pipes. You can also purchase space heaters for areas in your home that are more at-risk for freezing.
- **Disconnect garden hoses from outdoor faucets and install faucet covers.** Even frost-proof outdoor faucets can burst if a faucet is connected.
- **Seal leaks.** Locate and thoroughly seal leaks that allow cold air inside. Use caulk or insulation to keep cold air out.
- **Keep your garage door closed.** Prevent heat from escaping your home by keeping your garage door closed.
- **Insulate exposed pipes.** Generally, exposed pipes are the most prone to freezing in the winter. Look for pipes in your attic, basement, garage, and any exterior water lines that may be exposed.
- **Let your faucet drip.** A trickle of hot or cold water may be all it takes to keep your pipes from freezing. Let warm water drip overnight when temperatures are below freezing, preferably from a faucet on an outside wall.



All About Our Vector Truck

The PUD purchased a vector truck in 2019 to add to our fleet as a safe way for our staff to excavate.

A vector truck features a truck-mounted storage tank connected to a powerful vacuum and/or pump system, used for hydro excavation. This is a process that makes use of pressurized water and a vacuum system to rapidly remove large amounts of soil from an area that requires excavating. Solid ground is converted to mud that is quickly sucked up by the truck's vacuum.

The vector truck allows PUD staff to excavate around underground utilities, encouraging safe digging and mitigating risk for several projects. At a cost of approximately \$325,000, the vector truck is one of the PUD's most important assets. This piece of equipment has saved our crew countless hours in digging and excavating utility infrastructure, saving our workforce from hard manual labor and potential injury. The vector truck has also saved thousands of ratepayer dollars since excavation work can be performed safely and efficiently by PUD personnel instead of outside contractors.



Thurston PUD's vector truck during staff training at the Olympia Airport earlier this year.

Having Company for the Holidays? Your Water Usage May Increase



One of the best parts of the holiday season is getting together with friends and family members to enjoy each other's company. If you are hosting a holiday party or have company staying with you for the holidays, you may see a spike in your water usage on your bills for the next few months. Here are a few tips to help conserve water during the holiday season:

- * When washing dishes in the sink, plug your drain to utilize a sink full of hot, soapy water instead of leaving the faucet running. Also, be sure to run your dishwasher with a full load of dishes.
- * Do you need to defrost meats or veggies for your holiday meals? Consider thawing in the fridge the night before instead of running water over your food the day of.
- * Try to scrape all or most of leftover food and scraps into your garbage to avoid using water to run your garbage disposal.
- * Consider setting a shower limit for any company you may have staying with you.

Project Help—Customer Support Program

Do you qualify as income-eligible and need assistance with paying your water bill? Were 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 customer resources, please visit our website at www.thurstonpud.org/customer-support.htm.

If you would like to review the program requirements or to apply, please visit our website at www.thurstonpud.org/customer-support.htm to complete the Project Help application. If you would like to request a paper copy of the application, please call us at (360) 357-8783 or toll-free at (866) 357-8783 to speak with our Customer Service Team. You can also email us at PUDCustomerService@thurstonpud.org.

