



# Thurston PUD Newsletter

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

February 2022

## Leadership Message

### Water Disconnections Resume—First Time in 22 Months

Thurston PUD resumed water disconnections January 1 for the first time since the water utility paused the practice at the onset of the Governor’s Moratorium in 2020. **Disconnections, late payment fees, returned check charges and reconnections fees, which were all suspended during the moratorium, will return as part of the District’s regular billing process.**

At its peak, over 1,400 PUD customers fell behind on their utility bills as a result of the historic economic downturns from the COVID-19 pandemic. That translated to over \$150,000 owed by delinquent accounts which put a cloud of uncertainty over the District’s financial resources. Through the hard work of Finance and Customer Service Manager TaSeana Tartt, the District was able to secure a grant in the amount of \$153,000 to cover the delinquent accounts.

Part of the CARES Act, the grant was awarded by the Department of Commerce and so far, the District has been able to award about \$113,000 to its customers. Lewis County was the only other entity to generously share a portion of their CARES Act funding to assist Thurston PUD customers. Thurston PUD serves water to over 600 households in Lewis County. With the money provided, the District was able to create the Utility Relief Assistance Program, or URAP.



Today, the Customer Service Team has been able to whittle the number of delinquent accounts to 68 with constant communication and reminders. “We did everything we could to inform customers about their options,” said TaSeana. “For months, we sent out automated phone calls, letter notices, and in the last month we used door hangers—which made the greatest impact.”

Customers impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic with arrearages on their accounts, are encouraged to fill out an application for grant funding while there is money still available. “Some customers have submitted second applications that we have accepted,” TaSeana said. “If you need help, you can continue to apply for help.” TaSeana reminds customers that the District offers other ways to help customers. “We have extended flexible extended payment plans that are tailored to each customer’s financial need.”

Thurston PUD will stop administering URAP funds by December 2022 or once the funds have been exhausted, whichever is first.

If you have been financially impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and need help with your water bill, please completed an application for the Utility Relief Assistance Program at [www.ThurstonPUD.org](http://www.ThurstonPUD.org) or call our Customer Service Team at (360) 357-8783 for more information.

### Thurston PUD Commissioners

#### District 1

Linda Oosterman

#### District 2

Russell E. Olsen

#### District 3

Chris Stearns

## Important Messages

- PUD offices remain closed until further notice.
- Check out all the important information in the “What’s Happening at the PUD?” article on Page 2.

### Upcoming Office Closure

Presidents’ Day  
Monday, February 21, 2022

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

## What's Happening at the PUD?

### Budget, Rates and Fees for 2022

The District begins preparing the annual budget for the next calendar year in June. The annual budget for 2022 was prepared mid-2021 and adopted by the PUD Board of Commissioners on September 28, 2021. The rates that were approved in September took effect on January 1, 2022.



We read your water meters monthly during the first three weeks of each month, which means that this month's bill will include partial usage from December 2021 and January 2022. Our system prorates your consumption totals so that a portion of the consumption amount is charged at last year's rates and a portion will be at 2022's rates. Due to this, you may see two consumption charges on your billing statement this month to reflect the two rates.

Why do we do this? One of the values we have here at the PUD is to "focus on the customer." Prorating your bill reflects a more fair business practice because consumption amounts are not all charged at the 2022 rate for this rate transition period.

The 2022 adopted rates can be found online at [www.ThurstonPUD.org/our-rates.htm](http://www.ThurstonPUD.org/our-rates.htm). If you have any questions about your billing statement, please contact our Customer Service Team at (360) 357-8783, toll-free at (866) 357-8783, or via email at [PUDCustomerService@thurstonpud.org](mailto:PUDCustomerService@thurstonpud.org).

### Employee Spotlight

We are excited to welcome the PUD's new Engineer, Doug Piehl, P.E. The first engineer to be employed by the PUD, Doug joins the PUD's skilled Planning and Compliance Team where he will provide his technical expertise in engineering to designing, operating and maintaining our 279 water systems. Doug graduated summa cum laude with a degree in Mechanical Engineering from Washington State University in 2008. Prior to his employment with the PUD, Doug worked for a private water company for six years.



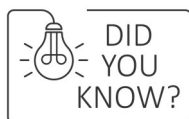
Doug states, "My personal philosophy is to identify and provide the appropriate level of engineering solution to a given situation." We look forward to having Doug here to help with the important work of providing safe and reliable water service to our customers!

Doug is a Professional Engineer (P.E.) which is a professional license regulated by the State of Washington. This means that Doug must continuously maintain and improve his skills by fulfilling continuing education requirements. Welcome aboard, Doug!

### Customer Service Announcements

The results of the PUD's Customer Satisfaction Survey, implemented in November 2021, have been published on our website at [www.ThurstonPUD.org](http://www.ThurstonPUD.org). Check out these results by clicking on "Customer Satisfaction Survey Results" under *The Latest* on the right side of the webpage.

With winter still underway, we ask that customers keep their contact information updated with our office. If you have a new phone number or email address, please call our Customer Service Team at (360) 357-8783 or email us at [PUDCustomerService@thurstonpud.org](mailto:PUDCustomerService@thurstonpud.org) to update your account.



Thurston PUD offers several different options to pay your bill. Payments can be made over the phone with a Customer Service Representative, using our automated phone payment system, or online at [www.ThurstonPUD.org](http://www.ThurstonPUD.org). All payments are fee-free!

## How Winter Storms Affect the PUD's Water Systems

Winter storms are common here in western Washington. Not only have we experienced severe winter windstorms over the past 100 years, we have also experienced widespread snowstorms and extreme flooding, some of these instances being as recent as last month! So how do these events affect the PUD's water systems? We enlisted the help of Jim Campbell, the PUD's Director of Field Operations, to help explain this important topic.



Pumphouse damage at a water system in Thurston County after a wind-storm.

Oftentimes, winter storms can cause electrical outages that in turn cause water outages for a water system without a generator. Thurston PUD works closely with electrical providers to monitor electrical outages, both planned and unplanned. Jim states, "We try to partner with electrical providers to make PUD water systems and customers a priority if there are power outages in our service area that are causing water outages."

Flooding is another major effect of winter storms as demonstrated by recent storms that caused rivers to overflow. Major flooding can damage infrastructure and carry an increased contamination risk for wells or water treatment plants. Fortunately, the PUD has not experienced this type of situation in the recent past. "Staff is on-hand to sample the PUD's most vulnerable water systems to prevent any health issues at the earliest opportunity," ensures Jim.

"Winter storms can also be a hazard for our field staff to travel in," says Jim. Icy and snowy roads cause increased response times, and freezing temperatures can cause damage to plumbing, pumphouses, and other water system components.

So what can customers do to become better prepared for winter storms? Jim encourages customers to become familiar with their home's plumbing layout. Water shut-off valves (separate from the shut-off valve at a customer's water meter) are usually located in garages or within three feet of a customer's home. "If you don't have a water shut-off valve, we encourage you to speak with a plumbing professional to discuss the benefits of having a shut-off valve installed," Jim added. These valves are useful if any plumbing repairs are necessary or if an emergency occurs to prevent costly property damage. For more preparedness tips, check out the article below.

## Not So Fast - Winter Is Not Quite Done

In the past few years, western Washington has experienced some of the most challenging weather in February ranging from unexpected snow events to extreme windstorms. To help you better prepare for these winter storms and possible unexpected outages, we created a short list of suggestions just for you:

- **Keep drinking water on hand.** In the event of an outage or emergency, keep bottled water handy or fill buckets to ensure that you have enough water to drink and cook.
- **Store water for other purposes.** Fill buckets or fill your bathtub with water to use for washing and flushing toilets.
- **Keep an emergency kit on hand and well-stocked.** After an emergency, you may need to survive on your own for several days, so an emergency kit with food, water, and other supplies is crucial. For a checklist of essential items, visit [www.ready.gov/kit](http://www.ready.gov/kit).
- **Prepare accordingly prior to a storm that has been forecasted.** If you hear of an upcoming storm, be sure to fill your car's gas tank and stock up on essential food and medications to avoid shortages during or immediately following a storm.
- **Keep your contact information updated.** We use an automated calling system to inform customers of planned maintenance and emergencies. Please keep your contact information with our office current so that our staff has a way to reach you.



## “Water” You Waiting For? Complete This Water-Themed Crossword Puzzle!

Affordable	Aquifer	Chlorination	Connection	Conservation	Cross
Cubic	Feet	Gallons	Grays	Ground	Harbor
Hydrology	Irrigation	King	Kitsap	Lewis	Pierce
Purveyor	Quality	Reliable	Reservoir	Safe	Service
Sustainable	Thurston	Utility	Water	Well	

W C D H J U S N E Q R K R T S P E H K P O X T A F Z E S Y F  
 N N O X E A G B N I O I A E A E D L A F X Z H E Q I R D U Q  
 P Q Z N A A L Y O U B B M O T V Q S B U I O E S B U F C W R  
 D Q K I N G N V X Y R J N W C A T Q F A A T R Y B P I M L Z  
 D S O U K E R Z Z X A N P Z N I W J P H N S T P G B O F O U  
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 K I E S G F L D F S E E K B I G D U Z H O P X F Z M A E W Z  
 V S N R I W M X W K Y Q B K G G R X E I P S H S N O L L A G  
 J O F U I V V A Y M N X M D X S I D J L M M Y E N I K Q O Z  
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 J G Q W W K T H Y F N U O W E U N W U Z H E R G V H V L X T  
 P T D Z R Z S T O O T J U R H R D A B J F M S R I N R W W Q  
 P M D Y A R L M E I R K X N D Z C J I S Y S Q N E D E Z Y S  
 W B W Y Z F S X L P Q C S H B Y I E C A S T P X K N S E Q W  
 K V G A J N B I X P L U L M L L H S H F E L B A D R O F F A  
 J E Z J Y R T D V Y X W E Q A A U E L E Z W D N U O R G Q B  
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