



Thurston PUD Newsletter

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

December 2022

Leadership Message

2022: A Year in Review and Looking Forward

By: Russell E. Olsen, Thurston PUD Commissioner

Due to the lasting challenges wrought by the COVID-19 pandemic and other global events, Thurston PUD hit the ground running at the start of the year. We have discussed the “new normal” in many of our newsletters, and we are still adapting to ever-changing situations that affect our organization.

Earlier this year, Thurston PUD considered the pursuit, creation, and development of telecommunication services throughout rural Thurston County in response to the inequities in access to broadband services revealed by the COVID-19 pandemic. The survey determined that there was not a need for the PUD to provide broadband service due to the Nisqually Tribe’s and privately owned firms’ business plans to provide broadband services. The PUD’s Broadband Feasibility Assessment was published in order to summarize staff’s findings and over 1,400 survey responses received from individuals, businesses, and establishments in our community. This document will be used to help other organizations in developing broadband resources throughout our region. The reports can be found at www.thurstonpud.org/broadband.htm.

In September, the PUD’s Field Operations and Planning and Compliance staff relocated to a new location near the intersection of Yelm Highway and Meridian Road in Olympia. This move has been a work-in-progress since 2019 and allows the PUD to avoid market fluctuations, because we are no longer paying rent to a commercial landlord. Instead, the PUD can list this property amongst its assets to strengthen our financial position as well as use this location as a base of operations for field, planning, and compliance staff members.

The PUD strengthened its relationships with fellow municipal entities, public agencies, utility organizations, and other community partners. One example is that the PUD entered into an agreement with six other water providers to participate in a Seattle Public Utilities-sponsored Geographic Information System (GIS) license to enter our own data into a GIS database, allowing our staff to improve communication and efficiency. We have also made significant progress with emergency management and disaster preparedness in order to increase our resiliency. PUD staff has recently obtained hazard mitigation grants to help fund a generator at one of the PUD’s largest water systems and two trailer-mounted generators for use during emergency situations.

(Continued on Page 2)



Commissioner
Russell E. Olsen,
District 2

Thurston PUD Commissioners

District 1

Linda Oosterman

District 2

Russell E. Olsen

District 3

Chris Stearns

In This Issue

- ◆ Learn more on how to avoid frozen pipes on Page 2
- ◆ “What’s Happening at the PUD?” Page 3
- ◆ Reminders from our Customer Service Team on Page 4
- ◆ Do you need assistance in paying your water bill? Learn more about the PUD’s Customer Support Program on Page 4

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Leadership Message (*Continued from Page 1*)

This year has not been without its challenges. Rising inflation, supply chain issues, worker shortages, and increased costs for labor, materials, equipment, and supplies have required our staff to update budget modeling tools and procedures in order to forecast more accurately. Like most local and regional utility purveyors, the Board made the difficult decision to adopt a no-frills budget for 2023 that includes an overall revenue increase of 8.9 percent in order to fund ongoing operations. Information about the 2023 Budget and rates, fees, and charges is published on our website at www.thurstonpud.org/our-rates.htm.

Looking forward, the Board of Commissioners and PUD staff will continue to (1) prioritize service to our customers, (2) promote responsible stewardship of the PUD's resources, and (3) develop the PUD as a leading water utility in our region. Our Utility Rate Advisory Committee (URAC), made up of customers on various PUD water systems, continues to meet periodically to guide the Board and staff on matters that impact the PUD and its customers. We welcome any feedback you may have about the PUD or your utility account. You can contact us using one of the methods listed on the front page of this newsletter. You can also attend a Commission meeting to provide public comment; these meetings are usually held on the 2nd and 4th Tuesday of each month.

For the past few years, I have had the honor of serving as President of the Thurston PUD Board of Commissioners. In 2023, another PUD Commissioner will have the opportunity to serve as President while I transition to another role on the Board. I would like to thank my fellow Commissioners for their dedicated service to our utility, and I would also like to thank PUD staff for their effort to providing safe and reliable drinking water to our customers. We all look forward to another year of serving you and your community.

Avoid Frozen Pipes

This year, the Winter Solstice falls on Wednesday, December 21, 2022. However, we have already seen chillier temperatures in the Puget Sound region, and these below-freezing temperatures 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 and cold water may be all it takes to keep your pipes from freezing. Let warm water drip overnight when temperatures are cold, preferably from a faucet on an outside wall.

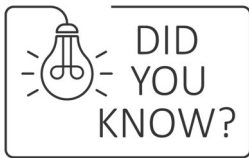


What's Happening at the PUD?

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.



According to the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC), about 200 million pounds of turkey are thrown out after Thanksgiving, not including bones. Based on the resources used to produce a turkey for consumption, that's over 100 billion gallons of water wasted! In order to eliminate food and resource waste, plan your holiday meals accordingly and be sure to eat or freeze your leftovers.

Office Closures

The PUD will be closed on the following days:

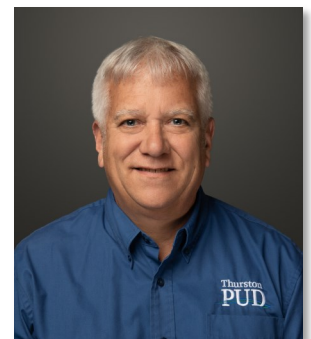
- PUD Holiday Gathering - Friday, December 2, 2022 from 2:00 p.m. until 4:30 p.m.
- Christmas Day (observed) - Monday, December 26, 2022
- New Year's Day (observed) - Monday, January 2, 2023
- Martin Luther King Jr. Day - Monday, January 16, 2023
- Presidents Day - Monday, February 20, 2023

If you experience a water service emergency, call us immediately at (360) 357-8783 or toll-free at (866) 357-8783 to report your location. Calls received outside of normal business hours (8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday) are routed to our answering service and on-call staff.

Employee Spotlight

This month, let's shine the light on Jim Campbell, our Director of Field Operations. Prior to working at the PUD, Jim worked at the Olympia Brewing Company in Tumwater for two decades, transferring to a private water utility company when the Brewery was shuttered in 2003. Jim started with the PUD when the PUD acquired the water systems previously owned by H&R Waterworks in 2017.

Jim was born and raised in Thurston County and enjoys skiing, boating, working around the house, and spending time with his family. He built his home from the ground up, and he applies these outstanding technical skills to his work on a daily basis. Jim says, "Each of the PUD's 279 water systems is a challenge that I have the opportunity to improve." He also adds, "It is my honor to continually provide better service to our customers." Thank you, Jim!



Jim Campbell, Director of Field Operations

Reminders from Our Customer Service Team

Happy holidays from our staff to you and your family! Our Customer Service Team has a list of a few reminders for you to wrap up the year:

- Please keep your contact information updated with our office so that we can get ahold of you during any emergencies, planned maintenance, or about your account status. Give us a call or send us an email to update the contact information on your account.
- Customers are welcome to make payments in person, by mail, online, and by phone. You can make a payment using our automated payment system or online at www.thurstonpud.org anytime. The PUD does not charge a fee for payments made by calling our office, paying via www.thurstonpud.org, or payments that are mailed or dropped off at our location. Customers can also sign up for our free Auto Pay or Direct Debit service for automatic payments. Get started at www.thurstonpud.org/credit.htm.
- Planning a visit to our office? We are located at 1230 Ruddell Road SE, Lacey, WA 98503, at the intersection of Lacey Boulevard and Ruddell Road. Normal business hours are 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday.



Our Customer Service staff is available by phone at (360) 357-8783, toll-free at (866) 357-8783, or via email at PUDCustomerService@thurstonpud.org.

Project Help—Customer Support Program

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.

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.

If you are interested in making a one-time or monthly donation to assist other customers in need, 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 \$ _____.

(Check one) 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: _____