



Thurston PUD Newsletter

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

November 2019

Leadership Message

The Value of Communication

By Ruth Clemens, Administrative Services Manager

For over a year, the PUD has published a series of articles titled *The Value of Water* in its monthly newsletter. The purpose of these articles is to educate and guide customers to understanding the complexities and cost of water utility service. We wanted to help customers view the water flowing from their taps with a different set of lenses—lenses that take a deeper dive into the true cost of water service.

Our next series of articles will be titled *Your Capital Surcharge at Work*. We learned over the last year that customers were still unsure about what the capital surcharge was and where it went. The Utility Rate Advisory Committee (URAC), a volunteer committee comprised of PUD customers tasked with presenting budget recommendations to PUD Commissioners, asked the PUD to create educating opportunities designed to help customers understand the importance of reserving these funds.

The capital surcharge that you see on your monthly bill is an additional fee that is reserved and maintained in a fund and is used only to pay for the replacement and repair of qualifying capital improvement infrastructure projects.

The concept is simple and can be translated to our everyday lives. For example, when a person purchases a home, a common practice is to set aside funds for anticipated and unanticipated costs like a new roof, weatherized windows, new HVAC or a remodel. The capital surcharge works the same way. Join us over the next year as we start the next conversation, *Your Capital Surcharge at Work*.

The PUD has made improvements with communication and outreach efforts. We will continue to grow in these areas, and you can accelerate these communication improvements by sending us direct feedback.

So, send us your questions and let us know what you'd like to learn. Continuous improvement is what we live by, and the quality of our performance is enhanced by your feedback.

We are also recruiting for new URAC members.

For a URAC application, article suggestions or questions, you can email me at rclemens@thurstonpud.org or call me at (360)357-8783 x106.

I look forward to our talks.



Ruth Clemens
Administrative Services Manager

Thurston PUD Commissioners

District 1

Linda Oosterman

District 2

Russell E. Olsen

District 3

Chris Stearns

In this Issue

Your Capital Surcharge at Work
Page 2

Holiday Closures
Page 3

Preparing for Fall & Winter Storms
Page 3

Meet Justin Kadoun, Field Technician
Page 4

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

It is with great pleasure we announce a new series in the Thurston PUD newsletter. Starting from this edition, each issue of the newsletter will feature an article focused on the theme “Your Capital Surcharge at Work.” This new series is meant to build upon the foundation of the “Value of Water” articles that were published over the last year and plot out the details of projects that are funded by the monthly Capital Surcharges.

In 2015, the Board of Commissioners passed a **resolution**, an official adopted decision, to place a capital surcharge on monthly bills to fund improvements that were listed in the Asset Management Plan. The **Asset Management Plan (AMP)** is a planning document that acts as a schedule for the replacement of infrastructure, components, and equipment. It also lists estimated cost and plans out these replacements as far as 2039. With a few exceptions, the PUD’s common practice is to run components and equipment to the end of their lifecycle. The AMP helps us financially plan for upcoming/potential replacement events.

In the resolution, PUD Commissioners committed that the PUD will collect, manage and allocate the capital surcharge toward replacements established in the AMP. The funds collected are exclusively used for projects identified in the AMP. In other words, if it’s not in the AMP, we won’t touch the capital surcharge funds.

At our annual budget hearings, we displayed visual boards of the assets we plan to replace through 2024 and, thanks to the hard work and dedication of our Field Operations Team, the District completed a number of replacements already. Having a competent and capable Field Operations Team that can perform the work has been key to saving ratepayer monies. Conducting the work ourselves means no contracts with vendors, more control over the timelines, and less cost in labor.

In 2016, the District spent \$185,749 from the capital surcharge fund toward work defined in the AMP. In 2018, the District invested over \$264,000 toward AMP items, and as of June, the District spent nearly \$320,000 in AMP projects for 2019 alone. This means that the acquisition of 2017 doubled our team in size and talent, which in turn contributed to a notable spike in the number of completed projects by the PUD field operations team.

The capital surcharge, Asset Management Plan, and the District’s skilled workforce perform together to achieve cost savings and a forward-looking standard of service for our customers; a standard that supports customers knowing what to expect from their water utility and reminds the PUD of the commitment to keep with customers.

	2016	2017	2018	2019	Total
<i>Pumphouse</i>	\$2,607	\$580	\$1,180	\$13,678	\$18,044
<i>Treatment replacement/upgrades</i>	\$50,872	\$28,679	\$29,393	\$9,317	\$118,261
<i>Pressure Tanks</i>	\$1,089	\$12,800	\$44,769	\$2,837	\$61,495
<i>System Upgrades</i>	\$40,680	\$37,702	\$18,315	\$45,617	\$142,313
<i>Drill New Wells</i>				\$78,245	\$78,245
<i>Electrical Replacements</i>	\$10,183	\$23,179	\$818	\$15,090	\$49,269
<i>Service Meters</i>	\$6,667	\$16,910	\$35,514	\$17,738	\$76,829
<i>Pump Replacements</i>	\$42,737	\$59,029	\$134,254	\$26,739	\$262,758
<i>Upgrades</i>	\$30,914	\$36,709		\$110,645	\$178,268
Annual Total	\$185,749	\$215,587	\$264,243	\$319,904	\$985,482

Above: Yearly totals of the work completed through the Asset Management Plan. Please note, 2019 totals are only through June.

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:

- **Thursday, November 28, 2019**
- **Friday, November 29, 2019**
- **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.

Ask a PUD Employee: Preparing for Fall and Winter Storms

For Winter 2019-2020, the Old Farmer's Almanac is predicting "wet or worse!" weather for western Washington. In order to prepare for those fall and winter storms, we asked Rick Sanchez, a Field Technician II with our Field Operations Department, for a few suggestions. Here's what he recommends:

- **Keep your gutters clean and clear of debris.** Clogged gutters can lead to costly roof damage.
- **Keep your vehicle fueled.** Fuel may not be available in a dire emergency, ensure your vehicle is topped off during bad weather.
- **Test and/or service your generator.** If you have a generator for your home, test it annually during non-emergency situations to ensure it can perform during emergency situations.
- **Install faucet covers.** For any outdoor faucets, install insulated covers to prevent frozen pipes or burst pipes.
- **Don't forget the flashlights.** In the case of a power outage, keep flashlights, candles, or any other kind of illumination handy. If you're using flashlights, keep batteries in stock.
- **Most importantly – keep drinking water on hand!** Keep bottled water on hand or fill buckets with water prior to an expected storm in case you experience a water outage.

In most cases, a power outage translates as a lack of electricity to run pumps and other equipment needed to get water to your home. Please exercise caution in using water during a power outage.

If you experience a water outage, call us immediately at (866) 357-8783 to report your location. Our team is on-call 24 hours a day, seven days a week.



Rick Sanchez
Field Technician



Tree damage at the Lew's
81st water system due to a
winter storm

“Project Help” Fund Keeps the Water on For Struggling Families

Historically, colder months mean lower water bills for PUD customers, but other bills like power bills go up as families try to keep their homes warm. Financial hardships do not discriminate according to seasons. For years, Thurston PUD has offered an assistance fund that helps low-income families keep the water running in their homes. The “Project Help” program allows Thurston PUD customers to contribute by making donations through their PUD bill. Your help is appreciated and **all** proceeds go to a family that is experiencing financial hardship. You can make a one-time donation or monthly donations.

Simply fill out the authorization form below and mail it back with your bill. If you have questions, please call us at 360-357-8783 or toll-free at (866) 357-8783.

I authorize Thurston PUD to bill my account \$ _____

- One-time to be donated to the Project Help Fund
- Each month

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

Name _____

Service Address _____

Customer Account Number _____

Signature _____

Date _____

Employee Spotlight: Justin Kadoun, Field Technician



Justin Kadoun
Field Technician

Justin Kadoun has been with the PUD since October 2016. He began his career with the PUD as a Meter Reader and has advanced to a Field Technician I. He has learned a great deal about operating water systems, and he continues to learn new things every day. Justin enjoys hunting, fishing, and other outdoor activities. He also enjoys playing the guitar and, as the father of two kids, loves spending time with his family.

Justin emphasizes that customers are encouraged to contact us as soon as possible when an issue arises—our team can respond promptly and efficiently to resolve any issues that may arise. “If you have any questions or concerns, do not hesitate to call. We are more than happy to discuss or guide you through any service issues you may have,” he said. Remember, our goal is providing the best service we can to you and your family.

Have an issue with your water?

If you experience an issue with your water service, call us immediately at (360) 357-8783 or toll-free at (866) 357-8783. We have technicians on-call 24 hours a day. We are committed to providing our customers with safe and reliable utility services, so your questions and concerns are very important to us.