



# Thurston PUD Newsletter

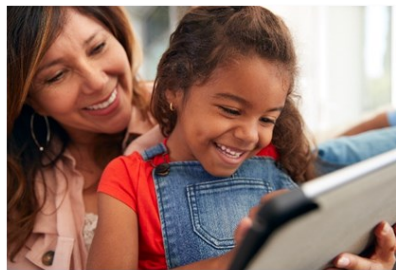
We are committed to providing safe, reliable, affordable, and sustainable water services to our customers.

November 2021

## Leadership Message

### Spread the Word & Take the Broadband Survey by November 30

In June, Thurston PUD launched a broadband access survey and internet speed test to get a better understanding of what internet service looks like for Thurston County residents. PUD Commissioners are championing the effort by tasking PUD General Manager John Weidenfeller to launch the survey and conduct outreach to all Thurston County anchor institutions starting with rural school districts. Other examples of anchor institutions include hospitals, government agencies, and fire districts.



We began our outreach efforts by working with the Yelm, Tenino, Rochester, Griffin and Rainier school districts to help get the word out to their families. We then partnered with the Timberland Regional Library to get bookmarks out to their patrons. We've informed as many municipalities as possible and met with city leaders to seek support and inform them of our presence in their areas. Our goal is to get as many Thurston County residents, businesses and anchor institutions to take the survey so we can understand what the need is for high-speed Internet access.

The survey was launched because of a great concern shared by our Commissioners who heard from constituents of the difficulty families and their students were having attending classes online during the 2020-2021 school year. "Our job is to not only serve PUD customers, but to serve the people of Thurston County," said PUD Commission President Russ Olsen. "There appears to be some inequity in access to high-speed internet that are our commission wants to better understand and see if there is a way that we can help." All three current PUD Commissioners championed a previous effort to bring broadband to part of Thurston County in 2012 and continue to champion the effort today because of their belief in the important role and impact that high-speed Internet access can have on an entire community including schools, businesses, economic growth and real estate values.

**The Thurston PUD Broadband Survey will close on November 30.** "We want to encourage as many people as we can to take the survey," said General Manager John Weidenfeller. "The more people we can get to take the survey, the more accurate the data will be and then we will know where the most unserved/underserved areas are." **The broadband survey is open to Thurston County residents only.**

You can take the survey at [www.noanet.servicezones.net/thurstonpud](http://www.noanet.servicezones.net/thurstonpud). No internet? No problem! You can take the survey over the phone by calling (360) 602-1522. Phone surveys are available Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

You can also visit and share our Facebook page at [www.facebook.com/tpudbroadbandsurvey](http://www.facebook.com/tpudbroadbandsurvey). For more information about our broadband survey, please call Ruth Clemens at (360) 515-6118 or email her at [rclemens@thurstonpud.org](mailto:rclemens@thurstonpud.org).

## 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.
-  Tell Us How We're Doing! Customer Satisfaction Survey Opens Nov. 1 (pg. 2)
-  Grant Money Still Available (pg. 2)
-  Changes to the Generator Program (pg. 3)
-  You've Probably Seen Him, Now Meet Him: Brooke West, Meter Reader (pg. 3)

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## Earn a \$5 Credit by Taking the Online Customer Satisfaction Survey

Thurston PUD is conducting an online customer satisfaction survey beginning November 1 to learn how it can improve services and better communicate with customers. The **first 200 customers** to complete a survey will receive a \$5 credit on their next water bill. “This survey can give us a chance to learn how to be more responsive to our customers,” said General Manager John Weidenfeller. “It’s a good opportunity to examine how we operate, how we communicate and to understand where we can improve from the customer perspective.”

The PUD attempted to launch a survey to customers previously, but efforts were delayed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

All Thurston PUD customers are encouraged to take the survey which will take about 5-8 minutes to complete. **Customers must include their names and service address on their completed survey in order to receive the \$5 bill credit.** Survey closes on Friday, November 19. You can take the survey on your computer, smart phone, tablet or other smart mobile device.

To take the survey, visit [www.ThurstonPUD.org](http://www.ThurstonPUD.org).

For more details, contact Administrative Services Manager Ruth Clemens at [rclemens@thurstonpud.org](mailto:rclemens@thurstonpud.org).



## Grant Funding Still Available for Unpaid Water Bills; Apply Today!

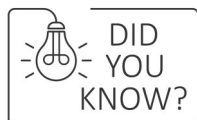
Nearly 200 households have applied for the Utility Relief Assistance Program (URAP), a program created to support customers financially impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. “We received grant funding of up to \$153,029 and have already applied over one-third of the total grant to customer accounts,” said Finance and Customer Service Manager TaSeana Tartt. TaSeana and her team have already awarded and applied \$55,000 to customer accounts.



The URAP was created in August thanks to a grant secured from the Department of Commerce. As part of the grant requirements, funding goes directly to customer accounts, but customers must first apply using our simple application process. Funding is limited and applications are reviewed in the order they are received. “We are still urging you to act now and apply,” said TaSeana.

All Thurston PUD customers with a past due balance are eligible for this program and funding covers unpaid balances from the March 2020 bill statement onward. To apply, visit [www.thurstonpud.org](http://www.thurstonpud.org). If you have questions, please contact the Customer Service Team at (360) 357-8783 or by email at [PUDcustomerservice@thurstonpud.org](mailto:PUDcustomerservice@thurstonpud.org).

### Thurston PUD Encourages You to Drink Water!



The U.S. National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine determined that an adequate daily fluid intake is:

About 15.5 cups (3.7 liters) of fluids a day for men

About 11.5 cups (2.7 liters) of fluids a day for women

These recommendations cover fluids from water, other beverages and food. About 20% of daily fluid intake usually comes from food and the rest from drinks.

## Important Updates to the Generator Program

Important changes are coming to the Thurston PUD Generator Program that will help streamline processes and ensure staff resources are used effectively and efficiently. Starting November 1, customers interested in a generator for their water system are required to submit a petition exhibiting at least 25 percent of property owners on the water system are in favor of pursuing a generator for their water system. The former policy allowed customers on a water system to request a ballot be sent out to homeowners on the water system to vote in favor or against the installation of a generator and the approval of a monthly surcharge to the customers on water system.

“We’ve had a lot of generator voting initiatives fail by a large margin because customers on a water system weren’t on the same page,” said Administrative Services Manager Ruth Clemens. “If customers can work together to ensure that a strong number of homeowners on the water system are in favor of getting a generator, then the District and ratepayers can save a lot of time and administrative costs.” The Generator program requires that 66% of homeowners vote in favor of a generator in order for the generator initiative to pass.

Another change to the program limits water systems to apply for a generator once every two years to allow communities to develop and bolster advocacy and promote buy-in. This limit would help relieve the

administrative workload and financial costs associated with repeatedly failed initiatives. “Since 2018, we’ve initiated approximately 25 ballots with monthly surcharge ranges of \$1.20 to \$98.00,” said ASM Clemens. “None have passed, and voter turnout is very low.”

The District commits to continue working closely with customers on water systems that are interested in seeking a generator. For more information about the District’s Generator Program, please contact Teal Reopelle at [treopelle@thurstonpud.org](mailto:treopelle@thurstonpud.org) or by calling (360) 357-8783.



## Employee Spotlight: Brooke West, Meter Reader

He walks about 6-8 miles a day, reads thousands of meters manually each month, encounters domestic and wild animals, endures cold, hot, and wet weather all year round—who is he? Brooke West. Brooke has been a meter reader for the District the last 3 years, but his job is more than just about getting an accurate read so you’re billed correctly. He checks your meter to ensure that you don’t have a leak on your property, he cleans out meter boxes when they get full of dirt and debris, and he troubleshoots, reports and repairs meters when he finds an issues. He also joins the rest of the Field Operations Team by responding to water emergencies.

Brooke has a strong background and many years in the construction industry which has been helpful experience for the District. “Brooke is a hardworking, dependable employee,” said Director of Field Operations Jim Campbell. “He’s just a straightforward kind of employee who gets the job done and keeps moving forward with the mission of the District.”

In his short time with the District, Brooke has formed some meaningful relationships with his coworkers that motivates him each day. “I like the men and women that I work with,” he said. “We have a great work environment and everyone is helpful. I can get on the radio and ask for help, and 4 trucks will pull up to help.” We are lucky to have Brooke as part of our team. Please wave hello to Brooke if you see him reading meters in your neighborhood.



## What's Happening at the PUD?

The PUD will be closed on the following days:

- Thursday, November 11, 2021 - Veterans Day
- Thursday, November 25, 2021 - Thanksgiving Day
- Friday, November 26, 2021 - Day After Thanksgiving
- Friday, December 24, 2021 - Christmas Day (observed)

The PUD is closed for major holidays, but we are always committed to our customers. Staff is available 24/7 for water emergencies. **If you experience a water emergency, please call us at (360) 357-8783 or toll-free at (866) 357-8783 to connect with our answering service and on-call staff.**

## 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](http://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](http://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](mailto: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.

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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: \_\_\_\_\_