Thurston PUD Newsletter

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

May 2026

Leadership Message

Breakdown of Your Bill—An Explanation of Charges

By Mariah Montague, Customer Service Supervisor

Mariah Montague, Customer Service Supervisor

Each year, during the annual budget process, the Board of Commissioners reviews and adopts updated water rates to ensure the reliable operation and maintenance of all PUD-owned water systems. For most PUD customers, the monthly bill is comprised of four (4) key components: a Base Rate, a Consumption Charge, a Capital Improvement Surcharge, and an EPA/WA State Emerging Contaminants Remediation Surcharge.

What is a Base Rate? The Base Rate is billed monthly to all customers based on meter size. Base rate revenue pays for the costs to operate and maintain PUD-owned water systems.

What are Consumption Charges? The Consumption Charges are based on customer usage (typically 30 days). Consumption charges are billed on a tiered rate schedule with conservation in mind. Consumption charges also help pay for the costs to operate and maintain the PUD owned water systems.

What is the EPA/WA State Emerging Contaminants Remediation Surcharge? All **Group A** water system customers are charged this surcharge. The collection of this surcharge is necessary to ensure funding is available now and in the future for per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) on-going operations, maintenance, and media replacement costs.

What are Capital Improvement Surcharges? Capital Improvement Surcharges are billed monthly to all customers based on meter size—this charge is noted as "Capital Surcharge" on your billing statement. Collection of capital improvement surcharges help pay for water system capital improvement projects identified in the Asset Management Plans (AMP).

What is an Asset Management Plan? An Asset Management Plan (AMP) is a financial planning tool we use to estimate when water system components will reach the end of their life cycles. We predict costs which helps us determine how much we need to budget each year. Staff has created an AMP for each of the 272 water systems owned and operated by the PUD.

For more information regarding rates and our budgets, please visit www.thurstonpud.org/our-rates.htm.

Thurston PUD Commissioners

District 1
Jim Campbell
District 2
Russell E. Olsen
District 3
Chris Stearns

Important Messages

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Fire-resistant Plants for Your Home

Decorative rock around your home's perimeter boosts curb appeal while helping maintain a defensible space.

Landscaping isn't just about beauty and privacy. The plants you choose can also affect your home's wildfire risk. Flammable vegetation acts as fuel, while fire-resistant plants, proper spacing, and regular maintenance help protect your home by reducing heat, flame contact, and ember ignition.

Fire-resistant plants don't ignite easily and produce fewer embers, but they're not fireproof. Even low-flammability plants will burn if they're dry or poorly maintained. Plant moisture, age, dead material, and chemical content all influence flammability.

You can safely incorporate a well-kept lawn into a fire-resistant landscape. Keep grass trimmed to the recommended height for your turf type, generally around 3–4 inches, and avoid dry patches or weedy, overgrown areas. A good drought-resistant cool-season grass is Tall Fescue (turf type). Regardless of the grass type you have, regular care keeps your lawn healthier and less likely to contribute to wildfire spread.

Most healthy deciduous trees and shrubs perform well, while some popular landscape choices such as juniper are highly flammable and should be kept away from structures.

Thoughtful plant selection and upkeep can significantly reduce wildfire risk around your home.

For more information, including a list of plants safe for fire-wise landscapes, visit https://pubs.extension.wsu.edu/product/fireresistant-plants-for-home-landscapes.

Unrepaired Leaks Can Be Costly

Even the smallest household leak can lead to surprisingly large water losses over time. Many leaks aren't obvious, especially those hidden underground where water is absorbed into the soil, but their impact adds up quickly.

A single faucet dripping once per second can waste **more than 3,000 gallons of water a year** according to the Environmental Protection Agency. That's nearly the same amount of water the average American uses in an entire month. It's a big cost for something that often goes unnoticed.

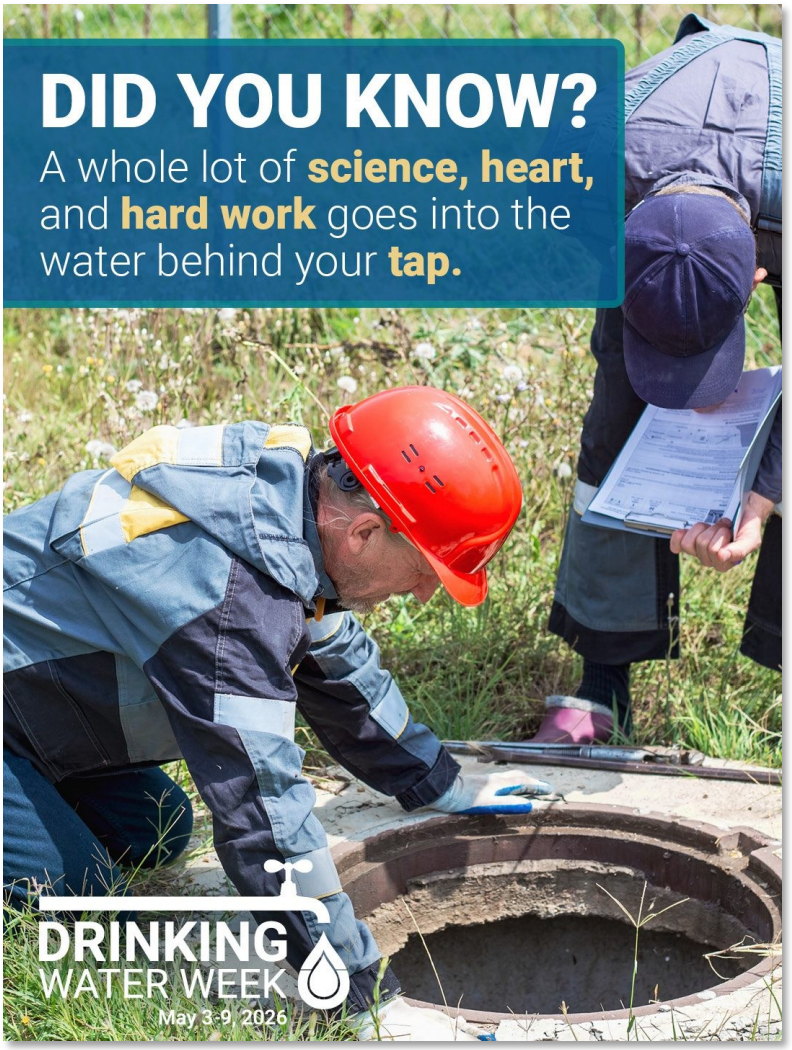
Toilets are another common culprit. Research shows that a leaky toilet can waste about **200 gallons of water every day,** which can add up to over $34.00 in leak loss on your monthly bill, or over $408.00 a year! A simple test can reveal whether yours is one of them: add a few drops of food coloring to the toilet tank. If the color appears in the bowl without flushing, you've got a leak.

Water Loss in Gallons at 50 psi

Leak this Size	Loss per Day	Loss per Month	Loss per Year
●	120	3,600	43,200
●	360	10,800	129,600
●	693	20,790	249,480
●	1,200	36,000	432,000
●	1,920	57,600	691,200
●	3,096	92,880	1,114,560
●	4,296	128,880	1,546,560
●	6,640	199,200	2,390,400
●	6,984	209,520	2,514,240

If you prefer an easier method, we offer **free toilet leak-detection tabs** at PUD Headquarters (1230 Ruddell Road SE, Lacey, WA 98503). Stop by Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., to pick some up. Leaks don't just waste water, they waste money. Regularly checking your home for leaks and repairing them promptly is one of the simplest ways to conserve water and lower your utility bill.

Celebrating Drinking Water Week! May 3—9, 2026



Drinking Water Week has been a national observance for nearly four decades, thanks to the American Water Works Association (AWWA).

In 1988, AWWA partnered with the League of Women Voters, the Association of State Drinking Water Administrators, and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to bring national attention to the importance of safe drinking water. Their efforts led Rep. Robert Roe and Sen. Dennis DeConcini to sponsor a resolution officially designating the first week of May as Drinking Water Week, a resolution later signed by President Ronald Reagan.

As you move through your day brushing your teeth, making coffee, and washing dishes, it's easy to take clean, reliable water for granted. But behind every drop is a complex system designed to deliver safe drinking water to homes, schools, businesses, and essential community services. And at the heart of that system are the dedicated water professionals who keep it running 24/7.

These operators, technicians, engineers, and support staff are trained experts with a shared mission: protecting public health. They monitor water quality, maintain equipment, analyze data, and respond to issues long before most of us ever notice a change at the tap. Their work is essential, often invisible, and always vital.

Most of what keeps our drinking water safe happens quietly in the background. Water is treated, tested, and monitored to meet rigorous safety standards. Infrastructure is inspected and maintained. Treatment processes are adjusted as conditions change. Every step, from treatment to storage to distribution, requires constant attention and expertise.

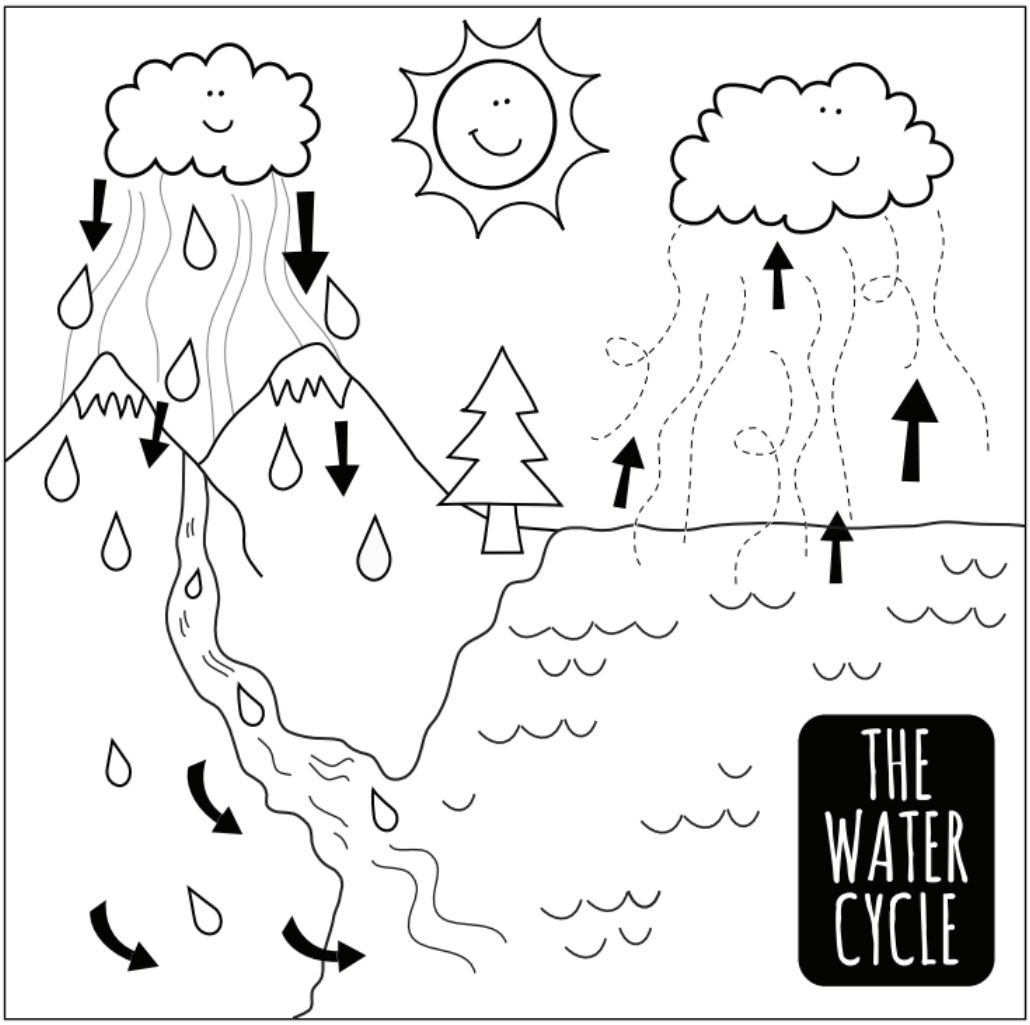
Drinking Water Week is a chance to pause and recognize the people who make all of this possible. It's an opportunity to learn more about how water systems work and to appreciate the professionals who ensure that clean, reliable water is always within reach.

This week, we invite you to join us in thanking the utility staff and water professionals who safeguard our community's health every single day. Their dedication keeps our water safe, our routines possible, and our communities thriving.

For a fun Drinking Water Week activity, check out Page 4 of this newsletter!

The Water Cycle for Kids

Drinking Water Week is a perfect time to educate children about their water supply in a fun atmosphere! Below is a visual representation of The Water Cycle that they can color in.



DRINKING WATER WEEK

WATER VAPOR

Water vapor is invisible in the air

WATER ICE

Water freezes into ice and snow on mountains

WATER LIQUID

Water liquid can be found in rivers, oceans, and lakes

American Water Works Association

Filling a Pool?

Summer is around the corner! In order to prepare for higher temperatures and summer fun, customers should get a head start on filling their pools. If you have a pool that you'd like to fill, please keep a few things in mind:

- For your water system, peak demand times may vary, but usually customers are using the most water in the morning (when getting ready for work) and in the evening (when returning from work). We recommend filling your pool ***outside of*** peak demand times.
- It will take several hours to fill a 5,000-gallon pool with a ½-inch garden hose.
- Filling a 5,000-gallon pool will add approximately 668 cubic feet (cf) to your monthly consumption total which will also increase your consumption charge for the month.

Based on the information above, we suggest filling your pool in increments over a few days during off-peak demand times. This will help prevent possible outages if your water system's well cannot keep up with demand; this could also help prevent certain water quality issues caused by an overworked water system.