



Thurston PUD Newsletter

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

November 2018

Commissioner's Corner

Continued Focus on the PUD's Mission

By Linda Oosterman, District 1



I want to thank you for allowing me to serve you for another six years as PUD Commissioner. As you know, your PUD is governed by a Board of Commissioners who each serve six-year terms. I proudly live in and serve District 1. Although I represent District 1, my position is voted on by all voters of Thurston County.

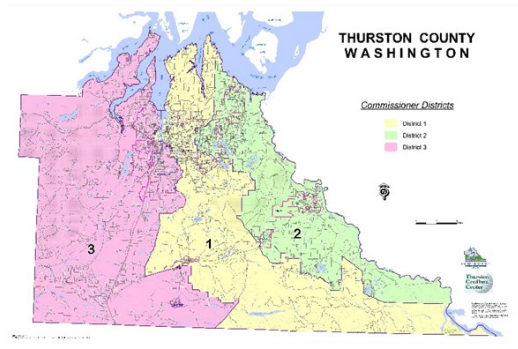
The last six years I have focused on emergency and disaster preparedness efforts and communicated those efforts to you. I represented the PUD at many federal, state and local level emergency preparedness planning and analysis sessions. I

have also earned essential certifications from the American Water Works Association that help keep me informed and knowledgeable of the evolving water industry and current standard practices at a national level. I was selected to represent the PUD on the Department of Ecology's Deschutes Watershed Water Resources Inventory Area (WRIA) 13 Streamflow Restoration Committee which develops plans for protecting local water resources and habitats.

Over the next six years, I plan to continue my efforts with emergency and disaster preparedness and remain focused on the PUD's mission to provide safe, reliable, affordable, and sustainable utility services to our customers. This means investment in water infrastructure

improvements, maintaining a high level of customer service and responsiveness through outreach, and continued fostering of the PUD's expanded workforce. I will also continue to represent the PUD on the WRIA 13 Streamflow Restoration Committee.

I would like to extend a heartfelt thanks to you, and look forward to serving you and Thurston County.



About Commissioner Linda Oosterman

Linda Oosterman has served as PUD Commissioner since 2012. She received her undergraduate degree in Organization Management and earned her Master's in Systems Theory and Family Therapy from the University of Wisconsin. She has received certification from the American Water Works Association for successfully completing the Public Officials Program. She has served as a manager of the county-wide Crisis Response Programs in eastern and western Washington. She was also the Director and an instructor in the Human Services Program at Grays Harbor College. As PUD Commissioner, Linda focuses on Emergency Management Planning, Prevention and Intervention. She supports science and engineering that advances water conservation, drinking water management, and sustainable practices.

Thurston PUD Commissioners

District 1

Linda Oosterman


District 2


Russell E. Olsen


District 3


Chris Stearns

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The Value of Water Series: Funding for Drinking Water Infrastructure Improvements

As water systems and drinking water demands expanded across the country, the costs for rehabilitation and replacement were not always factored into rates.

Overall, rates were low and stable for decades, largely because utilities were underinvesting in replacement, and focused more on day-to-day operations, maintenance and expansion of services. Today, a lot of utilities are paying for that shortsighted approach as their water assets reach the end of their useful lives.

In 2014, Thurston PUD began planning for rehabilitative and replacement efforts with the use of an Asset Management Plan (AMP). When we acquired the new water systems last October, our team immediately went to work analyzing and collecting information to construct AMPs for each of them.

While an AMP is an invaluable forecasting tool, it only provides part of the solution to ensuring healthy water infrastructure.

Federal and state funding play a key role in water infrastructure investment. Publicly owned utilities like the PUD have access to low-interest construction loans to be used toward **capital improvements** that increase public health and compliance with drinking water regulations. Capital improvements can be water main replacements, fire hydrant standardization, reservoir rehabilitation or obsolete water meter replacement. These examples can cost a water utility millions of dollars. The \$6.70 Capital Surcharge found on your monthly bill is money that is invested only in capital improvements, but until that fund catches up with the replacement needs, the money for large projects must be supplemented by funding from programs like the Drinking Water State Revolving Fund (DWSRF) and Public Works Trust Fund (PWTF). There are even emergency loan programs the Department of Health offers to water systems that face critical rehabilitative or reconstructive circumstances.

Loans like those from the DWSRF and PWTF have many stipulations and eligibility requirements. For each project that requires funding, the PUD has a small window of time to submit project planning documents along with a long list of information required by the Department of Health. These loans are directed toward projects that improve public health or upgrade deteriorating facilities. They do not cover day-to-day operations or maintenance.

The Emergency Loan Program is open to applicants year-round and only funds drought recovery, wind damage, floods, landslides, and wildfires. These special loans assist with critical construction, reconstruction, replacement, and rehabilitation including temporary repairs or improvements that serve to restore service.

Thurston PUD is committed to being good stewards of customers' dollars by managing and maintaining the PUD's financial health and resources, but also securing low-interest funding that invest in infrastructure that protects and ensures clean, reliable drinking water today and tomorrow.



In 2012, a new reservoir was constructed at the PUD's largest water system, Tanglewilde-Thompson Place. This large project received a grant and several loans including the DWSRF and Public Works Trust Fund loans.

Ask a PUD Employee: Which Water System is My Property on?

Great question! A lot of customers are unsure of which water system their homes are on. It's helpful to know which water system your property is on in case of an outage, or if we post any information on the website about your water system.

First, let's explain how water systems are defined. A water system is a facility with a well that is designed to serve a specific number of connections, usually homes. Water systems are designed by developers and used to supply water to a service area. Service areas are boundaries and lot lines. Water systems are usually categorized as Group A or Group B. Group A systems are large systems with 15 or more connections and are regulated by the Washington State Department of Health (DOH). Group B systems range from two to 14 connections and are regulated by counties.

For example, our largest water system is Tanglewilde-Thompson Place in Thurston County (Group A) and has over 1,300 connections and, one of our smallest is the Hemlock water system in Lewis County (Group B) which has two connections.

Each water system is assigned a name, a DOH number, and a PUD number. Thurston PUD owns and operates 273 water systems in six counties that equates to over 7,700 connections.

With over 273 water systems to name, it would be tough to fit all of them into this paragraph, but we would love to share that information with you. If you're interested in learning which water system your home is on, please give Senior Communications Specialist Ruth Clemens a call at (360) 357-8783 extension 106, or email her at rclemens@thurstonpud.org.

Employee Spotlight: Brian Wilson, Operations Specialist

Brian Wilson is an Operations Specialist who has been with Thurston PUD since May 2017. He graduated with High Honors from Green River College with a degree Water Supply Technology. He is recognized for his research on Washington State's Drinking Water Infrastructure Funding Gap and was invited to share his findings at an American Water Works Association Conference in Arizona. "We face many challenges as an industry, not only locally, but at the state-level and as a nation that require significant time and money to address aging infrastructure," he said. He urges customers to use water wisely with an eye on conservation to ensure the same quality and availability for future generations.



Brian Wilson

Operations Specialist

As an Operations Specialist, Brian works in the Planning and Compliance Department of the District and is focused on many things including developing and expanding emergency and disaster preparedness for the District. The complexities of his job find him working closely with both the field operations and administrative sides of the PUD. "I like the people I work with and that I'm part of a team that positively impacts the quality of people's lives by ensuring they have access to clean, affordable, and sustainable drinking water."

Outside of work Brian can usually be found coaching his son's Little League team, running his kids to sporting events and jiu-jitsu, and attending choir concerts and birthday parties. "In my 'free time', I like to read, do yoga, and watch sports (Go Red Sox!) and WWE.

The PUD is fortunate to have Brian as one of the many new PUD employees. He's brought a wealth of knowledge and a high-performing work ethic to the PUD.

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.

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 _____

Upcoming Holiday Schedule

Thurston PUD will observe and be closed for the following holidays:

Tuesday, December 25—Christmas Holiday

(Special note: there will be no PUD Commissioner Board meeting on Christmas Day)

Tuesday, January 1—New Year's Day

Monday, January 15—Martin Luther King, Jr. Day



We will still have on-call technicians available for water service emergencies. For water emergencies during holidays, please call our customer service number at (866) 357-8783.