



# Thurston PUD Newsletter

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

October 2019

## Leadership Message

### When Hard Financial Times Hit, Let Us Know

By Cathy Easton

Customer Service Supervisor



Winter and summer months bring lower and higher temperatures and higher utility bills that many families have difficulty paying. With summer months, water bills increase, and during colder winter months, electrical bills increase. Thurston PUD recognizes that low income customers or customers on a fixed income face significant challenges and financial obligations.

As a Customer Service Supervisor and long-time PUD employee, I see this heart wrenching cycle every year and there is no harder thing for a PUD employee than shutting off someone's water service. I can assure you, it is very difficult for me, but I understand it as the tough aspect of the job in order to be fair and equitable to all customers.

There are many programs out there that can assist community members who are having a hard time paying their utility bills, including one with the PUD. The PUD has a low-income assistance program that allows customers, if qualified, to receive a one-time annual \$50 credit toward their water bill. The program is open to homeowners, but we are working on expanding the program to renters. The low-income assistance program is made possible by contributions from PUD customers. On the last page of this newsletter you can also fill out a small form and mail it in with your next bill if you want to contribute to this cause. Please call the PUD Customer Service Team for more information at (360) 357-8783. We commit that 100 percent of donations are used solely for this purpose.

There are a lot of federal and statewide programs assistance programs, but did you know there are county-specific programs that can help you during financially trying times? For Thurston County citizens, St. Vincent de Paul

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### Thurston PUD Commissioners

#### District 1

Linda Oosterman


#### District 2


Russell E. Olsen


#### District 3

Chris Stearns

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## Value of Water: Update on Recent Projects

Throughout the year the Planning & Compliance and the Field Operations teams work behind the scenes to ensure that you are receiving safe, reliable water. At one of the public meetings recently, customers requested to know more about projects the PUD has completed or are currently working on.

In an effort to fulfill the request and to build more transparent relations with our customers, we would like to share some projects that we have been working on over the course of the last year.

### **Deschutes Village**

In July, the PUD upgraded the chlorination system at the Deschutes Village water system. The upgrades include a monitoring system that alerts the Field Operations Team if chlorine levels are too high or too low. The field team installed new electrical panels and control circuits bringing everything up to current code.

A critical aspect of the Deschutes Village project was the installation an 80-foot long chlorine contact pipe. The purpose of this pipe allows for contact time to inactivate and prevent coliforms in the water.

### **Timberline Village**

The PUD is at the tail-end of a water meter installation project at the Timberline Village water system in Lewis County. The District has prioritized this project due to State Department of Health regulations that require the PUD to meter all un-metered connections in Group A water systems. Not only will this bring the PUD into DOH compliance, but it will help the PUD identify unaccounted for water loss that has plagued the water system prior to the 2017 acquisition.

From the effort of Director of Planning and Compliance Kim Gubbe, the PUD secured a Washington State Acquisition and Rehabilitation Program (WSARP) loan which allows publicly-owned entities to use funding toward consolidating, restructuring or making major repairs to the water system. The PUD was able to secure a \$400,000 loan with up to fifty percent loan forgiveness dedicated to making extensive repairs at the Timberline Village water system. These low interest loans and invaluable grants that are available to public-owned agencies has tremendously helped the PUD save money and make critical repairs to water systems.

### **Well Decommissioning and Replacement**

The PUD is decommissioning five wells and replacing two wells by the end of the year. When a well requires “decommissioning,” the property owner must work with a licensed well driller to properly close the well due to hazards it can pose to people, animals and the water supply. There are a number of reasons that would force property owners to consider replacing an existing well with a new one. Low water production, excess sediment that has built up over the years, or that the well has reached the end of its 20-30 year lifespan (some wells exist longer than the average lifespan) are just a few reasons property owners decommission or replace wells.

Many of the District’s large water systems have more than one well located within the system, meaning decommissioning and replacing wells should have no impact on current water use. Decommissioning and replacing wells requires a very stringent process by the Department of Ecology that the District is very careful to follow.

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## Value of Water: Update on Recent Projects (continued from page 2)

The PUD plans to decommission or replace wells at the following locations:

### Decommissioned Wells

- 304<sup>th</sup> #1 Water System
- Clerget Water System
- Evergreen Vista Water System
- Lazy Acres Water System
- Whitney Water System

### Replacement Wells

- Fir Tree #2 Water System
- Indian Crest Water System

If you have any questions about well decommissioning or replacement or any of the projects in this article, please call us at (360) 357-8783.

## Employee Spotlight: Mariah Rodocker, Customer Service Representative



Customer Service  
Representative  
Mariah Rodocker

Mariah Rodocker was born and raised in the small community of Anderson Island, the Puget Sound's southernmost island. Her father is a long-time veteran of the water industry which has made her six months here a pretty smooth transition. "My interest in water was sparked by watching my dad in his professional career in this industry," she said.

Mariah graduated from Western Washington University with a bachelor's degree in Communications Studies which has undoubtedly contributed to her impressive customer service skills. "I love working in customer service because I get to problem solve daily with our customers," she added.

In her spare time, Mariah is quite the outdoors enthusiast. "I love the Pacific Northwest and everything outdoors," she said. "Some of my hobbies are fishing, four wheeling, and camping."

When asked to share some words of wisdom with customers, Mariah encourages customers to plan ahead for the holidays. "We are approaching the holiday season," she said. "Water bills can spike when you have company over for a big dinner." Extended holidays with family and friends can mean more showers and bathroom use, additional loads of laundry, and more dishwasher cycles. The PUD family is stronger because of new employees like Mariah. She brings a great deal of hard work, skills and positivity to the team.

## Have an issue with your water?

Our field technicians visit your water system as often as they possibly can. However, there may be an issue that occurs during a time when a technician isn't in your neighborhood. 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. We appreciate the opportunity to serve you.

## “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.

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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 \_\_\_\_\_

## When Hard Financial Times Hit, Let Us Know (continued from Pg. 1)

Society is a non-profit organization that receives donations from local parishes to families in need of assistance with rent and/or utility payments, propane, medical prescriptions, bus day passes and various other services and goods. Community Action Council and Sacred Heart Emergency Outreach are other resources we have led customers to pursue in times of need. Lewis and Pierce counties also have resources that include local St. Vincent de Paul chapters as well as Living Access Support Alliance.

Another helpful resource is Washington 2-1-1. Washington 2-1-1 is an easy-to-remember phone number that connects callers with a statewide database of community resources and partnerships that helps those with health and human services needs. Just dial 2-1-1 on your phone or visit their website [www.win211.org](http://www.win211.org) to find the right resources that can help.

The PUD is committed to working with customers who have hit tough times. If you ever find yourself in difficult financial times that may make it tough to pay your bill, please give us a call. We will make every effort to work with you. We are committed to excellent customer service not only because it’s our jobs, but because we are water utility customers too.