



Birds hunting at low tide on Hood Canal



THE CONNECTOR SUMMER 2021

COMMISSIONER CORNER

I would like to thank the staff for making it through all the challenges the utility has gone through over the last year and a half. The COVID outbreak showed how fast we could make changes to try to keep everyone safe and healthy. As we start to recover from the pandemic, there are still lots of people having a hard time keeping current on their water and electricity bills. As a public utility, we can't forgive the balance owed on those bills, because that's a gift of public funds. But what we can do is share where customers can go for help to bring their utility bills current. I am very proud that our utility has worked hard to push this assistance information out to our local residents and businesses, and I want to give a big "thank you" to our customer service staff for their extra efforts to connect our customers in need with available financial resources.

On a separate note, I am the PUD 1 delegate to the Water Resource Inventory Area (WRIA 14) group. For the last 2+

years, the PUD has participated in this local watershed planning process. Unfortunately, not all parties signed the agreement at the end of the planning process, meaning that the state Department of Ecology will finish the plan for the WRIA 14, which includes Mason County and a small part of Thurston County. Why this is so important is that as a public water purveyor for our county, it's important to us that we and others are good water stewards, monitoring how much water we use and how we use it. Washington State has the Growth Management Act, Shoreline Management Act, as well as local, state and federal requirements for water planning.

Water is one of the most precious resources we have, and we have a responsibility to be good stewards. We need clean, safe water for drinking, and we also have to have clean, cool water for fish and the environment. Yes, we live by a rainforest, but we also have periods of time in the summer that do not see a lot of rain. This

is also the time that some fish species are starting to spawn. The sharing and allocation of water is becoming very challenging as more and more people move to rural areas and want to have access to this water. No matter how many rules and regulations are developed, we still all need to work together to ensure everyone's needs are met. It is not always easy since different groups represent different interests and perspectives, but we also have an obligation to be good neighbors and share this important resource according to the law. Good water planning is necessary to achieve this. The PUD intends to remain involved in the planning processes to do our part.



Ron Gold
Commissioner, District 2





HOW EXTREME WEATHER IMPACTS UTILITY SERVICES

June brought some pretty extreme weather to the Pacific Northwest, with temperatures at the PUD office reaching 110 degrees on the hottest day. This early heat wave, coupled by an absence of our typical intermittent June rainy days, causes concern for utility providers. Not only does it trigger water conservation declarations sooner in the year, but it also poses risk for a higher instance of underground faults on the power side, as well as fire danger for overhead lines.

Living in a heavily treed area, when the heat and wind dry out the ground vegetation it causes higher concern for tree limbs that make contact with the power lines. As part of our efforts to mitigate risk of wildfires, we are changing some settings on our electrical grid to lessen the likelihood that a tree or branch can cause a fire. We have reclosers on our system that during normal operation times are set to a higher tolerance, meaning a tree or limb can contact the lines longer before the system shuts itself down and causes an outage. In the rainy season, a limb might burn off the lines before a line crew can even get to it and not ever cause an outage, maybe some slight fluctuation in power until it clears the line. During the dry season though, we want the grid to be more sensitive and shut itself off immediately. We are reprogramming all of our reclosers to this higher sensitivity. What this means for you is that you might have more frequent power outages if limbs

come in contact with the lines. What it also means is that there is a much lower risk for fires to occur. While power providers across the western United States are evaluating how to implement public safety power shut offs (PSPS), Mason PUD 1's power grid is luckily not part of Bonneville Power Administration's PSPS scope. That means there are smaller things we can do on the local level to help protect our system and our customers.

The other major impact to power during these extreme weather events is that there is a prevalence of underground faults. When the daily temperature fluctuates 30 or more degrees in a day, the ground adjusts and the underground lines expand with the heat. We have been lucky so far that there haven't been a lot of underground faults this summer, but we are seeing our neighboring utilities struggle with them. A lot of customers don't know that extreme heat is a major cause of underground faults,

which is why we see them a lot more during the summer months.

For the water business, the early heat and lack of rainfall has caused the PUD to begin our summer water conservation sooner than normal. The water department has sent notifications out to many water systems that have already experienced low pressure during peak usage times due to more residents staying at their vacation homes and an overall increase in outdoor watering. This requires system users to limit their outdoor watering to even or odd days, depending on their street address numbers. We ask all of our water customers to voluntarily adopt this practice to help prevent pressure issues on your systems and to help conserve water for all. Please try to water at night, only run full loads of laundry and dishes, avoid washing cars and boats unless absolutely necessary, fix any leaky faucets and running toilets, and please don't let your hose run. All of these things can add up to save you money on your water bill and save us issues on our water systems.



Kristin Masteller
General Manager

BONUS REBATES

Available for Ductless!

Keep your family cool and comfy this summer! Washington just saw record breaking temperatures mid-June at 110 plus degrees. As the news hit of the impending heat wave, residents flocked to stores to buy up every fan and portable AC unit they could find. With BPA offering an additional \$500 on top of the usual \$800 rebate already offered for ductless heat pumps, now is definitely the time to look into installation options. Don't delay, as the additional \$500 rebate ends September 30, 2021. Contact our customer service team for more information on how to qualify and to find out what other rebate options we have available.



\$800
+
\$500



Assistance Programs Available to Help Avoid Disconnection

Though the Governor has now fully reopened Washington State's economy, residents are still playing catch up due to falling behind over the last 15 months being out of work or working reduced hours. Through the American Rescue Act, there are several funding sources still available to assist customers on catching up on their utility bills.

Both CAC of Mason County and OlyCAP of Jefferson County have funds available and are taking appointments. Remember, even if you didn't qualify before, it's likely you would qualify now with the change in circumstance.

- **CAC of Lewis, Mason & Thurston Counties** is located at 807 West Railroad Avenue, Shelton, WA 98584 and can be contacted at: (360) 426-9726 or online at: www.caclmt.org.
- **OlyCAP (Jefferson County)** Port Townsend Office can be reached by calling: (360) 385-2571 or online at: www.olycap.org/get-help/energyassistance-program.
- **A Gift for Special Children** provides an array of assistance, including help with your utility bills, to Mason County families with children diagnosed with special needs and/or disease ages birth to eighteen. Check out their website at www.agiftforspecialchildren.org or call them at (360) 427-7058.

- **Crossroads Housing** has assistance available through TRAP (Treasury Rent Assistance Program) to assist families with rent and utility expenses. Contact them at (360) 427-6919 to see if you qualify.

If you are struggling to pay your bill, please remember to reach out to our customer service team. The moratorium on disconnects will be ending soon and those without a satisfactory payment plan in place will be subject to disconnection. Our team can provide you with the contact information for the assistance programs available and walk you through the process of setting up a long-term payment plan, which would include the current bill, plus the past due divided out by 12 months.



Katie Arnold
Director of Business Services

Water UPDATES

After receiving various funding packages, the water department has been busy preparing for projects. Currently, the Agate Beach Water System mainline replacement is underway and is scheduled for completion by the end of August. The whole system will be replacing the existing 3" PVC with 6" HDPE water line. This project is Phase 1 of 2, with the end goal at the end of Phase 2 to be able to service the vacant lots in the water system with a water connection. Agate Beach Water System is approved for 25 connections and all connections are accounted for until the system upgrades are completed.

In fall of 2019, the Lake Arrowhead Water System received funding through Washington State Department of Health Water State Revolving Fund to install manganese removal treatment and mainline replacement. The Lake Arrowhead Water System received 100% loan forgiveness, making this project entirely grant funded. This fall we will go out to bid for the manganese removal treatment portion. The project is anticipated to be completed by fall 2022. There will be approximately 1,500 linear feet of 6" HDPE replacing 4" PVC along Quillayute Trail, Colville Trail, and Skokomish Trail. The mainline replacement will be bid out separately in the spring of

2022 and the project should be completed by end of August 2022.

In addition to managing these construction projects, the PUD water department has been busy during this good weather maintaining pump and well houses as well as replacing aging water main line. The PUD would also like to welcome the Holiday Beach Water System in Hoodspoint into the PUD 1 water business. Holiday Beach residents have been longtime electric customers of the PUD and will now have their water service provided by the District. We look forward to serving you!

Lastly, for all of our customers who have irrigation systems, ponds, in ground pools and other water features that may cause back siphonage into the PUD's water supply, please remember that it's the time of year where we remind you to have your backflow assembly devices inspected, per state law. The PUD has certified backflow testers on staff, or we can refer you to outside testers. If you need to have a backflow device installed, please contact the water department and we can go over options with you. Thank you for helping us protect the public water supply!



Brandy Milroy
Water Resource Manager

! WATER CONSERVATION in effect July through September

Addresses ending in ODD numbers

1 3 5 7 9

Water on ODD days of the month.

Addresses ending in EVEN numbers

0 2 4 6 8

Water on EVEN days of the month.



During the months of July through September your cooperation is very appreciated and also imperative to help us avoid pressure loss and introduction of bacteria into the water supply. When that occurs, we have to put water systems on a Boil Water Advisory, chlorination and a rigorous testing process until we get confirmation that the water is safe to drink.

Thank you for helping us be proactive and for reducing peak water usage.

EARN FIVE BUCKS BY GOING PAPERLESS!



Customers who sign up through e-pay by September 30th to receive their statements via email instead of in paper format will receive a \$5 credit on their October billing statement. You must stay paperless for one year to keep the credit to your account. Existing paperless customers will also receive the \$5 credit.

THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS regularly meet the 2nd and 4th Tuesday of each month at 1:00 p.m. Members of the public may attend in person if they wear a face covering. Those that are unable to wear a face covering may attend the meeting virtually through a Zoom link on the PUD's website.



www.mason-pud1.org

Find us on 

Follow us on 

Drive Thru MASON COUNTY PUD1 CUSTOMER AND COMMUNITY APPRECIATION EVENT! Join Us!

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 8TH

11a.m. to 2p.m. • 21971 N. HWY 101 IN POTLATCH

**Burgers, Hot Dogs, Soft Drinks
and Olympic Mt. Ice Cream**

**Celebrating Public Power Week
from the safety of your vehicle at
our drive-thru event**

**PUBLIC
POWER
WEEK**

Powering Strong Communities



MASON COUNTY PUD 1 COMMISSIONERS:

- District 1**
Mike Sheetz (360) 898-7934
- District 2**
Ron Gold (360) 490-1560
- District 3**
Jack Janda (360) 490-1800
- General Manager**
Kristin Masteller..... (360) 877-5249