



Hama Hama Oyster Company in Lilliwaup



THE CONNECTOR WINTER 2022

MANAGER'S ARTICLE

Following up on the success of our grant writing endeavors for 2020 and 2021, PUD 1 submitted over \$7.7 million in applications in November to FEMA for power line rebuilds, water reservoirs, seismic valve retrofits, and backup generators for all of our water systems. In addition to FEMA, we also submitted another \$10.5 million in water system projects to the Drinking Water State Revolving Fund. The Department of Ecology has also opened their streamflow restoration grant cycle, for which the PUD has two projects to submit to benefit the Alderbrook and Union water systems. We were not successful in the last grant cycle but are strengthening our application to resubmit this biennium in hopes that one or both of our projects are chosen to move forward.

The PUD is also interviewing grant writing/lobbyist firms to apply for the federal infrastructure package dollars to support large projects like the upcoming Jorstad substation, a complete metering system replacement, SCADA technology to our substations including supporting fiber buildout, and other grant partnership opportunities for community solar, electric vehicle infrastructure and rural broadband deployment. The infrastructure dollars will be released over the next decade and the PUD wants to put together a strategy for what applications should be submitted and when.

Now's the time to strike while the iron's hot and the federal and state infrastructure dollars are coming down. We will likely not see another opportunity like this, at least in my career, for us to capitalize on the federal government's infrastructure investments

GRANTS

and rebuild our aging water mainlines as well as strengthen our electrical grid with new substations, wire, and communications facilities. These are all projects that would take us years to fund incrementally through our annual budget.

We realize that we likely won't be successful on all our applications, but even a few million dollars helps us achieve our capital projects quickly and without an impact to rates. We also continue to partner with local utilities and with Mason County to share trenches when they're open and streamline costs for all our public agencies. We want to continue to support our public and private broadband providers as well to help them deploy broadband throughout our county. The ARPA funding through Mason County has been great so far, with Vuecrest, Agate Beach, Eldon, and Colony Surf all getting rebuilt water or power lines in addition to laying conduit or fiber for high-speed internet.

The PUD should learn by February or March which projects were selected for funding. Like just about everything that comes down from the federal or state government agencies, it moves slowly and takes quite a while to get paperwork and studies completed before we can start construction, but it's all worth it in the end. Once we learn which projects

were selected to move forward, we will notify our customers in those communities and continue to stay in touch as the grant project progresses.

Stay tuned in coming months for our 2021 annual report. This report outlines the work that was accomplished for the year, as well as the PUD's financial position and report of grant-funded activities. It's a nice recap of all the good work these men and women have done over the last 12 months on behalf of our ratepayers. We publish it online and send a link out through SmartHub and social media. Limited hard copies are printed and available in the office as well.

I wish us all a happier and more prosperous year in 2022. May it be a relief from the challenges and stresses of 2020 and 2021- or at least come with enough grant money to keep us so busy that we don't have time to worry about the challenges and stresses! That will work too.



Kristin Masteller
General Manager

GENERATOR SAFETY

It should be fairly obvious since gas-powered generators are loud and smelly, that the odor they are omitting also is in the form of a poisonous gas. Despite these harsh effects of an operating gas generator, people still use them in enclosed spaces including garages, campers and sheds close to humans and pets. Carbon monoxide poisoning from generators causes thousands of illnesses and deaths every year, despite pleas from the news media and health officials urging people to use them safely and properly. Even if you can't smell the fumes, carbon monoxide can still be permeating your home.

Another inherent danger from generator use that gets far less attention, but is equally as deadly, is electricity back feed from generators that puts electrical line workers at risk of injury and death. Many homeowners plug generators in without even considering that they are pushing generated power back onto the electrical grid. When line workers come to your home or neighborhood to work on the power lines, they undergo a series of checks to ensure that the lines are deenergized from the utility's side of the power source, but they have no idea if the lines are suddenly energized from a homeowner firing up a generator

without proper safeguards. A few months ago, in September of 2021, two line workers were killed in Alabama due to electrical back feed. They were part of a mutual aid crew that responded to the devastation of Hurricane Ida. This was an avoidable tragedy.

All of these injuries and deaths are completely avoidable if people use generators safely and responsibly.

Safe generator use for homeowners should include things like:

- A well-ventilated space for the generator to operate that is at least 100' away from the house
- Keeping the generator dry under an elevated tarp or pop-up tent
- Installing a transfer switch at the panel to help prevent back feed of electricity through the home and onto the power grid
- If there's no transfer switch, shutting the main breaker to the whole house off at the panel and plugging freezers or electrical equipment directly into the generator
- DO NOT plug a generator into a wall outlet
- Don't overload the generator- rotate the appliances you need to use on



a schedule such as freezers and refrigerators overnight, tv time and lights during awake hours

- Install CO2 alarms in your home and if you start to feel sick, dizzy, or weak while using a generator, get to fresh air RIGHT AWAY - DO NOT DELAY
- Have your generator inspected regularly to ensure it's working properly

Our line workers and water techs already go out in the worst weather conditions. They put their lives at risk to ensure that our community has essential utility services 24/7. It is paramount that homeowners do what they can to help protect the men and women out there working for them. Please put these tips into practice and share them with family and neighbors. The more education we do around generator safety, the more we can help save lives.



CREATING A PLAN FOR BACKUP POWER FOR WATER SYSTEMS

It is that season again where the power may go out more frequently due to storms and extreme weather. Unfortunately, if you're on a water system that doesn't have a gravity-fed reservoir, you're without water too until the power is back on.

Recognizing that losing both water and power services is very inconvenient, the water department started a comprehensive PUD-wide generator plan in 2019. This plan outlines a tentative schedule for when a generator may be installed on a particular water system as well as an amount for us to budget each year to accomplish this. Backup generators are expensive, so the District can only budget for two generators to be installed every year. This list is prioritized by different variables including identifying wells and booster stations fed by 3 phase power, systems that experience multiple outages throughout the year, and systems that are prone to water quality issues after an outage. These systems are

prioritized first and on the immediate list for generator installation.

The District also purchased a single phase portable generator, so in some cases, if a power outage is estimated to be six hours or longer, a portable generator may be hooked up to the well if it's served by single phase power and the generator is not already in use.

In 2019, the PUD installed backup generators at Viewcrest Beach and Union booster stations. We did not install any in 2020 due to the pandemic disruptions. For 2021, generators are being installed at Highland Estates and Wonderland water systems. For 2022, Arcadia Estates and Bellwood A have been budgeted. As a bonus, Agate Beach, Shadowood, and Vuecrest water systems all have construction projects underway, thanks to grant funding, and generators are included in the project scopes of work.

Being able to provide all our water customers with safe and reliable drinking water is our number one priority. While we realize it's inconvenient to lose water and power at the same time, please be assured that we have a plan in place to systematically address this issue across all PUD systems that do not have gravity-fed storage. We also have put in a hazard mitigation grant to FEMA to complete the installation of all the generators in one year. We haven't received any word yet if our application was advanced in the review process, but we will continue to seek ways to expedite and fund the generator installations through grants.



Brandy Milroy
Water Resource Manager



OUR ABUNDANT, CARBON FREE, LOW COST HYDROELECTRIC SYSTEM

The Pacific Northwest’s hydroelectric dams produce and deliver carbon-free, low-cost electricity to folks across the region and beyond. The dams brought access to electricity to the rural areas of the Northwest and paved the way for the Public Utility Districts (PUDs), co-ops, and other not-for-profit utilities to be born. Since then, the dams have improved our lives in ways no one could have imagined. Hydroelectric dams are responsible for close to half the annual generation in the region, enough to meet Seattle’s annual energy needs sixteen times over in fact, and can produce even more on demand.

Hydropower also provides excellent support to the solar and wind generators, which have fluctuating electricity output. Hydroelectric dam operators use the “battery”, or the reservoir, behind the dam to store water when there is a surplus of solar and wind generation. The operators can then release water from the “battery” through the turbines when more electricity is necessary, which allows the controllers to provide a critical balance to the electrical grid. By using the dams this way, it allows the reservoirs behind the dams to act as a giant battery for wind and solar generation during off-peak times.

However, hydro has benefits beyond producing carbon-free electricity and grid balancing. The lower cost hydro is crucial to families and individuals that depend on affordable power. We can keep our homes comfortable and cover other basic needs without having to worry about overwhelming electricity bills. The low cost of electricity in our region also allows utilities like PUDs to provide incentives and programs to help those in need, like helping folks during crisis times, like we’ve seen these last couple years.

Businesses are flocking to the region to take advantage of our low cost, carbon-free hydropower attributes. Big companies like

Boeing, Microsoft, Amazon and Google have located offices and huge data centers in the region because of the access to our clean, affordable energy. This brings jobs and boosts local and regional economies.

The dams are also critical to local communities that are near the Columbia and Snake rivers and tributaries by protecting against flooding.

Further east, in the high desert areas, the dams provide farmers with irrigation for the crops and for access to clean drinking water. In fact, just 6% of the annual runoff to the Mighty Columbia, provides enough irrigation for 7.8 million acres of farmable desert. The crops and other goods produced are then shipped from ports via barges, which is very low carbon transportation when compared to railroad or semi-trucks. The Federal Columbia River Power System supports over \$24 billion in annual trade, with countless jobs and other opportunities that extend beyond the Columbia River Basin.

The benefits of our hydroelectric system are innumerable and irreplaceable. Even though time has passed, and our needs have evolved, the hydroelectric dams continue to offer solutions to the most critical infrastructure problems. The issues around climate change make hydropower even more necessary. The base load power that hydro provides allows us to be warm in the winter and cool in the summer without burning coal or gas and contributing to carbon emissions. It’s critical that we protect our hydroelectric resource for the future. Thanks for taking the time to read.



Mike Sheetz,
Commissioner, District 1

Keep Yourself Safe from Utility [SCAM] ATTEMPTS

Posing as a utility employee is a common scam. Scammers will try this in person, over the phone, via text, or by email.

Typically, they will threaten to shut off your power if they don’t receive payment immediately.

These tips can help you avoid becoming a victim:

- **Ask for verification.** We will know your name, account number, balance, and other information
- **Keep your information safe.** Do not give out sensitive information unless you have verified you are talking to a PUD representative.
- **Hang up and call back.** If you have any doubt about the authenticity of a call, hang up and call us at (360) 877-5249.
- **Don’t trust caller ID or recordings.** Today’s technology allows scammers to use local numbers on caller ID or to copy phone system recordings.

When in doubt, hang up! If it’s really the PUD calling you, we will make multiple attempts through phone, email and mail to reach you. We also can verify the information on your account.



Mason County Customers can get a **\$500** Electric Bill Credit or a **\$250** Water Bill Credit



(Jefferson County customers should also contact the PUD for options through OlyCAP.)

Qualifying Mason County customers who apply for ARPA assistance through PUD 1 can get a \$500 bill credit on their electric account and a \$250 credit on their water account, even if their bills are not currently past due. Any household that has experienced a financial hardship due to COVID-19 and applies at Community Action Council, can be eligible for this bill credit. Even if CAC denies the application, the PUD's ARPA funds can still apply; you just need to show proof of a phone appointment or application with the CAC, who forwards that information to the PUD on your behalf.

For families who are still underemployed, making less tips, or have had to miss work due to COVID, please reach out to us today. These funds are meant to offset financial burdens for Mason County households who are having to prioritize utilities along with rent, mortgage, food and other basic living expenses. We strongly encourage anyone who has been knocked off course financially by

the pandemic to contact the PUD and complete the short application, as well as make an appointment over the phone with CAC.

For customers who have both water and electric accounts, that \$750 bill credit can help a lot over the next couple months of winter bills. It's a quick process to complete the paperwork. Customers who have past due accounts and are making satisfactory payment arrangements can also have their past due balances paid off.

Please reach out to customer service today! (360) 877-5249. Customers who previously received CARES Act funding are also eligible for the ARPA program.



Katie Arnold
Director of Business Services



Round Up for the Canal Comfort Fund!







The Canal Comfort Fund is a utility assistance program that is funded entirely by generous donations from PUD 1 customers. The PUD accepts the donations and forwards 100% of them to the Community Action Councils, who disburses them to PUD customers in need. The CAC takes no administrative fees for administering the program.

Despite donations being down this year, as of October, the PUD issued \$6,649 in Canal Comfort funds to Jefferson County and Mason County's Community Action Councils, assisting 44 households in need.

If you are able, please consider rounding up your payment and applying the change to the Canal Comfort Fund. Every little bit helps (and is tax-deductible)! Your neighbors in need will greatly appreciate it. You can do this online through SmartHub or on your paper remittance slip. You can set up ongoing monthly donations or one-time gifts as well.

Thank you for your compassion and generosity!

2020 FUEL MIX SUMMARY*

	HYDRO	85.70%		NATURAL GAS	0%
	NUCLEAR	10.20%		BIOMASS	0%
	COAL	0%		OTHER	4.10%


*2020's data reported at end of 2021




THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS regularly meet the 2nd and 4th Tuesday of each month at 1:00 p.m. Meetings are held remotely due to COVID-19 and the call-in instructions for the public are posted on the PUD website along with the meeting packets. For more information on meetings, please visit mason-pud1.org or call the PUD office.



www.mason-pud1.org

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