



Olympic Mountain Sunset in Union. Photo courtesy of Mike Oblizalo.

# THE CONNECTOR SUMMER 2023

## COMMISSIONER CORNER

# Trimming Up Tree Hazards



The PUD gets a lot of calls and questions about tree related outages during the summer when folks are in town using their vacation properties. Customers who are used to city utilities that have either underground or loop-fed power to city blocks and suburban streets, don't realize the hazards that rural utilities have to deal with like trees and vegetation. We get asked a lot why we don't cut trees or what we are doing about trees falling into the lines. The short answer is: we trim vegetation back annually, but we will never be able to eliminate the hazard. This is part of the deal when we live and vacation in the beautiful shadow of the Olympic mountains and rainforest.

The PUD does have a vegetation management plan. The board of commissioners takes staff recommendations on tree trimming and danger tree budgets each year, and we allocate the dollars to get the work done. Our main system is trimmed on a 7-year schedule, meaning its broken into 7 sections and trimmed in a cycle by our contractors. Some areas that have faster growing vegetation are trimmed sooner. We also allocate a portion of our budget to removing identified danger trees, and we budget each year for summer helpers so we can split our line crew into two crews and do a bunch of in-house trimming along the side roads. We budget as much as we can reasonably afford to do each year. Even if our budget was unlimited, we could never clear cut the forest to remove the overhanging

canopy on Highway 101. We also have no control over healthy trees outside our easements that randomly come down in wind or snowstorms. Again, these are trade-offs we make to live in a beautiful, scenic area.

Another avenue the PUD is taking to reduce these outages though is to build a middle-mile substation in Lilliwaup. We are working on grants to start the engineering and design for that. Our team is also installing protection equipment on the line to help isolate the areas that go out when trees and limbs come down.

We also get asked why we don't just put all the lines underground. Besides the fact that the cost to do this is at least 3x more expensive than overhead construction and unaffordable, the shoulder space on the highways and in a lot of these developments along Hood Canal either don't have enough space, or the terrain is too rough, or the ground is too hard to trench or bore. Underground lines are not foolproof either. Extreme fluctuations in daily temperatures often cause underground faults and those take hours longer to locate and repair than overhead lines. It's a tradeoff. Some areas make sense, and our budget allows us to underground lines, and others do not.

Now that we keep getting drier and hotter summers, the PUD also has set our system to be more sensitive to line disruptions during the hot months. Limb or tree contacts will shut the lines down immediately, so they don't cause a ground fire. Again, this is a tradeoff that



Fallen tree on Hwy. 101 from outside PUD easement.

we have to make to protect our communities from wildfire because we can't control all the trees and limbs. It's just a part of doing utility business on the Hood Canal. That being said, the commission continues to fund staff budget requests to beef up our vegetation management and we have submitted a \$3.6 million grant for whole-system vegetation management to help us get ahead of the curve. We will continue to work to improve the reliability of the system and protect our homes and business from fire danger.



Mike Sheetz  
Commissioner, District 1



# Katie Arnold Receives National Leadership Award

Katie Arnold, PUD 1's Director of Business Services and District Treasurer, received the Robert E. Roundtree Rising Star Award during the American Public Power Association's National Conference in Seattle, Washington. The award is also a scholarship presented to future leaders in public power who are recognized by their peers for being creative problem solvers that perform their job responsibilities in an outstanding manner. As 2023's winner, Katie will receive a stipend to travel to one of APPA's conferences or training programs to advance her education and development in public power.

In 2016, Katie began as a consultant with Mason PUD 1 through a local accounting firm before eventually being hired by the PUD in a permanent accounting position and as the board-appointed treasurer for the District. She was soon promoted to a

director-level leadership role and now oversees all administrative functions of the District.

Having helped the District recover during a transition period of staff retirements and a backlog of financial reporting, Katie is recognized as a problem solver, a consensus builder, and a financial leader. In recognition of her outstanding work with the utility, she has also been selected to serve as co-chair of the Washington PUD Association's Finance Directors committee. Recently, Katie has dove headlong into the complexities of Washington State's new Clean Energy Transformation Act requirements to understand the financial implications for the PUD and has overseen the cost-of-service



analysis to inform ratemaking and financial policies that she helped develop. She has also been instrumental in helping to procure over \$16 million in grants and appropriations for Mason PUD 1 over the last five years.

## WHAT IS A Kilowatt Hour?



100-Watt  
Lightbulb



10 Hours



1 Kilowatt  
Hour

**Have you ever looked at your utility bill and thought, "What is 1 kWh? How much electricity am I really using?" Our friends at Snohomish PUD allowed us to share a great article they wrote, breaking down the information for customers.**

A kilowatt hour (kWh) is just that – a measurement of how much energy an appliance, light or piece of electronic equipment is using. The name is a little misleading. It doesn't translate to the number of kilowatts you're using per hour. Instead, it's a measurement of the energy you'd need if you kept a 1,000-watt appliance running for an hour.

But different appliances use different amounts of energy – so the time it takes for them to reach 1 kWh can vary greatly. It also depends on the model, age and other factors of the appliance. Older appliances might take more energy to run while newer ones are more energy efficient. Here are some household examples:

- Running a dishwasher (1,000 watts): 1 hour
- Using a 100-watt light bulb: 10 hours
- Watching a 50-inch LED TV (80 watts): 12.5 hours
- Cooking in the oven (2,000 watts): 30 minutes
- Running the refrigerator (300 watts): 3 hours
- Gaming on a PlayStation 4 (150 watts): 6.67 hours
- An alarm clock (50 watts): 20 hours
- Taking a warm shower (10,000 watts): 6 minutes
- Using a laptop (20-50 watts): All day
- Keeping a broadband router on (7-10 watts): About 4 to 5 days

Again, wattage used can vary greatly between appliances. A window air conditioner, for example, can use between 500 to 1,400 watts, on average.

It is also important to be aware that some appliances still use energy when turned

off or in standby mode. Televisions and computers still use a small amount of power even when turned off. Other appliances in your kitchen – including anything with an LED light or screen that stays on – can also use power even when not being operated.

According to the U.S. Energy Information Administration, in 2021, the average U.S. residential customer consumed 10,632 kilowatt hours (kWh) of electricity, an average of 886 kWh per month, or about 29 kWh per day. This number can vary, based on a number of factors, including the size and age of your house or apartment, and the type of appliances in your home.

So, how does the PUD use kWh to calculate your bill? We multiply your monthly kWh usage by our residential electric rate of .08962 cents.



More information and a breakdown of our rates can be found on our website: [www.mason-pud1.org](http://www.mason-pud1.org).



# Project Season IS IN FULL SWING

Thanks to several grant awards, there are multiple projects occurring this summer throughout our electric service area and water systems. Here's a snapshot of the things we're working on this season.

Mangum Power received the bid award to replace 158 poles in Jefferson County as part of Hood Canal Communication's grant funded broadband buildout. Magnum started in June on Dosewallips Road and will be working on Hwy 101 starting in July. HCC's fiber contractor is also working on the highway and side communities.

Kemp West, our contracted vegetation management company, starts in July trimming the lines in a section of Lilliwaup to Hama Hama on Hwy 101, and then will move onto Eldon up to Triton.

The bid has been publicized for the FEMA-funded Hwy 101 power line relocation project that is moving the power lines off the highway near Octopus Hole in Hoodsport, up to the top of the hillside above the Star White development. This project will be awarded in July and work should be completed by the fall.

Our line crew is also trimming vegetation in the side neighborhoods off of the highway and they will finish up the pole line rebuild on Finch Creek in Hoodsport in July. They then will move onto Four Wheel Drive Road and finish our line rebuild on Love Road, both in the Brinnon areas.

Our water department's Agate Beach grant-funded water storage project will begin construction in July and continue through October. The PUD water crew is working on a fencing project at Ripplewood well house in Matlock and will also install new mainline on the Arnold's Way and Viken Lane areas of the Canal Mutual system in Hoodsport, as well as complete the mainline replacement in Union that we started in 2022.

**This is a lot of activity occurring on the highway and the side streets. Please drive very slowly and carefully around these crews. Safety is our number one priority, and we want to make sure everyone gets to go home to their families at the end of the workday!**

We continue to solicit new grants to complete more projects on our capital work plan. We still have our normal daily work that our crews need to do, but these grants help us accomplish these larger projects that would otherwise have an impact on rates down the road or force us to increase our debt service to complete them. As long as the infrastructure money continues to flow, your PUD will



Magnum replacing poles on Duckabush Rd.

continue to pursue it. We have two grant applications in the works this summer that need community support. If you are driving by the office, please stop in and sign onto our letters of support that are in our lobby for our whole-system vegetation management project and our Highway 106 rebuild project. Even if you don't live in specific project areas, these grants help alleviate financial pressure on the PUD's rates overall. It's a win for everyone!



Kristin Masteller  
General 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. Meetings are now held both in person and remotely. 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](http://mason-pud1.org) or call the PUD office.



[www.mason-pud1.org](http://www.mason-pud1.org)

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**FRIDAY, OCTOBER 6<sup>TH</sup>**

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

**Burgers, Hot Dogs 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



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