



View from North Mountain overlooking Skokomish Valley

THE CONNECTOR FALL 2025

COMMISSIONER ARTICLE

THE CHALLENGES OF GOING CARBON FREE WITHOUT PROPER REGIONAL PLANNING

"Let's eliminate coal and gas plants!"
"Let's switch to solar and wind!" It sounds good in theory, but the reality is far more complicated. To replace just one megawatt of reliable, firm power, it can take 30 to 60 megawatts of wind and solar to achieve that same firm power. At the same time, America is electrifying everything from cars to appliances, and data centers to smart grids. All of it requires electricity on demand, not just when the sun shines or the wind blows. The problem is that our grid isn't ready. New transmission lines can take decades to plan and permit. Current transmission projects have been stuck in planning or permitting for 20 years or longer. Renewable projects like wind and solar farms also require massive amounts of land, and many communities push back against siting them nearby, taking the "not in my backyard" position. Meanwhile, state and federal mandates keep pushing new energy policies

out faster than the infrastructure that is needed to support them.

What I am trying to say is that it is nice to do all of these things to reduce our carbon emissions, but regionally, we have had our heads in the sand with regard to planning because we're simply not ready for it. What we need is better planning, more realistic timelines to implement our carbon-free energy mandates, and more thoughtful policies that balance carbon goals with customer affordability. Mason PUD 1 commissioners and management are actively engaged with the Public Power Council and the Washington PUD Association to push for expedited, expanded transmission in our state and to ensure our lawmakers understand the practical limits our industry faces.

We have lots of challenges, but the key challenge is to be able to work together

on realistic timelines, recognizing that it takes cooperation and understanding how things work in the electrical world. Agencies like the Washington State Department of Commerce can't do it alone. Utilities must be at the table, because we're the ones who live and breathe this every day. If we truly want to hit Washington's 2045 carbon reduction targets, we need collaboration, planning, and resources- not just mandates. I also want to recognize and thank all the people in our industry working hard behind the scenes to keep the lights on for us.



Ron Gold,
District 2 Commissioner

Energy Efficiency Rebates



Heather Williams & Cassandra Steiger

Mason County PUD 1 continues to take part in the Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) Energy Efficiency Rebates program. This program allows PUD 1 customers a more cost-effective way to upgrade their washers, dryers, and heat pumps to modern, energy-efficient models. Additionally, it offers an incentive for new energy-efficient manufactured homes (NEEM).

For the 2024-25 rebate period, PUD 1 has distributed just over \$409,163 and the rebate account will be replenished on October 1st for the next biennium. By upgrading to energy-efficient appliances, customers can save an average of \$400 each year on their utility bills, reduce the demand on the power grid, and lessen their carbon footprints. Applying is easy and straightforward, and the PUD 1 customer service team is here to assist. "Our customers can contact me at the office for a list of contractors who have experience

with this program," said Cassandra Steiger, PUD 1's Conservation Specialist. "Their income status will determine if the rebate check is paid to the customer or if the PUD pays the contractor directly." To date, the PUD has assisted with 81 regular heat pumps, 25 low-income washers and dryers, 10 commercial heat pumps, 16 NEEMs, five heat pump upgrades, 18 air source heat pumps, and one low-income ductless heat pump.

Recently, Cassandra had an opportunity to sit down with her first rebate customer, Heather Williams, to discuss her experiences with this program. "Heather was my first customer, and with the funds from this program, we were able to install a new washer and dryer," said Cassandra. "This was truly an answer to my prayers," Heather shared. "I was without a washer and dryer and would have had to drive two-hours round trip to do my laundry. Being in my 70s and living on a tight budget didn't leave me with many options."

During the application and installation of Heather's washer and dryer, Cassandra learned that Heather's old furnace was also eligible for a rebate. "The ductless heat pump has air conditioning something I didn't

have before, and with a heart condition like I have, it is very important for me to stay cool on the hot summer days," said Heather. "All of this has been a blessing. I want to say thank you to Cassandra, PUD 1, and BPA. If it wasn't for them, I don't know what I would have done. Everyone has been a delight to work with, and I highly recommend everyone apply for this program."

The PUD's rebate program is funded on a two-year cycle and renews this October for the next biennium. PUD 1 strongly recommends that customers reach out to the PUD Conservation Specialist before making any purchases to see if they qualify for any rebates and ask questions about the program. "BPA provides us with another way to help our customers, and I intend to see every penny of these funds used to do just that," said Cassandra.

To learn more about the rebates that PUD offers, customers can call the PUD office at (360) 877-5249 and ask for Cassandra.

Holly Paul,
Business Services Coordinator

PUD 1 Partners with Brinnon School District and the Skokomish Tribe on Lighting Conservation Projects through BPA Conservation Grants

The PUD received two energy conservation grants from Bonneville Power Administration (BPA), one for commercial lighting projects and one for a low-income appliance rebate program. The Skokomish Tribe partnered with the PUD to replace commercial lighting for their Tribal business offices, daycare, healthcare clinic, and their former police station building. Brinnon School District also signed on to upgrade lighting in their K-8 school as part of their facility modernization project.

"We're very excited to bring these grant dollars to Mason and Jefferson Counties and to partner once again with the Skokomish Tribe and Brinnon School District to help

them save energy and lower their electric bills," said Cassandra Steiger, PUD 1's Conservation Specialist. "The folks at BPA have been great to work with, helping us put these conservation funds to good use. We're thankful that they chose to fund our projects and for providing support along the way." The two commercial lighting grants, totaling \$28,828, are estimated to produce savings of 133,900.54 kilowatt hours each year, which translates to over \$10,734 in annual energy costs.

In addition to the lighting program grants, the PUD also received \$182,000 for low-income households to purchase new energy-



Pictured L-to-R: Kristin Masteller (PUD 1), Melissa Podeszwa (BPA), Josh Bowers (Brinnon School), Cassandra Steiger (PUD 1), Chairman Guy Miller (Skokomish Tribe), Katie Arnold (PUD 1), and Thomas Kachman (Skokomish Tribe).

efficient washers and dryers, as well as ductless heat pumps. The PUD collaborated with Shelton's South Sound Appliance to prequalify 20 low-income customers for new appliances. Twenty-five qualifying households also received new ductless heating/cooling units through this grant program.

STRENGTH IN PARTNERSHIPS:

Funding Rural Water for Mason County's Future



Access to safe, reliable drinking water is a fundamental expectation in any community, but for small towns and rural areas like those around Mason County, the work required to maintain and improve aging water systems is daunting and expensive.

Mason PUD 1 has made significant progress on this front replacing outdated infrastructure, installing treatment systems, and expanding storage capacity to meet current and future needs. These improvements aren't just about clean water coming out of the tap; they also represent long-term investments in public health, housing, and economic development.

Water infrastructure is the foundation of a thriving community. Upgrading aging water lines and building reservoirs not only protects water quality and quantity, but it also lays the foundation for Mason County's economy. The County's 2024 Housing Needs Assessment identified a deficit of roughly 7,000 housing units across all affordability levels. Indeed, many PUD 1 customers faced decades-long waits for connections to build on their properties because, like most small public water providers, we couldn't ask our 3,300 water customers to shoulder the full expense of these multi-million dollar infrastructure upgrades. That's why PUD 1 has worked diligently in recent years with state and local partners to leverage grant funding for our growing list of capital projects. Federal programs such as the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) and the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL), along with the Washington State's Department of Health funding programs, have opened the door to unprecedented investment in rural systems. The Public Works Assistance Account has also provided critical funding for the PUD. Still, these programs often have local match requirements, which can be cost-prohibitive for small

water systems. This is where the local partnerships come in.

Coordinated regional planning helps strengthen projects and grant applications. By aligning our local priorities with state and federal funding opportunities, we've been able to stretch local dollars further and tackle expensive water projects that would have otherwise been unaffordable for PUD customers. These successes are the product of strong relationships with our legislators in the 35th District, our county commissioners, and state agency staff who have all helped the PUD make the case for why these projects matter and why they deserve support- and it's paid off. Since 2019, the PUD has received \$19.2 million in Department of Health and Public Works Board funding, with \$11 million of that as grants and \$8.2 million as low interest (1.38% or less) loans. The Mason County Board of Commissioners also provided over \$1.5 million in ARPA funding and Representative Travis Couture and Senator Drew MacEwen have sponsored \$2.7 million in capital budget funding to cover the gaps. The entire 35th delegation worked together to push these projects through committee. They and other partners sent support letters for the PUD's grant applications, including the Mason County Economic Development Council, who provided important data and statistical support for the PUD's grant writing efforts and ensured our projects were included in the local and regional CEDS (Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy) lists.

The truth is, no single entity can solve infrastructure challenges alone. We need collaboration, trust, and shared vision. When we come to the table with aligned goals and a solid plan, we're not just building water lines and reservoirs, we're building better partnerships to serve our communities. We demonstrate that safe, reliable water infrastructure is a community priority that supports public health, housing, jobs, and community resilience. With four recent water system projects already completed and several more underway, PUD 1 is grateful for the partnerships that make them possible, and we're committed to ensuring that every drop of progress benefits our communities today and for generations to come.



Kristin Masteller,
General Manager

EARN TEN 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 \$10 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 \$10 credit.



Power Outage

FOR UNION CUSTOMERS

Tuesday, 9/30 for Manzanita Substation Cutover

The Manzanita Substation is complete and ready to be put into service. This substation will serve the Union area's power needs for the next 50+ years, and the PUD is very excited to finally bring it online. To do this, the PUD must take an overnight power outage to transfer customers over to the new substation.

PUD 1 has scheduled the power cutover from the old Union Substation on Dalby Rd. to the new Manzanita Substation starting at 11:30 p.m. on Tuesday, September 30th. This outage will last until approximately 6:00 a.m. on Wednesday, October 1st.

It is possible that sections of customers will be back online sooner than 6:00 a.m. as the PUD crew brings the substation feeders online one at a time. There are many steps in the cutover procedure between the BPA lines in Potlatch that feed this substation over to the Manzanita Campus. The PUD will have our contractors on site to help expedite the work. Customers should plan to be out of power until 6:00 a.m. on Wednesday, October 1st and have flashlights and supplies on hand.

If your water system does not have a backup generator or you are on a private well, please have bottled water on hand as well. For PUD-owned water systems: **Alderbrook, Union, Vuecrest & Union Ridge** have backup power to the wells, and you should stay in water service during the power outage. **Highland Park** will lose water pressure and power. Hood Canal needs to conserve water as they will have water until the reservoir is empty (except the six customers at the top of the hill who will be out of service). **Madrone Beach** also needs to conserve and will have water until the reservoir is empty.

A map of the locations for the power outage and the times of the outage are available on the PUD's website at www.mason-pud1.org. The PUD will also send notifications to all the customers affected by the outage. Any questions can be directed to the PUD's Engineering Manager or General Manager at (360) 877-5249.

PUD 1 thanks everyone in advance for your patience during the outage and for your support of our infrastructure projects!



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 or call the PUD office.



www.mason-pud1.org

Find us on



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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



Join Us!

**FRIDAY,
OCTOBER 3RD**

11 a.m. to 2 p.m.

**21971 N. HWY 101
IN POTLATCH**

**Celebrating our
90th Anniversary and
Public Power Week at
our drive-thru event!**



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

PUBLIC POWER WEEK

Powering Strong Communities