



Skamania County PUD's

# News From the Wire

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**PUD #1 of  
Skamania County**

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**Board of  
Commissioners**

**Meeting Schedule**

**9 a.m.**

Monday 10/20/08

Monday 11/03/08

Monday 11/17/08

Monday 12/01/08

Monday 12/15/08

## HAPPY BIRTHDAY PUD

As we approach the elections of November, 2008, I take opportunity to reflect on a big decision made by the voters of Skamania County in November, 1938. By a vote of 1136 For and 663 Against, the people of Skamania County decided to form a Public Utility District (PUD), to acquire through purchase, or condemnation if necessary, the electrical distribution system of West Coast Power Company, and to operate the electric system in a not-for-profit manner by and for the people of Skamania County. This was a landmark decision.

Think about this a moment. Some local citizens with limited knowledge in the construction and operation of an electric utility, took on an established big investor-owned private company, and expected to do a better job of delivering electricity to the people of Skamania County. Even more incredible; they were successful.

In 1937, the new Bonneville Dam came on line. Also, the new Bonneville Power Administration had been created by Congress and had low-cost power to sell. And, yes, the amount of electricity used by the average household was small, but growing rapidly as new appliances were coming to market. Electric hot water heaters, electric washing machines and dryers, electric stoves, irons, and appliances too numerous to name. America was coming out of the Great Depression and moving into prosperity.

The first PUD Commissioners were:

District #1 – Clement Akerman,

District #2 – Chauncey Price

District #3 – Harvey Card

These gentlemen had to arrange Bond Sales, levy taxes to pay consulting engineers, hire staff, negotiate a Power Sales Agreement with BPA, negotiate a Sale Agreement with West Coast Power Company, and start from scratch, all of what your PUD does today.

Bonneville Dam was new, as was the BPA transmission system. With sales of power low and debt on the projects high, the electric rates in those days were very high. For example, if customers in 1940 had used the rough average of 1,200 kilowatt-hours per month of energy usage, as our customer-owners use today, the average bill in 1940 would have been \$408/month. Jeepers !!

But the usage of electric power grew by leaps and bounds, and with eggs being cheaper by the dozen, every rate change BPA made from 1940 until 1968 was down. The first BPA rate increase came in 1968 and every BPA Rate Adjustment has been up, not down, since.

Several people have served on your PUD Commission since the beginning. They are:

District #1	Clement Akerman	1938 - 1946
	William Thompson	1946 – 1952
	Clyde Riddell	1952 – 1958
	Rolf Jemtegaard	1958 – 1982
	Melissa Carlson-Price	1983 – 1988
	Ralph Cornwell	1989 – 1991
	Melissa Carlson-Price	1991 – 1992
	Dale Richards	1992 – 2005
	Dennis Gale	2005 – current
District #2	Chauncey Price	1938—1960
	Carl Krohn	1960 – 1962
	Sidney Adams	1962 – 1980
	Parker Knight	1981 – 2004
	Curt Esch	2004 – current
District #3	Harvey Card	1938—1948
	Ross Shepeard	1948 – 1972
	Carl Nielson	1972 – 1990
	Jack Nielson	1991 – 1996
	Clyde D. Leach	1996 – current

The PUD actually started serving the electric needs of the County in early 1940, with 517 customers. For contrast, the PUD now serves over 5,700 metered accounts.

In 1940 the PUD paid \$854 dollars for state, county, and city taxes. In 2007, the PUD paid \$467,966.

In 1940 the Net Electric Plant (system) value was \$78,348. In 2007 our Net Electric Plant value was \$17,212,820. During this same period our sales of energy went from 768,000 KWHrs in 1940 to 128,329,615 KWHrs in 2007. All of this data is presented to show how your PUD has grown.

Then in 1947 some folks living in the eastern edge of our county approached the PUD Commission asking if the PUD would take over the water system in the Underwood area. Petitions were circulated, and \$600 per connection paid on a 'subscription' basis. This subscription money was leveraged to buy the existing pipes and tanks, and to make improvements. The Underwood Water System now serves around 330 customers, has its own set of accounting books and funds, and is in much better condition.

In the same time frame citizens in the Carson area took a similar path, leading to the PUD taking over the water systems and expanding to include a 12" supply pipe from Bear Creek, bigger reservoir, bigger pipes, and bigger pumps. The Carson Water System also operates as an independent entity with its own accounting books, funds, and rates.

It is a matter of Washington State Law that the three systems the PUD operates, the Electric, Carson Water, and Underwood Water, must not mingle funds, must not cross-subsidize one-another, and must each operate in a prudent business manner. Your PUD meets all of these tests, and, in 2006 the Carson Water System was recognized by the State Dept. of Health as 'the Most Improved Water System in the State'.

This trip down memory lane is offered for purpose. I profess that the people of Skamania County, indeed, any county, can, and have, shown that they can take over essential utility functions such as electricity and water service, and provide these services better, at lower cost, with nearly total local control, and with each customer having voice in policy decisions, for the benefit of the county.

As a general statement, I believe your PUD is in very good shape. You have a dedicated and hard-working staff who knows what they are doing. You have elected a Commission that serves to serve. They have steered a course to improved reliability of both water and electric service, and have set annual budgets that control costs, and therefore rates. They listen to your input when you offer it, and they have your interests, and the future in mind.

I bolster this last point with a simple look at where we are today:

**Rates:** The lowest of all non-generating PUDs in Washington, and much lower than Portland General Electric and Pacific Power & Light.

**Service:** Not perfect yet, but getting better each year, and better than most.

**Future:** This one's your call. After all, it is your PUD.

Thank you to the brave people who made this all possible, 70 years ago.

Bob Wittenberg, Your PUD Manager

## PUD WELCOMES TREE TRIMMING



### CREW

*If you haven't already, you may soon see our new tree-trimming crew hard at work. We are happy to now employ (from left to right) Pat Hartley, Robert O'Neal, David Cooper and Gary Gast.*

## ENERGY STAR APPLIANCE REBATES Available at Your PUD

*If you have purchased an Energy Star Appliance; such as a Refrigerator, Dishwasher, Clothes Washer, or Water Heater, you may qualify for a rebate. Please contact your PUD.*

## GIFT CERTIFICATES ARE NOW AVAILABLE

*PUD #1 of Skamania County now offers gift certificates. It's a great way to light up someone's life.*

*Here's how it works: Stop by or call the PUD office and make a payment on a customer's account. We will give you an attractive gift certificate that you can present to that special person, and it will show up as a credit on their bill. If you would like, we can send the gift certificate for you anonymously.*

*This wonderful gift will mean a lower power bill, which anyone would enjoy. Give this deLIGHTful gift and make someone's heart & home a little brighter.*

## CONSIDER A BACK-UP GENERATOR BUT BE CAREFUL HOW YOU USE IT.

*If you use a generator, please be sure it is installed properly to ensure your safety and the safety of our linemen. For more information, call us for a free brochure on "Standby Electric Generators & Their Dangers of Back Feed" - This brochure also includes information on portable and permanent generators and things to consider when looking for a generator.*

### News From the Wire

is an informational newsletter published by Skamania County PUD for our customers. Reader comments are welcome.

#### PUD Commissioners:

District 1..... Dennis Gale  
360-837-3862  
District 2..... Curt Esch  
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District 3..... Clyde Leach  
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#### Skamania County PUD:

Manager..... Bob Wittenberg  
Auditor..... Chris Iobst

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