



Then and *Now*

In 1938, Klickitat County created a new public utility district. This year, Klickitat PUD celebrates its 85th anniversary. A lot has changed in the decades in between.

In 1938, the county was a patchwork of electricity providers. Pacific Power & Light, an investor-owned utility headquartered in Portland, served the cities. Small power plants provided power to small communities such as Glenwood, Klickitat, Wahkiacus and Roosevelt. However, large sections of the county were without electricity.

The power provided by PP&L was expensive and unreliable. The power company's chief interest was giving value to stockholders, and there was not much profit in maintaining the

system or providing lights to farms and rural areas. They thought it would cost too much to string new lines, and there would be too little return in revenue. They didn't foresee the farmer using the electricity to help ease the drudgery of farm chores.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Rural Utilities Service began three years prior. RUS originated with the Rural Electrification Administration, one of the agencies created under the New Deal in 1935 to promote rural electrification. The intent was to facilitate the expansion of electricity into rural America, which directly aligned with the needs of Klickitat County residents.

To appreciate where we are, it often takes some looking back. We've provided a series of comparisons to highlight 85 years of progress.

Then: In 1938, a new federal law established a minimum wage of 25 cents an hour.

Now: The minimum wage is more than \$15 an hour, an increase of almost 6,000%.

Then: In 1942, the first full year KPUD provided electricity, the average cost was about 5.5 cents per kilowatt-hour. Adjusted for inflation, that would be \$1.05 per kWh in 2023.

Now: The price for power for residential and small farm customers is 9.7 cents per kWh.

Then: In 1941, when Klickitat PUD energized the first line, the utility had 225 customers and 90 miles of line. That was just 2.5 customers per mile of line—not a large customer base to spread costs.

Now: Today, KPUD serves 13,754 customers and has 2,000 miles of line. That's seven customers per mile of line, continuing to make Klickitat PUD one of the state's most rural electric utilities.

Then: The average KPUD customer used less than 100 kWh of electricity monthly. In 1948, General Manager Emmet Clouse reported there were fewer than two dozen electrically heated homes in the PUD's territory.

Now: KPUD's residential and small farm customers use 1,500 kWh a month on average.

Then: Klickitat PUD's first commissioners were farmers and Grange leaders, including Martin Lumijarvi from Centerville, M.A. Collins from Bickleton and J.S. Degman from White Salmon.

Now: KPUD's elected commissioners are orchardist Dan Gunkel from Goldendale, retired Klickitat PUD water/wastewater project manager Doug Miller of Centerville and businessman Randy Knowles of White Salmon. As the first commissioners did, current commissioners meet twice monthly to conduct PUD business in open public sessions.

Then: In 1938, KPUD was the first PUD in Washington to apply to Bonneville Power Administration for power from the new federal dams on the Columbia River. KPUD estimated its annual energy consumption would be 3.6 million kilowatt-hours.

Now: Klickitat PUD's annual energy consumption is about 495 million kilowatt-hours.

Then: Early dams for electricity production were across relatively small rivers. In 1934, construction began on the first two federal dams on the Columbia River. In 1938, Bonneville Dam was completed and provided 526.7 megawatts of electricity.

Now: In 1997, KPUD began generating a portion of its load for the first time with the completion of a small hydro plant at the McNary Dam fishway. Klickitat PUD also developed a landfill gas-to-energy project at the Roosevelt regional landfill. Its output at the time was equivalent to about one-quarter of KPUD's annual energy load. Investments in renewable energy were made in 2006 when Klickitat PUD partnered with three other public utilities to build the White Creek Wind generation project. KPUD owns 13% of the total project output of 204.7 MW.

Then: Through the 1930s, federal hydroelectric projects developed a massive generation surplus. During World War II, energy-intensive industries such as aircraft manufacturing and shipbuilding rooted in the Pacific Northwest because of the abundance of low-cost electricity.

Now: The increased electricity demand has used up the federal surplus power. Surplus capacity at some of Klickitat PUD's substations is also nearly depleted. Additional capacity has been added in the past several years for communities such as Bingen, Husum, Dallesport and Alderdale.

