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WA-18

Public Power Week

Each year during the first week of October, we celebrate Public Power Week. Why is public power important and how does it affect you?

Choice and input are the main answers. When we consider electric, water and wastewater rates and make decisions—especially difficult ones—the people making those decisions live in your community and represent you.

Public power gives you the opportunity to be involved in two main ways. The first is your choice in commissioners. Your PUD is governed by three commissioners, elected by you. You choose who governs the PUD. They set our policies and the direction of the utility. Your PUD employees then implement that policy.

The second opportunity for input is in face-to-face meetings. You can do this in several ways. You can attend our public commission meetings, held the second and fourth Tuesdays of each month; you can attend your community or public service meetings when we provide updates; or you can stop in and see us.

Your input is important. This fall, we will talk about financial stability and electric rates. I encourage you to participate as we discuss your PUD's future. Electric markets continue to affect us negatively, and that continues to put upward pressure on our rates. That is something you should know and pay attention to.

We have been tight on our budgets the past five years, and this is starting to affect our ability to provide cost-effective service. Maintenance requirements go up when we spend less on upgrading our infrastructure, and services can suffer if staffing levels are not sufficient to get all the work done. We made these decisions during the past few years knowing there would be eventual effects. I think those decisions were the right decisions. What will the decisions be going forward?

The beauty of public power is that these issues and decisions are made locally. We see all of you on a regular basis, and we know our decisions affect our friends and our neighbors. That can be difficult. It would be easier if we were making decisions from far away, but public power is about local control. It is why the citizens of Klickitat County voted November 8, 1938, to form a public utility district.

In celebration of Public Power Week and our 77th year of providing Klickitat County service, we are hosting an open house in our Goldendale and White Salmon offices Wednesday, October 7. I hope you will stop by and visit. You can pick up information on PUD programs and other information. Please bring your questions. We would like to talk about the issues facing your PUD and the challenges facing our industry in the coming years.



Jim Smith
General Manager