

KPUD Points the Way to Clean Power

By Brandi Meech

Most people who live in the state of Washington and in Klickitat County, know from experience that the amount of wind and water resources in the area are abundant.

It is no wonder public utilities statewide are taking advantage of these resources and producing clean and efficient power sources. The resources, referred to as “clean power”—meaning environmentally friendly—are becoming more popular across the state and are giving customers the chance to help the environment with their power choices.

The most common type of clean power used in Washington is hydroelectricity. According to the Washington PUD Association’s January newsletter, hydroelectricity—which is falling water used to turn a turbine and create power—accounts for 81.8 percent of Washington PUDs’ electricity load.

Eight Washington PUDs—Chelan, Douglas, Klickitat, Cowlitz, Grant, Lewis, Pend Oreille and Snohomish—solely or jointly operate their own hydroelectric facilities.

Klickitat PUD (KPUD) and Northern Wasco County PUD share the fish attraction water project at the McNary Dam hydro plant near Umatilla, Oregon.

The plant, which began operating in 1997, accounts for more than 13 percent of KPUD’s annual load, which means 8 percent less power that must be purchased from the Bonneville Power Administration, which supplies power to most Washington utilities.

Although hydropower facilities in Washington produce renewable energy, not all facilities are currently considered as producing green energy due to the time when these facilities were licensed.

Another new and popular clean power source is wind.



Wind power is the nation’s fastest growing energy source. Washington PUDs are ahead of the game with the nation’s largest wind power project operating in the area, the Nine Canyon Wind Project outside of Kennewick. It is owned by nine public utilities.

However, the White Creek Wind Project, which is owned by four public utilities—KPUD, Cowlitz PUD, Lakeview Light and Power and Tanner Electric—will soon become the largest public power-owned wind power project in the United States when it begins producing power in 2007. The site is near Roosevelt, Washington.

Wind power, like hydroelectricity, is a power source that produces zero emissions and does not burn any fossil fuels. The only downfall is when the wind is not blowing no power is generated.

Wind power by itself cannot be stored, which is why having both wind and hydropower is critical. When the wind is not blowing, some Washington utilities can draw from their stored hydroelectric power supplies to ensure a clean source of

energy.

Another addition to KPUD’s portfolio is the green power produced by the H.W. Hill Landfill gas plant in Roosevelt.

According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, landfill gas plants are as green as it gets. The agency says the plants are the only renewable energy source that actually removes pollutants from the air.

The plant takes methane emitted from organic waste as it decomposes and turns it into power. The H.W. Hill Landfill gas plant produces enough power it could supply 28 percent of KPUD’s annual load and even clean up the environment in the process. It is one of only about 120 in the United States, which shows how dedicated KPUD and the state of Washington are to clean power.

With new laws appearing to make clean energy mandatory, it is assuring to know Washington PUDs are already taking the necessary steps.

A story by John Dodge, who covers the environmental and energy section of the Olympian, recently said as soon as November, a clean energy initiative in Washington could reach the ballot and require all utilities serving more than 25,000 customers to obtain at least 15 percent of their energy load from a renewable energy source by 2020.

The renewable energy source must come from wind, solar or other conservation measures.

Although KPUD does not currently sell power to more than 25,000 customers, making it exempt from this pending measure, it is already taking steps with the McNary, the H.W. Hill Landfill Gas Plant and the White Creek Projects to make sure Klickitat County residents have access to renewable and clean energy sources. ■

