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Renewable Energy Initiative Passes

In the November election, voters were asked to cast their ballot on an initiative requiring utilities serving more than 25,000 customers to acquire a certain percentage of their load from renewable resources.

The voters approved the initiative 52 percent to 47 percent. Here in Klickitat County, our PUD commission endorsed the initiative as being good for the environment and also good for our county's economy. Klickitat County voters responded by endorsing the initiative by the same proportion as the state.

Where are utilities going to find enough renewable resources to fulfill this mandate? A good share of it will come from our county. From wind, landfill gas and biomass cogeneration, it's all here in Klickitat County.

It is estimated more than 6,000 megawatts (MW) of wind generation will be built to meet this renewable demand. A significant portion will be built here. We have the wind resource, and we have the transmission availability. It is not inconceivable to imagine more than a third of this capacity being installed in our county.

Klickitat County PUD has a head start on most utilities in our state. We have been instrumental in the development of wind power. In the early 1980s, Boeing MOD II generators sat atop the Goodnoe Hills collecting the wind and generating electricity. When completed, they were the largest wind generators and the largest wind farm ever built.

Lessons learned from building and operating those huge generators are now employed at most wind farms today.

Additionally, we have harnessed the methane generated at Rabanco's regional landfill. This state-of-the-art regional landfill is just getting started. The first waste was delivered in 1992. In 1999 the PUD started burning methane collected from the waste to generate electricity.

We are now working to double the size of this facility from 10 MW to 20 MW. Ultimately, this facility will be able to generate more than 40 MW.

SDS Lumber Company in Bingen has used biomass for cogeneration of electricity for more than 25 years. This year, they upgraded the facility to produce an additional 1 MW, for a total of 6 MW.

The PUD and SDS working together have enabled Klickitat County to be one of the main exporters of clean renewable energy for the state. We are happy the voters have endorsed what we here at Klickitat PUD see as good business sense and good public policy.

Tom Svendsen, General Manager

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