

KPUD Manager Sets Retirement Course

If it is true that Tom Svendsen is retiring, you wouldn't know it by talking to him.

The longtime Klickitat PUD (KPUD) general manager, who spent more than 30 years with the energy provider, is as on-task as ever. In fact, listening to him talk about industry trends, it is hard to imagine the Goldendale man is stepping down in fewer than 30 days.

"The next big phase of the new administration in carbon reduction will be getting transportation on the electric grid," Tom says, discussing the challenges in the industry. "Where are we going to meet that demand?"

"My lifelong avocation has been the promotion of Klickitat County as a renewable energy center and economic driver," notes Tom, adding he wants to continue working on those issues.

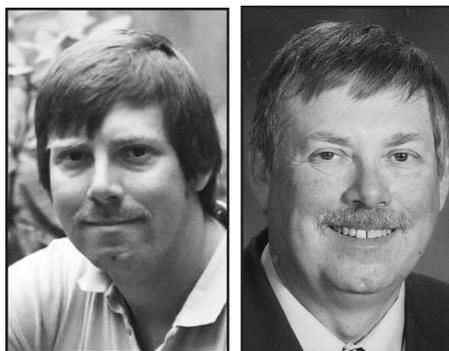
Klickitat County has huge potential to lead the nation in future energy technology, he says.

Tom, who joined KPUD in 1976, has come up with new ways to harness and use energy for more than three decades.

He was involved with the county's first wind energy project at Big Horn. Before that, he helped install a 10-megawatt generator near a fish ladder at McNary Dam and built a landfill gas-to-energy project from the ground up.

In 2007, Tom's district ushered in the White Creek Wind Project near Roosevelt, which harbored 1,400 megawatts of energy and resulted in a \$2 billion investment.

Recently, he teamed up with the Washington PUD Association on strategic planning to help kick-start the region as a renewable energy hub, and has worked on the Columbia Gorge Bi-State



Top, Tom Svendsen at the White Creek Wind Project site. Tom is retiring from KPUD after serving more than 30 years. Photo courtesy of the Goldendale Sentinel. Above, from left, Tom during his earlier days at KPUD and Tom today.

Renewable Energy Zone.

Tom says he has been fortunate in his career to sit on the forefront of energy development.

"I got to be the lead dog to come up with a plan for how the Northwest can develop and meet carbon targets that have been set nationwide and worldwide to be a carbon-neutral society," he says. "I got to make a difference in the world, and I think I made a difference."

He says a key to getting things done is uniting conflicting sides. Business and environmental interests have clashed in the past, he says,

pointing to summer spill at the dams, which aim to divert water to aid salmon migration as an example.

"If carbon is the ultimate danger to the environment we are kind of shooting ourselves in the foot by trying to save salmon by doing things that have been proven not to work," he says. "You save a hundred fish by putting 10,000 cars on the road."

One of the things Tom seems to have a handle on is balance. Although he says his views tend to be more politically conservative, he cites the widely liberal book "Hot, Flat and Crowded" by Thomas Friedman as a "dead on" summary of the energy situation.

In fact, Tom says liberals and conservatives have more in common on the energy front than they think.

"They're saying the same thing in different ways," he says. "People get caught up in the rhetoric of the 'whys,' but the 'how' is the main thing. Everybody's got the right direction, so let's just get there."

Although he plans to continue attending local energy meetings, Tom concedes it won't be all work.

"The first thing I'm doing is going ice fishing," he says. "I'm going to ride my motorcycle in the summertime. I've got dirt bikes, I've got four-wheelers, I've got toys. I'll go camping with the kids."

He recently bought a travel trailer and hopes to spend time on the road with his wife, Debi, who just finished her education degree to teach middle school.

Tom says his career has been full of highlights, but he is happy to pass the torch.

"I've been able to work with an awful lot of great people," he says. "It's in good hands. I'm really proud I was able to be a part of it." ■

Courtesy of The Goldendale Sentinel.