



A recently purchased skid steer with a mulching head will help clear KPUD's rights-of-way and aid in fire prevention.

New Equipment a Cut Above

KPUD's conservation efforts helped by new skid steer

By Beth Schroder

Klickitat PUD recently acquired a new piece of equipment geared toward improving KPUD's ability to clear power line rights-of-way.

The ASV skid steer, with tracks and a mulching head attachment. The mulching head is a rotary drum equipped with steel chipper teeth. These teeth allow the operator to remove and shred brush, heavy vegetation and trees up to eight inches in diameter.

As part of Klickitat PUD's traditional vegetation management program, contractors and KPUD tree-trimming crews work through hundreds of miles of right-of-way areas each year, removing vegetation and trees growing too close to power lines.

Depending on how much vegetation has grown and the location of the right-of-way, clearing can be long and grueling for hand crews. The right-of-way mulching machine makes work much quicker in many areas. In places where hand clearing is still necessary, the debris can be gathered into areas accessible by the machine and processed.

While cost- and time-savings using the mulching machine

were high priorities in the decision for KPUD to purchase the equipment, the additional benefit of mulching was also a factor.

Mulching debris from right-of-way clearing distributes the material across the cutting area. This aids in erosion reduction and leaves no brush or piles, helping prevent wildfires. Mulching also allows better access for crew vehicles and equipment when outage restoration is needed.

Along with the mulching program, Klickitat PUD is implementing a spray program to encourage desirable foliage to return to the right-of-way areas while reducing the growth of noxious and undesirable foliage.

In addition to easier access for crews, the goal of this program is to aid in wildlife and conservation by promoting a more hospitable environment for desirable vegetation.

Using mechanical right-of-way maintenance is cost effective, reduces resource allocation and labor costs, and is faster in the many areas where the equipment can be deployed.

The equipment will be used for right-of-way maintenance as often as possible based on weather, workloads and fire levels.

Another advantage of the skid steer is that its attachments can easily be exchanged to allow for other uses. When not being used to clear rights-of-way, the skid steer will be used in KPUD's pole yard and warehouse. ■

KLICKITAT PUD

The skid steer can reach up and mulch brush, limbs and trees up to 8-inches in diameter large limbs, while spreading the mulch to prevent piles of flammable material.

