PUD Commissioners Opt for Smaller Rate Increase

Improving financial conditions and a colder winter have allowed the Grays Harbor PUD to implement a smaller than expected rate increase in 2019. The PUD Commissioners have voted to adopt a 2.25% increase in customer rates, effective May 1. The commissioners had originally set a 2.5% increase, effective April 1 when they passed the 2019 budget last November.

“Not only were we able to delay the increase by one month, but for the second straight year, we were able to approve a smaller increase than we had budgeted for,” said Commission President Russ Skolrood. “Waiting until the spring avoids increasing rates during cold weather, high energy usage months and it allows the utility time to assess its financial state and have a better idea of what size the increase needs to be.”

Under the new rate schedule an average customer bill of 1200-kilowatt hours per month, will see an increase of $2.67. The commissioners pointed to rising power costs of over a half-million dollars and a projected rate increase by the Bonneville Power Administration of 2.9% in the fall as the main reason for the increase.

“We know that when rates go up, it has a big impact on our customers,” said Skolrood. “Times are hard and every dollar counts. That is why our staff has worked to contain and control internal costs and we have worked with our partners at Bonneville, and in Olympia and Washington DC to keep power costs as low as they can practically be.”
Fiber in the Air for East County Project

Grays Harbor PUD telecom and line crews have worked together to hang over 30,000 feet of utility fiber cable running from Elma to the Schouweiller Road, a crucial step toward the completion of the East County Fiber Project. When completed, the line will provide the backbone of a state funded stretch of telecommunications line that will improve fiber optic cable connections to the Elma and Satsop School Districts, the Schouweiller industrial park and local homes and businesses.

The project was funded by $463,000 of the state’s 2017-19 Capital Budget, approved by the state legislature in January of last year. In addition to the East County project, legislators have been debating and fine tuning other legislation intended to expand and improve internet services in rural Washington.