AHS Class Gets a Look at the Line Side of Utility Work

The month of May saw the Grays Harbor PUD continue its tradition of demonstrating some of the daily tasks and challenges of utility work to local students. Aberdeen High School’s Industrial Wiring class began their tour in the TransBanker training room where PUD linemen Andrew Wallin and Dan Perron discussed and demonstrated the procedures of power line connections from transformers to residential services. They also spoke about crew safety and the dangers each person faces.

The group was a little hesitant when it came to the demonstration of the Arc Trailer. As Perron and Wallin began to place objects closer to the live wires, students slowly backed away. But even from a further distance, they quickly realized the results of what Mylar balloons, kites, and other debris can do to the power system when the objects tangle with energized lines.

The linemen then escorted the class up to the Power House where System Dispatcher Jeff Willis briefed them on the network of the electrical system throughout Grays Harbor. While some of the students may not venture directly into the field of the electrical industry, they did walk away with a different view and understanding of the challenges PUD linemen face on a daily basis.

Top: PUD linemen Andrew Wallin and Dan Perron demonstrate the PUD TransBanker lab to AHS students.
Right: Aberdeen students view the PUD Arc Trailer demonstration.

ON-LINE BILL PAYMENT

Want to pay your bill on-line? Now you can pay your bill instantly without ever leaving home. Just go to ghpud.org, click the “Pay Bill/Smart Hub” button on the bottom left hand side of the screen and follow the instructions. If you have any difficulties using the online service, please call Customer Service at 1-800-562-7726 or you may email customerservice@ghpud.org.
PUD Offers Energy Efficiency Kits and Information at Home & Garden Show

Energy saving tips, tasty cookies and useful giveaways were the main takeaways for customers who stopped by the PUD booth at the 2019 Home & Garden Show in Elma on May 18th and 19th. Information on PUD Energy Efficiency kits was in high demand as qualifying customers were presented with a coupon for three LED bulbs, an energy efficient showerhead and a hot water saving thermostatic shower valve. For more information on how you can take home one of the energy saving kits, call PUD Energy Services at (360) 538-6383 or drop by the Energy Services office located at 220 Myrtle St. in Hoquiam (the office is closed for lunch from 1-2 PM).

Left: The Grays Harbor PUD’s Dan Kinnamen hands out energy efficiency information at the Home and Garden Show.
Right: The contents of the PUD Energy kits.

Congratulations Grads!!!
PUD, Cities Complete LED Streetlight Change Out

In 2017, Grays Harbor PUD crews began collaborating with cities participating in Relight Washington, a state program which provides grants to communities to fund the replacement of aging streetlights with more efficient LED lights. In May, that project was completed. On May 6, Operations Director Steve Easton reported to the Board of Commissioners that the last of the LED light change outs was completed. In all nearly 2500 lights were changed in eight cities (Aberdeen, Hoquiam, Cosmopolis, Montesano, Elma, Ocean Shores, Westport and Oakville).

“It was a true team effort to complete this project,” Easton told the board.

Relight Washington was launched by the Washington Transportation Improvement Board in the summer of 2015. In using LED streetlights, it is intended that cities will experience more efficient energy use and lower energy costs.

“This represents a great partnership between the cities, the state and the utility,” said PUD General Manager Dave Ward. “I am so proud of our staff for all the work they did to complete this project and grateful to the cities for their partnership.”

Helping All Creatures Great and Small

The Grays Harbor PUD has outstanding customer service. From helping people pay their bills and save money through conservation to connecting businesses to energy and telecommunications systems, the PUD excels at serving customer’s needs. Every now and then, that service is also extended to non-customers, of the four-legged variety. For example, in May serviceman Derik Hnilica came to the aid of a cat stuck dangerously close to power lines on SR 109. Later that same month, Contract Construction Superintendent Todd Plato took in three baby raccoons after a tree crew working on the Mox Chehalis Road accidentally killed their mother. The three are now at an animal rescue facility. Both are examples of PUD employees doing a little bit extra to help Grays Harbor residents of all shapes and sizes.
Removing the Lower Snake River Dams is a Bad Idea
by Arie Callaghan, District One Commissioner

Since becoming a PUD commissioner, I have learned a lot about the many issues facing the electrical industry. I try to do my best to gather the facts and look at both sides of the issue and come to an informed decision on each subject but I have to say some issues really have me scratching my head.

The Snake River dams have become a center of controversy in the last couple of years. The dams on the Columbia and Lower Snake Rivers provide clean, base load electricity to the Northwest region along with flood control, a navigable highway from Idaho to the Pacific, irrigation to some of the richest land in the state and outdoor recreation for tens of thousands from one side of the state to the other. Generations of people that live on the banks of these rivers depend on them for their livelihood. They are a part of our state and one of the reasons we can claim leadership in the battle for clean energy. On the other side of the issue, we have special interest groups who are trying to push a dam removal agenda by using the worry surrounding endangered orca pods in Puget Sound and reduced salmon runs to get these dams removed.

I think it’s a stretch to tie dam removal with the survival of the southern resident orca pod. The Lower Snake River and Columbia Rivers don’t flow into Puget Sound so I have a tough time making the connection between the Lower Snake River Dams and the orcas. Other issues such as pollution, ship traffic and shoreline development are a much more immediate threat to Puget Sound wildlife. I get why they use this argument. It’s an easy sell. Orcas are beautiful. They are a symbol of our state. But the threat to them goes way beyond dams in Eastern Washington.

 Millions of the dollars are being spent by our customers for fish and wildlife enhancement at nearly every hydro facility on Washington rivers. These projects attempt to achieve a balance between the dams AND the environment and many are succeeding. Harvest reforms, better fish passage, predator control and other methods have all had their impact on improving salmon runs. It’s not perfect, but show me a power source that meets our needs and includes requirements to limit impacts to the environment. Solar? Reliability and capacity make that nearly impossible. Wind? Capacity is an issue and when the wind doesn’t blow, carbon-emitting resources like natural gas would be needed to back up the system. There is no perfect answer, but hydro is as close as we are going to get to a power source that meets our needs and supports the environment.

Taking out the Lower Snake River dams is a bad idea. It’s a knee jerk solution to an issue that, when you examine the entire picture, could do more harm than good. Once the dams are gone, they are not coming back. Remove one, and others will follow. That’s a recipe for trouble. Hydropower has made our environment better. Let’s not undo years of clean energy leadership by adopting a solution that is long on emotion and short on science.