PUD Board: ‘Removing Lower Snake Dams is Bad for the County and the Region’

In a resolution highlighting their value to the environment and economy of the Pacific Northwest, the Grays Harbor PUD Board of Commissioners have thrown their support behind the four hydroelectric dams on Eastern Washington’s Lower Snake River. In recent years, environmental groups have targeted the dams for removal.

Last month, the board unanimously approved the resolution firmly stating that the “removal of elements of the Federal Columbia River Power System (FCRPS), including the Lower Snake River Dams would negatively impact the Grays Harbor Public Utility District’s responsibility to provide reliable, efficient, clean and affordable power to its customers.”

“Removing the Lower Snake Dams is bad for the county and the region. Locally they mean efficient energy at an affordable cost and greater energy reliability for Grays Harbor PUD customers,” said PUD Board President Russ Skolrood. “But to the region, especially Eastern Washington and the Columbia River Gorge, the impacts are even greater. They impact the lives of thousands of families through irrigation, flood control, navigable waterways and outdoor recreation.”

PUD Board Secretary Dave Timmons says that without the energy generated by the dams, the reliable flow of energy from the FCRPS would be threatened, a fact illustrated by a 2017 report from the Bonneville Power Administration.

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.
“In January of 2017, when thousands of households across the Northwest needed power to stay warm, the output from wind generators varied from 3000 to 74 megawatts. Those are not numbers you can plan on to reliably power homes and businesses. At that same time, the Lower Snake Dams were generating nearly 1300 megawatts. To me that shows that one source can be counted on, the other can’t,” said Timmons.

Proponents of dam removal often cite the impact the dams have on the salmon runs that Puget Sound orca pods rely on for survival. PUD Board Vice President Arie Callaghan says numerous studies dispute that claim.

“Operators of hydroelectric facilities spend billions of dollars on programs to allow dams to coexist with the environment. Those programs have made a real difference, which shows me those dams and salmon can coexist,” said Callaghan. “NOAA Fisheries reports show strong numbers of salmon fry making it down river to the ocean and increasing numbers making it back upriver to spawn. To remove those dams would be a shortsighted error, driven by emotion rather than the facts.”

Studies carried out by several groups including NOAA and the Environmental Protection Agency have shown that predation, ocean conditions, pollution and other factors have greater, far reaching effects on salmon over their lifespan than the relatively brief period they spend around hydroelectric dams.

The board’s resolution also highlighted the irony that comes from the State Legislature passing a bill calling for a 100% emissions free power system, while at the same time environmental groups are seeking to dismantle parts of the infrastructure that make it possible.

“Washington is leading the way in clean energy because of hydro power and yet there are those who would seek to cut the knees out of that system,” said Skolrood. “That makes no sense to me. We have made huge strides toward a 100% clean energy industry. Why in the world would we want to start moving backwards?”

---

**PUD Crews and Trucks Star at Emerson Equipment Day**

It’s become a year-end tradition for Hoquiam’s Emerson Elementary School students: As the school year ends, the PUD comes to talk to them. The school’s Equipment Day offered the opportunity for PUD line and substation crews to show off the tools and equipment they use in their daily work, share information on safety and answer questions about their job. Thanks to crew members Natheon Camus, Craig McAlpin, Kris Kay, Derek Hnilica, Jim McCormick and Todd Gwinn for spreading the PUD message to the PUD’s youngest customers.
PUD Makes Final Connections for East County Fiber Project

Improved telecommunications services and cooperation between the Grays Harbor PUD, local schools and businesses and the Washington State Legislature were recognized in June as the PUD made some of the final connections to the East County Fiber project.

“This is a big deal for the community and the Grays Harbor PUD” said PUD Core Services Director Rob Hanny. “In addition to providing options for new services and new service providers in the community, this project will improve the availability of broadband services for the Elma and Satsop school districts and businesses. This project also provides the potential for providing additional connectivity to Mason County and the I-5 corridor.”

“Broadband access used to be a luxury but now it is a critical part of any business and education plan,” said PUD Commissioner Arie Callaghan. “We are so grateful for our local legislators for their support of this critical piece of economic development for Grays Harbor.”

The $463,000.00 project was funded through a portion of the 2017-19 Capital Budget. State Representative Mike Chapman sponsored the request and, along with Representative Steve Tharinger and Senator Kevin Van De Wege, helped guide the request through the 2017 and 2018 legislative sessions. The funding allowed the PUD to cover the cost of materials and crew hours needed to string over five miles of fiber optic cable and other infrastructure to make connections to local businesses and school district facilities.

Tharinger and Chapman took part in the June 6th ceremony at Elma Elementary School, congratulating the PUD for their leadership in telecommunications expansion in southwest Washington and trying their hand at splicing and connecting some of the final fiber strands. The 24th District representatives were joined by Harbor Pacific Bottling’s Tim Martin and representatives of the Elma and Satsop School Districts, all entities that will see improved service.
Rolling Through Renewable Energy
by Dave Timmons, District Two Commissioner

About five months ago my friend, Dave Johnson and I discussed the idea of riding our motorcycles (Harley’s) to a Vietnam Veterans event called “Rolling Thunder” in Washington DC. We decided it was important for us to be there to support our vets. With the blessing of our families, we headed out on May 14. Our plan was to ride Hwy. 2 east and Route 66 (Hwy. 40) west, but because of road construction and terrible weather in the Midwest, our routes were changed almost daily, and we zigzagged across the Midwest trying to outrun the terrible storms. We did see one tornado (in the sky above us, but didn’t touch the ground) which caused us to hide under an overpass.

Over those four weeks we rode through 22 different states, saw some beautiful and amazing parts of the US that neither of us had ever seen before and it gave me the opportunity to witness the many different sources of electrical energy generation in different states. With all the discussions on climate change and clean, renewable energy, it was a blessing to see what’s happening in other states.

In many states, we saw wind generation, but nothing like we observed in the Texas Panhandle. As we drove west on Hwy. 40 through Oklahoma, Arkansas and into Texas we passed an area with miles of wind turbines as far as we could see, and they were still building more. It was an impressive sight. Other states where we saw numerous wind turbines were Iowa, Oklahoma, New Mexico, North Dakota and South Dakota. Riding through those states, I can verify they have lots of wind blowing from one direction or another most of the time.

In North Carolina, Nevada, and Texas, and New Mexico we saw some large areas of solar generation, and in a few states, including West Virginia, Illinois, New Mexico we saw what looked like coal generation plants.

I feel very fortunate to have had the opportunity to be in Washington DC for maybe the last “Rolling Thunder”. I was also glad to see firsthand the many states investing in clean, carbon free sources to produce electricity. I also felt good knowing that in our state the primary source of electricity is hydro generation. When the wind is not blowing, or the sun is hidden by clouds, hydro is still producing electricity for our NW communities, and for that we should all be thankful.

Scammers Resort to Phone Calls AND Emails to PUD Customers

Scammers are using new methods as they renew their calls to Grays Harbor PUD customers. PUD Customer Service staff have reported receiving phone calls from customers who were contacted by phone AND email threatening to shutoff power if immediate payment is not made on accounts they claim are delinquent. In some cases, the contacts include recorded utility voice messages and letterhead in an attempt to appear legitimate.

“It’s a different, more sophisticated method by these scammers but the PUD’s message remains unchanged: the scams only work if you volunteer your personal information,” says Customer Service Director Katy Moore. “If you get an email or phone call threatening to shut off your power or containing account information you think is suspicious, call the PUD Customer Service office to report the scams and to check on your account status.”