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Public Power, Local Control

The first week of October is Public Power Week. It is a time each year where we celebrate the local control we enjoy over our electric utility.

This year marks Klickitat PUD's (KPUD) 70th anniversary. On November 8, 1938, the citizens of Klickitat County decided they didn't want an outside business running the electric company. They decided to run it themselves.

Citizens of our county elect three officials—friends and neighbors—to provide the PUD's leadership, set policy and rates at meetings open to the public.

A manager and a staff are hired to direct the day-to-day operations. The board provides the vision and leadership that makes things happen. Klickitat PUD's board meetings are held the second and fourth Tuesday of each month. We invite you to stop by and see public power in action.

Another benefit of a local utility is the service provided by our employees, who also are your friends and neighbors. We have line crews who stand ready around the clock to make sure your service is not interrupted.

This isn't always the case with a private power company—at least not close by. This summer, we planned an outage for maintenance at our Bingen Substation. We planned the outage for a Sunday morning to minimize inconvenience to our customers. When the maintenance was completed and KPUD crews were ready to re-energize, Pacific Power & Light's (PP&L) antiquated breaker at the Condit Substation failed to operate. We were told the backup source from Hood River was inoperable due to deferred maintenance on a line PP&L no longer needs because of the contemplated removal of the Condit Dam.

Help was hours away. Bonneville Power Administration crews and our crews stood by helplessly while we waited for a crew to be dispatched from Portland. Power finally was restored more than six hours later. We know this is unacceptable and are working to do something about it.

We take pride in our service. We will do better. As your friends and neighbors, we have a stake in seeing that your service is the best it can be.

In another part of the state, Whidbey Island residents are trying to form a PUD for this precise reason. They are now served by Puget Sound Energy, who have no crews stationed on the island. Winter storms two years ago left much of the island without power. When a semitruck jackknifed on the only road into the island it was many agonizing hours before contract crews could even begin to assess the damage and restore power.

Thanks to public power, we all have meaningful involvement in regional power issues, as well as a voice in the control of our own destiny.

Tom Svendsen, General Manager



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