

# THE PUBLIC POWER NEWSLINE



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**Oroville** • 1500 Main St. • 476-3531  
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Photo behind: Close-up of broadband switches

**PUD No. 1 of Okanogan County**

**March 2020**

## OKANOGAN PUD MARKS 75 YEARS

In 1930, thanks to the efforts of the Washington State Grange, Initiative No. 1 passed with 54 percent of the vote to create public utilities. Before that, electricity was privately owned, and most of those companies didn't consider serving rural areas to be a priority – there just wasn't enough money in it.

Okanogan County business owners, farmers and grange members gathered together to begin the process to form their own PUD. In 1936, the county elected its first three PUD commissioners and formed its own PUD with 68 percent of the vote. Nine years later in May 1945, the battle with Washington Water Power was finally over, and the PUD took over operations.

In the 75 years since, Okanogan PUD has built hundreds of miles of transmission and distribution lines to serve thousands of new customers.

In 2000, Okanogan PUD started a new venture – broadband, which some consider “the electricity of the 21st century.” Just like we spread electricity to our territory in 1945, so we seek to do now with broadband.

Public power is more affordable, more reliable and cleaner than privately-owned power across the nation.

Local control by an elected board of commissioners is an essential piece of the puzzle, along with open public meetings. Utility rates are based on the cost of the services provided to our customer-owners, not based on appeasing investors or stockholders. PUDs also serve their public, with efficiency incentives, assistance programs and paying taxes.


Only one in seven Americans are served by a public power utility. Continue to make your voice heard by participating in public power elections, open meetings and more – something only 14% of Americans can do.



*-Okanogan County Historical Society*

**Above: Founding commissioner Roy King addresses a crowd. Right: An ad that ran in the Omak Chronicle in 1958.**

**SPEAKING of PROGRESS**



Benjamin Franklin Discovered Electricity . . .


### BUT

**YOUR PUBLIC UTILITY DISTRICT BROUGHT IT TO YOU AT PRICES YOU COULD AFFORD TO PAY!**

Residential use of electricity has increased since 1946 from 3255 kwh per year per customer to 8271 kwh, AN INCREASE OF 154%.

Cost of Electricity in 1945 was 1.744c per kwh, now is 1.198c per kwh, . . . A DECREASE OF 31%.

2360 New Residential Customers have been added to your electric system in 13 years, mainly people WHO COULD NOT AFFORD ELECTRICITY AT THE PRICE THEY HAD TO PAY BEFORE YOUR DISTRICT BEGAN ITS OPERATIONS.



A. Leroy King,  
Irvin R. Woods,  
Howard E. Appel,  
—COMMISSIONERS

# 2020 BUDGET INCLUDES CUTS, INCREASES

## Proposed revenue increase still to be determined

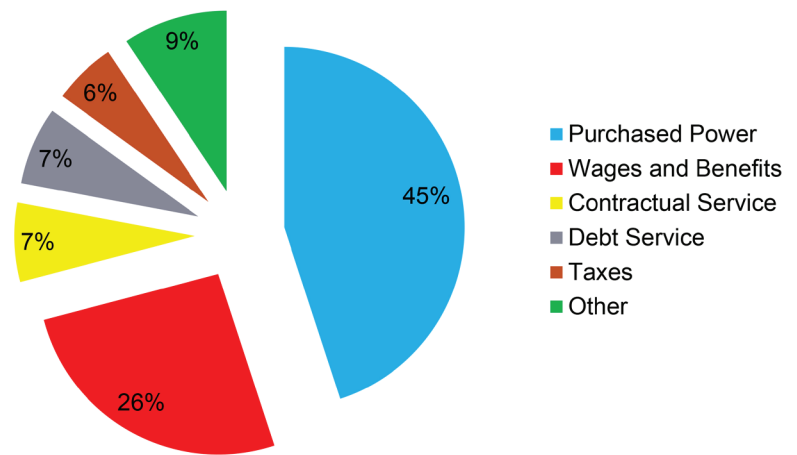
The 2020 budget for the Okanogan County PUD was finalized at the Dec. 16 meeting of the board of commissioners, including \$58.3 million in revenue, \$48.9 million in expenditures, \$4 million in debt service and a capital budget of \$13.5 million.

To reach that revenue amount, the district will pursue a 2% increase in revenue, but how that will affect the different rate classes (residential, general service, irrigation, etc.) will be determined through a rate setting process, currently underway.

The district is working with consultants FCS Group on a cost-of-service analysis and rate study, to help guide the discussion surrounding the rates. Any new rates could go into affect April 1, but the district will provide additional notice when such measures are determined. The rates have not increased since the basic charge was raised in April 2019.

The budget also cuts expenses, including no longer staffing the Omak office on Fridays as of March 1, and no longer staffing at all as of April 1. The current customer service staff member at Omak will be moved to the Okanogan office and an open staff position will not be filled.

The Omak office, along with all others, will still



The above graph shows power purchases are by far the largest PUD expense.

have a drop box for payments, which will be collected daily. Customers can also use the pay-by-phone option, or sign up online or via an app for SmartHub (see story below).

Various departments across the district also cut back on their budgets, in many cases by delaying projects or equipment purchases. For example, about 25% of the construction schedule was pushed back beyond the 10-year plan. Larger projects will be stretched over more years to complete.

Customers can stay updated through the district's website, [www.okanoganpud.org](http://www.okanoganpud.org), and through the district's Facebook page.

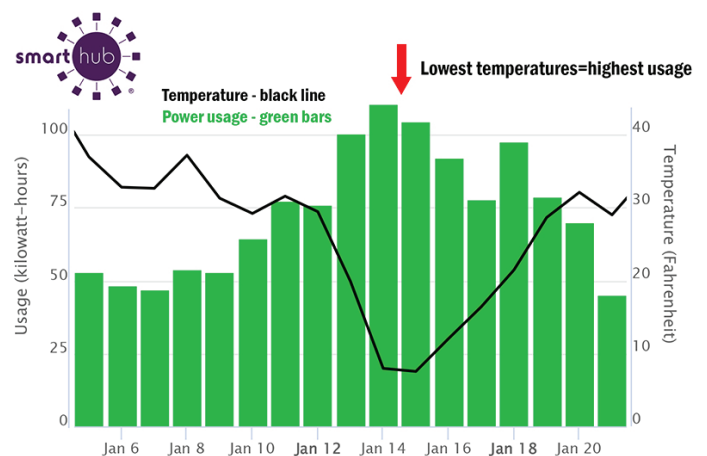
**Omak Office changes**  
**As of March 1:** Omak office will not be staffed on Fridays.  
**As of April 1:** Omak office will not be staffed. Drop box still available.

# KEEP TRACK OF USAGE & BILLS

Ever wonder why bills are different from one month to the next? More power usage means a higher bill. Usage is typically the highest in winter, when heating systems are turned on.

PUD customers can anticipate the next bill, or catch trends of high usage through the free SmartHub app or online program. After registering, customers can check their usage over their entire history with the PUD, and see where their usage has gone up and down in any particular time period. The example at right is from this January, during a cold snap.

Come see us to help you get started!





# COMMUNITY SOLAR PROPOSED

## Customer interest drives project; participants receive annual state incentive and bill credit

With 150-plus individuals or businesses interested, the Sunny Okanogan Community Solar project could be constructed later this spring.

The district was pre-certified for the project last summer, and has until July 1, 2020, to complete it. The state has authorized 14 cents per kilowatt-hour of annual incentives for those who participate.

Participants also receive 5 cents per kWh from the PUD as a bill credit annually, as approved by the board of commissioners in January.

If there are not enough PUD customer participants to fund the community solar project upfront, the project will not be built. If it is fully funded, it could be as large as 74.4 kilowatts, enough to power about 6-9 average homes. Project costs, including maintenance, are fully funded by the paying participants. When participant funds are requested, there will be a short window of time to buy in.

How long it will take for participants to receive back their initial buy-in depends on the total cost of the project. The PUD is in the process of getting quotes from solar installers soon (as of the printing of this newsletter). The board of commissioners must also approve a contract for the project.

Updates will be posted on the district website, [www.okanoganpud.org](http://www.okanoganpud.org), and on its Facebook page.



**Above: An example of a ground-mounted solar array, similar to what could be built for Sunny Okanogan Community Solar.**

More information can be found by scanning the QR code to the right, which leads directly to the project website. Inquiries can also be emailed to [communitysolar@okpud.org](mailto:communitysolar@okpud.org).



If all goes through, the project will be built in front of the Omak substation.



## TREE TRIMMING SCHEDULE SET

The PUD trims and prunes vegetation that interferes with primary overhead lines and transformers that create a potential hazard. Keeping these right-of-ways clear prevents damage to PUD equipment and outages as a result.

In 2020, crews will work at (in no particular order) South Pine Creek, Crumbacher, Swanson Mill, Mt. Hull, Loomis, Ellisforde, Tonasket, Tunk Creek, Keystone, Crawfish Lake, Haden Creek, Havillah, Antoine Creek, Siwash Creek, Conconully, Salmon Creek, Riverside and transmission lines. Some areas have already been completed.

The PUD has a replacement program for any trees that might need to be removed.

Call our Right of Way Superintendent for additional information at 509-422-8435. More tree trimming program information is also available on our website, [www.okanoganpud.org](http://www.okanoganpud.org), under the "Environmental & Generation" tab.

## PROGRAMS ASSIST CUSTOMERS

Project Help funds are provided through donations from Okanogan County PUD customers and help other customers pay deposits and energy bills.

Customers seeking Project Help assistance qualify by:

- experiencing a sudden serious illness or death, hospitalization or unexpected reduction of income
- not exceeding 80% of the area median income
- being ineligible for other federal government and emergency assistance

Priority is given to those in urgent need of assistance, and those who are 65 years or older.

Low-income customers might qualify for LIHEAP - Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program. This can help pay heating bills, and possibly heating system repairs, whether the customer uses oil, wood, electric, etc. The program runs while funds remain available, typically November through May.

# Okanogan County PUD

PO Box 912 • 1331 N. Second Ave.

Okanogan, WA 98840

[www.okanoganpud.org](http://www.okanoganpud.org)

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## RESIDENTIAL CUSTOMER

# INCENTIVE PROGRAMS AVAILABLE

Are you looking at projects that will improve the energy efficiency of your home, business or farm? You might qualify for one of our incentive programs!

Through funding from Bonneville Power Administration, Okanogan PUD receives incentive funds designated for residential, commercial, industrial and agricultural sectors. The amounts vary for each.

Any PUD customer planning a project such as new windows, insulation or ductless heat pumps should call our Energy Services department **BEFORE** beginning the project so that we can determine if it is eligible for the incentives.

Call us at 509-422-8428 or head to our website, [www.okanoganpud.org](http://www.okanoganpud.org).

Contact us **BEFORE** you begin your project to be sure it qualifies!

### RESIDENTIAL



#### Doors

Upgrade substandard exterior doors to Energy Star®. \$40 offered per door as incentive.



#### Windows

Upgrade wood or metal windows to more efficient windows with a U-value of 0.30 or less. Incentive rate is \$6 per square foot.



#### Ductless Heat

Contact us for requirements before a qualified contractor installs a ductless heat pump in your home. Incentive starts at \$800.



#### Insulation

Upgrade insulation in your attic, walls or floors. Incentive based on area and extent of improvement.



#### NEEM Homes

Purchase a Northwest Energy Efficient Manufactured home and get cash back, \$1,000-\$1,200.

### COMMERCIAL



#### Windows

Upgrade wood or metal windows to more efficient windows with a U-value of 0.30 or less. Incentive rate is \$18 per square foot.



#### HVAC

Projects involving your heating, ventilation or air conditioning (HVAC) can be incentivized based on the type of project.



#### Insulation

Upgrade insulation in your attic or walls. Incentive based on energy savings.



#### Custom

Commercial incentives can encompass many other energy efficiency projects. Contact us if you have something else in mind!

### AGRICULTURE



#### Irrigation

Upgrade your irrigation system to be more efficient. Incentive depends on type of upgrades.



#### Stock Tanks

Upgrade to freeze-resistant stock tanks.



#### VFDs

Install a variable frequency drive for motors or pumps to maximize efficiency. Incentives based on horsepower and application.

Okanogan County PUD partners with Okanogan Conservation District to manage agricultural incentives. Contact their office at 509-422-0855 x101.

### PUD board of commissioners:

**Jerry Asmussen (North)**

486-1962, [jerrya@okpud.org](mailto:jerrya@okpud.org)

**Bill Colyar (South)**

923-9233, [billc@okpud.org](mailto:billc@okpud.org)

**Scott Vejraska (Central)**

826-7088, [scottv@okpud.org](mailto:scottv@okpud.org)

### PUD staff:

*General Manager Steve Taylor*

*Director of Finance & Accounting Don Coppock*

*Director of Power Resources & Broadband Services Ron Gadeberg*

*Treasurer Janet Crossland*

*Community Relations Coordinator Sheila Corson*

Send any comments, questions or suggestions for newsletter articles to [sheillac@okpud.org](mailto:sheillac@okpud.org), 422-8427.

[www.okanoganpud.org](http://www.okanoganpud.org)

Find us on Facebook!

