**Turning Excess Pressure Into Clean, Renewable Energy**

Converting excess water pressure into clean, renewable energy will soon become a reality with Skagit PUD’s planned installation of a micro-hydroelectric system at our East Division Street reservoir in Mount Vernon.

In 2020, Skagit PUD partnered with InPipe Energy to identify areas within our water distribution system suitable for a micro-hydroelectric system to generate electricity by harvesting excess pressure from the water pipeline.

Utilities typically use a lot of energy in the form of pumping to move water over long distances. (Skagit PUD has over 650 miles of pipelines.) Water is pumped up to a high point, stored in reservoirs, and then flows by gravity to low parts within the system. The water is at high pressure. Too high for typical domestic and commercial uses. The pressure is reduced via friction; in this case, the PUD will use a hydroelectric turbine to provide that friction and capture the electricity.

“The installation of micro-hydro units aligns with the Washington Clean Energy Transformation Act to eliminate fossil fuels from electricity generation by 2045 and the Skagit County Climate Change and Sustainability Initiative,” Engineering Manager Mark Handzlik said.

“This includes the increased deployment of renewable energy in public facilities and encourages demonstration programs.”

Once installed, the micro-hydroelectric system will generate about 94,000 kWh per year—enough electricity to reduce the energy consumption by half at the E Division Street location. The new micro-hydroelectric system is estimated to cost $400,000. Skagit PUD will contribute $100,000 to the project. Additionally, grants of $24,000 were received from Puget Sound Energy and $200,000 from TransAlta’s Centralia Coal Transition Grants. InPipe Energy is funding the balance of $76,000.

Handzlik says that he is excited about the micro-hydro project and what it means to the PUD. “It’s a neat little project that aligns with the District’s core value of environmental stewardship and goal to strengthen the use of technology to create efficiencies.”

**LISTEN TO YOUR MOTHER (NATURE) THIS EARTH DAY**

April 22 is Earth Day. This year, celebrate the water planet by using water outdoors the way Mother Nature intended and making every drop count this spring planting season. From selecting regionally appropriate blooms to knowing when and how much to water, you can be a water-saving force of nature this Earth Day with a lush and low-maintenance landscape.

Localize your landscape.

Think outside the flower box by choosing plants native to our region, which require less water to supplement normal rainfall.
**COVID-19 Response:**

Skagit PUD is committed to keeping our customers connected to essential services during the COVID-19 pandemic emergency. If you are experiencing hardship due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we ask that you give us a call to discuss options we have in place to support you with paying your water bill.

Since March 2020, we have provided (and will continue to provide during this pandemic) the following for our residential customers:

- Waiving late fees
- Halting disconnects for non-payment
- Making payment arrangements
- Connecting residential customers to local agencies for additional bill assistance programs

Last year, Governor Jay Inslee issued Proclamation 20-23, which addressed Utility Ratepayer Assistance and Preservation of Essential Services. Although this Proclamation doesn’t relieve customers from the obligation to pay for utility services, we have options to help during this time.

Please contact us to learn more. Our customer service team is available by calling (360) 424-7104 during regular business hours or customerservice@skagitpud.org.

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**Customer Assistance Program offers $200 grants**

To help customers experiencing difficulties paying their water bills, Skagit PUD established a Customer Assistance Program in partnership with Community Action of Skagit County.

To be eligible for a one-time $200 grant, the following needs to apply:

- Be a PUD customer with an active account in your name.
- Received a past-due notice on a water service account.
- Household income less than 150% of the Federal poverty level.

Because assistance is limited to available funds, Skagit PUD seeks donations to assist qualified low-income residential customers. Please consider how you might financially contribute.

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**Say goodbye to mailbox clutter**

Online bill payment can simplify your life. Easily create an account. View and pay your water bills anytime on any device.

Using Skagit PUD’s customer account portal, you can link and pay multiple accounts, view your billing history, and set up automatic payments.

The program provides a more convenient payment option and helps customers avoid late fees by offering 24/7 access to view their account information and pay their bills.

**Sign up for paperless billing**

Skagit PUD now offers paperless billing, too. It's fast, secure, and convenient. Paperless billing is an easy way to receive your statement, and it clears the clutter of paper bills. You’ll receive an email alert when your statement arrives.

**Why go paperless?**

**Fast:** Skagit PUD emails you as soon as your statement is posted.

**Secure:** Access 32 months of billing history in your protected online account. No need to file or shred paper bills.

**Easy:** Enroll for free today at SkagitPUD.org.

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**Get Your Rain Barrels for Summer Gardening**

Collecting rainwater is an easy way to conserve water—and save money on your water bill. During the drier season, when water consumption often doubles, using collected rainwater can reduce the strain on the PUD’s water supply and keep more water available for fish and wildlife. Rainwater is also naturally “soft” and free of minerals and chemicals, making it ideal for plants and lawns. Using a rain barrel to collect rainwater also helps reduce stormwater runoff that might otherwise run down storm drains and into our streams, rivers, lakes, and bays.

Skagit PUD sells ready to install 55-gallon rain barrels for just $60 plus tax. If you would like more information about Skagit PUD’s low-cost rain barrel program, please visit our website at SkagitPUD.org or call (360) 424-7104.