

Between the Lines



Customer Newsletter Winter 2021 BentonPUD.org

Benton PUD Celebrates 75 Years

Benton PUD has been a trusted part of the communities we serve for seventy-five years with a long tradition of forward-thinking anchored in our public power heritage and strong customer service focus. This has defined us since day one and continues to be the reason for our existence. In honor of Benton PUD's 75th anniversary year, we reflect on how it all started and on our accomplishments in 2021.

Public Power Comes to Benton County



Thanks to the efforts of the Washington State Grange, in 1930 Initiative 1 passed with 54 percent of the vote giving citizens of each county the right to create a public utility district (PUD). Before that, electricity was provided by privately owned companies who did not consider serving rural areas to be a priority – there just wasn't enough profit in it.

In 1934, voters in Benton and Franklin counties approved the first countywide PUDs and the first commissioners were also elected. Benton PUD's first priority was to acquire poles, lines, and property from the Pacific Power & Light Company (PP&L). After many unsuccessful attempts, the Benton PUD commission voted on a resolution to approve condemning PP&L property. This was a controversial vote for the commission and the PUD, which resulted in a legal battle. To cover the expenses of the court case as well as expenses to begin operations the PUD issued municipal bonds.

The year was 1946 ...

On September 12, 1946, Benton PUD became a locally owned, non-profit operating utility. Those first years were busy upgrading and expanding the electricity delivery systems to handle the fast-growing county. While the average monthly bill in 1946 was around \$5, electricity was only used for lighting, a few appliances and in rare cases, heat. Thanks to electricity, our quality of life has improved greatly over the years. Today, we take affordable and reliable electricity for granted not only to operate our computers, televisions and charge our cell phones but as an essential service critical to our health, safety, and overall well-being.

Benton PUD then and now ...



L to R: Owen Hurd, General Manager, Robert Johanson, William Campbell & Preston Royer, Commissioners

Electric Connections

1946: 3,240
2021: 56,368



Wholesale Broadband Customers

1946: 0
2021: 768



Miles of Distribution Line

1946: 180 miles
2021: 1,742 miles



Miles of Fiber

1946: 0
2021: 461



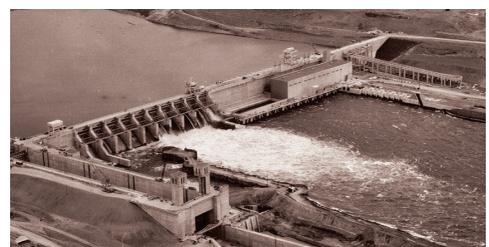
Average Annual Usage

1946: 2,470 kWh
2021: 32,403 kWh



Power Poles

1946: 3,900
2021: 24,660



Power Resources

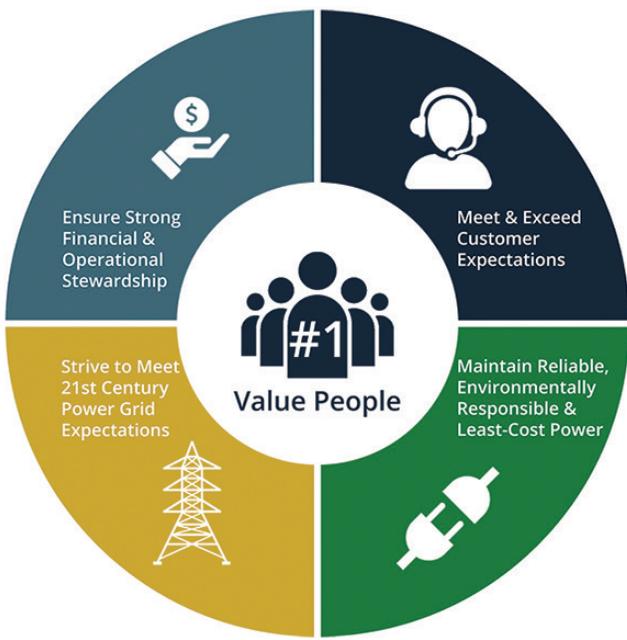
1946: Hydro
2021: Hydro & Nuclear



A Look Back At 2021

Coming off a year when Benton PUD and the rest of the world adapted to a “new normal” living through a global pandemic, we’ve been reminded of how resilient our community continues to be during hard times. In November 2020, we opened our doors to our customers and the public after an eight-month closure with renewed focus on our strategic goals. We are very grateful for our customers and are proud of all we achieved in 2021.

In November, our commission adopted a five-year strategic plan, which provides a road map for future strategic actions and reaffirms our commitment to continuous improvement in four core functional areas, with valuing our customers and employees at the center of all we do. You can review our 2022-2026 Strategic Plan at BentonPUD.org/StrategicPlan.



Meet & Exceed Customer Expectations

Over \$1 Million in COVID-19 Relief Distributed

Consistent with our longstanding mission and purpose which aim to bring value to the people we serve, Benton PUD commissioners approved an assistance program to provide needed financial relief to our most vulnerable customers. In the spirit of neighbors helping neighbors, and on behalf of our customer owners, we provided over \$1 million in bill assistance. To see if you qualify go to BentonPUD.org/COVID-19CustomerAssistance.

Record-breaking Year for Round Up for Helping Hands

We are proud to be a part of such a generous community. This year we saw record giving to our Round Up for Helping Hands program. We are on track to raise over \$65,000 to assist those in need of help paying their electric bill this winter. All funds raised are disbursed by Community Action Connections (CAC) to customers who meet eligibility requirements. If you would like to Round Up your bill for Helping Hands, login to SmartHub and follow the prompts.

Benton PUD as a Community Partner

Benton PUD remains engaged in our community through a variety of events. We partnered with our local schools for science nights, career fairs and safety demonstrations and partnered with numerous community organizations throughout the year, including Benton Franklin Fair & Rodeo, Prosser Balloon Rally, Prosser Boys & Girls Club Festival of Trees, and holiday happenings at the GESA Carousel of Dreams.



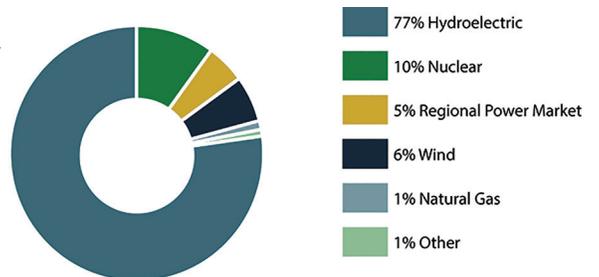
Maintain Reliable, Environmentally Responsible & Least-Cost Power

Saving you energy and money

Benton PUD paid about \$2 million in rebates to our customers for various conservation projects. The energy savings from these projects equate to enough energy to power approximately 800 residential homes. Conservation savings from these projects help all our customers over the long term through reduced wholesale power supply expenses. Visit BentonPUD.org/Rebates to find out more about conservation programs that your business or home may qualify for today, our low-income energy programs, and free energy savings tips.

Protecting our environment

Benton PUD is proud of our hydro and nuclear-rich power supply and 94 percent carbon free fuel mix. As we look forward, we are in a great position to meet our state’s ambitious 100 percent clean energy goals. Benton PUD continues to be engaged in state and regional efforts to preserve clean and abundant hydropower and to advocate for the advancement of nuclear power in our community and region.



Benton PUD’s power supply is over 93% clean

Strive to Meet 21st Century Power Grid Expectations

Responding to Growth

Despite the pandemic, Benton PUD connected over 1,000 new electric services in 2021. Benton PUD also stayed focused on projects to improve our infrastructure and maintain the reliability and safety of our electricity and delivery systems. We completed construction and energized our newest substation located in the Southridge area and continued investments in automation technologies to improve operational planning and reliability.



Ensure Strong Financial & Operational Stewardship

Reliable & Affordable Electricity

Benton PUD regularly benchmarks its average bills with 30 comparable Northwest utilities. Our average monthly residential bills have remained in the lower half of comparable utilities since 2005 and are not planning to increase rates in 2022.

Benton PUD’s electricity delivery systems performed very reliably as we experienced record demand for electricity during the “heat dome” event in June. We also developed a comprehensive wildfire mitigation plan to better manage risk of fire ignitions during summer months.

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