

Benton PUD Rate Action Proposed for 2019

Benton PUD’s retail electric rates are proposed to increase 2.9% effective October 1, 2019 subject to the apporoval of the Board of Commissioners. The last increase was 1.9% and occurred two years ago on October 1, 2017. For the average residential customer, the proposed increase will be about \$3.00 a month, raising the average monthly bill from \$116 to \$119. Raising the monthly bill amount for comparable Northwest utilities is \$127 (see graph below).

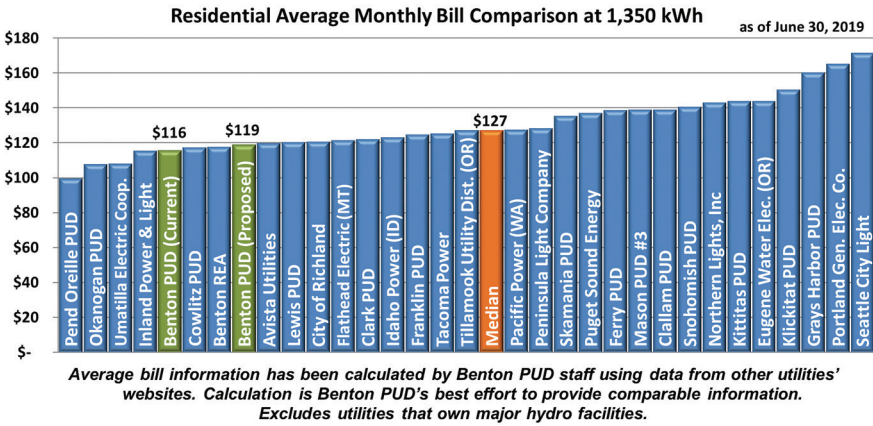
Customers are invited to attend an informational meeting regarding the proposed retail electric rate increase on August 21 at 5:30pm at Benton PUD’s Auditorium at 2721 W 10th Avenue in Kennewick. Customer comments accepted through September 9.

The major driver of the rate increase is rising power costs due to the following:

- Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) is increasing rates charged to customer utilities on October 1, 2019. BPA is the major provider of power and transmission services to public utilities in the Northwest.

- An increase in the requirement under the Energy Independence Act (passed in 2006) to purchase renewable resources. Effective January 1, 2020, that requirement increases from 9% to 15% which requires Benton PUD to acquire additional renewable energy that adds to overall power costs.

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BENTON PUD
2721 W 10TH AVE
KENNEWICK, WA 99336

PERMIT NO.
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KENNEWICK
WA 99336

Between the Lines

Benton PUD Substation Electricians added a second transformer bay to Orchard View substation located on Columbia Center Boulevard. The second bay will serve new customers in both the Vista Field and Southridge areas. Pictured left to right: Robert Davis, Brandon Billingsley, Duane Szendre, Todd Gaston, Jim Tietzort and Brent Wurz.



Customer Newsletter Summer 2019 BentonPUD.org

Benton PUD Commissioners show support for Lower Snake River Dams

The Benton PUD Board of Commissioners unanimously approved a resolution in support of the four hydroelectric dams on eastern Washington’s Lower Snake River due to their value to the Northwest in terms of power production, irrigation, and navigation.

Franklin PUD, Benton REA, and the City of Richland, along with twenty other consumer-owned utilities throughout eastern and western Washington, have passed similar resolutions in support of the dams.

“There is a groundswell of support rising in the public power community for the value of the dams to our way of life,”said Commissioner Barry Bush in speaking about the Commission resolution. “Here in the Tri-Cities and surrounding area, it is important for the public to know just how important all of the dams are to both our agricultural economy and to the reliability of the electric grid.”

Many of the large farming operations in southeastern Washington rely on huge pumps drawing water from the Columbia and Snake Rivers to irrigate the land. The dams keep the water levels within certain ranges to allow those pumps to operate. Further, dams enable the transportation of food via barges to help feed the world.

Relative to the electric grid, the Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) identified the Lower Snake River Dams as a low-cost resource, critical to supporting reliable power by maintaining a constant balance of generation and load.

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Lower Snake River Dams : continued

According to BPA, Ice Harbor Dam is particularly critical to the local area because of the electricity it generates during high-demand periods of summer. The Commission believes that removal of these dams would negatively impact our region's ability to provide reliable, clean, and affordable power to its customers.

“Washington State has passed recent legislation requiring 100% carbon-free electricity within the state by 2045”, said Commissioner Lori Sanders. “You cannot achieve that goal without the carbon-free energy from the existing dams and nuclear resources. Additionally, wind and solar resources could not be integrated into the electric grid without the flexibility of the dams.”

Three federal agencies (BPA, U.S. Army Corp of Engineers, and Bureau of Reclamation) are responsible for management of the federal dams in compliance with Biological Opinions developed and approved by the National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration Fisheries (NOAA Fisheries). The dams are operated according to the Biological Opinions developed over decades of extensive scientific research.

“Since 1978, electric ratepayers have spent \$17 billion dollars on infrastructure and other fish restoration projects,” said Jeff Hall, Benton PUD Commission President. “At least 96% of young salmon make it past each of the Snake River dams on their down-river passage. This is evidence that dams and salmon can coexist.”

As a result of a 2016 court order, the federal agencies are developing a Columbia River System Operation (CRSO) Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) that will analyze the potential environmental and social effects of five alternatives to operations at the dams. A draft EIS is scheduled for release in February 2020 followed by a public comment period and release of the final EIS in September 2020. For more information on the CRSO EIS or to see a copy of the resolution passed by our Board of Commissioners go to BentonPUD.org.

Rate Action Proposed for 2019 : continued

■ Power costs are projected to be up approximately \$4 million in 2019 primarily resulting from a combination of two factors: 1) A much lower than average water year which reduces energy production from Benton PUD's share of the Northwest hydroelectric system, and 2) Extreme weather throughout the Northwest in February and March causing most Northwest utilities to purchase more energy at significantly higher market prices.

Benton PUD power costs and taxes represent two-thirds of our budgeted expenditures. Operations and Maintenance (O&M) costs, capital expenditures and debt service make up the remaining one-third. Benton PUD regularly benchmarks its average bills with 30 comparable Northwest utilities. Our average monthly residential bill has remained in the lower half of comparable utilities since 2005 and is expected to remain in the lower half after the proposed increase.

Benton PUD receives Tree Line USA award

For the 20th year in a row, Benton PUD received the Tree Line USA Award. Given to utilities by the National Arbor Day Foundation, this award honors a commitment to proper tree pruning, planning, and care.

Benton PUD makes it a priority to properly care for trees, not only for our community to enjoy, but to ensure electrical safety around power lines. Benton PUD offers a Tree Program to help customers properly care for trees, so they don't cause hazardous situations. Our team is available to prune and remove trees near primary high-voltage overhead lines to prevent these situations from happening.



Benton PUD developed the Tree Program to promote quality tree care and help customers plant the right kinds of trees near utility lines and equipment. In return, we have healthier trees, less outages, and long-term savings to Benton PUD.

If you have any questions about our tree program, pruning trees, or planting the right tree please go to BentonPUD.org or contact our Utility Tree Coordinator, Brian Cramer, at (509) 585-5399.

Home Energy Savings Tips for fall

School is almost back in session, and there's several things you can do to save money as your family's schedule shifts. Electricity usage changes throughout the time of day depending on factors like temperature and daylight. Doing things like readjusting your thermostat and running large appliances in the late evening hours add up in the long run to save money on your bill. Also, as you are buying school supplies for the kids, think about your home too. Little things like replacing old light bulbs with LEDs, replacing old weather stripping around doors, using smart power strips or programmable thermostats are another great way to reduce your usage.



Benton PUD is getting ready to offer our new Pay As You Go service. Pay As You Go allows you to pay for electricity in advance, similar to buying minutes on a cell phone or adding fuel to your gas tank. When the account balance gets low, you simply add more money to the account, several small amounts or a few large amounts - it's your choice. With Pay As You Go, you can avoid late fees and security deposits, and you will also be able to take control of your expenses by closely monitoring your balance and finding ways to reduce your usage. We anticipate this new service will be available within the next few months.

If you are interested in learning more contact Customer Service at (509) 582-2175.

See you at:

Benton Franklin Fair & Rodeo Grand Parade
Saturday August 17
10:00 a.m.
Downtown Kennewick



RiverFest 2019
Saturday, September 7
10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.
Columbia Park



Benton PUD Senior Day
Wednesday October 23
9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.
Benton PUD Kennewick & Prosser Auditoriums



Q. What kind of programs do you have to help low income customers?

A. Benton PUD offers a 10%, 15% or 25% discount, based on household income, for qualifying low income seniors, low income disabled and low income veteran/active military customers. The minimum discount for all three ranges is the Daily System Charge assessed for the billing period.

Income qualified customers will also need to meet the following criteria:

- For a Low Income Senior Discount, the customer must be 62 years of age or older.
- For a Low Income Disabled Discount, the customer or a member of the household must have a qualifying disability.
- For a Low Income Veteran/Active Military Discount, the customer must be on active duty or be honorably discharged (or have a general discharge under honorable characterization).

Benton PUD also offers Helping Hands assistance of \$125 to \$225, based on household size to income qualifying customers. The program is funded by donations from customers and is administered by Community Action Connections

Where Does Your Power Come From

Coal	0.8%	✱ Wind	6.6%
✱ Hydro	82.2%	✱ Other	1.0%
Natural Gas	1.4%		
✱ Nuclear	8.0%		
✱ Indicates 97% carbon free			

For more information  BentonPUD.org or call Customer Service 509.582.2175