



Between the Lines

Community Solar coming to Prosser

Last summer we had an overwhelming response from you, our customers, to the first ever community solar project in the Tri-Cities. We received 429 customer requests to purchase 5,840 units in our Ely Community Solar Project, over four times the number available.



Lori Sanders
Commissioner

To help meet the demand for community solar we investigated offering a second project. Benton PUD plans to break ground next year on the first community solar project in Prosser. The Old Inland Empire Project will be built at Benton PUD facilities located at Gap Road and Old Inland Empire Highway.



The 25 kilowatt project will be comprised of 88 Washington-made panels. We have contacted the customers next on the community solar waiting list, created from the customers who wanted to participate in the Ely project but did not get chosen in the random drawing. The Prosser project will have 493 units available for purchase. The total cost of the project will be paid for by the participants.

Thank you to all of you who trusted us to be your partner for clean, sustainable power. We invite you to keep an eye on our website for project updates in the coming year.

Lori Sanders
Benton PUD Commissioner

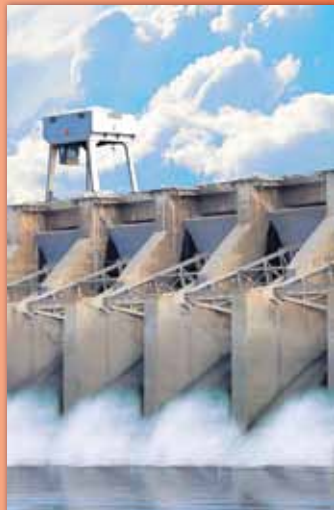
A strong case for protecting our dams

The issue of breaching the dams has been around for decades. A small number of anti-dam activists continue to attract news coverage, but they have failed to make a strong case for dam removal. Here's why:

The Snake River dams produce reliable, low-cost, carbon-free energy. Together, these dams, on average, supply 12 percent of all the energy produced by the entire federal hydro system and 5 percent of the Northwest's total hydro energy. But their benefits do not stop there.

These dams are essential to the reliability of the Northwest electric grid. Their flexibility makes it possible to integrate highly-variable wind energy into the power grid. When the wind changes, dams are called upon to add or reduce power to keep the grid stable.

They are also equipped with the most advanced fish passage systems anywhere. Survival levels for young salmon at these dams are astounding, with an average of 97 percent, safely traversing each dam. These are the highest returns since the Snake River Dam construction began in 1962.



According to an independent public opinion poll conducted in February 2015 by Portland-based DHM Research and commissioned by Northwest RiverPartners, 70 percent of Northwest residents recognize the value of the Snake dams and support them; only 10 percent said they should be removed. Support for the dams increased 10 percent this year.

The naysayers may capture the headlines, but the fact remains - fish can be protected while also preserving our hydropower—an unmatched source of reliable, renewable energy that fuels our region's economy and keeps our skies clean.

Benton PUD celebrates 70th Anniversary

Next year, Benton PUD celebrates 70 years of serving our community. It goes without saying that a lot has changed over the past 70 years. In 1946, when Benton PUD first opened its doors it served 3,705 customers with two substations and two boom trucks. Today, we serve over 50,000 customers with 37 substations and a fleet of vehicles.

Benton PUD's first customers used electricity for lights, a few appliances and maybe for heating their home. The average home used 3,700 kilowatt hours (kWhs) of electricity a year. Today, an average home uses 17,000 kWhs annually for hundreds of different items including smart phones, televisions and other items that make our lives easier and more comfortable.



Chad Bartram
General Manager

For 70 years, our rates have been based on recovering our actual costs. The average customer's bill was around \$5 back in 1946. With today's inflation, if a home in 1946 used the same kilowatt hours as a home today it would cost \$174 a month compared to today's average bill of \$111. Electricity is a good buy for our money and provides us many luxuries unheard of 70 years ago.

New technologies enable Benton PUD to run more efficiently to keep costs down. It's hard to imagine running a utility without computers like we did in 1946. Other technologies bring on interesting challenges such as the growth in solar and electric vehicles. Our 70th anniversary gives us a reason to reflect and a reminder to always plan for the future.

Enjoy your holidays and look forward to a new year,

Chad Bartram
Benton PUD General Manager

Celebrating Public Power at The REACH

Over six hundred students from the Mid-Columbia region took part in an inaugural event that celebrated the importance of public power in our community. The Energy Experience, a STEM-focused energy and environmental summit for 7th and 8th grade students was held in October at The REACH.

The Energy Experience was designed to create awareness and understanding of energy resources, safety, energy efficiency and public power. The primary focus was educating students on various forms of energy including hydropower, nuclear, wind, solar, natural gas and energy efficiency and the benefits and challenges of each.

Benton PUD partnered with The REACH, Franklin PUD, Energy Northwest, Benton REA, Cascade Natural Gas, City of Richland Energy Services, Bonneville Power Administration, Columbia Basin College, Benton Conservation District, Washington Green Schools, Ben Franklin Transit and TRIDEC.



Each partner hosted an interactive hands-on display for students to experience the benefits of our region's energy resources. There was an outdoor safety demonstration to teach students about electrical safety. Students were introduced to careers in the energy industry through equipment displays and discussions with local energy professionals. The event was a huge success. We look forward to being a part of it in 2016.

Where your power comes from

The Benton PUD Fuel Mix as calculated by the Washington State Department of Commerce:

Biomass	0.12%	Nuclear	8.43%
Coal	5.86%	Waste	0.10%
Hydro	75.21%	Wind	2.40%
Natural Gas	7.80%	Other	0.08%

■ Holiday Safety Tips

Lowell Fuher, a Benton PUD employee, is an extreme Christmas display designer and it shows at his home in Kennewick. His computer knowledge that helps employees on a daily basis is an important component in his annual light show. Lowell says safety is first when it comes to lighting displays and has these tips to share when installing your lights this year.

- Never overload extension cords. It's tempting, but not safe. New LED lights give us the opportunity to go beyond the old rule of only three strings per cord, but always follow the guidelines from the manufacturer of both the lights and the extension cord. Use lights and extension cords designated for outdoor use to ensure they are weather proof and safe when they get wet from rain or snow. Household extension cords come in several varieties: Indoor, Outdoor, and Outdoor heavy duty. You should always use the proper cord for the application. Only use lights and extension cords that contain the Underwriters Laboratories (UL) label, which means they meet UL safety standards.



- Whenever possible try to place outdoor connections in a dry location such as behind the drip line from your roof. Most homes have a GFCI (Ground Fault Circuit Interrupter) which is designed to help prevent electrocution in wet conditions. If your home has an outdoor GFCI protected outlet, it is highly recommended for safety reasons to connect your outdoor lights and devices to this outlet.
 - If your cords or lights are frayed or damaged it's a good bet they may be unsafe and should be replaced.
 - Putting lights on a timer is a great way to save energy and will help you save money on your electric bill. Lowell recommends setting timers to turn your lights on about 4:30 p.m. and off about the time you go to bed.
 - When purchasing lights, LEDs come in all shapes and colors and are 80 to 90 percent more energy efficient. They are designed to allow you to safely connect many sets of LED lights together on the same cord.
 - Be careful with the ladder when installing lights on a high roof. Look up at all times while handling the ladder to make sure you don't get close to an overhead power line.
- Lowell's idea of Safety First is the most important part of any lighting project. An accident involving electricity could really overshadow the wonders of the holiday season. Be safe – have fun.

Benton PUD reaches safety milestone



Safety is a number one priority for Benton PUD employees. Each employee takes personal ownership of safety, and lives it every day. This is demonstrated by employees' commitment to attending and participating in quarterly safety training, discussing safety practices during daily job meetings and at monthly safety meetings, and reporting work related injuries and illnesses. Employees are also committed to helping educate the public about safe electrical practices in the home and business. During 2015, Benton PUD employees achieved a one year safety award – they were recognized for over 200,000 hours with no lost-time injuries. Congratulations to our employees for making safety a top priority.



P. O. Box 6270 Kennewick, WA 99336

Benton PUD Holiday hours

Benton PUD wishes you and your family a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year. In observance of the upcoming holidays, Benton PUD offices will be closed:

Thursday, December 24 - Closed at 3:00 pm

Friday, December 25 - Closed

Friday, January 1 - Closed

Benton PUD's outage line is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week at 1-888-582-2176.



Benton PUD Helping Hands Program / \$1 a month can make a difference

Cold winter temperatures and high electric bills make it tough for many in our community this time of year. Give the gift of warmth to someone who needs help paying their electric bill by donating to Benton PUD's Helping Hands Program. Donations are accepted by phone, mail, online or at Benton PUD offices located in Kennewick or Prosser.

Stop in at one of our locations before the end of the year and set up a recurring monthly donation of \$1 or more, or increase your current monthly donation to Helping Hands and you will receive your choice of:

- 1) an advanced power strip or
- 2) an energy efficiency kit with two Light-emitting Diode (LED) lightbulbs and a low flow showerhead.



Both options are available for a limited time and while supplies last to Benton PUD customers only. Sorry, these cannot be mailed.

Donations are tax deductible and distributed by Community Action Connections (CAC) to Benton PUD customers who meet CAC guidelines.

Thank you for your support.

Make a recurring donation and receive your choice of #1 or #2:

1) Advanced power strip

Energy consumed by TVs, DVD players, game consoles, external monitors, and printers can add up to nearly 10% of a household's monthly electric bill. People forget to turn off their devices when not in use and many electronics continue to draw power after it's turned off. Replacing your conventional power strip with an advanced power strip can help reduce the electricity wasted when these devices are idle.



2) Energy efficiency kit with two Light-emitting Diode (LED) lightbulbs and a low flow showerhead.

Hot water heaters account for up to 30% of your monthly electric bill. Using energy-efficient showerheads reduce the amount of water released from your tap by up to 50%. This means you'll have 50% less water to heat.

Changing from a standard bulb to LED, you'll use up to 80% less energy and your bulb will last 15 times longer.