



# Skagit PUD:

*Providing water for a growing community*

**T**he Skagit County Public Utility District has been providing safe drinking water to customers in Skagit County for more than 70 years.

It was created by the voters of Skagit County in 1936. Within 10 years, the PUD purchased the private water systems that served the cities of Mount Vernon, Burlington and Sedro-Woolley and consolidated them into one large water system serving most of the Skagit Valley.

The district's customer base has since swelled to approximately 70,000 customers served through 600 miles of pipeline.

Initially, each city maintained its own water filtration facility, but in 1954 the PUD replaced the aging and worn out filter plants with a new well near the Skagit River. During the early 1960s, the district began diverting water from streams in the Cultus Mountains to the newly constructed Judy Reservoir, which became the PUD's primary water supply.

Judy Reservoir (named after L.B. Judy, the district's first general manager) brought a dependable supply of high-quality, gravi-

ty-fed water to the valley. The consolidated storage and treatment facility also meant that chlorinated water could be delivered through 11 miles of transmission lines to Sedro-Woolley and Mount Vernon. The transmission lines loop together in Burlington, creating a strong backbone for the valley's water supply.

In 1990, as the Safe Drinking Water Act was gaining momentum, the district constructed a new 12-million-gallons-per-day filtration plant to meet new treatment requirements. This plant features direct filtration and chlorine dioxide treatment, followed by chlorination prior to distribution.

Prior to construction of the filtration plant, the district needed to treat Judy Reservoir with copper sulfate to kill the algae. Unfortunately, that left a slight odor to the water and also upset the natural food chain of the algae population. After the filtration plant went online, Skagit PUD was able to discontinue the use of copper

sulfate and allow the algae to grow naturally. The filtration process now removes all algae.

The district now has plans to double the capacity of the filter plant to meet the needs of the rapidly growing area. Along with this expansion, the PUD will construct a new

pumping station on the Skagit River to augment flows from the Cultus Mountain streams.

The new pumping station will be capable of delivering up to 36 million gallons per day from the river to Judy Reservoir, and will ensure that sufficient water is available to

meet projected demands for the next 40 years.

While 97 percent of the district's water demands are within the cities of Mount Vernon, Burlington, Sedro-Woolley and the surrounding areas, the PUD also provides water to several rural and remote parts of the county through satellite water systems.

Over the past 12 years, the district has rescued six troubled water systems, most of

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which are fed by small wells.

One such system is a reverse osmosis treatment facility, which serves a small community on Guemes Island, where saltwater intrusion has affected groundwater supplies. Another system, on Fidalgo Island, receives its water from an Anacortes transmission line, which also serves the City of Oak Harbor and Whidbey Naval Air Station. In the past year, the district has also constructed a new water system to serve the small community of Marblemount, at the western edge of the north Cascades.

Over the years, conservation and environmental stewardship have become increasingly important for the district.

The Skagit River and its tributaries support some of the healthiest salmon runs in the Northwest and form the only stream system in Washington to support all five species of Pacific Northwest salmon, as well as bull trout and steelhead.

The district participates in local watershed management and planning efforts to protect in-stream flows necessary to maintain salmon spawning and rearing habitat, while also ensuring adequate water to meet current and future demands of its customers.

*Right, pipeline across the Skagit River supplies water to Sedro-Woolley.*

*Below, Judy Reservoir and Skagit PUD water treatment plant and clearwell storage tanks.*

In 1996, the district entered into a memorandum of agreement with other public water suppliers, local government agencies, local tribes, and state resource management agencies that provides for coordinated water-resource management for the next 50 years and ensures minimum in-stream flows to protect fish habitat.

Projections show the population of Skagit County could grow by 45 percent in the next 20 years, with most of that growth expected to occur in the PUD's service area. To meet the needs of this growing and changing community, the district is continually planning for the future.

The district has completed a third clearwell for additional storage at its water filtration plant, installed over four-miles of new transmission pipeline, and is planning to double the capacity of its treatment plant, and replace its largest transmission pipeline in the next two years. In addition, the PUD will undertake numerous distribution system improvements throughout the Skagit Valley.

With hard work and creativity, the district will keep pace with new regulations and population growth, while providing its customers with safe, affordable drinking water. 

