



What's Up at the PUD?

Alternate energy sources

Well, winter is settling in and, after a summer that we won't soon forget, I think it's time to get back to something resembling normal.

We have been getting quite a few questions from our customers about alternative sources of energy, both 'green' and not, and what the cost of such alternatives might be. I have very recently received information from Energy Northwest on exactly that subject.

A little background first: Energy Northwest was formed in 1957 as the Washington Public Power Supply System, or WPPSS, an unfortunate acronym in light of the financial mess that, among other things, resulted in its reorganization as Energy Northwest. To quote their website:

Energy Northwest is a Joint Operating Agency (JOA), comprising 27 member public utilities from across the state of Washington.

We own and operate four electricity generating stations: Columbia Generating Station (nuclear power plant), Packwood Lake Hydroelectric Project, Nine Canyon Wind Project, and White Bluffs Solar Station. We also provide operations and maintenance services for other facilities, such as the Mason County PUD No. 3 Olympic View Generating Facility.

In addition, our Energy/Business Services organization is devoted to the identification and development of new generating resources, encompassing both traditional and renewable technologies. Energy Northwest is a sales affiliate of Hometown Connections, offering a suite of services from the American Public Power Association for public utilities.

A summary of their recent study of costs for alternative energies showed the following;

Biomass	12.2-13.4 cents per kWh
Wind	7.0-7.8 cents per kWh
Solar PV	12.2-13.2 cents per kWh
Geothermal	10.0-11.0 cents per kWh
Small Hydro	8.1-8.9 cents per kWh
Natural Gas	5.8-6.4 cents per kWh

These prices do not include the costs of transmission.

Compared to the 3.0 to 4.0 cents per kWh for existing hydro, the choice is pretty clear if we are looking only at price, particularly given that the next lowest cost, natural gas, is simply not available in our area.

Your commissioners are always looking for ways to control the cost of serving you, and will continue to do so but in the Pacific Northwest, where we enjoy the availability of plentiful and cheap hydro, alternative sources are not yet a practical option.

Until next month,

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