

## DID YOU KNOW?

### Flush less

If everyone in the United

States flushed the toilet just one less time per day, we could save a lakeful of water about a mile long, a mile wide, and four feet deep every day.

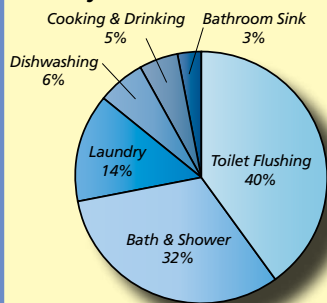
### Leaks add up

Little leaks add up in a hurry. A faucet drip or invisible toilet leak that totals only two tablespoons a minute comes to 15 gallons a day. That's 105 gallons a week and 5,406 gallons of water a year.

### Where your water goes

We drink very little of our drinking water. Generally speaking, less than one percent of the treated water produced by water utilities is actually consumed. The rest goes on lawns, in washing machines, and down toilets and drains.

### Family of Four Water Use



### Water gobbler

If you have a lawn, chances are it's your biggest water gobbler. Typically, at least 30 percent of water consumed by households is used outdoors.

Source: American Water Works Association



One of the last steps in completing the Skagit River Diversion Pump Station was restoring and monitoring native plants along the Skagit River. The new pump station cost \$23 million to construct.

# budgetcrunch

## Cutting expenses to provide best service at low rates

BY JAMES COOK

Skagit PUD Commissioner

At Skagit PUD, we recognize the economy is creating difficult times for everyone. No one is untouched. We are committed to do our part to be economical and responsible to our customer-owners.

Just like you, the District has tightened its belt in 2010. We have reduced overhead by making significant staff reductions, increased efficiencies, delayed non-critical projects and encouraged stricter conservation practices.

As commissioners, our focus is on a balanced budget each year and ensuring the long-term financial health of the District. Last year, our System Development Fees, which

result from new service connections, came in at just 30 percent of budget—a \$700,000 shortfall. Interest revenues were off by \$130,000.

In 2009, an outside consulting and engineering firm conducted a rate study that indicated a rate increase of 7.9 percent would be needed if the

District were to make no changes in its costs of operations.

Instead, we chose to respond to the impacts of a poor economy and decline

in construction activity by reducing our expenses. By doing so we could still provide the best service to our customers and keep rates as low as possible.

The commission was committed to holding the water rate increase in 2010 to three percent, which is approximately \$1 per month for the average residential customer.

It is a difficult balancing act to keep water



## TOP HONORS: Award-winning water treatment process

Skagit PUD's Water Treatment Plant was awarded a **Silver Certificate of Achievement** from the Washington State Office of Drinking Water for meeting stringent criteria related to public health protection. Skagit PUD was one of 14 plants to receive such an award.

"Achieving consistent high drinking water quality like this is a mark of a highly dedicated and skilled water department staff," **Denise Clifford**, director of the Office of



Drinking Water, said in a letter informing the District of the award.

Skagit PUD voluntarily participates in the state's Treatment Optimization Program (TOP), where water filtration plants commit to work toward meeting treatment optimization goals for particle removal and disinfection that are more stringent than current regulatory requirements. Because turbidity (water cloudiness caused by suspended particles) is a readily measured indicator of treatment plant performance, TOP tracks finished water turbidity data for all conventional and direct filtration plants in Washington.

## Wetlands restoration plan calls for 9,272 new native plants

Phase I of the \$4.2 million Judy Reservoir to Mount Vernon Transmission Pipeline project is now complete. Phase I is located within the city of Mount Vernon and follows the Kulshan Avenue right-of-way. The 36-inch pipeline connects to existing transmission lines at North LaVenture Road, while cutting 1½ miles through sensitive wetland and buffer areas.

As part of Skagit PUD's wetland restoration and mitigation plan, 9,272 varying individual plants were put in the ground last fall.

Over time, the establishment of native woody and emergent vegetation will increase plant species richness and structural diversity within the wetlands compared to pre-construction conditions. The plantings will improve buffer functions such as screening wetlands from human disturbances.



## RAIN BARRELS: Low tech, low maintenance way to conserve water

For centuries, rainwater has been collected as a way for people and communities to meet their water needs. Today, this simple technology is still in use—most often for controlling stormwater runoff and conserving water.



### Why use a rain barrel?

Collecting rainwater is an easy way to conserve water—and save money on your water bill. During the drier season, when water consumption often doubles, using collected rainwater can reduce the strain on the PUD's water supply and keep more water available for fish and wildlife. Rainwater is also naturally "soft" and free of minerals and chemicals, making it ideal for plants and lawns.

If you would like more information about Skagit PUD's low-cost rain barrel program, please visit our Website at [SkagitPUD.org](http://SkagitPUD.org) or call (360) 424-7104.

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rates low while meeting our regulatory obligations and operational needs. The costs associated with providing safe and reliable water continue to expand.

For example, Skagit PUD is a partner to a 50-year coordinated water resource management agreement. The aim is to ensure in-stream flows to protect fish habitat, while securing adequate water to meet current and future customer demands. To meet that commitment, in the last 12 years the District has invested \$55 million into construction and riparian mitigation. This past fall we completed both the Skagit River Diversion Pump Station and Phase I of the Judy Reservoir to Mount Vernon Transmission Pipeline Project, at a cost of \$27.2 million.

Skagit PUD recognizes it has a greater responsibility to customers to find creative ways to keep costs in check. Our goal is to offer good, clean water at affordable prices.



**James Cook** has served as a Skagit PUD commissioner since 2005. He is the current board president and represents District No. 3. Commissioner Cook can be reached at (360) 770-4825 or via e-mail at [jacook06@comcast.net](mailto:jacook06@comcast.net).