

# Water to Watts

**New Legislator briefing on Washington's public utility districts and the state's utility landscape.**

December 2024

# About the Washington PUD Association

The Washington PUD Association is a non-profit organization created in 1936 to support public utility districts.

Our mission is to support, preserve and enhance members' ability to provide locally controlled, cost-based energy, water and telecommunications services to communities in the State of Washington.

WPUDA services include advocacy, policy analysis and research, training and education services, collaboration and information sharing for our members.

Our members include 27 public utility districts and one joint operating agency, Energy Northwest.



# Washington's electric utility landscape

Consumer Owned Utilities (COUs)-  
Not-for-profit, community-owned with locally elected officials

- Public Utility Districts
- Electric Cooperatives
- Cities

Investor-Owned Utilities (IOUs) – regulated by the Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission.

- Puget Sound Energy
- Avista
- PacificCorp



# Types of Water providers

Public Utility Districts – RCW 54

Water & Sewer Districts – RCW 57

Cities and Counties

Private water providers

Small system operators



# Types of Telecom providers

Public Utility Districts – wholesale/retail

Cities – wholesale/retail

Ports – wholesale/retail

Private providers

- Cable
- Wireless
- Satellite
- Internet Service Providers (ISP)
- Local telephone company



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# Brief history of PUDs

- PUDs formed as a result of frustration in rural areas of the state over the lack of access to affordable electricity.
- The Washington State Grange launched an Initiative campaign to enact a law that would allow communities to own and operate their own utilities, called Public Utility Districts.
- Initiative #1 went to the ballot in 1930 and was approved by 54% of the voters.



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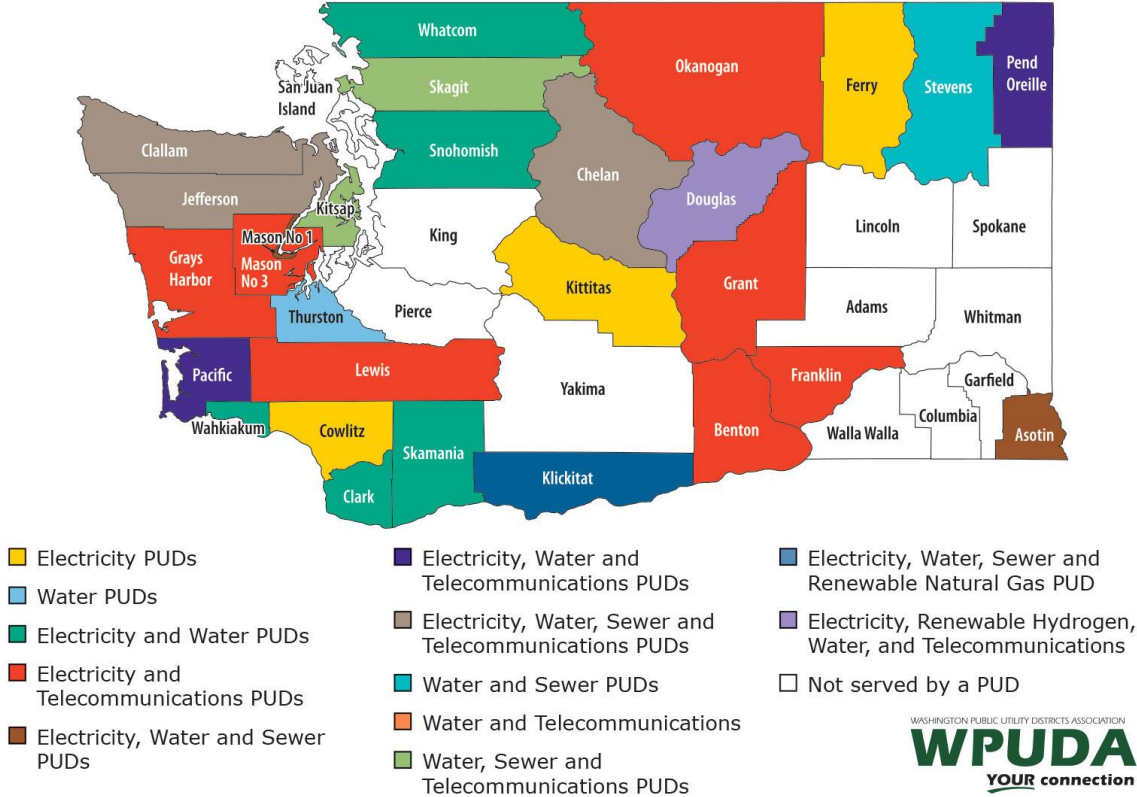
# RCW 54 – The laws of the PUDs

- PUDs are formed by a vote of the people.
- As not-for-profit utilities, charges for utility services reflect actual costs and, by law, are fair and non-discriminatory (RCW 54.24.080)
- PUDs may provide one or more of the services authorized under law;
  - Electricity
  - Water,
  - Wastewater,
  - Wholesale and retail telecommunications,
  - Renewable natural gas production and distribution – Klickitat County PUD
  - Renewable hydrogen production and distribution – Douglas County PUD
- PUDs are governed by non-partisan, locally elected boards made up of 3 or 5 members that meet in open public meetings and are accountable to their customer-owners. PUDs are also subject to audits by the State Auditor’s Office.
- PUDs are typically countywide but may be less than countywide. Only one county has two PUDs, Mason County

# PUD Fast Facts

- There are 28 PUDs.
- WPUDA members include 27 PUDs serving nearly one-million customers (connections).
  - 23 electricity
  - 18 water (8 provide sewer as well)
  - 15 provide telecom services
  - 1 provides renewable natural gas
  - 1 is developing hydrogen
- Geographically, PUDs cover more than half the state.

**Counties Served by Public Utility Districts**





# Contact WPUA

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