

# FOREST to GRID



Jefferson County  
Public Utility District

August 2025



Dan Toepper, Dist 3 Commissioner, measures the length of a cedar tree destined for the utility pole manufacturing process.

Making the grade as a utility pole is no small feat, with only select trees meeting the rigorous standards required.

Utility poles often come from unexpected places. Selective harvesting by property owners offers a sustainable way to source high-quality poles without large-scale clear cutting. PUD Dist 3 Commissioner Dan Toepper used selective harvesting to produce future utility poles, which can help improve the forest stand health on his family property.

Commissioner Toepper partnered with pole manufacturer, Bell Lumber and Pole Company in Longview, WA, to identify select 70+-year-old western red cedar from the stand. The result: 25 logs destined for use in the regional electric grid. Where exactly? That's hard to say.

Each year, the Bell facility produces approx 12-15,000 utility poles. Most pole timber harvested in Washington

stays local, but there's strong demand in the Midwest and East Coast for longer transmission poles (over 65'), since trees there rarely grow that tall. Most poles from the facility are Douglas Fir, with many being transmission pole grade (65'+ long). Western red cedar makes up a lesser market due to availability. Each species has an average in-field lifespan of 40-50 years depending on conditions.

Bell Pole also looks for quality. Trees that make the cut can't have visible damage (old and new), must be free of powder worm infestation, and have the ideal straight pole-like form. Those unfit for utility service are used for traditional wood

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**5%-7%**  
of trees in a given  
stand of timber may  
make the grade

## PUD Hires New General Manager



Joseph Wilson, JPUD  
General Manager

Joseph Wilson took the helm as General Manager of Jefferson County PUD August 4th, bringing more than three decades of utility experience to the position.

Wilson, formerly the Deputy General Manager – Power Delivery at Tacoma Public Utilities, holds a degree in Electrical Engineering from the University of Washington.

Wilson was unanimously selected by the PUD Board following a 6-month-long national search performed by the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) executive search team.

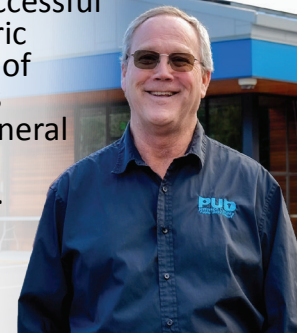
Wilson will lead the PUD's electric, water, and broadband services and 80+ employees, managing its \$85 million-dollar annual budget.

## The Next Chapter

General Manager Kevin Streett, who was hired as employee number one for Jefferson PUD's electric division, is retiring after more than 40 years in the industry.

Streett began as line crew superintendent in 2012, shortly after the successful vote to pursue local electric ownership by the citizens of Jefferson County, and was promoted to Assistant General Manager in 2017, and General Manager in 2019.

"It's been a great ride helping grow the utility and I'm really proud of the work our team has done to make it all happen over the years."



Kevin Streett, JPUD General  
Manager 2019-2025



# Making Connections: Helping Broadband Go-Live

The PUD has reached a milestone, with more than 400 in-home broadband installations as fiber crews work northward from the Quilcene area. Creating a 10-Gig network from the ground-up requires far more than what's seen in the field.

It all begins in the backend. With more than 4000 registered fiber customers (both current and future construction) in the system, every property must be accounted for. Staff dig deep into databases and customer records to track buildout progress.

To date, 864 homes have received network boxes with fiber ready for signal testing. Splicing and testing is a vital step to ensure connectivity before going live with service.

With fiber live, attention shifts to service plans. The ball is now in the customer's court with registration taking place online, but questions still arise and that's where the intern steps in. Throughout the summer, the PUD's Communications and Broadband intern has called nearly 500 customers, assisting with plan selection and in-home install scheduling. One-on-one conversations ensure each household gets the right connection for their needs, whether through the PUD's in-house internet plans or via a qualified internet service provider.

Crews continue rolling out fiber in neighborhoods from Quilcene to Gardiner, and fiber techs are on track to wrap up in-home installs by winter. From there, the PUD team will shift to the next project areas where contract crews have begun planning routes to homes in the Jefferson North and Discovery Bay East fiber zones.



### Meet the Intern: Ahwrey Scarpinato

Ahwrey is a 2024 Port Townsend High graduate who attends Texas A&M located in the town of College Station between Dallas and Houston, TX. He is majoring in Political Science with double minors in Business and Communications. Beyond his internship and the classroom, Ahwrey stays active with soccer, hiking, and theater.

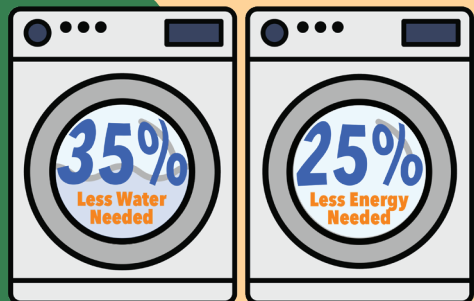
## BPA Washer-Dryer Program Now Underway!

For a very limited time, income-qualified households earning 80% or less of area median income annually can receive an Energy Star washer and dryer at no charge *but*, they are only available on a FIRST-COME, FIRST-SERVE basis.

This \$800 per appliance rebate from the Bonneville Power Administration aims to help customers save on their monthly utility bills, with the goal of reducing overall energy demand. Limit one set per qualified household.

PUD customers who are part of a utility bill payment assistance program have already had their income verified. Visit [jeffpud.org/additional-rebates](http://jeffpud.org/additional-rebates) to learn more.

It's more than just a drop in the bucket. Energy Star-rated appliances can significantly reduce household water and energy needs each month.



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product markets like dimensional lumber.

The entire pole making process can take over a year and is dependent upon the species and market demand.

At the Bell yard, raw timber is initially graded and quickly debarked, with operators leaving the outer cambium layer of the tree to allow for gradual drying. Size matters—a tree can shrink more than a half inch during the drying process, potentially impacting the final grading standards.

Once dry, the timber is further transformed, traveling through a massive track-fed planer. A skilled operator carefully feeds the rotating pole through a series of cutterheads capable of taking a half inch of material off in a single pass. A final inspection by staff determines the poles future before being sized and sorted.

The newly minted pole is now ready for its final journey to a treatment facility in Bellingham, WA. From there, each will enter circulation with utilities across the U.S.



Regular meetings of the PUD's Board of Commissioners begin at 4pm on the first and third Tuesdays of most months. Meetings are held in-person and online, with a link available on the PUD's calendar on [jeffpud.org](http://jeffpud.org)

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