



Board of County Commissioners

1820 Jefferson Street

PO Box 1220

Port Townsend, WA 98368

Kate Dean, District 1 Heidi Eisenhour, District 2 Greg Brotherton, District 3

March 18, 2024

The Honorable Patty Murray
154 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Re: Support for Mason County PUD No. 1's Appropriations Request for FY25

Dear Senator Murray,

The Board of Commissioners for Jefferson County, Washington would like to express our support for Mason County PUD No. 1's appropriations request to fund their Grid Resiliency Project, which includes the design and engineering of a middle-mile substation at Jorstad Creek in Lilliwaup, Washington as well as a redundant transmission line to loop feed the PUD's two substations on the southern end of their electric service territory.

This Grid Resiliency Project is important for south Jefferson County residents on the Hood Canal because this area experiences frequent and long-lasting power outages due to the terrain of U.S. Highway 101 and the Olympic National Forest that winds along the shoreline of Hood Canal, as well for Mason County residents on State Route 106. These areas are vulnerable to natural hazards like landslides, wind and snow events, and most commonly, fallen trees from the rainforest canopy.

Currently there is a 35-mile stretch of power lines that run along Hwy 101 from Hoodsport to Mt. Walker in Brinnon. When one section goes out of power, the entire stretch goes out. During two large storm events in 2022, these customers were out of power for over three days the first time and over two days the second time because there is no redundant power supply. With a middle mile substation, most of these customers could have been back in service in less than 24 hours.

Additionally, the PUD's Hoodsport Substation and the Jefferson County substation are old (1960's) and both must be taken completely offline for the PUD to perform their maintenance. This middle mile substation would improve the resilience of the local power grid and enable the PUD to keep most customers in power under most circumstances thanks to a redundant power feed. It also will allow the PUD to be more efficient and proactive in the necessary maintenance that these other older substations need.

The construction of a redundant transmission line will loop feed the two southern substations that feed the Skokomish Indian Reservation and rural activity center of Union, which are the two main business corridors in PUD 1's service territory. Every customer on the PUD 1 system will benefit from this increased resiliency of PUD 1's electric grid. Every customer will also benefit from this funding by alleviating the pressure on electric rates. With only 5,500 electric meters, Mason PUD 1 experiences the same challenges larger utilities have with infrastructure but with far fewer customers to spread the costs amongst. This funding would go a long way toward making the Jorstad Substation a near-term reality without impacting individual household budgets while also helping to keep the Skokomish Tribe's business enterprises and Union businesses in power during storm events.

We hope you will agree and select Mason PUD 1's Grid Resiliency Project to move forward for appropriations.

Sincerely,

Jefferson County Commissioners

Kate Dean, Chair, Dist. No. 1

Heidi Eisenhour, Dist. No. 2

Greg Brotherton, Dist. No. 3