

Meet Barry Chrisman

PUD Hydroelectric Superintendent

We interviewed Barry to find out about his job at the PUD.

What sparked you towards a STEM career field?

I've always liked doing mechanical types of things. I really was a science geek and loved watching science shows as a kid. I found math to be easy for me, and science and history were also really interesting to me.

What type of training do you have?

I started out in construction. I went to WSU for one year and then got into an electrical apprenticeship program for four years. Later, I got my welding certification and developed my skills in cable splicing. Basically I did anything I could do to increase my value as a worker. After being hired as an electrician for the PUD's Jackson Hydro Project, I concentrated on learning how the operations side of things worked. I got a chance to be what they called a hydro chief and became superintendent from there. If a student is interested in having a job like mine today, a degree in engineering would be useful, if not required, for my job.

What STEM skills are important in your job?

Engineering for sure because you really have to understand concepts and be able to put things together. Also, math is important because I'm always calculating megawatt output of the plants and the minimum flows of the rivers.

Why is your career unique?

My office is pretty much outside and in a lot of places. There are so many different layers to my job so everyday seems to be

something different. I also get to interact with lots of different people, anyone from the emergency agencies in the County to the project road crews.



Barry is able to view the Jackson powerhouse operations using his smartphone.

What do you like about your job?

I have the best job in the County! I like the variety and that people know that when they give me something to do, it'll get done. I've been a part of some very interesting projects that make big impacts on the PUD and the people in Snohomish County. Recently I've been a part of some very big projects like upgrading our Woods Creek Hydroelectric Project, the construction of the first hydroelectric project in Washington state in 20 years at Youngs Creek and the relicensing of our Jackson Hydroelectric Project. I continue to be excited to be a part of the PUD hydro projects in the future. Things are always changing!

Any advice for students who want to go into a similar career?

- ▶ Be willing to work hard.
- ▶ Take initiative to solve problems and ask questions.
- ▶ Keep your eyes open and stay engaged in what is going on around you – that way you are always learning.
- ▶ Focus on learning how things work, which is the basic of physics.
- ▶ It is important to learn to figure out how to size-up your priorities. For me, it is always a balance between fish needs and maximum power production and finding the best balance for both.
- ▶ Practice your social skills as personal contact is very important. You must build trust in people so that people believe you are trying to do what's right when you are making decisions. 📧



Barry gives a tour inside the powerhouse of the Youngs Creek Hydro project.