



# BOARD & OWNER LINKAGE PLAN

**T**he Board is seeking to continue to strengthen the relationship and linkage between the elected representatives of the PUD, the owners of the PUD, and the policy-making process.

The inherent challenge is to connect with Snohomish PUD owners in ways that are most meaningful to them, in order to develop policies and set direction that meet and exceed their expectations. We want owners to understand the utility, its challenges and the fact that they own it. We also want them to be proud of the utility they own.

People are very busy these days. Old community involvement models no longer offer the average citizen an appealing way to stay connected and participate. Few individuals take the time to attend Commission meetings. At the same time, however, people say they want to know what is going on.

This plan outlines an involvement model, based on Carver, that offers a variety of ways for owners to learn about PUD policy issues, convey input, get to know their Commissioners, and participate in the process.

## Primary Objectives

- ▶ Clarify values
- ▶ Keep owners informed
- ▶ Build stronger relationships

## Audience

Owners of the PUD as defined by the Board as people in Snohomish County/Camano Island who are eligible to vote.



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## Key Messages

The three primary areas that messages will focus on:

- ▶ Keep owners informed on what a PUD is; who their Commissioners are; how they can participate in the PUD process. *Your PUD is Owned by You or You are the PUD.*
- ▶ Keep owners informed on the many unique benefits of public power: *Local Control, Not-for-profit Rates, Responsiveness to Community Needs.*
- ▶ Keep owners informed on current issues affecting the future of the utility. Issues like resource planning, deregulation, rates, and environmental topics.

## Strategies

### ☐ CLARIFY VALUES

- Receive information from our owners.
- Identify key issues, values and preferences important to PUD owners and communicate those to the PUD Board.

### *Implementation*

Using an outside research firm, conduct owner research in first half of 2000 to identify owners' priorities, preferences, wants and needs regarding the utility. Use both quantitative and qualitative methodologies. Board to review results and incorporate in ends/policy statements. Topic areas would include:

- ▶ Rate sensitivities
- ▶ Reliability needs and concerns
- ▶ Environmental issues
- ▶ Green power
- ▶ Owner values
- ▶ Owner levels of risk tolerance
- ▶ New products/service possibilities: in what business do our owners want us to be?
- ▶ How do customer/owners like to get information about the utility? Do they want more information on things like fuel cells from their utility?
- ▶ Public purpose issues



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Conduct periodic surveying to check for changes in priorities by owners and/or get updated information on new topics under consideration by the Board. Also check for measuring comprehension of the messages being communicated by the Board/PUD.

Invite owner input through surveying, public meetings, hearings, web site, and comment cards.

*For research findings about our owners received to date, please see page 5.*

**KEEP OWNERS INFORMED**

- Communicate information to our owners.
- Keep PUD owners informed about policy issues facing the PUD and the policy-making process.

*Implementation*

Use wide variety of methods to make a connection with owners, including: invitations to meetings, public forums, newspaper ads, bill stuffers, and *Current*.

Through *Highlights* and SnoWeb, communicate to employees the key messages from the Board. Keep employees up-to-date on Board policies and direction.

Include topic on the Board’s role, Governance, etc., in Guest Speakers Bureau. Have topic presented by Board member(s).

Develop, and actively distribute, a brochure about the Board, the Board’s role, Governance, and the Commission meeting schedule.

Develop background materials, Q&A’s and key talking points on the primary messages and issues the Board wishes to communicate, so that Commissioners all have a common base.

Pursue new ways to communicate with customers, such as developing Q&A columns for local community newspapers, getting on radio talk shows, and participating in community forums.



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## □ BUILD STRONGER RELATIONSHIPS

- Strengthen our two-way communications with our owners.
- Increase owner involvement in the policy-making process.

### *Implementation*

Look for additional ways to “personalize” the Board with owners. Increase the Board’s visibility by including their photos in more publications and public access areas. Currently, the Board is featured in the lobby areas of outer offices and the Electric Building, in PUD publications, on the PUD web site, and on the meeting agenda in the *Herald*.

Elevate the Board’s presence in the community through increased involvement in community events, associations and meetings.

Sponsor important community-wide events that provide opportunities for increasing PUD connections. Sponsorships would include chambers, school events, trade shows, and community events.

Identify key opinion leaders in the community and develop communications especially for them.

Identify any organizations, associations or at-risk groups that we need to increase our commitment to through greater participation. Look for new ways to meet their special needs.

Work with an outside consultant on additional ways to seek input, educate owners and build relationships.

Reinforce and build productive relationships with other elected and appointed officials of municipal, governmental, utility, and community-based organizations.

### **Timing**

Immediate, upon approval by the Board. Some tactics have been implemented in the past six months. The plan will be reviewed and updated on an annual basis.



## Research Findings on Owners To Date *(As part of the “Clarify Values” objective)*

- ▶ Our owners are happy with their utility.
- ▶ They are price sensitive and want their power costs to be predictable and competitive.
- ▶ They want their reliability to stay high but don’t feel it needs to be increased.
- ▶ They are wary of the changes that deregulation might bring to rates and reliability.
- ▶ They are supportive of public-purpose programs and environmental commitments.
- ▶ Most do not want a choice of providers and would not switch from the utility if given a choice.
- ▶ Most want to know what is happening at the PUD. They get most of their information about the utility through our bill stuffer.
- ▶ Most do not want big changes from the PUD. They like steadiness and predictability.
- ▶ Most know they are customers and owners of the utility.
- ▶ And, happily, the vast majority view the PUD as being trustworthy and responsive to their needs.