



Denali White of Wenatchee was the first lucky student to try out a solar-powered go-cart built by her father, PUD engineer Jim White.

Solar power comes to schools

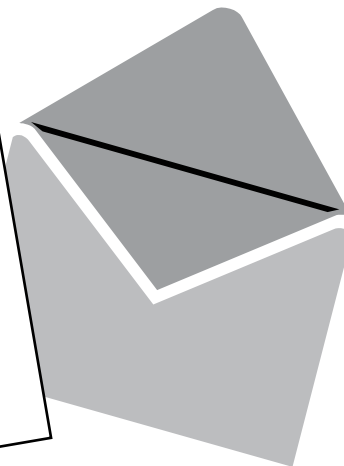
Some 400 school children from the Chelan area visited the Earth Day Fair at Riverwalk Park on Friday, April 22. Among the attractions was a solar go-cart built by Chelan County PUD engineer Jim White for the PUD's SNAP (Sustainable Natural Alternative Power) program.

More than 30 schools and nonprofit agencies in Chelan County now have solar systems, thanks to funding and labor provided by Alcoa and the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers. Nearly all the schools in the county now

have a 1.3-kilowatt solar array mounted to poles on their grounds or to their buildings. A system is available for the Stehekin School.

The schools and non-profit agencies receive a portion of the voluntary contributions made by PUD customers to support solar production through SNAP. This year, a total of \$32,000 was paid to solar and wind power producers in the county. Because of the SNAP program, Chelan County now has more solar generation than any county in the state.

You're invited
What: Community meeting
When: 7 p.m. July 12
Where: Stehekin Community Hall
Why: Learn more about planned improvements to the Company Creek powerhouse, energy conservation opportunities, and moving overhead electrical lines underground.



Meet Stehekin's chief plant operator

Stehekin's hydro power plant is unique – and so is its chief operator, Robert Nielsen. We asked Robert to tell us about himself and his job. Here is his report:

“Stehekin's hydro plant is truly a unique installation, providing power to about 132 meters, all on our own little self-contained distribution system.

Our water source is the Company Glacier on the north side of Bonanza Peak, which drains down Company Creek to our intake, then empties into the Stehekin River after we've borrowed it to produce about 200 kilowatts of clean electricity.



Robert Nielsen

“An attendant's duties range from janitorial, secretarial, and routine communication with Wenatchee (headquarters), to 24-hour response for abnormal situations caused by weather or equipment. The plant has been constructed and improved over the years by a cadre of skilled workers and craftsmen. The attendant's job is to maintain their good work, keep the plant neat and organized, identify problems beyond the attendant's skills or abilities to remedy, and coordinate for the most efficient use of the down-lake crews that come up to do various jobs, whether in the plant itself or on the distribution system.

“We are attuned to the seasons and weather, adjusting the hydro for efficient use of available water, keeping the intake clear all autumn and during flood conditions, and performing switching on the distribution system to provide power to the most customers possible

Operator: Nielsen

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when storm damage happens. We also read all the meters on two different schedules, starting and stopping service as requested, and coordinate for other services as requested by the public.”

‘We are attuned to the seasons and weather, adjusting the hydro for efficient use of available water.’

Nielsen gets relief help from operators Dick Bingham and John Wilsey, and he credits them with always being ready to assist 24/7.

Nielsen has lived in Stehekin since 1980. He spent four years in the Army and has been a climbing and ski instructor. He has studied at Evergreen State College, Olympia Community College and Bates Boatbuilding Vocational School. He spent eight summers as a commercial fisherman in Bristol Bay, Alaska, and has worked as a contractor in the valley for 19 years. Nielsen and his wife, Tammy, have sons ages 5, 14, and 15.

In answer to your question...

At a community meeting with the PUD in October, a question was asked about whether the District might qualify for federal funds to improve the Stehekin Valley electric system. Unfortunately, the answer is no. PUD attorneys, who researched the Rural Electrification Act, learned that municipal utilities can apply for funding under the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Rural

Utilities Services High Energy Cost Grant program. But funds are only available in communities where the average expenditure for home energy exceeds 275 percent of the national average, which currently is 9 cents per kilowatt hour. Because the average Stehekin residential rate is 5.38 cents per kilowatt hour, the system won’t qualify for the program.

About this letter

The Stehekin Letter is a quarterly letter from Chelan County PUD. The newsletter covers energy-related topics of interest suggested by Stehekin residents and offers tips on energy efficiency and improvements.

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