



# Pend Oreille County Public Utility District

Administrative Offices - P.O. Box 190 • Newport, WA 99156 • (509) 447-3137 • FAX (509) 447-5824  
Box Canyon Hydro Project - P.O. Box 547 • Ione, WA 99139 • (509) 446-3137 • FAX (509) 447-6790

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

September 18, 2020

Media Contact: Amber Gifford

[agifford@popud.org](mailto:agifford@popud.org) / 509-447-9328

## **Pend Oreille PUD Receives Results of CNS Fiber Feasibility Study** North-County Broadband Expansion Survey

Newport, WA – Public Utility District No. 1 of Pend Oreille County (PUD) received two \$50,000 grants last year from the Washington State Department of Commerce’s Community Economic Revitalization Board and the Washington State Public Works Board to conduct a Community Network System (CNS) feasibility study in northern Pend Oreille County. The goal of the feasibility study was to determine the cost and infrastructure needs to extend broadband fiber services to the residents of the north-end of Pend Oreille County. The study, conducted by CCG Consulting (CCG), began in February with the majority of the surveys to support the study being conducted throughout the month of March. The results of the study became available recently and revealed that it will cost an estimated \$20 million to extend broadband fiber to all residents of the north-end. Research was also conducted to determine the cost to extend to only the residents in the cities, towns, and densely populated areas, that cost came in at an estimated \$7 million.

CCG said that the number of survey responses they received resulted in some of the best participation they had ever seen when studying rural areas across the country. CCG also stated that “the northern county has some of the worst broadband they have ever seen”. The statistical results of the residential survey are interesting and are outlined below:

- The survey resulted in 848 residential responses (25% of all potential customers).
- 84% of respondents favored the idea of expanding fiber into the northern county. Most of the rest said they needed more information.
- 58% of homes have a broadband connection of some type today (50% RTI, 18% fixed wireless, 17% satellite, 13% use cellular).
- The results released low satisfaction with current Retail Service Providers (RSPs) (only 15% happy with download speeds, 33% happy with customer service, and 14% happy with the value they get compared to the price they pay).
- Customers buying stand-alone broadband pay an average of \$105 per month. That’s one of the highest numbers CCG has ever seen.
- 64% of respondents work at home at least part time. 59% would work from home more with better broadband.
- 25% of respondents have school age children. 69% of them said the broadband was inadequate for doing schoolwork from home.
- 61% of households said they would switch to fiber and pay the same fees they pay today.
- 42% of respondents said they would pay the connection fee to get added to the network.

The PUD's next steps are to explore potential grant funding to determine what extent fiber could be extended to the northern county. "The PUD maintains a goal of providing greater connectivity opportunities to the north-end of the county and is excited about moving forward and exploring options to make this happen," said Sarah Holderman, the PUD's Director of Treasury, Broadband and Strategic Planning. "The results of the study are extremely helpful - we thank and appreciate all those who took the time to participate in the survey."

### **About Pend Oreille County Public Utility District**

Pend Oreille PUD was established in 1936 and began operations in 1948. The PUD is governed by three locally elected Commissioners. A General Manager and staff operate the utility within policies set by the Board of Commissioners. The PUD has four operating systems: The electric system distributes electricity to the county, the production system produces power from the Box Canyon Hydroelectric Project, the water system consists of nine individual water distribution subdivisions, and the community network system provides wholesale broadband communication services. For more information visit: <http://popud.org>.

# # #