

QUICK HISTORY OF EPUD

Emerald People's Utility District is one of the six public utility districts in Oregon. We are a unique utility with a unique history – a history which helps explain who we are today and where we'll be tomorrow.

Emerald was formed by a vote of the people in 1978. Another election in 1981 gave authorization to sell up to \$72.5 million in revenue bonds to purchase the electrical system from the private power company Pacific Power and Light, who served the territory. At the time however, the system was, “not for sale.” After many battles, PP&L finally agreed to negotiate in 1983 and by the end of July a purchase price of \$26 million was reached. November 17th, 1983 was the date of “switchover,” and the day Emerald became an official operating utility.

Reaching switchover took many years of work, dedication and faith. There were many along the way who said it could not be done. It all began in 1970 when a small group of people met at the Elmira Grange to discuss the problem of increasing utility rates. Residents of rural Lane County, then served by PP&L, were paying rates about twice as high as other county residents served by publicly owned utilities. The group decided to pursue forming a People's Utility District, with the goal of providing better, consumer-oriented service, at lower rates.

The committee went to work drafting boundary descriptions, trying to secure customer information from PP&L, and petitioning and campaigning for district information. Fundraising took place from all angles including auctions, garage sales, direct donation requests, volunteer labor, agreements with lawyers and consultants for delayed payment for services and even paper drives.

The group's activities were often described as a battle between David and Goliath. It was an apt metaphor – a group of ordinary citizens with limited legal and political expertise and even more limited funds, fighting to buy a multi-million dollar electrical system from a powerful sophisticated corporation encompassing vast energy, mineral, and communications technologies. Yet, 13 years and 14 lawsuits later, Emerald became a reality.

So, it is not just our name that makes EPUD us a “people's” utility, but our deep roots with the people in our communities. Each of our customers is an owner and we seek to include them as much as possible in the operation of their utility.

