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## NWPPA Honors 2022 Annual Award Winners

(May 25) Today at its 82<sup>nd</sup> Annual Conference and Membership Meeting in Coeur d’Alene, Idaho, the Northwest Public Power Association presented the following awards to 12 individuals and one member utility team within the public power community.

### **Life Member Awards**

*Presented to policymakers and managers who are retiring from NWPPA member utilities and have made notable contributions to the association and public power.*

**Michelle Bertolino** joined Roseville in 2002 and became the utility’s director in 2010. She was the first woman to be named director of Roseville, a utility that was founded more than 100 years ago. Bertolino served on the NWPPA Board of Trustees for more than 11 years and was president in 2021. She was also a past president of CMUA and a past chair of both BANC and TANC. She devoted nearly 30 years to the public power industry before retiring in 2021.

In December 2021, **Scott Coe** retired from Emerald PUD after nine years as the utility’s general manager and more than 33 years in the electric utility business. Coe came to Emerald PUD in 2012 following a 24-year career at the Bonneville Power Administration. During his last seven years at Bonneville, his focus centered on the support of public utilities, fostering his deep appreciation for public power. Under his leadership, Emerald PUD developed and implemented long-term strategic plans in both 2015 and 2020, and created Sharing Sun Community Solar, the GREEN Grant Program, an energy efficiency program, and much more.

**Howard Gonser** was first elected to the Northern Wasco County PUD Board of Directors in 1987. During his 35 years of service, he served as president of the board seven times, as well as president of OPUDA twice. Over the past three decades, many improvements were made to the PUD’s electrical infrastructure, including FERC licensing, construction, and continued operation of two hydroelectric facilities. Another accomplishment was the adoption of policies for the integration of new large single loads, which more than tripled the size of the utility during his time with the PUD. Gonser will be retiring at the end of this year.

**Linda Gott** has served Mason PUD 3 as a commissioner since 1999; she previously acted as the PUD’s representative to the Economic Development Council of Mason County for six years. In her nearly three decades with the PUD, Gott served on numerous local, regional, and national boards, acting to further the interests of public power. She has actively promoted the benefits of public power and its involvement in and build-out of rural telecommunication systems using fiber-optic technology. Gott will be retiring later this year.

During his 50-year career, **Doug Nass** spent more than 30 of those years working for public power utilities. Most recently, he served as general manager of Clallam County PUD for 15 years. Under his leadership, the PUD formed a balance scorecard performance metric and strategic plan; achieved APPA’s Smart Energy Provider award and three consecutive RP3 designations, including Diamond level in 2020; and implemented a county-wide OMS, GIS, and SCADA. Nass retired from the PUD on Jan. 15, 2022.

With more than 40 years in the public power sector, **Chuck Thurman** has a breadth of knowledge, experience, and industry relationships. He has been with the City of Monmouth Power & Light as superintendent since September 2011. Prior to that, Thurman worked at the City of Banning (Calif.) and Snohomish County PUD (Wash.). During his time at Monmouth, he served on the NWPPA Board of Trustees for six years. Thurman has also been active with the Oregon Municipal Electric Utilities Association, American Public Power Association, Public Power Council, and Northwest Requirements Utility. Thurman will be retiring later this year.

Throughout a career spanning nearly 40 years, **Steve Wright** consistently demonstrated his commitment to collaboration and public engagement. Wright became Chelan PUD's general manager in 2013. Prior to that, he had a storied career at the Bonneville Power Administration, including serving as administrator for 12 years. At Chelan PUD, he managed the development of two five-year strategic plans, which engaged thousands of customer-owners, employees, and businesses in an open dialogue to build consensus around public power issues. He retired from Chelan PUD at the end of 2021.

### **Paul J. Raver Community Service Awards**

*The award is presented to an electric system or an individual for leadership in enhancing the role of the electric systems in achieving community betterment of a city, county, state, or the region as a whole.*

**Susan Cutrell** joined Parkland Light & Water in 2001 and, in 2015, she became the utility's first female general manager. She has served at the local community level with a mix of power and water programs, at the state level with Washington Rural Electric Cooperative Association, and regionally with NWPPA. During the COVID-19 pandemic, many Parkland Light & Water members lost jobs and had to decide what bills to pay. Cutrell recognized this and had customer service representatives transition from conversations around late payments and disconnects to compassionate conversations of help and hope.

**Mark Grotbo** serves as general manager of Ravalli Electric Cooperative and is dedicated to his co-op and community. Over the past few years, he created a round-up program, Power of Change, for the co-op in order to give back. In its first full year, the program donated over \$56,000 to the community. Most recently, Grotbo realized members' need for high-speed, reliable internet. After a feasibility study discovered the co-op could not provide broadband on its own, he continued to explore other options. Last summer, Ravalli acquired a locally established internet company. Now with two roles, Grotbo puts in many extra hours preparing for the broadband movement in Ravalli County.

For 40 years, **Paul Lau** has contributed to shaping much of SMUD's industry-leading initiatives through environmental leadership and innovative customer programs. Lau became CEO in 2020 and spearheaded the development of SMUD's ambitious 2030 Zero Carbon Plan. During his tenure, some of SMUD's achievements include securing \$127 million of grant money from the Department of Energy for the Smart Grid Sacramento project during the recession; creating a virtual net metering program to bring the benefits of solar energy to customers in historically under-resourced communities; and implementing the nation's first electric school bus program.

With over 30 years of experience in the electric utility industry, Tillamook PUD General Manager **Todd Simmons** has a wealth of knowledge and experience in not only the industry itself but also in emergency preparedness. Simmons has spent countless hours preparing Tillamook PUD for emergencies, which extends into the community, region, and nation. He ensures Tillamook PUD is highly involved with the many volunteer emergency preparedness corps located in each cluster of communities. Simmons also instructs incident command systems at various organizations. Recently he worked with APPA, Edison Electric Institute, and NRECA to develop an Incident Command System Guide for Electric Utilities.

Formally established in 2018, **Turlock Irrigation District's Team TID** identifies community-based activities and programs to support, and assists in organizing the participation of any interested TID employee. For example, in 2019, blood drive participation resulted in 38 pints of blood, which the American Red Cross estimates will save 144 lives; in 2020, over 100 employees participated in four activities to raise over \$4,000 in support of TID's communities in need; and in 2021, Team TID raised nearly \$5,000, which was used to provide holiday meals and gifts to families in need. Since 2018, over 500 employee volunteers have participated in activities in support of TID's communities, resulting in over \$15,000 being raised.

### **John M. George Public Service Award**

*This award recognizes policymaking officers of member systems that have demonstrated remarkable service to public power.*

For more than 20 years, **Linda Gott** has actively promoted the benefits of public power on the local, regional, and national level. In 1999, she became a Mason County PUD 3 commissioner. Gott has served on the American Public Power Association's Legislative and Resolutions Committee and its Policy Makers Council; she is a past president of Public Utility Risk Management Services; she served six years on the NWPPA Board of Trustees; and she currently serves on the board of directors for Energy Northwest and for NoaNet.

### **Homer T. Bone Award**

*This award is presented to honor an elected official that has demonstrated sustained and remarkable work on behalf of public power.*

For 36 years, **Peter DeFazio** has represented Oregon's 4th Congressional District, which contains mostly public power service territory. He's chaired the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee since 2019, and been the committee's ranking Democrat since 2015, after initially joining the committee in 1987. He previously served many years on the House Natural Resources Committee and its Subcommittee on Water and Power. Rep. DeFazio has been a staunch proponent of public power and hydropower during his career in Congress. He founded and led the Northwest Energy Caucus in Congress, and delivered a multitude of legislative results for the people of the region.

**About NWPPA:** NWPPA is an international association representing and serving more than 150 customer-owned, locally controlled utilities in the Western U.S. and Canada. The association also serves over 300 associate members across the U.S. and Canada who are allied with the electric utility industry. For more information, visit [www.nwppa.org](http://www.nwppa.org) or follow @NWPPAssoc on our social channels.

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