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The Follow-up File

Subject: Sustainable Connections' Green Power Community Challenge

What they said then: In September, Sustainable Connections, Puget Sound Energy and the City of Bellingham launched a campaign called the Green Power Community Challenge to increase the number of businesses and homes purchasing green power.

Before the campaign began, 40 businesses in Whatcom County were purchasers of green power. In September, that number went up to 110 businesses in Whatcom County after the campaign began. At the time, about 0.6 percent to 0.7 percent of Bellingham's electricity usage came from green power.

The Green Power Community Challenge sponsors wanted to see that figure increase to 2 percent by the campaign's endpoint in March. With that percentage, the Environmental Protection Agency would designate Bellingham a "Green Power Community," providing the city with highway signs and national press opportunities. Only three cities in the United States — Eugene, Ore.; Moab, Utah and Boulder, Colo. — can boast that designation.

Long said the addition of an estimated 50 businesses and 1,000 houses could accomplish the 2 percent goal.

What they say now: Long said the campaign has gone very well. By February, 6 percent of Bellingham's electricity usage came from green power, more than triple the campaign's original goal, and the organization is still waiting for a month of data. Today, 140 businesses in Bellingham purchase at least some amount of green power in Bellingham, Long said.

Puget Sound Energy had operated a green power program for four years before the start of the campaign, and Long said the community challenge catapulted the issue into the public's consciousness.

"It was a tremendous response," Long said.

Because of Bellingham's success in reaching the 2 percent goal, the EPA will

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designate Bellingham a Green Power Community and will erect signs on I-5 that announce Bellingham's nationally recognized status.

Sustainable Connections will celebrate the end of the campaign and hand out prizes to participants at Depot Market Square on April 21, at noon.

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