



THE NWGA: A HISTORY

Natural gas first came to the Pacific Northwest via the Northwest Pipeline in the mid-1950's. The local distribution companies that served communities throughout Washington State established the Association of Washington Gas Utilities, Inc. on March 6, 1956. Its incorporating address was the original corporate offices of Cascade Natural Gas Corp.

Many of the original incorporating member companies have long since been folded into the companies that serve the region today. They included:

- Washington Natural Gas company
- United Gas Corporation of Washington
- Portland Gas & Coke Company
- Cascade Natural Gas Corporation
- Twin Cities Gas Company
- Spokane Natural Gas Company
- Natural Gas Corporation of Washington
- Olympic Gas Company

In the mid-1980's, natural gas utilities across the Pacific Northwest recognized a risk to their businesses as the Northwest Power Act, passed in 1980, began to be implemented. Specifically, natural gas utilities were placed at a disadvantage to electric utilities with the Super Good Cents program that provided incentives and support for all-electric homes funded with public dollars through Bonneville Power Administration (BPA).

In response, Pacific Northwest Local Distribution Companies (LDCs) morphed the original organization to become region-wide in 1986 and hired professional staff for the first time. The objective of the newly resourced organization was to educate energy stakeholders across the Pacific Northwest about the promise and importance of natural gas as a regional energy resource. It was also tasked to provide a voice for natural gas in regional energy conversations, historically dominated by electricity, specifically with BPA and the Northwest Power Planning Council. Finally, the Association worked to ensure that the Super Good Cents program using public dollars was fuel neutral. The members during this time are familiar names:

- Cascade Natural Gas Corporation
- CP National Corporation
- Intermountain Gas Company
- Northwest Natural Gas Company
- The Washington Water Power Company
- Washington Energy Company

The Association's staff grew to five by 1991. Regional pipelines joined the group from 1992 through 1994. The Association changed its name to the Northwest Gas Association (NWGA) in November 1994. NWGA members at this time included:

- Cascade Natural Gas Corporation
- Intermountain Gas Company
- Northwest Natural Gas Company
- Washington Water Power (CP National)
- Washington Gas
- Northwest Pipeline
- Pacific Gas Transmission (PGT)
- Westcoast Energy

The next few years were tumultuous for the energy industry in general as deregulation took hold. Stakeholders closely evaluated the relevance of association memberships. For instance, the Pacific Coast Gas Association, a 104-year-old trade association was merged with the Western Electric Power Institute to become the Western Energy Institute. Puget Sound Energy acquired Washington Gas; Washington Water Power became Avista and embarked on a bold departure from the traditional

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utility model; PG&E, the parent company of PGT went bankrupt in the wake of the Western Energy Crisis, which also almost bankrupted Avista, Williams others.

In 2002, the NWGA's original Executive Director retired. The Board took a hard look at whether to retain the organization and if so, what they wanted from it. They decided there was continued value in maintaining a focused regional voice for natural gas in the Pacific Northwest, which remained dominated by electricity and associated issues. They hired a new Executive Director later that year and charged him with becoming that voice.

In 2004, Terasen Gas (now FortisBC Energy), the LDC serving British Columbia's Lower Mainland, Vancouver Island and Squamish/Whistler joined the NWGA. 2004 also marked the first iteration of the NWGA's signature Natural Gas Market Outlook. The next year, TransCanada purchased PGT out of bankruptcy and renamed it Gas Transmission Northwest (GTN). Duke Energy purchased the Westcoast system and later spun off its North American gas assets into a separate company, Spectra Energy. Over the next couple of years, MDU Resources purchased both Cascade Natural Gas Corp. and Intermountain Gas Co.

The NWGA Board went through its first formal Strategic Planning Process in 2007. The Plan called for the NWGA to be the go-to source of information relating to natural gas in the Pacific Northwest; to convene its members and stakeholders around common issues, and to advocate as necessary and appropriate. The NWGA Board periodically reviewed and affirmed the relevance of the Plan, which served as the organization's north star for ten years.

By the end of the 2000s, the NWGA membership included:

- Avista
- Cascade Natural Gas Corp
- Intermountain Gas Co
- NW Natural
- Puget Sound Energy
- Spectra Energy
- Terasen Gas
- TransCanada GTN
- Williams NW Pipeline

In 2012, the Board dissolved the original corporation and reincorporated as an IRS recognized 501(c)(6) tax exempt organization registered as an Oregon not-for-profit trade association.

Due to a large turnover of Board members as well as a rapidly evolving policy environment in the Pacific Northwest, the Board undertook a fresh strategic planning process in 2017. The product of that process is a plan that shifts the emphasis of the organization toward being a "tip-of-the-spear" advocate, while retaining its value and credibility as a regional information resource and convener.

As of January 1, 2019, NWGA counts eight members including:

- Avista Utilities
- Enbridge BC Pipeline
- FortisBC Energy
- MDU Utilities
- NW Natural
- Puget Sound Energy
- TransCanada GTN System
- Williams NW Pipeline