January 12, 2026

Via electronic filing

Oregon Public Utility Commission
Attn: Filing Center
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Re: Renewable Northwest's Initial Comments

OPUC Docket No. UM 2417: Identifying Priorities in Implementation of Executive Orders 25-25 and 25-29

Renewable Northwest ("RNW") thanks the Public Utility Commission of Oregon ("PUC" or "Commission") for the opportunity to comment on the Commission's implementation of Executive Orders ("EO") 25-25 and 25-29. Beyond EO implementation, the Commission is also charged with implementing several bills from the 2025 legislative session, including ones that involve opening time-intensive investigations and rulemakings. We appreciate that the Commission is engaging stakeholders in the continued refinement of its workplan and seeking input on how to prioritize the many workstreams on the Commission's plate. Given that the PUC is time and resource constrained, we hope that this exercise will bring forward the most impactful work the Commission can move forward with while meeting all statutory and executive directive deadlines.

By RNW's count, the Governor's recent executive orders include at least ten directives for which the PUC will either be the lead implementing agency or a supporting agency. EO 25-29 directs agencies to "prioritize implementation of the Oregon Energy Strategy Pathways," which is a comprehensive strategy for how Oregon can meet its energy and climate policy objectives. The Energy Strategy includes 42 actions, many of which implicate the PUC. Additionally, the PUC is starting to implement legislation passed in the 2025 session, including but not limited to, the Fair Act (HB 3179), the Power Act (HB 3546), performance based ratemaking (SB 688), microgrids (HB 2066 and HB 2065), grid enhancing technologies (HB 3336), and certificate and public convenience and necessity revisions (HB 3681). With so much work ahead, the PUC should prioritize the issues and solutions that will deliver the biggest impact and spend considerable time on the specific issues over which the PUC has most influence. Luckily, many of the Executive Orders' directives can be integrated into the Commission's existing workplan and

regularly occurring proceedings. For brevity, RNW has re-ordered some of the Commission's questions, which are addressed below.

What are the major barriers to meeting state goals that the PUC can address?

- **Transmission capacity constraints -** Transmission capacity is constrained across the NW, which is a major barrier to clean energy development in the region. This in turn threatens our ability to meet load growth, maintain reliability and affordability, and meet HB 2021's emission reduction targets. The PUC can help address this barrier by requiring and encouraging robust consideration of various transmission alternatives in utility planning processes, as RNW has advocated for in PUC dockets UM 2409 and AR 669, among others.
- **Lack of inter-regional transmission -** Transmission planning is fragmented and has generally occurred at the regional and sub-regional levels. However, inter-regional transmission is increasingly important for a decarbonized grid. Improving inter-regional connections can lower costs, increase reliability, and help meet the state's energy policy goals. The PUC can similarly address this barrier by requiring and encouraging robust consideration of various transmission alternatives.
- **Wildfire risk and liability -** The risk of catastrophic wildfires is increasing across the West. Oregon's investor-owned utilities and its rural electric cooperatives both face uncapped wildfire liability, which threatens their financial stability and reduces their ability to invest in new infrastructure. The risk of wildfire also makes it more challenging for developers to enter into long-term power purchase agreements with utilities since financial institutions don't want to take on unmitigated risk. In addition, wildfire insurance premiums are rising, which eventually ends up in customer rates. Together, these issues threaten our ability to meet HB 2021's emission reduction targets and maintain reliable and affordable electric service. The PUC can address this barrier by implementing the Oregon Energy Strategy's Electricity Action 2, communicating clear requirements for utility wildfire mitigation, implementing any new legislative initiatives, and sending clear regulatory signals that the investment community can digest and comprehend.
- **Siting and permitting -** Siting and permitting is a major barrier to clean energy and transmission development in Oregon. Permitting delays increase project costs which are ultimately borne by Oregon consumers, threaten grid reliability, and challenge our ability to meet HB 2021 targets. While transmission and clean energy siting and permitting largely falls outside the scope of the Commission's regulatory purview, it does retain oversight regarding the issuance of a certificate of public convenience and necessity ("CPCN") for transmission infrastructure. The Commission will implement revisions to its CPCN processes in an HB 3681 (2025) implementation proceeding, but RNW notes that streamlining its CPCN process will help utilities and developers move forward with constructing transmission facilities in a manner that aligns with the Governor's and legislature's intent and helps Oregon meet its clean energy mandates. HB 3681 gives the Commission broad discretion to approve a CPCN if it aligns with a demonstrated need

for new transmission capacity and reliability, and allows the Commission to issue a CPCN without prior state or local land use approvals.[1] These changes should allow the Commission to help support streamlined clean energy procurement to meet Oregon's state mandates.

What specific issues, initiatives, solutions or policies would your organization prioritize when implementing the 2025 legislation and the Governor's recent executive orders? What would successful implementation look like to you? What specific outcomes would you like to see?

RNW Priorities

- **Expediting clean energy procurement** - The PUC should prioritize processes and actions that enable utilities to quickly procure shovel-ready clean energy projects. The One Big Beautiful Bill Act (H.R.1) rapidly phases out the federal Production Tax Credit ("PTC") and Investment Tax Credit ("ITC") for wind and solar resources. Effectively, projects must now start construction by July 4, 2026 – six months from now – to remain eligible for the tax credits. Given the looming deadline, the PUC should support utilities in procuring shovel-ready projects, whether that means reviewing competitive bidding rule waivers in a timely manner or urging utilities to issue requests for proposals ("RFPs") and/or conduct bilateral negotiations. Projects that can secure power purchase agreements ("PPAs") or at least make it onto RFP shortlists ahead of the tax credit expiry will deliver materially lower costs to ratepayers compared to those procured post-expiration. Further, the PUC should seek to eliminate bid criteria within RFPs that unnecessarily limits the bid pool, such as requiring long term firm transmission rights. Any lessons learned about expediting procurement and coordination with siting and permitting agencies could be applied to future proceedings.
- **Increasing transmission capacity** - Transmission capacity constraints are a major barrier to clean energy development in the state and region. The PUC should focus on processes and actions that support the planning and development of new transmission capacity, particularly in existing rights of way ("ROW") and priority corridors, as well as increasing the capacity of the existing transmission system through grid enhancing technologies ("GETs") and other advanced transmission technologies. Also, as discussed, the Commission should encourage broader assessment of transmission investment and alternatives in the various planning processes it oversees.
- **Addressing wildfire risk and liability -** The PUC should prioritize commissioning an expert review of wildfire liability to potentially inform legislative concepts ahead of the 2027 legislative session. This expert review could lead to balanced solutions that mitigate

[1] HB 3681 (2025) Sect. 4(2)(a).

wildfire risk to the greatest extent possible, quickly and fairly compensate wildfire victims, and promote utility solvency.

Successful Implementation

From our perspective, successful implementation of the 2025 legislation and the Governor's EOs would eventually lead to meeting emission reduction targets under HB 2021 and maintaining reliability and affordability, especially in the face of rapid load growth.

Specific Outcomes

- Enhanced coordination between state agencies on siting and permitting approvals for clean energy projects and transmission infrastructure.
- Deeper alignment between planning, procurement, and permitting processes so it is clear how specific projects fulfill identified needs.
- Reduced timelines for connecting new clean energy projects to the grid through utility-specific and BPA interconnection processes.
- Reduced timelines for building new transmission lines.
- Utilities regularly evaluate and deploy GETs, high-performance conductors, and other advanced transmission technologies when cost effective to enhance the capacity, efficiency, reliability or safety of the existing transmission system.
- Identification of critical transmission corridors to meet state energy needs.
- Streamlined siting and permitting approvals for transmission lines within those corridors or within existing ROW.
- The expert review of wildfire risk and liability informs ongoing discussions and culminates in balanced legislative solutions in 2027.
- The existing docket on MYP and PBR (AR 676) results in a multi year plan and performance based ratemaking framework that effectively contains costs for customers and incentivizes utilities to invest in solutions that they are currently not incentivized to invest in (GETs, non-wires alternatives, etc).
- In the near term, clean energy projects are selected through utility RFPs and bilateral negotiations, enabling them to maintain tax credit eligibility, which will result in lower costs for customers.

What are the most impactful, near-term actions the PUC could take? Are there opportunities for quick actions?

- Expediting procurement - As mentioned above, the PUC should focus in the near term on supporting expedited procurement given the looming tax credit cliff. Beyond the expiration of federal tax credits, the region is facing a potential supply shortage by the late 2030s and HB 2021's 2030 emission reduction target, both of which necessitate

bringing new clean resources online as quickly as possible. The PUC can support expedited procurement by urging utilities to issue RFPs or bilateral calls with third-party developers, by expeditiously reviewing waiver requests of competitive bidding rules, and eliminating requirements that unnecessarily limit the bid pool.

- Streamlining siting and permitting - While the PUC is not the main siting and permitting agency for clean energy projects, it does serve an important role through the certificate of public convenience and necessity ("CPCN") process. The PUC is already planning to undertake a rulemaking process to implement changes to the CPCN review criteria, pursuant to HB 3681. HB 3681 also allows for concurrent CPCN and land use processes, which will likely expedite review and lead to greater agency coordination. EO 25-29 section 2c requires agencies to identify opportunities to streamline siting and permitting, allow for contemporaneous review, and accelerate interconnections for projects that reduce emissions, improve reliability, and benefit ratepayers. In the near term, the PUC can provide key insights to lead siting and permitting agencies through this multi-agency coordination effort, particularly around the planning, interconnection, and procurement processes.
- Increasing transmission capacity - The PUC can support transmission through several different pathways.
    - First, EO 25-29 section 2e directs the Oregon Department of Energy ("ODOE") in coordination with the PUC and the Governor's office to develop a strategic transmission siting framework. Through the transmission siting framework, the agencies can identify and designate transmission corridors, streamline partial siting and permitting approvals for future projects in existing ROW and in those corridors, and target financial support for projects in the public interest. Having the PUC at this table, particularly with its knowledge of utility resource planning, utility-specific transmission planning, and various regional transmission planning efforts like WestTEC, NorthernGrid, and more will be critical to the frameworks' success.
    - Second, the proceeding that the PUC opens to address CPCN revisions could allow for other revisions that would further support EO 25-29 direction around a strategic transmission siting framework. Specifically, the PUC could create a pathway to expedited review and approval for transmission projects in existing ROW and any corridors identified by the strategic transmission siting framework, as directed by EO 25-29, Section 2e.
    - Third, the PUC can continue to integrate GETs and other advanced transmission technologies into resource planning through the open investigation in UM 2409, which has the potential to lead to quicker and more frequent deployment of GETs across the state.
- Addressing wildfire liability - EO 25-29 directs state agencies to prioritize implementation of the state Energy Strategy. Specifically, agencies must adopt and implement GHG reduction strategies and align their work with the five least-cost pathways identified in the Energy Strategy. Under the clean electricity pathway, the PUC, in coordination with ODOE, is tasked with commissioning "an expert review of balanced

wildfire utility liability solutions that enable both utility accountability and ongoing customer cost containment, reliability, and decarbonization investments."[2] This report could be instrumental in identifying legislative solutions for the 2027 session that address wildfire risk and liability, which as mentioned above, is a key barrier to utility investment in new infrastructure and financing clean energy projects from third-party developers. The report should include a comprehensive review of what other western states have done to address these issues.

What are the most impactful, long-term actions the PUC could take?

- Implementing performance-based ratemaking - In the longer term, the PUC should adopt a multi-year rate plan framework and performance-based ratemaking which together can incentivize cost containment strategies, emission reduction actions, and investments in programs and actions which further the public interest (e.g. energy efficiency, distributed energy resources, grid resiliency, support for low-income customers, and generally being more efficient). The PUC is already undertaking this effort in several dockets as a result of the FAIR Act (HB 3179) and the performance based regulation act (SB 688). Fortunately, this work overlaps with Electricity Action 8 laid out in the Oregon Energy Strategy: "[I]nvestigate opportunities to modify utility business models and ratemaking practices to enhance marketplace competition and thereby lower costs in utility planning and resource procurements."
- Enabling large load flexibility - Rapid load growth, particularly from large loads like data centers, could threaten regional resource adequacy before 2030. The PUC should explore options for large loads to reduce energy use during periods of grid stress through participation in demand response programs and preferential curtailment during emergencies. Large load flexibility can reduce the need to build new infrastructure and result in cost savings for customers. This strategy dovetails with the EO's focus on accelerating the buildout of clean energy and transmission. In order to reliably serve load and reach HB 2021's targets, we will likely need to invest in a variety of solutions on both the load and generation side.
- Reducing interconnection timelines - The interconnection queue backlog is a major barrier to getting clean energy projects online, but is not an issue we can solve overnight. EO 25-29 directs ODOE, in coordination with the PUC, and the Department of Land Conservation and Development ("DLCD") to "inventory, assess, and analyze barriers to the permitting, construction and interconnection of clean energy projects and associated infrastructure" and then recommend solutions. The PUC can play an instrumental role in identifying barriers to project interconnection, determining what the PUC can influence vs. what the Bonneville Power Administration ("BPA") oversees, and then developing solutions within the PUC's purview.

[2] Oregon State Energy Strategy, Electricity Action 2

- Implementing the statewide energy storage goal - EO 25-29 establishes a goal of deploying 8 GW of energy storage in Oregon by 2045. The PUC, in coordination with other state agencies and the Governor's office, could begin to scope out how to implement this statewide goal.

RNW thanks the Commission for its attention to these comments and looks forward to reviewing comments from other interested parties.

Respectfully submitted this 12th day of January, 2026,

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