



July 3, 2026

To: Oregon Department of Energy

RE: Implementation of EO 25-29 – Comments of Renewable Northwest on ODOE’s Draft Report on Siting and Permitting Large-Scale Electricity Infrastructure

Renewable Northwest (RNW) appreciates the opportunity to comment on the Oregon Department of Energy’s (ODOE) draft report on Siting and Permitting Large-Scale Electricity Infrastructure. This report stems from Governor Kotek’s issuance of Executive Order 25-29 directing ODOE to “evaluate and recommend actions to update siting and permitting processes to facilitate deployment of renewable energy, energy storage, and grid infrastructure needed to deliver reliable and affordable clean energy to Oregon consumers.”¹

RNW is a uniquely positioned organization in the clean energy advocacy space. Our members include the environmental organizations and consumer advocates that helped pass our state’s clean energy laws; the renewable energy and storage developers that build projects necessary to decarbonize our grid and keep the lights on; the engineers, consultants, and attorneys who help clean energy projects through complex siting and permitting processes; and the buyers who support corporate procurement of clean energy. Because of the deep expertise and experience of our membership, we are well positioned to provide insight into the challenges associated with the Energy Facility Siting Council’s (EFSC) process and the opportunities for streamlining.

We appreciate many aspects of EFSC’s existing process, including its comprehensive, consolidated approach, standards-based review, well-established stages, and opportunities for public engagement. These features help ensure that projects are appropriately sited, impacts on people and natural resources are avoided and mitigated to the greatest extent practicable, and state standards are met. RNW also recognizes EFSC’s commitment to continuous improvement, as reflected in this draft report and our experience with the council over the years. That said, there is ample opportunity for streamlining that is not considered in this draft report.

¹ <https://www.oregon.gov/gov/eo/eo-25-29.pdf>

The big picture problem is that Oregon trails almost every other state in adding new renewable energy projects to the grid, despite ambitious clean energy mandates and forecasts of significant demand growth. Oregon needs to figure out how to build more clean energy more quickly to maintain reliability, unlock the cheapest sources of energy, and reduce our greenhouse gas emissions in line with climate science. RNW recognizes that siting and permitting are only one piece of the challenge, but the state should still do everything it can to streamline and modernize those processes as one part of the solution.

EO 25-29 represents a directive to do this work. But instead of getting creative about how EFSC can streamline siting and permitting processes and reduce timelines, the vast majority of the report is an explainer and defense of EFSC's current processes and undertakings. **In fact, only 6 of the 91 pages are dedicated to fresh ideas and problem solving.**

The comments that follow are organized into three sections: 1) comments on EFSC permitting timelines, 2) feedback on ODOE's recommended actions, and 3) reiteration of the recommendations we made in our March 20, 2026 comments for streamlining the siting and permitting process.

I. EFSC Permitting Timelines

ODOE's draft report includes a table of average permitting timelines for renewable energy projects delineated by each stage in the process. What this fails to capture is the full permitting lifecycle - from submission of Notice of Intent (NOI) through issuance of the site certificate. To provide a more complete picture, RNW analyzed EFSC's publicly available project data.

Of the 31 renewable energy projects² that EFSC has evaluated, only eight include complete data from NOI through site certificate issuance. **For those projects, the average permitting timeline was 982 days - roughly 2 years and 8 months.** This timeframe does not include any subsequent amendments to the site certificate. When you consider that 3 of these projects were originally permitted under the same site certificate, **the average permitting timeline grows to 1,130 days - over 3 years.**

While ODOE correctly indicates that EFSC's review from a complete application to site certificate takes a little over 300 days, that represents only a fraction of the overall permitting timeline. The most time-consuming part of the process occurs before an application is deemed complete. For the 10 solar and wind projects for which these data are available, an average of 551 days elapse between the issuance of a Project Order and EFSC's determination of a complete application, as shown in Figure 1 below. While ODOE's report places this timeline squarely on

² This does not include terminated projects because there is not enough available information about permitting timelines for those projects.

developers, **the length of this stage is driven in large part by EFSC’s application requirements.** The extensive analyses, engineering detail, and supporting documentation required to prepare an application largely determine how long this phase takes. Accordingly, one of the greatest opportunities to improve permitting timelines is to evaluate whether all existing application requirements are necessary and whether certain analyses can be scaled to reflect the type, size, and potential impacts of a project.

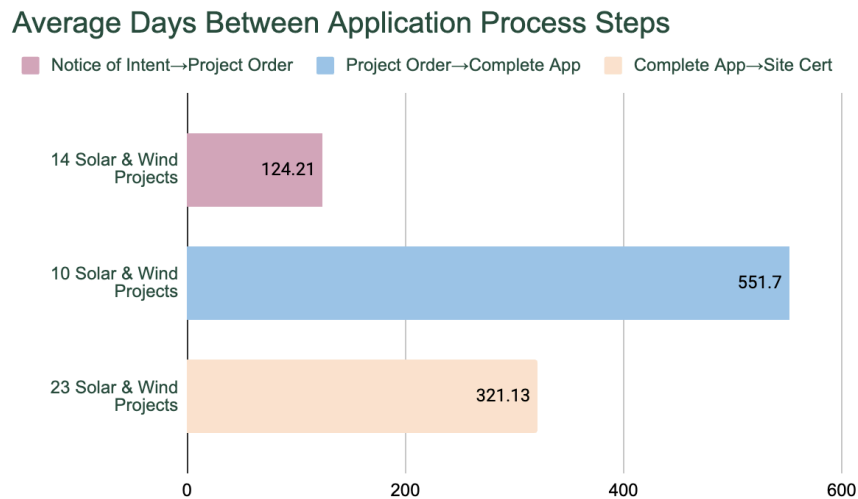


Figure 1. RNW’s analysis of average timelines between key stages in the permitting process

RNW’s findings are consistent with a recent analysis from Berkeley Lab comparing state energy facility permitting timelines across the U.S. Together, **these analyses illustrate that permitting through EFSC takes approximately 3 years to complete.** Further, the study found that the longest phase of the permitting process in Oregon occurs before an application is submitted, with more than 500 days between NOI and application submission, followed by another 300 days between a submission and a determination that the application is complete. While these permitting stages are parsed differently than RNW’s analysis, both analyses demonstrate that the longest part of the process is everything in between initiation and a completed application.

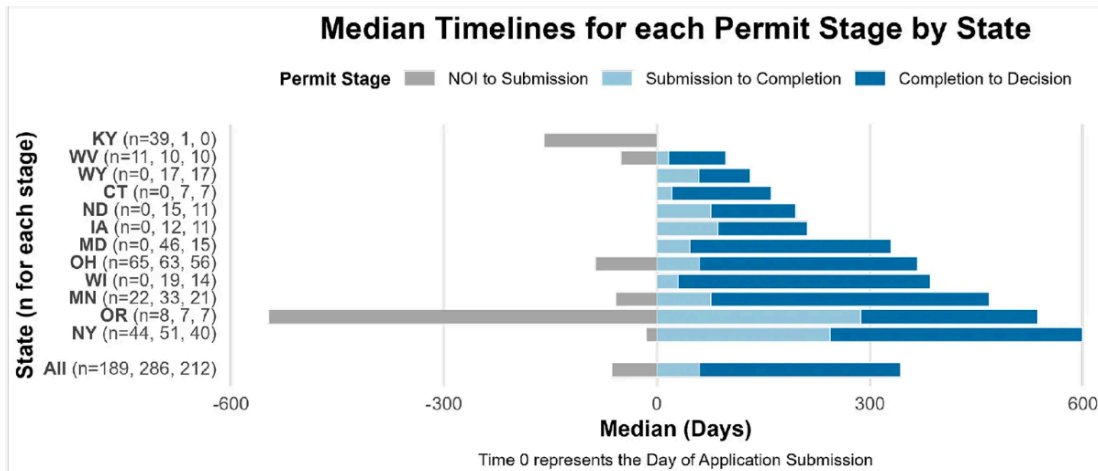


Figure 2. Compares median timelines of each permit stage by state. (Source: *Outcomes and timelines for state-based energy facility permitting in the United States*)

The report notes that “[I]n a few states (OR, NY), the median timeline for submission to completion is substantially longer than in other states, and Oregon also stands out with a long median timeline for Notice of Intent (NOI) to Submission.”³

The report goes on to add:

In Oregon, the public is notified of an upcoming permit application typically at least a year prior to the application submission, and the agency review of applications for completeness takes approximately as long as reaching a decision. The “submission to completion” stage is also noticeably longer in New York than in most other states. This may be an indication that the permitting process is exceptionally onerous or challenging for developers to comply with in Oregon and New York, and clearer guidelines or standardization may be helpful, but we cannot be certain and this deserves further research.

This is precisely the kind of analysis RNW hoped ODOE would undertake pursuant to the EO. **We urge ODOE to pursue a more robust evaluation of the EFSC permitting timeline - particularly the drivers of the long timelines reflected in the NOI to Submission and Submission to Completion stages - for the final report to the Governor.** Understanding what makes these phases so time-intensive is essential to identifying meaningful opportunities to streamline permitting while maintaining rigorous environmental review and public participation.

³ Nilson R, Tao L, Maddock W, Katz J, Baillargeon N and Hoen B (2026) Outcomes and timelines for state-based energy facility permitting in the United States. *Front. Sustain. Energy Policy* 5:1715811. doi: 10.3389/fsuep.2026.1715811

II. ODOE Recommended Actions

RNW supports several of the recommendations ODOE puts forward in the draft report, including those under the headings “Contested Case Step Review,” Streamlining Information Requirements to Meet Important Resource Standards,” and “Meaningful Engagement on Focused Issues.” In turn, we take these sections to mean that EFSC is committed to re-evaluating parts of the contested case process, allowing federal review to satisfy council standards where appropriate, and rightsizing application requirements through EFSC’s ongoing Phase 3 rulemaking process. Below we provide comments on each recommendation.

First, as the report notes, a full Contested Case takes an average of 427 days and is one of the longest steps in the process. During the June 26 Council Meeting, the siting division director noted that the contested case is just one stage in EFSC’s process whereas for some state processes, the contested case is the whole process. EFSC identifies two steps in the contested case process as duplicative of siting division review and notes that they “could be removed or scaled back with no or minimal substantive impacts to the value of Contested Case.” **We support EFSC’s continued evaluation of which stages in the contested case process could be removed or paired back, as well as identification of a procedural pathway to implementation.**

Second, the report recommends that ODOE consults with a lawyer to determine if Council standards could be met through federal environmental review for projects with a federal nexus. **RNW strongly supports a robust evaluation of how federal environmental review and Council review can be harmonized to avoid duplication and unnecessary delay.** This may be particularly important for transmission projects as they are likely to cross federal land and lack of transmission capacity is one of the biggest impediments to clean energy development in Oregon. The Boardman to Hemingway (B2H) is an unfortunate example of how the federal and state level permitting processes can operate in tension with one another. **RNW recommends that the final report more thoroughly evaluate opportunities for streamlining between federal and state permitting and identify a procedural pathway to implementing recommended changes.**

Finally, **we support EFSC’s continuation of its phase 3 rulemaking to evaluate and right-size application requirements.** Specifically, the rulemaking aims to ensure that required information is “clearly defined, proportionate, and directly connected to each standard.” This aligns with our recommendation for a programmatic review of EFSC’s application requirements. As the rulemaking proceeds, we encourage EFSC to ensure that it streamlines the application process and avoids introducing unnecessary or overly burdensome requirements.

In the draft report, these recommendations are presented primarily as areas for further investigation by ODOE. In the final report, we encourage ODOE to develop these into more specific, actionable recommendations that can advance the EO's goal of streamlining siting and permitting.

III. RNW Recommended Actions

RNW submitted comments on March 20, 2026, seeking to provide constructive inputs for ODOE's draft report on siting and permitting large-scale electricity infrastructure. While we do not repeat those comments in full here, we highlight several key recommendations that we encourage ODOE to incorporate into its final report, along with a few additional recommendations for consideration.

- **Reduce the EFSC permitting timeline to one year using existing staff and resources.** This will require streamlining or eliminating lower-value processes and focusing on the most critical and impactful aspects of the siting and permitting process. This recommendation is not intended to reduce meaningful public participation or environmental review. Rather, we recommend a programmatic review of current requirements to right-size analyses and information requirements for Council standards. EFSC could look at county procedures and assess whether certain analyses can be reduced or eliminated from the site certificate application.
- **Shorten the timeline between the submission of a Notice of Intent (NOI) and the issuance of a Project Order to 60 days.** Although EFSC does not always take the full 140 days under OAR 345-015-0160(2)(5), the NOI-to-Project Order phase is a key period to streamline as EFSC already knows the standards against which it evaluates projects and the Project Order is largely a standardized document.
- **Use a discretionary approach to limit Requests for Additional Information (RAIs).** Projects can get caught in endless cycles of RAIs that provide little additional value while extending timelines. We understand the need for EFSC to be able to issue RAIs, so instead of placing strict limits on these requests, we recommend using discretion to limit the extended request cycles.
- **Allow greater flexibility in facility design within permitted project boundaries.** The site certificate application requires a level of engineering detail that is unreasonable years before a project will actually reach construction. Because equipment availability and market conditions often change during that time, many projects end up needing amendments, which add further delay. Allowing more design flexibility within approved project boundaries would reduce unnecessary amendments without comprising environmental review.
- **Recognize state clean energy policies as a basis for a Goal 3 exception.** Currently, state energy policies like HB 2021 and the Renewable Portfolio Standard are not

recognized as sufficient justification for a Goal 3 exception at EFSC. As a result, Oregon’s land use framework and energy policy objectives operate in tension with one another, creating additional uncertainty, delay, and cost for projects intended to advance state clean energy goals. Allowing state energy policies to be considered as part of the exception analysis would better align these policy frameworks while preserving discretion to evaluate impacts on agricultural lands. EFSC can implement this change without legislative action.

- **For amendment requests that are largely administrative in nature, EFSC should implement a fast track administrative update process.** For requests like facility name changes, construction extension requests, and the division of a large facility into smaller ones, which have little to no impact on the environment or the public, EFSC Staff should evaluate the request administratively rather than requiring a formal amendment process and Council approval. Further, these kinds of requests should not require hundreds of pages of supporting documentation. These changes would substantially reduce delays after site certificates are issued and lower the cost of energy projects.
- **Strengthen the expertise and effectiveness of the Energy Facility Siting Council.** ODOE should explore options to ensure the Council has the expertise necessary to evaluate renewable energy projects, including:
 - Professionalizing the Council so that members are well-paid, can do this work full-time, and have deep expertise in the issues that come before EFSC.
 - Reserving at least one Council position for someone with expertise in renewable energy development, a critical perspective in energy siting.
 - Reserving at least one Council position for someone with expertise in energy policy or law, another critical perspective in energy siting.
 - Reducing the size of the Council to improve efficiency.
 - Evaluating alternative governance structures, including the use of a hearings officer.
- **Evaluate how EFSC can support more efficient reviews of transmission infrastructure.** Use the experience of permitting Boardman to Hemingway (“B2H”) to identify procedural and substantive changes that could have streamlined the siting and permitting process. Potential options include: an ODOE concierge service for transmission projects where one staff person plays a coordinating role between utilities, developers, local governments, tribes, and state and federal agencies. Another option is to standardize and make clear from the outset the environmental review requirements that agencies will seek on transmission projects. For example, applicants seeking to build transmission lines should know before they submit a notice of intent (NOI) what studies and information will be required from the various state agencies that engage in EFSC’s review of site certificates for transmission lines.⁴

⁴ See recommendations from the Sightline Institute’s “Four Ways to Get More Power Lines—and Clean Power—for Oregonians” by Kelly Trumbull: <https://www.sightline.org/2026/03/26/four-ways-to-get-more-power-lines-and-clean-power-for-oregonians/>

- **Implement a plan to achieve the EO’s goal of deploying 8 GW of energy storage by 2045.** The EO establishes a statewide goal of deploying 8 GW of energy storage by 2045 but does not assign responsibility for achieving that goal to a specific agency. We recommend that ODOE take the lead in developing an implementation strategy, in coordination with the PUC and other relevant agencies, that sets interim milestones, identifies barriers to storage deployment, and recommends policy changes needed to achieve the 2045 target.

IV. Conclusion

RNW appreciates the opportunity to comment on ODOE’s draft report on siting and permitting large-scale electricity infrastructure. We urge the agency to take a more ambitious approach in its implementation of the Governor’s executive order. With Oregon’s binding 2030 clean electricity requirements rapidly approaching and growing load, the state cannot afford unnecessary delays in bringing new resources online. While siting and permitting is only one part of the development process, it is a critical one. ODOE should more fully evaluate opportunities to streamline siting and permitting while retaining robust environmental review and public engagement.

Respectfully submitted this 3rd day of July, 2026

/s/ Katie Chamberlain

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Renewable Northwest