

PUC UPDATE*

Stakeholder Update

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About this Publication, Name Needed

In an effort to keep stakeholders updated on what’s happening at the PUC, we have decided to periodically distribute information via this newsletter. We hope the information is helpful as you continue engaging in PUC processes.

*** We are seeking your creative ideas to help name this publication.** The winning name will be selected by a team of PUC employees. Please submit your publication name entries to kandi.young@puc.oregon.gov.

Message from the Executive Director

Welcome to the first edition of our new stakeholder newsletter (*which you can help name - see above*). Our intent is to provide periodic updates to help you, our stakeholders, better understand who we are as an agency and the work that we’re doing. This is especially important as the PUC is continuing to expand our efforts to engage new stakeholders as we address legislative directives and changes in the utility sector.



Mike Grant
Executive Director

This year, you can expect future publications to inform you about the PUC’s work to collaborate at the regional level on markets and transmission issues, advance our agency’s engagement with diversity, equity, and inclusion, facilitate new policies into our regulatory structure, address wildfire mitigation and planning, establish plans to meet legislative directives on topics such as climate and clean energy, and much more. We will also provide administrative and operational updates on changes to key personnel, business practices, and organizational structure.

I hope you find this newsletter informative and helpful as you engage in PUC activities. Please let us know if there are topics of interest you’d like to see covered in future publications.

Mike

PUC’s New PDX Office

Yes, we are moving the PUC’s Portland Office! For the past ten years, we have maintained office space in Portland, most recently near the Convention Center. The agency believed that having a presence in Portland would be beneficial as most of our stakeholders and the three largest energy utilities are based there. Additionally, many PUC staff live in the Portland Metropolitan area, which allows opportunities to meet with utilities and stakeholders in person without traveling to Salem.

We move to the new downtown Portland location the first week of April. The new office is at 200 Market Street, Suite 1830, close to Portland State University and Smart Park parking. At this new location, the PUC will have access to an in-office conference room, a large common (shared) conference room, and a large auditorium that is technically a part of Willamette University. Access to these facilities will allow us to conduct hybrid and in-person hearings, workshops, and other PUC events.

About the Climate & Clean Energy Agenda

As many of you know, the electric and natural gas industries are undergoing rapid and significant change. The effects of technology innovation, new policies and environmental directives, a greater awareness of the need to address equity and environmental justice, and increased impacts and future risks from climate change are all having a profound impact on these industry sectors.

The PUC is actively addressing these changes in its regulatory practice and proceedings. Responding to both external directives and internal recognition of a need for action, the PUC is addressing climate and clean energy in a variety of dockets and proceedings—in addition to the significant traditional ratemaking and regulatory oversight routinely performed by the PUC.

To help summarize this work, the PUC developed its Climate and Clean Energy Agenda, which is posted online. This agenda contains a high-level summary of activities in four key areas related to climate and clean energy and is intended to combine and largely replace previous work plans created in response to the Governor’s Executive Order 20-04 and the 2021 Legislative Session. Each section contains a summary of the primary directives and drivers for action, as well as the PUC’s actions and decisions. The information is intended to provide the reader a broad overview of the various work streams at the PUC, with hyperlinks to additional resources to provide an opportunity for a deeper and more thorough understanding of these activities and their current status.

It is important to note that this Climate and Clean Energy Agenda covers only a portion of the PUC’s work and is not intended to capture the breadth of the agency’s regulatory role and functions. Please visit the “About Us” section on the [PUC’s Website](#) for additional resources on our mission and scope of responsibility. For a more detailed summary of the 2021 legislation that is driving many of the activities listed here, please refer to the PUC’s [2021 Legislative Summary](#).



[Utility Planning and Programs](#)



[Wildfire Prevention and Mitigation](#)



[Transportation Electrification](#)



[Equity and Impacted Communities](#)



Help Promote Faster Internet Oregon Campaign

The PUC is encouraging Oregonians to report their home internet speed data or lack of internet service as part of Faster Internet Oregon’s internet speed test and broadband mapping survey. This information will help secure infrastructure funding and ensure it is allocated so every Oregon resident has access to fast, affordable internet service.



Congress’s bipartisan broadband infrastructure funding bills are distributing billions to the states with the goal of making equitable internet access for all Americans a reality. These broadband funding programs present an unprecedented opportunity to overcome the enormous challenges that have kept reliable, affordable Internet service out of reach for many rural and Tribal communities.

Encourage your members, constituents, family, and friends to take part in the speed test and survey at: www.fasterinternetoregon.org.

PUC's Budget Request – Quick Facts

As with other state agencies, the PUC is seeking legislative approval of its budget for the upcoming 2023-2025 biennium. Our request includes three policy option packages (POPs) that seek additional positions and resources to help the agency meet its growing workload.

Below you will find quick facts about our 2023-2025 agency budget request, as well as summaries of our POPs.

\$118,432,200 – Total Funds

- \$62,389,094 – Other Funds Limited (OFL)
- \$54,829,960 Other Funds Non-Limited (OFNL) - Oregon Universal Service Fund
- \$1,213,146 – Federal Funds Limited (FFL)
- Approximate **11.88 percent** increase from 2021-2023
- 6.23 percent OFL increase
- 2.73 percent FFL increase
- 19.34 percent OFNL increase



Full-Time Employees (FTE) = 141.0 (142 positions) – Three positions in Policy Option Package (POP) 101 (3.0 FTE), four positions (4.75 FTE) in POP 103; 2021-2023 135.5 FTE (140 positions)

Program Areas (Current Service Level)

- Commissioners – 3 positions
- Utility Program – 100 positions
- Policy and Administration – 22 positions (plus 2 Maritime Pilot positions)
- Residential Service Protection Fund (RSPF) – 8 positions
- Policy Option Packages 101 and 103 will increase staffing by seven positions.

Utility Fee - 0.43 percent – Average cost to customer is \$0.37 per utility bill. Total revenue collected by Oregon utilities equals approximately \$4.0 billion per year.

Residential Service Protection Fund (RSPF) Surcharge - \$0.03 per access line; decreased from \$0.10 in 2022.

Policy Option Packages (POPs)

- **POP 101** – Create three new positions to provide subject matter expertise and analysis for power systems issues within planning, policy, and ratemaking dockets or lead power systems-focused dockets and special projects.
- **POP 102** - Increase the professional services budget to allow the PUC to contract for subject matter professionals to assist and augment the PUC in fulfilling its mission. Expertise on certain subjects within the PUC's growing scope of work (cybersecurity financial derivatives, interconnection modernization, performance-based regulation, modeling and valuation) are often best obtained through the use of external consultants.
- **POP 103** - Reclassify three positions we received approval for to help implement House Bill (HB) 2021 (2021)—these positions were limited duration and funded through June 2023. The PUC seeks to reclassify these positions into permanent full-time positions and to create a new Utility Analyst 2 position. The work created with the passage of HB 2021 will continue beyond the current biennium and these positions will be needed to continue and fulfill the obligations of a clean energy transition in Oregon.

Hearing Room Capabilities and In-Person vs. Hybrid Public Meetings

The COVID-19 pandemic forced the PUC to send staff home to work in March of 2020, and since that time we have been hosting public meetings virtually via Zoom. Through conversations with stakeholders and the public, we have found the virtual meeting option is more convenient for many people wishing to participate in our processes, however, there are some who prefer to have an in-person option as well.

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In order to accommodate a hybrid public meeting option, meaning the ability to handle virtual and in-person attendees at the same time, the PUC's Information Systems Team has been working to make upgrades to the PUC's Hearing Room. This room, which is where all public meetings were held prior to COVID, now has a camera and speaker system in place to show three camera angles, allowing attendees to talk without the use of a wireless microphone during a Zoom meeting. There are four cameras installed in the Hearing room that provide a viewpoint of the dais, the audience, and the east and west sides of the room. During Zoom meetings, we can show three of the four views due to Zoom limitations. Instead of using individual wireless microphones, attendees can now use an in-ceiling microphone array to talk and be heard in the room and online.



Recent hybrid public comment hearing in La Grande with Commissioners and participants in person and by phone.

Intervenor Funding Available to Expand PUC Participation

In February, the PUC approved a comprehensive funding agreement for justice communities -- groups representing environmental justice communities and low-income customers in the service territories of PGE, PacifiCorp, NW Natural, Idaho Power, Avista, and Cascade Natural. You [can view the agreement online](#).



This funding is made available through House Bill (HB) 2475 (2021) legislation, which allocates \$500,000 annually of ratepayer money for groups looking to participate in PUC proceedings to represent justice communities in Oregon. The funding can be used to provide money to justice community group staff to engage in PUC cases, hire attorneys or experts, or support the engagement of members of underrepresented communities in our processes.

There are two types of funding available:

1. Request funding on a docket-by-docket basis. This means a group may request funds as they start to participate in a single docket. Up to 50 percent of this funding is available up front.
2. Pre-certification grant funding is available to groups wishing to participate in a variety of dockets. All of this funding can be requested up front and can operate as a multi-subject grant for activity at the PUC. Importantly, this funding is limited to representation of communities and issues in the PGE, PacifiCorp, and NW Natural service territories.

Rules are being developed to implement this legislation. View the proposed rules in [Docket No. AR 652](#).

[For more information on pre-certification grant funding, view this document](#). Please submit pre-certification funding requests through the PUC's Filing Center referencing Docket No. UM 2276. If you have questions, please submit those to Nolan Moser, Chief Administrative Law Judge at 503-689-3622 or Nolan.moser@puc.oregon.gov.

Activities & Discovery System Update

For the past 20 years, the PUC has utilized a custom built and maintained software program called 'BizApps' to handle docketing internally and externally. After an extensive solicitation process and discovery phase to determine stakeholder needs, the PUC selected a vendor to replace this system.

Staff has been working closely with Aeon Nexus, the selected vendor, to develop our new system, which we are calling "Activities and Discovery" or ADS for short. This system is designed to enable users to view, review, and create a variety of filings and actions; staff to update and create events for a docket; parties to view, create, and

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respond to discovery requests; and users to view and review consumer complaints and manage subscription lists for specific dockets. The system is designed to enable external stakeholders to efficiently file documents and conduct discovery (replacing Huddle).

Before we can go live with ADS, we have two key issues we are still working on with the vendor. The first is to ensure large files can be uploaded to the system that meet the needs of stakeholders. The second is ensuring the system has appropriate security features in place. Until these two key issues are resolved, the PUC is unable to move closer to going live with this project.

We will keep you posted on the progress of the ADS project through this publication.

[View online for more information](#) on this project, including training videos.

PUC’s DEI Framework: A Builder’s Guide

As the PUC’s Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Director, I recently presented the [Framework for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion](#) at the March 7 public meeting. Let’s take a moment to discuss the Framework in more detail.



The Cambridge dictionary defines framework as “A structure around or over which something is built.” It also defines a framework as “A system of rules, ideas, and beliefs that is used to plan or decide something.” The PUC’s framework serves as a builder’s guide for the agency’s Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Operations

Plan—activities supporting diversity, equity and inclusion within the routine operation of the PUC.

The idea of a framework is not new, rather the term “*framework*” is an example of the evolution of language surrounding DEI and utility regulation. Considering the framework, a system of rules, ideas, and beliefs that is used to plan or decide something, PUC staff and other personnel are “builders,” using the DEI framework as a blueprint, with the overarching design being the [State of Oregon’s Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Action Plan](#).

You may ask, “What does this mean and how can I be involved?” We invite you, to act as inspectors, utilizing our framework to ensure that our structure is ‘code compliant.’ We invite you to “inspect” the four pillars of the DEI Framework outlined in the plan (see above link).

We realize the importance in the ability to hold multiple perspectives and value you as accountability partners to help us carry out our mission to its fullest through the careful formulation and execution of our operations plan. And I’m honored to be a ‘foreperson’ on this construction site.

- Ezell Watson III

HB 2021 Implementation Activities Online

At a recent public meeting, stakeholders requested a dedicated webpage describing all the HB 2021 implementation activities, including descriptions of the dockets and links to important orders. We listened, and now have a dedicated page: [View this new page to stay informed on implementation efforts](#).

Access this page on the website in two ways:

1. Select the *Dockets & Topics of Interest* page (On the [home page](#) under *Utilities & Stakeholder list*)
2. Under *Utility Regulation* in the drop-down at the top, select *Energy-Electric & Natural Gas*. It’s the last link in the list under *Energy Initiatives*.

