



# Oregon

Tina Kotek, Governor



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## Energy Advisory Work Group

### Meeting Notes

DATE: January 22, 2026

TIME: 2:00 – 4:00PM

Oregon Department of Energy – via WebEx

Meeting Attendees		
EAWG Members	ODOE Staff	Guests
<p>Alessandra de la Torre, NW Energy Coalition            Annette Price, Pacific Power            Bridget Callahan, Sustainable Northwest            Greg Alderson, Portland General Electric            Jana Gastellum, Oregon Environmental Council            Jennifer Hill-Hart, Oregon Citizens' Utility Board (alternate for Bob Jenks)            Kerry Meade, Building Potential            Lauren Kolojejchick-Kotch, Community Action Partnership of Oregon            Lisa Gaines, Oregon State University            Mary Moerlins, NW Natural            Nicole Hughes, Renewable Northwest            Silvia Tanner, Multnomah County            Tashiana Wangler, Avangrid Power            Tim Lynch, Multnomah County (alternate for Silvia Tanner)            Wade Carey, Monmouth Power &amp; Light</p>	<p>Janine Benner, Director            Alan Zelenka, Asst Director Planning &amp; Innovation            Christy Splitt, Government Relations Coordinator            Edith Bayer, Energy Systems Sr. Policy Analyst            Jenny Kalez, Communications Director            Joni Sliger, Sr. Clean Electricity &amp; Markets Analyst            Lauren Rosenstein, Community Equity &amp; Inclusion Analyst            Katelyn Jackson, Public Affairs Specialist            Ruchi Sadhir, Assoc Director, Strategic Engagement            Stacey Heuberger, Office Operations Analyst</p>	<p>Alec Shebiel            Alysha Vilelli            Angela Crowley-Koch            Beth Bray            Brad Reed            Brian Stewart            Clark Brockman            Danelle Romain            Dave Cobar            David Anuta            Denise Lopez            Destiny Sargent            Fatima Falcon            Forest Tanier-Gesner            Greg Miller            Hannah Dondy-Kaplan            Jamie Allen            Jennifer Joly            Kelly Fukai            Kelly Thomas            Mary Rudolph-Knobbe            Natalia Ojeda            Sarah Kirby            Trevor Weltzer            Tucker Billman            Vinh Mason            Vinny Jasso            Zach Waas Smith</p>

### Welcome and Director's Update (*Janine Benner, Director*)

- Janine welcomed members and attendees and introduced Lauren Kolojejchick-Kotch from Community Action Partnership of Oregon as a new member of the Energy Advisory Work Group.
- ODOE is preparing for the 2026 legislative session, focusing on budget conversations. ODOE, along with all state agencies, submitted information to the legislature last fall on how it could reduce spending. If the legislature adopts these reductions, it will have an impact on ODOE's work, especially efforts to visit and engage with Oregonians across the state.

- ODOE will be seeking technical adjustments to the 2025-2027 budget to increase limitation to allow ODOE to spend the remaining funds in the Solar Rebate and Heat Pump accounts. ODOE will also be asking for limitation to spend money from the grant that funds the Governor's Climate Advisor position. Janine reiterated that these are technical adjustments to the current budget and are not requests for new money.
- The ODOE team is starting to think about Policy Option Packages and legislative concepts for the 2027 session. This will likely be an agenda item at the next EAWG meeting.
- ODOE is working on implementing the Energy Strategy. While this may involve legislative concepts in 2027, ODOE is focused on actions that can be moved forward without additional resources for now.

**EAWG Roundtable - What are you hearing about/watching for/working on for the 2026 legislative session?**

**Lisa Gaines, Oregon State University Institute for Natural Resources**

- Will be watching the Higher Education Coordinating Committee since INR falls within those state programs. Will also be watching for anything related to the Independent Research and Science Team.

**Nicole Hughes, Renewable Northwest**

- Interested in wildfire liability, transmission, and permitting issues.
- Involved in three lawsuits against the Trump administration for the federal executive orders that have impacted the permitting of renewable energy projects in Oregon.
- Diane Brandt will be managing Renewable Northwest's engagement in the upcoming legislative session.

**Jana Gastellum, Oregon Environmental Council**

- Sarah Clark is OEC's new Deputy Director of Programs. They are also recruiting for a Legislative Director.
- Will be watching transportation conversations. Oregon needs a holistic package that supports multimodal clean, affordable, accessible, safe, and climate-smart transportation.
- Will also be watching anything related to transmission or renewables, including anything that helps make better and more efficient use of energy, like the idea of virtual power plants.
- Supporting the Climate Superfund bill.

**Tashiana Wangler, Avangrid Power**

- Interested in any changes that will impact permitting for energy resources.
- Hearing there might be conversations on perusing Cap and Trade in 2027.

**Wade Carey, Monmouth Power and Light**

- Monitoring the nuclear study, plug in solar, and virtual power plants this upcoming session.

**Annette Price, Pacific Power**

- Pacific Power has been in the process of settling several of the wildfire lawsuits.
- Looking to hold back any punitive wildfire legislation.
- Hired two Senior Government Affairs representatives, Katie Morrison and Natasha Jackson.

**Greg Alderson, Portland General Electric**

- Reviewing legislative concepts and will be watching all energy-related legislation this upcoming session.
- Working on a small fix around utility insurance.
- Interested in the implementation around the Governor's two executive orders on energy siting and permitting.

**Jennifer Hill-Hart, Citizens' Utility Board**

- Busy implementing bills from the 2025 legislative session.
- Doesn't anticipate as much engagement during the 2026 session, given their capacity.

**Kerry Meade, Building Potential**

- Building efficiency, behind-the-meter energy generation, and storage are all topics they will be interested in tracking this session.
- Will be engaged in the virtual power plants bill.

**Alessandra de la Torre, NW Energy Coalition**

- Supporting the Climate Superfund, as well as virtual power plants.
- Interested in anything related to wildfire liability or a wildfire fund.

**Mary Moerlins, NW Natural**

- Reviewing all energy related legislative concepts. Also watching Washington's session, currently underway.
- Starting second year of carbon regulation in Oregon, under the Climate Protection Program.
- Navigating the latest climate executive order from the Governor, learning what that will mean to them as a utility.
- NW Natural's customer affordability offerings have been consolidated into one department to ease access.

**Bridget Callahan, Sustainable Northwest**

- Focusing on implementing legislation from last session, but will be watching for anything related to energy, wildfires, and water this short session.
- SNW is hosting the Energy Resilience for Local and Tribal Governments Workshop on January 27.

**Lauren Kolojejhick-Kotch, CAPO**

- Lauren is CAPO's Utility Policy Manager and works in both weatherization and energy assistance, focusing on affordability and community impact.
- Will be tracking legislation that leans towards housing this session, including the inclusive utility investment bill.

**Tim Lynch, Multnomah County Office of Sustainability**

- Looking at budget concerns this session and how the federal impacts will trickle down through the states to local governments.
- Interested in virtual power plants and inclusive utility investments.

**ODOE's 2026 Session Update** (*Christy Splitt, Government Relations Coordinator*)

- ODOE is seeing a specific theme around permitting this session and is currently tracking four permitting-related legislative concepts: LCs 185, 193, 201, and LC 109 which was developed by the Governor's Office.
- LC 286 is the EFSC exemption concept. With the expiring federal tax credits, there is interest in getting projects started sooner rather than later. ODOE supports that effort and is already working under EO 25-25 to accelerate projects.
- A solar consumer protection concept, LC 283, would require minor rule changes to ODOE's Solar Rebate program.
- Two repeat concepts from last session would both require ODOE-lead studies. LC 309 would require a study on nuclear energy, focusing on small modular reactors and requiring robust tribal consultation. This concept would require a report due February 2027 but is contingent on ODOE finding a non-state source to fund the study. Another study on fuel diversification, LC 126, would require ODOE to address Oregon's reliance on a single fuel storage hub and evaluate other places where storage could take place. That report would be due June 2027.
- LC 226 would have ODOE apply for startup funding to explore needs and design for a clean energy infrastructure fund.

**Questions and feedback:**

None.

**Executive Order Update & Discussion** (*Janine Benner, Edith Bayer, Energy Systems Sr Policy Analyst*)

- Governor Kotek issued three executive orders related to energy and climate change and each of them includes directives to ODOE.
- EO 25-25: Accelerating Wind and Solar Energy Development in Advance of Elimination of Federal Clean Energy Tax Credits. This order directs relevant state agencies and commissions to take necessary steps to accelerate and prioritize siting and permitting reviews for solar and wind projects starting construction by July 4 so they can qualify for federal clean tax credits. ODOE has identified those projects and is working with developers to help expedite the approval process. This includes site certificate approvals, as well as meeting pre-construction conditions.

- EO 25-26: Directing State Agencies to Take Urgent Action to Promote the Resilience of Our Communities and Natural and Working Lands and Waters. While this EO is directed towards land management agencies, ODOE is a named agency and the Climate Action Team’s work on natural climate solutions and the Oregon Climate Action Commission will overlap. Leadership from these agencies have begun meeting to plan for this EO.
- EO 25-29: Reducing Greenhouse Gas Emissions and Advancing Oregon’s Clean Energy Future. In this EO, the Governor directs Executive Branch agencies to align decisions, activities, and investments to advance the least-cost pathways identified in the Oregon Energy Strategy. There are several specific directives to ODOE in this EO.
  - There are three main components of this order: prioritize implementation of the Energy Strategy pathways, get clean energy projects built, and build a resilient clean economy.
  - ODOE is directed to work with the PUC and the Department of Land Conservation and Development to reduce barriers to clean energy development. ODOE will inventory, assess, and analyze those barriers to permitting, construction, and interconnection of clean energy project and then recommend actions to the Energy Facility Siting Council for discussion. ODOE will report the findings and recommendations to the Governor by September 1, 2026.
  - ODOE, including the Oregon Climate Action Commission and the Energy Facility Siting Council, will be working with DEQ, DOGAMI, and the PUC to evaluate and make recommended actions to streamline existing energy siting processes, establish parallel paths for approval processes, and facilitate or accelerate interconnections. Those recommendations will also go to the Governor on September 1.
  - ODOE will undertake a process to evaluate and propose a framework to strategically accelerate transmission corridors, streamline partial siting and permitting approvals in those corridors, and direct financial support for projects that benefit the public interest. This proposal will go to the legislature for consideration in 2027.
  - The EO directs ODOE, and other agencies, to explore and prioritize opportunities for public-private partnerships to support development and deployment of clean energy technologies that align with Oregon’s carbon-free energy and economic development opportunities. Agencies are required to report quarterly on progress.
  - ODOE is required to evaluate emerging clean energy technologies and report progress and key findings in the 2026 Biennial Energy Report.
  - ODOE is working on an implementation plan for this EO and will share it when it is complete.

***Questions and feedback:***

Lauren Kolojejchick-Kotch asked why OHCS is not a named agency in the directive regarding clean energy development barriers. Janine noted that while OHCS is not listed in the EO, ODOE will collaborate with OHCS on relevant Energy Strategy pathways.

Tim Lynch said there is interest from trades, utilities, and community members in thermal energy networks (TENs) and asked if ODOE has formally looked into that as a potential

alternative or supplement to existing networks. Edith said that TENs are a potential area to look into more in the Energy Strategy and would like to continue the conversation.

Edith addressed a chat discussion on virtual power plants (VPPs), noting that near term grid relief actions in the Energy Strategy could include VPPs. Angela Crowley-Koch added that an LC related to VPPs is under consideration this session, and OSSIA is developing an amendment that would allow utilities to participate as VPP aggregators.

### **ODOE Strategic Plan Presentation & Discussion** (*Ruchi Sadhir, Assoc Director for Strategic Engagement*)

- Ruchi reviewed the development process for ODOE's 2025–2029 Strategic Plan and reintroduced consultant Sylvia Cibrowski, who met with EAWG members in September 2025.
- Sylvia summarized themes raised by EAWG members at their prior meeting and many are incorporated throughout the draft plan.
- ODOE will not be changing its Mission Statement.
- The Values in this plan have been slightly updated by adding a word or two before each value statement. Fiscal Responsibility and Professional Excellence have been added as their own standalone values.
- Ruchi reviewed the five pillars that ODOE chose to focus on for the next five years:

#### **1. Address Oregon's Greatest Energy Challenges**

While ODOE has a lot of important responsibilities, there are also directed plans and strategies that require significant effort and focus. At the same time, ODOE wants to respond and adapt to emerging ideas, best practices, and legislative direction. This pillar aims to prioritize and align resources that will support ODOE's role in implementing and advancing the Energy Strategy, the Energy Security Plan, and Oregon's energy needs while maintaining flexibility to respond and strategically adapt to shifting circumstances.

#### **2. Proactive, Inclusive Communication and Collaboration**

Through constructive dialogue grounded in active listening, clear and accessible communication, and coordinated internal efforts, ODOE seeks to strengthen outreach, engagement, and collective problem-solving on key energy issues.

#### **3. Accessible, Effective Services and Programs**

There are a range of people and organizations that work with ODOE programs, from non- technical experts to companies and researchers who expect advanced levels of information. Each service and program should meet the specific needs of its intended user.

#### **4. Aligned, Effective People and Operations**

ODOE's mission depends on the people doing the work, as well as making sure that processes and technology are supporting all agency functions effectively. This pillar aims to clarify roles and priorities, create an aligned, well-supported organization that can operate efficiently and stay focused on the agency's most important priorities.

#### **5. Reliable, Responsive Data and Analysis**

This pillar focuses on strengthening how ODOE collects, manages, analyzes, and uses energy-related data so it can reliably fulfill its statutory role as Oregon's central source of credible energy information.

- More in-depth descriptions of goals and actions for each pillar are available in the packet materials provided to members.
- Ruchi asked members to think about whether this strategic plan reflects the key takeaways that have been raised throughout the process. Members can reach out to Ruchi or Janine with any questions, suggestions, or feedback.

***Questions and feedback:***

Ruchi clarified for Nicole Hughes that ODOE is aiming to publish the final strategic plan early this year.

Silvia Tanner recommended engaging organizations with successful outreach models (e.g., Community Energy Project) to inform actions under Pillar 2. Lauren Kolojechick-Kotch agreed and emphasized the importance of plain language communication and clarifying how public input will be used to increase trust and transparency.

Silvia Tanner said that it would be good to leverage some of the same framework used in the Environmental Justice Community and the Energy Strategy to help advance Pillar 3.

For Pillar 4, Bridget Callahan noted the value of clearer guidance on who to contact within ODOE.

Lisa Gaines asked whether data sharing priorities are included in Pillar 5. Ruchi noted that some elements are included but must be balanced with confidentiality and public records requirements.

**Closing Comments/Q&A**

- Janine confirmed for Nicole Hughes that the Biennial Energy Report will be released November 1, and it will be reframed a little. This may be a good topic at an upcoming EAWG meeting.